HT2021 WK 4– JCR motions

Motion 1: JCR Officer Discretionary Budgets

This JCR notes:

- 73% of the Women's Rep budget was used in MT2020 alone. In 2019/2020, 90% of the budget was used by the end of HT.
- No other officer has used more than 75% of their discretionary budget in the last two academic years.
- Discretionary budgets of The Executive Committee are used particularly infrequently.

This JCR believes:

- The budget of the Women's Rep provides essential support for many members of the JCR.
- This essential support should not be limited by an insufficient budget.
- The funding for the Women's Rep can be achieved by altering current budgets.

This JCR therefore resolves to:

- Increase the Women's Rep budget to £500 p.a. (from £350)
- Reduce the budget of each Executive Committee member by £30 to offset the £150 increase in the Women's Rep budget.
- Keep all other budgets the same.

Role	Budgets 20/21	Proposed Budgets 21/22
President	£ 200.00	£ 170.00
VP Secretary	£ 150.00	£ 120.00
VP Welfare and Equal Opportunities	£ 150.00	£ 120.00
VP Events and Activities	£ 150.00	£ 120.00
Treasurer	£ 50.00	£ 20.00
Domestic/Accommodation Rep	£ 50.00	£ 50.00
Catering Rep	£ 50.00	£ 50.00
Environmental&Ethics Rep	£ 50.00	£ 50.00
International Rep	£ 350.00	£ 350.00
Social Media Rep	£ 150.00	£ 150.00
Academic Affairs Rep	£ 150.00	£ 150.00
Amalgas	£ 250.00	£ 250.00
Entz	£ 600.00	£ 600.00
MAD	£ 250.00	£ 250.00
Charities Rep	£ 250.00	£ 250.00
Tortoise	£ -	£ -
Male and Female Welfare Reps (combined)	£ 2,500.00	£ 2,500.00
Women's Rep	£ 350.00	£ 500.00
LGBTQ+ Rep	£ 350.00	£ 350.00
BME Rep	£ 350.00	£ 350.00
Class Officer	£ 350.00	£ 350.00
Access Officer	£ 150.00	£ 150.00
Mental Health + Disabilities Officer	£ 350.00	£ 350.00
Totals	£ 7,250.00	£ 7,250.00

Proposer: Will Blessing
Seconded: Ella Stadler
Votes for: 31

Votes against: 1
Abstained: 1

Motion 2: Ruskin School of Art Degree Show 2021

Proposer: Max Watkins

Seconder: Chris Roscoe

This JCR notes:

- The Ruskin's Degree Show is an annual exhibition that represents the culmination of all graduating Fine Artist's work. The Degree Show acts as a launchpad for some of the brightest careers in the arts, helping young artists to gain recognition and support at the crucial early stages of their profession. It is also a public facing event that engages with both local and online audiences, as well as being the most significant event in the calendar to increase access to the Fine Art course at Oxford University.
- The impact of the pandemic and remote learning is felt particularly hard by Fine Art finalists, who can no longer have a Degree Show in the usual format before the point of graduating in 2021. The graduating cohort are in the process of resolving an alternative Degree Show programme and are considering a combination of a short and longer publication, online exhibition, and / or using fundraised monies to organise an exhibition, when it is safe to do so.
- The Degree Show is an annual event that on average comes in at an expense of £11,500. Students are expected to fundraise the majority of this. So far, we are attempting to fundraise through drawing sales, marketing events, and JCR donations. Under the limitations of the pandemic, our fundraising outlets are restricted.
- Each year this JCR has generously committed money to the Degree Show (e.g. £600 in 2020 for 2 Fine Art finalists, £500 in 2019 for 1 Fine Art finalist)

This JCR believes:

- That Exeter has a close and intimate relationship with The Ruskin as a neighbouring department and has 2 JCR members who will / would have exhibited at The Degree Show this year.
- It is important to invest and support our local artistic community, especially those who are a part of our JCR.
- It is important that the JCR helps to prevent its Fine Art member's future prospects being severely limited by the impact of the pandemic on the Degree Show, and that this can be done by financially supporting the cause.

This JCR resolves:

- To contribute £600 (the same sum as last year, 2020) for the Fine Art JCR members exhibiting at The Degree Show 2021
- That if the Degree Show in its revised format falls under the estimated costs, that all excess monies contributed by the JCR will be returned.

Votes for: 29
Votes against: 1
Abstained: 3

Motion 3: Get luggage scales in college for international students to be able to weigh their luggage

This JCR notes:

- International students often struggle with packing during the vacations due to limited baggage allowances, especially for long-haul flights

This JCR believes:

- Exeter has a responsibility towards ensuring a smooth vacation departure from college for all its students, especially since vacation storage in college is limited
- International students in Exeter should not have to struggle with packing especially when overweight luggage can incur expensive fines at airports

This JCR therefore resolves to:

- ~~Ask the relevant authorities to buy a weighing scale that can be placed in a common space such as the bottom of Staircase 7 or in the JCR for communal use~~
- ~~Ask the relevant authorities to buy one or two portable digital luggage scales which students can borrow from the porter's lodge at the end of term~~
- Friendly Amendment: 'Ask the relevant authorities to buy two portable digital luggage scales to be kept at the porter's lodge and Cohen Quad Front Desk for student use at the end of term'

Proposer: Orthi Onupom
Seconded: Emily Rosindell

Votes for: 31
Votes against: 0
Abstained: 2

Motion 4: Signing of Open Letters to End the Eating Disorder Crisis

This JCR notes:

- At least 5% of the student population at Oxford have/are experiencing an eating disorder.
- There has been an 81% increase on demand for eating disorder services through the pandemic.
- The criteria which make someone eligible for referral to Cotswold House (the Oxford eating disorder service) is also that which deems the student unfit to study.

This JCR believes:

- The University has a duty to their students to provide more specialist support to students in a time where life is becoming increasingly uncertain and access to support through the NHS is limited to those who are already unfit for study.

This JCR therefore resolves to:

- Mandate the Execs to sign the open letter to the Vice Chancellor
    - https://platform.organise.org.uk/campaigns/teamup-oxford-university-eating-disorder-crisis?utm_source=organise&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=blast70511
- And also to local MPs
    - https://platform.organise.org.uk/campaigns/teamup-crisis-in-adult-eating-disorder-services?utm_source=organise&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=blast70511
- Strongly encourage members of the JCR to support the cause and add their signatures if they have not already done so.

Proposer: Ella Wilczyk
Seconded: Grace Wheeler

Votes for: 32
Votes against: 0
Abstained: 1

Motion 5: Condemning St Peter's College and its master regarding the Ken Loach issue, and subsequent treatment of Jewish students

This JCR notes:

- St Peter's College (SPC) invited Ken Loach to speak at an event titled "Ken Loach in conversation with Professor Judith Buchanan." The event was held on February 8th. Professor Buchanan is the Rector of SPC
- Oxford University has adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism as a guide to interpreting and understanding antisemitism, in order to meet their aim that all students have a 'fulfilling experience of higher education'
- Ken Loach has a history of anitsemitism, with several notable examples of such behaviour:
    - Loach has made remarks violating the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism (IHRA), E.g. drawing 'comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis' and accusing 'the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust'
    - Loach's previous remarks violate the IHRA definition. E.g. by responding to a question whether the Holocaust, a historical fact, is questionable, he has suggested it should be debated, stating "History is for all of us to discuss. All history is our common heritage to discuss and analyse"
    - On antisemitism in the Labour Party, he has said "their aim is to destabilise Jeremy's leadership… there is no validity whatsoever." The Equality and Human Rights Commission found that claiming antisemitism was exaggerated, fabricated, or used as a smear campaign, was one of the violations the party was guilty of
- When the leadership of SPC met with Jewish students expressing their concerns, they:
    - Claimed to be unaware of Loach's past comments, despite there being widely reported in the media and accessible online
    - Asked Jewish SPC students not to view SPC as hostile towards Jewish students, as this would increase discomfort
    - Pushed Jewish SPC students to explain why downplaying the Holocaust is always unequivocally antisemitic
    - Refused to cancel the event because it would be bad for PR, despite acknowledging the harm it would cause, saying: "I don't want to create additional publicity […] it would be huge to cancel an invitation at this point"
    - Suggested that SPC did not have a problem with antisemitism on account of the previous Master being Jewish
    - Diminished Jewish students concerns by claiming, with no basis, that "some Jews don't think its offensive"
    - The Master claimed the talk would focus on his films and "set aside" the controversy, thereby selectively engaging with his politics and disregarding the issue of antisemitism where convenient
- SPC statement on social media:
    - Did not mention the antisemitic comments made by Loach in the past, focussing only on his 'distinguished filmmaking career'
    - Claimed that SPC 'stands vigorously against all forms of discrimination and always seeks to support students who are discriminated against'

    - Argued that, while holding a 'strong opposition to antisemitism,' they do not believe in no platforming, as it does not support the goals of a free and open academic community
        - Yet, in their response to Jewish SPC students who raised concerns, the leadership of SPC suggested Loach's filmmaking can be separated from his political views. However, he is a political filmmaker, yet his political views were not addressed at the event and therefore students were not made fully aware of his political views. In refusing to recognise these views, no 'free and open academic community' was generated, as there was no mechanism through which Loach could be criticised or addressed in relation to his antisemitic comments
- The Oxford University Jewish Society (JSoc), an apolitical society of the university, released a statement detailing the harm caused to their members by this invitation
- The Board of Deputies of British Jews expressed support for JSoc's statement
- Jewish students in recent days have faced extensive and deeply harmful online harassment and hate speech
    - This is the latest development in a run of recent events that have highlighted an undercurrent of antisemitism in Oxford culture, impacting the welfare of Jewish students

This JCR believes:

- Ken Loach has made antisemitic comments which have hurt the Jewish Community. By not addressing the comments made by Loach, both in SPC's social media statement and at the event, SPC failed to make the audience aware of his harmful statements, whilst continuing to praise Loach's 'distinguished filmmaking career'. This grossly dismisses the impact and gravity of Loach's antisemitic comments
- The approach of the Master of SPC, in response to the concerns raised by Jewish students, was not only insensitive, but unacceptable
- The running of the event has detrimentally impacted Jewish students across the University in having a 'fulfilling experience in higher education', as further antisemitic comments have been made in response to the event. This is contrary to the aim stated by the University in December 2020

This JCR therefore resolves to:

- Condemn the handling of Jewish students' concerns in SPC by the College's leadership
- Stand in solidarity with Jewish students at SPC and throughout the University in their condemnations of the incident
- Commit to actively upholding a zero-tolerance policy against antisemitism and the minimisation or denial of its existence
- Work to provide adequate welfare resources and support for Jewish students in Exeter affected by antisemitism
- Mandate the Welfare team to secure antisemitism awareness sessions for the JCR
- Mandate the JCR President to sign the PresCom statement regarding the issue
- Mandate the JCR to post said statement on Social Media
- Call upon Exeter College's Governing Body to echo the concerns of this JCR as set out above

Proposer: Ella Stadler

Seconded: Emily Rosindell

Votes for: 33
Votes against: 0
Abstained: 0

Professor Judith Buchanan, *Master of St Peter's College*

CC: Dr Huw Dorkins, *Vice-Master*; Professor Mark Maloney, *Senior Tutor*; Professor Abigail Williams, *Fellow for Equality and Diversity*; St Peter's Junior Common Room; Oxford University Jewish Society

Statement from JCR Presidents to the Master and Fellows of St Peter's College, Oxford

Dear Professor Buchanan,

We are writing to you, on behalf of our Jewish students, as the collective of JCR Presidents across Oxford, to express our strong condemnation of the events over these past few days. There are a litany of failures, which range from the many previous invitations extended to an apologist of antisemitism to speak at the college; and your response following the vocal protest by members of the Oxford community, Jewish and otherwise. However, the undeniable outcome from this course of action is that Jewish students at St Peter's have been made to feel their college is not a safe place for them; the Jewish Society have since received a torrent of vitriolic abuse online, from which the college should have protected them.

The discourse surrounding the events of the recent days has been brought to the forefront of public discussion, however, this has led to some misconstruction of our beliefs as a student body, and particularly of those Jewish students, who have been forced to air years — if not generations — of personal and familial trauma simply to validate their lived experiences. This is not an issue of "no-platforming" or "cancel culture" as some may say it is, nor is it a debate on the Israel-Palestine conflict. The problem lies in the initial failure on the part of St Peter's College to contextualise the speaker that was invited, recognise his known antisemitic comments, and the further failure on the part of the college to address these concerns in an appropriate manner. Fundamentally, as a high-profile leader of your college community, you have failed in your duty of care to Jewish students, especially given the slurs and backlash they have faced.

Our job as representatives of our respective student bodies is to help facilitate the creation of a culture in Oxford in which each individual student feels welcome and safe. In failing to understand, or worse, refusing to acknowledge, the suffering caused by statements such as those made by Ken Loach, the governance of St Peter's has undone much of this work. Many of us have called emergency meetings of our common rooms to address these events; in these meetings, Jewish students have been forced to relive stories of serious personal trauma to an extent that some of us have had to write to our own college's governance, warning of the mental health impact these events have had on the Jewish students and the student body as a whole. Jewish members of other colleges have had to listen in meetings while non-Jewish students debate if this affront to their beliefs is tolerable, and have stated in such meetings that they now no longer want to call

Oxford their home. This is because of the utterly inappropriate handling of this situation on the part of the college.

Welfare support specific for Jewish students must be reviewed, as well as consideration given to spaces for students of colour, given that many Jewish students do not feel comfortable in such spaces, in that they are white-functioning in society, but still fall victim to narratives of white supremacy and other such bigotry.

We call upon St Peter's College to institute a robust vetting procedure of invitations to external speakers. Consultation must be made with the Fellow for Equalities and Diversity, as well as representatives of the JCR and minority groups across Oxford. While it is not a perfect solution to rely on the labour of individuals who represent minority groups, the college must demonstrate its commitment to actively engage with and listen to voices which are far too often ignored in the wider society.

We also call upon the Governing Body of St Peter's College to apologise formally to the Jewish members of its community in recognition of the hurt which has been caused. The Governing Body must now publicly set out a plan to regain the trust of Jewish students, which must include the establishment of forums in which their voices can be heard and formally acknowledged by the college. We welcome your initial statement of apology on a personal basis, but this must now be accompanied by the full weight of the Governing Body and binding resolutions by the Fellowship that will set in place robust procedures to prevent such wretchedness ever rearing its head again in the college.

We look forward to receiving your considered response as well as a response from the Governing Body. With your consent, we would also like to publish any responses to this letter.

Prescom

Wednesday 10 February, 2021