

JCR Meeting Minutes

Hilary 2016 Week 4

Chair: Jemimah Taylor

Secretary: Edward Green

Returning Officer: Henner Petin

I. Report from the President

Not much has been going on this week, but Elizabeth Rawson was the clear winner on the JCR end, so I will bring this to the President of the college this week.

II. Reports/Questions to Officers

III. Reading from the Poet Laureate

IV. Ratifications from Previous Meetings

Minutes ratified from previous meeting.

1. Ratifying the Constitution

This JCR Notes:

1. That the Constitution requires itself to be renewed every year by the JCR at the second JCR Meeting of each Hilary Term;
2. That it is the second JCR Meeting of Hilary Term;

This JCR Believes:

1. That a functional Constitution is essential in the running of the JCR

This JCR Resolves:

1. To renew the Constitution as it stands for another year

Proposed: Stef Paterson

Seconded: Kate Ogden

Short Factual Questions:

Akshay: Is the Constitution still contradictory?

Ed: Less so than it used to be, but in places yes.

No debate
Move to vote
For: Everyone

- V. Constitutional Amendments
- VI. Motions of No Confidence
- VII. Charities Motions
- VIII. Monetary Motions

1. Present for a Modern Hero

This JCR Notes:

1. That at the end of last term our beloved Entz Pres was tragically prevented from putting away the bop sound system due to "illness."
2. That Jonathan Mainwaring heroically volunteered to do the job instead.
3. That the Computing and Website Officer promised to submit a motion to get Jonathan a present.

This JCR believes:

1. In honouring those who have acted in its best interests.

This JCR resolves:

1. To mandate the Entz Pres to purchase dinosaur-themed Lego for a price of no more than £30 and
2. To present this present gift-wrapped to Jonathan at the start of the next JCR meeting.

Proposed: Cameron McGarry

Seconded: Graham Kelly

Short Factual Questions

Lucy: How much does a set of Lego cost?

Cameron: Lego is expensive.

Stef: Does Johnny know that you've put this motion into the JCR?

Cameron: Yes he does.

Debate:

Graham: Why have we chosen £30?

Cameron: It was a figure that I thought would be voted on, but gave scope.

Lucy: **[Amendment]** change resolves (1) to say 'no more than £10'

[Taken as friendly]

Joe: Should we be paying? Shouldn't the Entz President pay as it was he who was not present to do his job.

Leila: The JCR shouldn't be paying for something that the Officer has failed to do

Cameron: **[Amendment]** Adds a resolves (3)
'To thank Johnny for his help in this matter'

Kate: **[Amendment]** Remove resolves (1) and (2)
Debate on the amendment: none
Move to vote on the amendment
For: Overwhelming majority
Amendment passes
Kate Ogden becomes the new proposer of the motion

Move to Vote; no opposition
For: Overwhelming majority
Motion passes

2. Britain Weaker in Pooroupe

This JCR notes:

1. The UK will shortly hold a referendum on continued membership of the EU
2. A campaign, Oxford Students for Europe, has been set up to defend Britain's EU membership and promote a Remain vote

This JCR believes:

1. EU membership supports a lot of the jobs we all want
2. The UK gets £7 billion of research funding from the EU
3. Leaving the EU would be isolationist and not in the open spirit of this JCR
4. This JCR should support UK membership of the European Union

This JCR resolves:

1. To provide the Oxford Students for Europe campaign with £100 to campaign to Remain in the EU
2. To affirm its support for continued UK membership of the European Union.
3. To add resolves (2) to the JCR Policy Document

Proposed: Akshay Bilolikar

Seconded: Redha Rubaie/Kate Ogden

Short Factual Questions:

Will: How often does the JCR donate to a political campaign like this?

Kate: We have donated to political bodies before, it depends on where you draw the line between charity and political movement.

Noni: How often do we donate to something that is national campaign?

Ed: I haven't found anything in the minutes that is on the same scale as this.

Kate: What do we know about the Oxford Students for Europe? Who is a part of the group

Akshay: We know me, the co-chairs are Aiden MacFarlane and another [sorry Akshay, I'm sure they're lovely but I didn't catch the other name]

Lucy: Why is it £100?

Akshay: The campaign is effectively broke, but the money can be debated on. It is really for the amount that the JCR is willing to give.

Lucy: Have they got money from other JCRs/MCRs

Akshay: Motions are going through 4/5 JCRs

Cameron: What other areas of funding have you contacted?

Akshay: we've got some money from the Lib Dems, the Labour Club haven't given money and the Conservatives are neutral.

Debate:

Stef: How worthy do you think this cause is? Why should the JCR be supporting it?

Akshay: In the long term this is one of the things that will effect all of us and our future generations.

Lucy: Why do you need money? RMF doesn't have funding and is doing well

Akshay: We do need funding for things like drinks events

Joe: I would see myself voting to stay in the EU, but how effective do you think that this campaign is going to be? Also is it true that you are serving champagne at events?

Akshay: The perception is very true, I wasn't involved in the serving of champagne, that was a pre-committee that were not elected.

Stef: Do you not think that resolves (2) is problematic? Do you not think its too political an issue to bring to a JCR?

Akshay: Not really, support for things like RMF is no way near as strong as support of the EU and that's fine to bring to the JCR. Around 75% of students support Britain remaining in the EU

Tom: Have we ever taken a stance on such a political issue, do you not think that it's a major conflict of interests for you to be a high ranking member of the organization and then to come and ask for funding?

Jack: This is quite a political issue, where people can swing in both directions and

there are people who want to leave the EU. It's not comparable to RMF, where a lack of support might not necessarily indicate that they oppose the group. Suggesting that the whole JCR supports remaining in the EU would alienate the people who want to leave it

Kate: Do we have any opinion on what the actual JCR thinks on this issue as a whole? Could we hold a referendum in order to check that?

Kate: **[Amendment]** To strike (1), (2), (3) and create resolves

(1) To have a referendum on whether the JCR supports remaining in the EU or not, using the official referendum question as the question in the referendum.

Taken as friendly

Stef: This is just a bit ridiculous, when people get the email then they might not realise that there might be monetary implications to this. I think it's something that the JCR should not get involved in, don't think that putting it into the Policy Document is the right thing. Once it's in, it's difficult to remove, and shouldn't be in there representing the interests of the JCR.

Cameron: No-one cares what we think, it does not make sense for us to act as if we are the guiding light, it is well beyond what we should be saying to the world.

Nikhil: I think we need to be wary of the idea that we cannot take a political stance as the JCR, everything is effectively political to some degree. That's why we have votes, that's why it works. Fighting for the Living Wage is a political thing, making a stand for vegetarianism would have been a political statement in the last fifty years or so.

Kate: The draft Policy Document contains elements in it which are distinctly political, so I don't think that you should throw it out as too political for the JCR to become involved in.

Akshay: We have done things before that our political, JCRs and SUs are one of the ways we do this and make our voices heard. The young are chronically under-represented and so this is one way that we can express our opinion and exert political pressure.

Move to vote; no opposition

Vote

Favour: Over half

Motion passes

IX. Motions as Submitted

1. Threats to student welfare and academic freedom

This JCR notes:

1. Under Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, public bodies have a duty to prevent radicalisation – termed the “PREVENT duty”.
2. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has sent guidance to bodies including Oxford colleges on how they might implement this duty.¹
3. Oxford colleges were asked to respond to HEFCE by 22 January.
4. As HEFCE notes, Oxford colleges are under **no legal obligation** to follow HEFCE’s interpretation of the PREVENT duty.

This JCR further notes:

1. The HEFCE guidance suggests a new obligation that all those who deal with welfare in College refer any concerns about radicalisation to the government’s CHANNEL de-radicalisation programme.
2. The National Police Chiefs Council report that 80% of referrals to CHANNEL have been abandoned as unnecessary by the programme.² This demonstrates excessive over-reporting of vulnerable students. It creates a climate of fear for students when approaching College officers with welfare or other needs.
3. The HEFCE guidance suggests giving college officials and the government the power to intervene in events and academic exchanges to prevent “extremism”. No clear definition of extremism is given.
4. The HEFCE guidance suggests JCRs and student societies should all be expected to comply with these obligations even though the law does not require them to do so – including reporting students to CHANNEL and shutting down events.
5. Legislative safeguards already exist to crack down on individuals and events supporting terrorism.
6. The HEFCE guidance would add a set of measures to crack down on “non-violent extremism”, which is not clearly defined anywhere.

This JCR believes:

1. If College chooses to follow the HEFCE guidance, that would represent a major change to our welfare and academic freedom practices, and to the operation of this JCR.
2. The student body should be properly consulted about such major changes.
3. If College chooses to follow the HEFCE guidance, there is a serious risk that vulnerable students will be put off using welfare services by the knowledge they could be reported to the police with no clear pretext (whereas the current legal requirement is only that those indicating a plan to harm themselves or others should be reported).
4. In the absence of any clear definition of “extremism”, the HEFCE guidance would give college officials and the government a blank cheque to intervene wherever they choose in shutting down events – potentially contravening the requirement in the 1986 Education Act and the Human Rights Act to protect academic freedom and freedom of speech.

¹ <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/prevent/>

² <http://www.npcc.police.uk/FreedomofInformation/NationalChannelReferralFigures.aspx>

5. The HEFCE guidance significantly undermines the independence and freedom of this JCR by demanding that we carry out the PREVENT duty in ways not required by law.

This JCR resolves:

1. To express strong reservations about the suggestions raised in the HEFCE guidance.
2. To ask College not to proceed with any HEFCE advice without further legal advice, and full and frank discussions with the student body, especially Muslim and BME students who have been disproportionately affected by PREVENT in the past.
3. To request that College shares with the student body any plans it has to proceed on this matter.
4. To mandate the President of the JCR to write to the College Head of House and College authorities immediately asking them to desist with any plans they have to implement the HEFCE guidance, including training under PREVENT, until those plans can be discussed fully at a Governing Body meeting, with student representatives party to those discussions.
5. To mandate the President of the JCR to ask college to immediately let us know what their stance is and exactly how much of PREVENT and the HEFCE guidance they are carrying out.
6. Add Resolves (1) to the Policy Document

Proposed: Lucy Hirst

Seconded: Nikhil Venkatesh

Short Factual Questions:

Tom: Have College followed the self-assessment part of the procedure?

Jemimah: Yes, they have done already, they went with a set of guidelines that had some element of the HEFCE guidelines in it, but now Oxford seems to be stepping back from that.

Stef: Where else can they look for guidance?

Lucy: They can use the law itself, the HEFCE takes it beyond the law in its guidelines and therefore college could have its own interpretation based on the law alone.

Debate:

Leila: As a Welfare Officer who would be required to carry this out, I feel uncomfortable thought policing people.

Akshay: I know terrorism seems far away from us, but we should probably have a debate to see if Peer Supporters should be trained in how to report suspected extremism.

Lucy: It imposes no limits on what the Peer Supporters might do in breaking confidentiality, they just need to think that the person they are speaking to might be in the process of becoming an extremist.

Nikhil: We have laws on counter-terrorism already, this does not add anything productive and actually harms the detection of extremism. Is designed to tackle what David Cameron calls 'non-violent extremism' which can involve not following or observing 'British values'. One thing that terrorist experts will tell you is that most terrorists feel isolated from figures of authority who might be able to help them. On the training front – my mum was trained in Prevent, she works with 7 year olds. One of the things that they were told might be a sign of extremism was that they might have been a victim of racism in the past. We need to know what college is doing and ask them not to go forward with the process beyond the scope of what the law says.

Noni: This is a really vague policy. I have said things in tutorials that might be considered counter to British values, but I think the chance of me being considered a risk is pretty low, in part because I'm a white woman. If I was a Muslim woman, this might be a different story. I think the College should have their own thoughts and think about how they can apply this in their own way.

Stef: Is there a problem with not following these guidelines? Will we/college get into trouble?

Lucy: No – there is a law, but that is less than what HEFCE is asking for us to implement. If we implement the law, then that is all that is required of us.

Move to vote

In favour: Over half

Motion passes

(To add resolves [1] to the Policy Document) In favour: Over half

Motion passes

2. Motion to Support Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford

This JCR notes that

1. Rhodes Must Fall In Oxford have sent out a request for JCRs to endorse the Fall of the Rhodes statue. They held a protest on Friday 6th November to ask for its fall and to present a petition to the Provost of Oriel.
2. BME students, staff, and applicants suffer from a pattern of discrimination which tarnishes their experience of Oxford and leads to alienation.
3. The curricula are severely Eurocentric

This JCR believes that

1. The veneration and celebration of a racist, colonialist, genocidal murderer is unacceptable.
2. Our university's iconography must be determined by our democratic voice, one we should exercise to an end that creates an environment which supports all students and does not alienate them.
3. Solidarity with this cause (RMFO) is our obligation in fostering a just community of students.

4. That BME students, staff, or applicants should not suffer from racism.
5. That a theoretically world class university should not be so Eurocentric as to offer no opportunities at any level to study Sikhism for example

This JCR resolves to

1. Express support for the fall of Rhodes as outlined by RMF Oxford – “standing in support of the fall of Rhodes” as a student body
2. Support Rhodes Must Fall Oxford’s wider aims in attempting to counter the effects of racism past and present on curricula, staff representation, admissions, and experience of students of colour at Oxford.
3. Make public this support through contacting national and student media.
4. Add resolves (1) and (2) to the JCR’s Policy Document

Proposed: Lucy Hirst

Seconded: Noni Csogor

Short factual questions:

Kate: Can we be clear on what actually happens to the statue of Cecil Rhodes?

Lucy: ‘Contextualisation’ is the word that gets thrown around a lot. I’ve stepped back from the practical elements of the programme, but I’ve heard plans to move it into the Ashmolean with a plaque, for example. Destruction/pouring blood all over it in the street is not what is desired.

Debate

A procedural motion is brought to have the motion decided by a secret ballot

Luke opposes, and says: I think it’s a question of whether the members of the JCR should be held to account on their opinion on a matter like this, I think that’s an argument that should be considered.

Tom: I think that a number of motions passed do so because people get swept up in it and people are perhaps afraid to express their opinion in public so a secret ballot is important.

Move to vote

For: Overwhelming majority

The motion will be decided by a secret ballot

Nikhil: I’m a big supporter of RMF and this motion, but it’s important to clear up a lot of misinformation that has occurred. RMF is not all about the statue, that element is a symbolic continuation of something that happened in South Africa.

The point is to make the experience of BME students better by a process they call ‘decolonisation’, its about breaking down the curriculum, acknowledging the contribution of the University to structural and historic racism, and to work to make the University a non-racist place.

Lucy: Not just about the BME students, but also about the broadening the curricula for all people. If Oxford wants to keep its title as one of the best universities in the world, then it has to do world history that isn't just white, Eurocentric history.

Akshay: I see what you're saying about the statue and that it's only a part of the message, but it really is about the statue. I think it's a slippery slope to take this statue down because it has to consider others, and I think that it's important to point out that this is controversial even within the BME community itself.

Noni: The media did not really care when CRAE published a document pointing out the awful experience of BME students at Oxford in 2014. RMF have managed to create a conversation that otherwise did not exist, and part of this is connected to the symbolism of the statue and the focus on taking it down. People have been going on national news and pointing out that Oxford is really racist, and this is a conversation that otherwise would not have happened. I don't think that supporting RMF has to mean that you support everything 100%, I think it means that you support the overarching principle.

Tom: Oriël's taken an interesting stance, and declared that the statue will not fall. From an academic standpoint, I believe that changing the curricula is really important. But I believe that removing the statue is at some level an act of historical vandalism and that, as a student of Classics, removing any statue inevitably changes the context of the statue itself.

Leila: The movement hasn't stopped even though Oriël say they won't take down the statue, which surely shows that the movement is about more than just the statue itself.

Akshay: **[Amendment]** Add resolves (5) For the JCR to remain neutral on the issue of removing the statue of Cecil Rhodes.

Taken as unfriendly

Debate on the amendment

Ingrid: It's important that we don't lose focus and we talk about our views as a JCR on the relationship with the statue, so remaining neutral might be the best way to represent a number of views that the JCR has.

Nikhil: If you think that removing the statue is an act of vandalism, maybe we could bring a motion condemning the British Museum? Whose interests does it serve to leave the statue up? Many people probably had no idea about it before a month ago. Cecil Rhodes was an awful man who committed genocide, and even at the time people were questioning whether there should a statue of him. Whose life is made better by the presence of the statue? For Oxford it's a symbol of a racist past and we need to engage with it.

Ingrid: As a BME student, that statue reminds me that Oxford has a colonial history, and it reminds us everyday of its bad history. I want everyone to remember that, and I think that that happens with the statue up rather than removing it.

Akshay: The people who can't speak at this debate are people who are not even born yet, and if donors continue to donate with the statue remaining up then that is something that we should consider.

Noni: Oriel have said that money and donation was not a factor in the decision. People have jumped on the bandwagon on RMF on this point, claiming that there is a relationship between taking the statue down and people being made redundant. Until RMF pushed this, I had no idea about the statue or Oxford's relationship with racism and colonialism. I think it was damaging that I didn't know who Cecil Rhodes was and where the University had come from.

Nikhil: Ingrid made an interesting point, that the statue helps us to acknowledge the past. In response I would say that the way we have to engage with this past is through academic understanding and free debate. People respond to the statue in different ways and I understand that. But there's a reason why he wanted a statue. The symbolism of putting such a man in a position of veneration is pretty disgusting to me. He is at the top of the college looking down on the rest of us. We need to keep in mind the past that the University has, but we should do it by having lots of BME students who tell us about it and engaging with this with the statue taken down.

Lucy: If we are going to get to the point of saying we need donors' money, then we are sacrificing our principles for money. I don't know how I feel about that, but I think it's a real problem, as it seems to suggest there is a point at which we would sell our principles.

Luke: In 1984, Oriel admitted women and to the donors objected. There are principles that rank higher than the donations of individuals and the interests that come attached to that.

Akshay: Everyone is saying that is a movement not about a statue, but it has produced the most problems, and therefore it makes sense to be neutral on it.

Nikhil: CCC supports Rhodes Must Fall, but does not support the fall of the statue is a farcical situation. On the donors' point, there are situations in which we would not accept money and that's not a trade off for future generations, its about where we are and what we believe in.

[Procedural motion] to have the vote on the amendment in secret [passed without opposition]

Move to vote on the amendment:

For: 6, Abstention: 1, Against: 20 [amendment falls]

Return to debate on original motion

Stef: Can you outline the reasons for opposing the Rhodes Must Fall movement? For context, even if you don't personally hold those views.

Akshay: There's Ingrid's point about it, people agree with pretty much everything in the motion apart from the statue. You could argue that pretty much everyone from pre-1960 is a horrible person and therefore

Kate: A lot of the opposition is based on the idea that you'll smash and remove history, but that's not what is being proposed to I think that's something to make clear.

Akshay: **[Amendment]** Remove resolves (1), (2), (3), and (4) and replace them with To have a referendum on whether the JCR supports the following

- 1) Express support for the fall of Rhodes as outlined by RMF Oxford – “standing in support of the fall of Rhodes” as a student body
- 2) Support Rhodes Must Fall Oxford's wider aims in attempting to counter the effects of racism past and present on curricula, staff representation, admissions, and experience of students of colour at Oxford.

Taken as unfriendly

Akshay: If we're adopting a policy position, then we should take the broadest possible sample of people from the JCR. A referendum is the best way to do this, the meeting seems very undemocratic.

Nikhil: I don't think we should have a referendum on this, I don't think it's anti-democratic, we can't have direct democracy all the time. We only refer things to referendum in extraordinary circumstances, I think it's healthy for people to hear the debate and makes them much better placed to make a decision on the issue. In this instance, when there's been a wealth of misinformation about RMF and what it intends to do, it should carry more weight that people are here and have just heard the debate. We can assume that lots of people who aren't here don't have strong views on it. Especially as we're having another referendum, it makes sense to make sure people spend the maximum amount of time thinking about this.

Ed: If people cared enough they should be here to defend their point of view; the fact that they are not here does not mean that their opinion is not able to be expressed.

Kate: The JCR Meeting is a form of direct democracy, everyone who read this email and didn't turn up knew that the decision would be made in their stead.

Tom: There are people who can't make it, particularly as the day was changed to take Challenge into account.

Akshay: I think if this is something that everyone believes in then the referendum is the best format, particularly because the meeting was changed.

Luke: I agree with Nikhil, but also on this thing about the time that was changed in the meeting, do you think that there is a significant number of people who were unable to come who would have changed the JCR's opinion on this?

Akshay: I think that there are a number of people who were afraid to come into the room in the first place, because they didn't want to talk about the statue staying up.

Nikhil: If we are to say that decisions made in a JCR meeting by secret ballot is not democratic then the vast majority of the things that we do are not fair and should not be supported.

Ingrid: Jailbreak is on, and I know that people would come if they were here. We're also talking about the media, and saying that this is what the JCR believes in. We should be taking the widest number of people's opinions into account.

Move to vote:

For: 4 Against: Overwhelming
Amendment falls

Akshay: I think that the fact that the RMF people don't want to have a referendum is proof that they don't think they can win one.

Noni: This is substantively different from the previous motion, as the number of technical questions show that people are not completely clear about what RMF want, and it will invalidate the last 45 minutes if we move it to a referendum, where people who have not heard the full extent of discussion will vote on it.

Move to vote:

[For the Motion] For: 18: Against: 1 Abstention: 5 (1 spoiled)
Motion Passes

[For adding resolves (1) to the Policy Document] For: 18 Against: 3 Abstention: 3 (1 spoiled)
Motion passes

[For adding resolves (2) to the Policy Document] For: 20 Against: 1 Abstention: 3 (1 spoiled)
Motion passes

X. Emergency Motions

1. Formal Hall Surfing

This JCR Notes:

1. We all enjoy Formal Hall and raising money to charity

This JCR Believes:

1. By giving up 50 seats, we could host a formal hall swap with Lincoln College

This JCR Resolves:

1. To give up 50 seats of a formal hall to organise a formal hall swap with Lincoln College. Tickets would be marked up, with profits going to the 4 RAG charities.

Proposed: Eleanor Tovey

Seconded: Akshay Bilolikar

Debate:

Tom: **[Amendment]** add resolves (3) to bring up the issue on Food Committee for DO

Taken as friendly

Move to vote

Favour: Majority

Motion passes