**President’s Report**

Zoe Harrison – Union President

**Pledge 1: Being YOUR President**

As I say in every report, this is a pledge that is and will always be extremely close to my heart and will always most likely be my main priority. This has been something I have worked hard on ever since I started the role in July 2022 and will continue to carry on trying to be.

We are lucky to have now a chair of Forum, Reece which is amazing, but I interim chaired Forum before him being appointed in that position and also continue to chair our bi-weekly exec meetings.

I continue to signpost students when they come forward with issues, as well as supporting our Advisor with advice cases that come in. A lot of this entails meeting with students and always aiming to support students through procedures with academic or support staff members to reach a resolution that the student is happy with.

I continue meeting with Richard Medcalf out PVC Students every month to discuss issues students are facing and how we can ensure that they are aware of the issues and support us in dealing with them for students. I also meet with the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, PVC Students, our Vice President and our Union Director quarterly where we update them on what we are doing and they do the same, to make sure that we are always working in partnership and we have their support in what we do for our students.

As many of you are aware, there was an issue where the University notified students in halls that they were not guaranteed accommodation next year and were changing the way they prioritise students moving into halls. Following on from this, we were notified of the issues that this imposed to our student body and how this decision was impacting our students and making them feel. Following quite a turbulent few days and many meetings with students, I approached the University about having an open discussion where they met with students to answer their questions and talk honestly with them. Whilst I’m aware some students may not have found this helpful, it was originally what students had asked for so they had a space to talk to the University.

Following this, I emailed the Pro Vice Chancellor for Students with a few of the key questions that students still had following the meeting, and published our correspondence which you can read by clicking [here](https://www.newmansu.org/asset/News/6013/Combind-Accomdation-Letter.pdf) if you haven’t seen it yet. Whilst I know this issue is in no way solved and is still contentious, I hope that my efforts to get answers for students has in some way helped.

**Pledge 2: Put Newman Students’ Union on the map**

As a Union, we have continued to send our staff and sabbatical officers the University’s open days to promote what we do to prospective students before entry. We have continued to work to improve our online presence whether that is on social media or by using our MSL site and sending regular communication to students.

We are currently working on our Annual Awards Ceremony which is a much loved event that we hold in the heart of campus that aims to celebrate our amazing staff and students and all of the hard work that they put in to the Newman Community and Student Lifecycle throughout the year.

At the last Student Forum, I reported that we had recruited approximately 270 course reps which is a higher number than we were on last year and shows the continuous growth of this area of our student voice system as the numbers have grown year on year. The 270 number has stayed relatively stagnant due to course reps withdrawing from the position due to personal reasons, but then gaining numbers from the January starters.

At the time of writing the last report, we had 71 students complete the mandatory training with reminder emails being sent with a deadline for the completion of this training.

At the time of writing this report, I am very pleased to say that we currently have 221 course reps who have completed the mandatory training as well as the returned competency form. We have received feedback from staff, that the feedback they are receiving in SSCC’s from students is a lot more productive, structured and streamlined and we hope some of this is down to the feedback forms that we have created and distributed to our reps ahead of meetings.

Along with this, we have 7 Faculty Representatives who have all been trained as well as other training we have provided. We have 2 from FED and 5 from FASPS with 1 of them siting specifically over the School of Nursing and Allied Health. The faculty reps have attended our student forum, SSCC’s, meetings with Associate Deans and Faculty Boards.

It is amazing to see the student voice being heard at every corner of the institution.

**Pledge 3: Create a student led strategic plan**

We are in a really exciting period of time as a Union as we embark on a new strategy for the organisation. We have made some really amazing headway with this piece of work. I don’t want to give too much as away as I will be talking a bit more about it later with our Union Director Robin, but for now, here are some of the headlines:

Our ‘WE SHOULD TALK’ SURVEY had 65 questions, from this we had:

• 162 Online Responses

• 152 Offline Responses

• 50 Pre-University Student Responses

We then held our ‘LET’S TALK WEEK’ which was a week of open engagement with students. From this we had

• 100+ Interactions/ Conversations

We then held Focus Groups with an External Facilitator. We held 8 Focus Groups with a mix of 50 Students & Staff.

Me and the Union Director then presented our findings to the University Council and University Leadership Team which received good feedback.

Our next steps are that we are waiting for the report from the external facilitator following our Focus Groups. We will be engaging with our key stakeholders to discuss what the future of the Students’ Union looks like following this.

**Advice**

As some of you may know, our Student Voice and Advice Co-Ordinator left Newman Students’ Union at the end of March 2024 so as of then, with the help of the rest of the team, I will be looking after the advice centre.

At the start of the academic year we switched over our website to MSL and this came with a new database to generate reports from our advice service. The Union President and Student Voice and Advice Co-ordinator are taking on advice cases together and supporting students. Since July 2023 the engagement with our advice centre has continued to see a static amount of students coming to us. As of the time of writing this paper, the advice centre had seen **77** advice cases which is **6** more cases than this time last year.

We are now able to generate graphs and get more detailed information from our new database which is really helpful.

We are finding that with our new case manager, we haven’t quite got the information we need. Saying ‘general’ is far too broad and we are speaking to MSL to get this refined so we have more accurate data going forward.

Most of the trends we are finding is students coming to us to complain about their course. A lot of this relates to communication from lecturers and we are trying to support departments to make sure they have a clear line of communication between students and their course. All of these complaints have been solved at the informal stage and have not escalated further which shows how the Union’s relationship with the University and academic staff is strong and we are always working to benefit the students and their experience here at Newman. The other highest trend is extensions which is to be expected because the support we are offering to students regarding mitigating circumstances and extension increased during December/January but that was to be expected during the exam and assessment period.

This graph isn’t the most helpful in the world, and just proves that we need to streamline our options to get more detailed information as ‘Other’ has covered a wide range of things. The trends that fall under this are a lot of signposting to other departments, mainly being Student Support. As well as this, another thing we have been helping students with is disability related support, such as signposting students to Student Support, supporting students if their needs are not being met and supporting with applications. We have also done a lot of work in supporting students through panels such as fitness to practices and disciplinaries.