

15.10.25



**Chair:** Miles Craven [MC]

**Officers:** Josh Darley [JD], Erin Gerard [EG], Etienne Lewis-Jarvis [ELJ]

**Student Attendees:** 11

## Welcome and Agenda

- Everyone Welcomed, Group Agreement and Agenda.
- MC was elected as Chairperson ahead of the Student Forum in a space with the other Student Officers.

## Student Officer and Forum Reports

Verbal updates given from;

### i) Executive Officer Team (JMSU Officers)

**President, Miles** – Improve Visibility of JMSU across the campus and in LJMU departments as well as accommodation. Working with LJMU EDI team to improve initiatives and how students can get involved. Sustainability. Updated on the crossing outside SLB, it is now with Liverpool City Council, JMSU have pushed it as far as they can.

**VP Education, Erin** – Academic Societies, Winter Support for International Students, Library Engagement and Hours, Assessment Support as well as Electronic Support for Neurodiverse Students for example, Canvas.

**VP Community and Wellbeing, Etienne** – Women's Safety; 16 Days of Activism & Reclaim the Night, Mental Health: Wellbeing Forum, Tailored Support for Neurodiversity Students; Sensory Room in City Campus.

**VP Activities, Josh** – Increase member numbers and engagement, collaboration between Sports and Societies, Mental Health Training and Movember.

Dates of Mental Health Training for Student Leaders;

- Tuesday 21 October, 5-7pm
- Tuesday 28 October, 5-7pm
- Monday 17 November, 2-4pm
- Thursday 27 November, 5-7pm

If anyone would like to book on to these sessions, please contact JD or the Student Voice Team.

## ii) Forums

**Wellbeing** – First one, as its new for this academic year. Went well and well attended. Supported by LJMU SAW staff.

**Societies** – First one of the academic years, went well and set the agenda for the year of activities.

### **Discussion Topic: How do you feel that the cost-of-living crisis is affecting your university experience?**

- Tuition fees have increased but not the maintenance support. De-influencing people to go to uni. The cost of education is high, and everything is going up.
- Value of education is going down.
- Correlation of value to education standard is off.
- Accommodation costs have gone up each year, there are no cheaper options left.
- Third year students get less loan compared to other years so being hit hard at their most stressful point in their degrees.
- Postgraduate students do not get maintenance loans so therefore forced to get a job just to survive. Leaving little to no time to study. It is encouraging burnout. Many fulltime Master programmes are for a full year Sept – Sept. There is no break for summer, so no time to work for a bit and save up money. The student mentioned that had they had known about the lack of maintenance loan they would have taken a year out to save up money. The way LJMU promote the Master programmes is pushing the 20% off which okay saves some money but no communication on other elements like no maintenance loan and how intense the programme would be, the number of assignments is insane. MC and EG spoke about JMSU's priority submission for NUS England conference which was on postgraduate funding. The Officers want to explore this topic more as similar issues like this keep being raised.
- Student finance website (England) is hard to navigate and there is a lack of accessible information. It is hard for students to know what money they will receive from year to year. Forms are confusing and unnecessarily complicated. It seems to be about luck more than anything else. So many students have issues and when you need to contact them it is hard to speak to someone for her. It is particularly hard for those new to the process, care leavers and estranged students were mentioned. The discussion then went on that even if you have had other family members go to university the process has changed so much and continues to change that there no advantage.
- JD asked had costs impacted the student experience – engaging with societies etc. Student spoke about their experience accessing sailing which is in collaboration with University of Liverpool. They spoke about the higher membership fess even though they would not be eligible to compete in BUCS. It is an expensive sport anyway but feels like the associate members pay more for less opportunities. JD will look into this further and ask for clarification on membership fees and their reasoning behind the difference in full members and associate membership. Fees noted were £72 for University of Liverpool and £90 for associate members.
- Often students must ask themselves can I afford to do this? They joke about being poor as students. But it is not funny. We should not be poor. There needs to be an in between middle ground which allows time for student experience and be able to do things other than study and work.
- Officers asked how many work part time jobs? 9/11 had or have jobs to survive at uni. Multiple students stated having multiple jobs. Some mentioned working night and day shifts, then fitting in university around shifts and feeling exhausted. Many agreed they were working just to pay rent. They had to forfeit social activity. The student experience is not the same when you are constantly worrying about the bills. MC asked did they think that is specific to JMSU? No, Liverpool is one of the cheaper cities. They mention of the housing crisis and the costs compared to Manchester and other popular student cities.

- Student asked if there could be a campaign around the stigma on asking for financial help. This led to discussions and personal tales of applying for the Hardship Fund at LJMU. There were mixed experiences in the group. There needs to be an easy way to advertise it. Less stigma around it. It would be good to communicate about the process and what the team will ask etc. There was a lot of discussion around the guilt of spending over £50 on things as that is flagged by the team as a 'big' purchase. Only half of the students knew about the fund in the room and most of those knew about it through their engagement with JMSU. The Officers want to investigate this further and work with the Student Voice Campaigners on something to develop the awareness of the Hardship Fund.
- Student raised that many LJMU staff are not aware of provisions that JMSU offer such as Half Term Hampers, Fill Your Fridge Vouchers and that means they cannot sign post to them. They imagine that there are many students that could benefit from them if staff knew about them. There is concern that there are many students suffering in silence and that will have a far greater impact long term to their studies, mental health and wellbeing.
- This then led to a discussion around awareness of Martin, LJMU Police Officer. Again, only half the student attendees were aware of him being on campus available to meet with students. It was agreed that raising awareness of him and other JMSU provisions is really needed.
- Question was asked after overhearing a conversation, why do groups like Hiking have to pay for membership and then events on top of it? JD discussed some of the costings for hikes and the number of members. It led to a wider discussion on hidden costs in student groups, forum agreed that all student groups to need be transparent not just on the membership fees but any future costs like trips, travel etc.
- It was raised about the varied costs of groups that are similar, for example Cheer and Heels, both similar activity but differ greatly on their membership fee. It was a huge difference of £65 between the two groups and the costs went up again if there were competitions. This again led to conversation on price of kits, travel and the mounting hidden costs of being in student groups. From this more conversation on BUCS fees and how some sports are missed because of their fees and this limits opportunities to students. JD invited those individuals from the conversation to chat to him at the end so he could help them further.

MC then drew the conversation to a close.

### **Opportunity For Additional Member Ideas**

For discussion and approval, this can be any ideas or motion proposals put forward by LJMU student members in attendance of student forum.

Nothing raised.

### **Any Other Business**

MC raised Sustainability Forum is next week.

MC closed forum and thanked attendees for coming.