**Democratic Procedures**

**Guidance notes**

These notes accompany the Heriot-Watt University Student Union Bye Laws and supplement Section 3: Democratic Procedures. This guidance does not constitute a formal Union Governance document but does require majority approval of the Executive Committee to amend or alter.

**Aim of Democratic Procedures**

The purpose of our democratic procedures is to ensure that we are listening to what our students want and are taking appropriate action to improve the student experience for our members.

**Listen**

Sabbatical Officers are primarily responsible for engaging students through various mediums. Executive Officers are responsible for supporting this work.

It is important to note that all student ideas whether through formal or informal routes will be considered by the elected Officers. However, not all ideas will be taken forward to Executive Committee meetings or acted upon. The elected Officers will use their own judgement as to what is reasonable to take forward. Ideas where there is a potential impact on the student experience or it is a prevalent student should be prioritised. Ideas where there is an achievable positive outcome are also useful but this should not be considered as high a priority because it is also important for students to discuss ideas that are difficult or unachievable.

**Listening to targeted and informed feedback**

The Union has a broad range of student volunteers and networks that can give us valuable information. The below schedule describes how Sabbaticals and Executive Officers should use these networks to listen to our members.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Officers responsible** | **Groups** | **Regularity** |
| Academic | 1. President 2. Executive Officer (Academic) | School Officers | Weekly |
| Class Reps | Once per semester |
| Postgraduate Officer | Monthly |
| International | 1. President | Dubai President  Malaysia class reps  West London College reps  Orkney reps | Monthly VC/Skype  Visit in Semester 2 |
| Activities | 1. VP Activities and Events 2. Executive Officer (Activities) | Societies Convenor  Halls Officer  Charities Officer | Monthly |
| Society Presidents | Once per semester |
| Halls Reps | Once per semester |
| Sports Union  Chaplaincy | Once per semester |
| Events | 1. VP Activities and Events 2. Executive Officer (Events) | Events Crew | Monthly |
| Union Ambassadors | Once per semester |
| Equality & Diversity | 1. VP Welfare and E&D 2. Executive Officer (E&D) | Disabled Students’ Officer  Ethnic Minority Officer  LGBT Officer  International Officer  Women’s Officer | Monthly |
| Sports Union  Chaplaincy | Once per semester |
| Welfare | 1. VP Welfare and E&D 2. Executive Officer (Welfare) | Hub Volunteers | Once per semester |
| Nightline | Once per semester |

**Listening to untargeted and random feedback**

Members do not always participate in formal groups that interact with the Union so it is important to capture members’ ideas in a more informal but equally valid way. These are some of the ways the Union will help our members give us feedback.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Medium** | **Regularity** | **Responsible Officer** |
| Sabbatical lunches | Weekly | Sabbatical rota |
| GOAL Days | Monthly | Sabbatical rota |
| Suggestions boxes | Monthly | President |
| Social Media | Monthly | Vice Presidents |

**Using suggestion boxes**

Suggestions boxes will be installed in the commercial outlets of the Student Union. The President is responsible for gathering the feedback cards on a monthly basis. An example suggestion form is below

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | |  | | | | | | |
| **What does your idea relate to?** | | | | | | | | |
| **University** |  |  | **Union** |  |  | **City** |  | **Other** |
|  | | | | | | | | |
| **What do you want us to do?** | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | |
| **Why should we do it?** | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | |
| **If you would like to be kept informed about what we do with your idea please give us your student email address** | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | |

The Sabbatical or Executive Officer responsible for the Section the suggestion relates to are responsible for ensuring a response is sent within one month.

**Listen**

Liberation Officers

Executive Officer (E&D)

School Officers

Hub Volunteers

Nightline

Executive Officer (Welfare)

Suggestions boxes

Sabbatical lunches

GOAL days

Executive Officer (SBC)

VP (SBC)

President

Executive Officer (Academic)

Borders College SA

Societies Convenor

School Officers

Events Crew

Student staff

Executive Officer (Events)

Executive Officer (Activities)

VP (Activities & Events)

Activity Officers

Union Ambassadors

Social Media

Chaplaincy

Sports Union

VP (Welfare and E&D)

International Presidents

PG Officer

Class Reps

Report to Executive Committee under *Listening Summary*

**Discuss**

There are three main stages to Discuss

**Executive Committee review of Listen**

Executive Meetings usually take place on a monthly basis during term-time. The Agenda will include a standing item called *“Listening Summary****”*** to enable Officers to summarise and discuss the feedback they have received through their Listening activities. The Sabbatical and Executive Officer for each Section will agree in advance who will be responsible for leading the Section summary at Executive. This report can be verbal but the summary must be recorded on the Union database

**Recording what we have learned**

Sabbatical and Executive Officers are responsible for recording the feedback they have received from students during Listen. The information should be recorded on the Union database:

* Section
* Topic
* Source
* Short description (if applicable)
* Action taken
* Question outcome (if applicable)

**Asking member’s questions**

There will be no more than four questions asked of our members in any month. To ensure we keep interest and cover different topics, the topics for questions should follow this format:

* One or Two Union issues
* One open/interesting issue
* One or Two University/Community issues

Questions can be formatted in one of two ways:

1. Single topic questions with attitudinal responses such as:  
   *What do you think about the current social study spaces on campus?*

*Great OK Terrible*

1. Multiple topic questions with single option answers such as:

*Which one of these should be the Union priority for next semester?  
Improving social study space More events Public transport to the campus*

We will ask our questions in two different ways:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Medium** | **Site** | **Data capture** |
| Online via www.hwunion.com | On the homepage there will be a fixed voting module for students to click | Monthly by Responsible Officer |
| Student Shop voting tokens | Students can pick up a voting token in the shop and the voting bins will be at the exit. | Monthly by Responsible Officer |

**Discuss**

Yes

No

Inform initial student/group raising issue

Executive Committee discuss *Listening Summary* at meeting

Is there majority agreement on the Questions?

President has casting vote

Right of Recall

Referendum

Executive reconsider

Is student/group or student body satisfied with decision?

No

Yes

Executive Committee discuss *Action Decisions* at meeting

Designate Responsible Officer

Responsible Officer Compile results

Agree question timetable

Token vote

Online vote

**Act**

There are two main phases to Act

**Executive Committee Decision**

Executive Meetings take place on a monthly basis. The Agenda will include a standing item called *“Action Decisions****”*** and will immediately follow *“Listening Summary”.*

The Sabbatical and Executive Officer responsible for the Section where a question has been asked will be responsible feeding back the outcome to the Committee. This report can be verbal but the summary must be recorded on the Union database in the “Question Outcome” section.

**Closing the feedback loop**

The Sabbatical and Executive Officer must ensure that details of the decision taken are communicated on the website within 7 calendar days of the Executive Committee meeting. The responsible Officers must also inform the student(s) or group(s) who had raised the issue initially (wherever possible) of the decision and agreed action within 7 calendar days.

Should the Executive have decided to disregard the majority view of the student body then this must be justified in writing on the website. In this instance, the Executive Committee must inform the CEO of their decision so that it can be included on the Agenda at the next General Meeting. The exception to this rule is the one issue set as the open or minor issue. These questions are designed to be more light-hearted and fun and will not require further action should the Executive ignore the feedback.

The President is responsible for providing the Trustee Board with a written report on Executive Committee decisions. This will be included in the Executive Report standing item on each Trustee Board meeting Agenda. The report must include an explanation of the Executive decision in cases where the Executive disregarded the majority view of the student body.

**Act**

Yes

No

Is a Policy Motion required?

Does the Executive Committee decision reflect the feedback of the student body?

Inform initial student/group raising issue

Record on database and publish decision

Policy Motion

Pass

Fall

Add to Impact report

Record on database and take action

Inform initial student/group raising issue

Record on database and Operational Plan

Is further action required?

No

Yes

Is student/group or student body satisfied with decision?

No

Yes

No

Yes

Inform Trustee Board

Note under Reports at AGM

Right of Recall

Referendum