# TT15 Week 6 JCR Meeting Agenda 7:30pm - 31st May 2015

Chair - Bethany Currie / Loughlan O’Doherty  
Secretary – Edward Green  
Returning Officer – Henner Petin

**Monetary Motions**

**1. Peer Support Hoodies**

This JCR notes:

1. That five new peer supporters started at the beginning of this term

2. That new hoodies need to be ordered by Wednesday of 6th week.

3. That in previous years the JCR has paid for the peer supporters' hoodies

This JCR believes:

1. That peer supporters should be visible and recognisable

2. That peer support hoodies make it clear who the peer supporters are

3. That it's important for the JCR to show their investment in the peer support programme

This JCR resolves:

1. To pay £75 to cover the cost of the hoodies of the new peer supporters.

**Proposed: Sandy Downs**

**Seconded: Sammy Breen**

**SHORT FACTUAL QUESTIONS:**

Kate: You have £85 in the Peer Support budget that you haven’t spent yet?

Sandy: We will spend it on a peer support event in 7th week so need this as an extra.

**MOVE TO DEBATE:**

Jack: move to vote

Seconded

No opposition.

**MOTION PASSES**

*[N.B.] Bethany Currie cedes the chair to Loughlan O’Doherty in order to propose the next motion.*

**Emergency Motions**

**2. Formal statement in condemnation of the Oxford Union**

The JCR notes that:

1. The Oxford Union has produced a cocktail making light of colonialism and slavery.

2. The JCR opposes racism and colonialism and is committed to creating an inclusive environment.

3. Members of our own JCR were involved in the protest led by Rhodes Must Fall Oxford on Thursday evening

The JCR believes that:

1. Imagery and behaviour of this kind by a prestigious organisation with close ties to the university must be condemned by the JCR in order to contribute to the creation of an inclusive environment in the JCR.

2. The Union’s reaction in the aftermath has not been adequate.

3. We have a commitment to support members of our JCR

The JCR resolves to:

1. Formally condemn the behaviour of the Oxford Union

2. Have the Vice President contact the Union and the student newspapers to publicise the JCR’s condemnation.

3. Stand in solidarity with the protestors and the Rhodes Must Fall Movement

4. To have the executive committee contact the OUSU president to request the Union is barred from using OSSL (The student email service run by OUSU). Failing this the executive is to request a list of the Union scandals is distributed alongside it's advertising emails.

**Proposed: Bethany Currie**

**Seconded: Rose Shendi**

**SHORT FACTUAL QUESTIONS:**

Tom: Have any other colleges passed this motion?

Beth: Magdalen have a petition that will be debated on Wednesday, University College has passed it. In total thirteen colleges have passed it.

Kate: What have the colleges passed?

Beth: Exactly this motion, but we have included the clause about the support of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, because Kiran Benipal played a role in it.

Sandy: Have other colleges passed the resolves (4)?

Beth: Yes, but I would be open to removing it.

Arthur: Can we have some information about the Rhodes Must Fall movement please?

Beth: It was originally a movement by students of the University of Cape Town to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes in their university. In Oxford it encompasses a broader range of issues, such as the diversification of the curriculum, the diversification of the staff etc. It recognizes that much of the University’s resources were built on the products of colonialism and therefore we have a duty as students to recognize that this is the case.

**MOVE TO DEBATE:**

Sandy: [Amendment] Strike “This JCR resolves” clause (4).

Beth: Taken as unfriendly in order that we can debate it.

Jem: Even if (4) is practically impossible, it is important that the Union has this issue debated.

Sammy: It’s all well and good, but you can’t stop the Union from doing it. You can’t stop the Union contacting all of its members who have paid to be a member of society, but don’t support what the Union has done. The whole clause seems unnecessary.

Beth: I respect that as a member of the Union, and I think that OUSU won’t stop them using them in practice. There is a reason that this particular issue went viral; one member of the Union who was there and tweeted it had 40,000 followers and it went from there. There have been other instances, and several other instances of questionable cocktail names. This can be a tool to inform people about the Union.

Sandy: I think it is a good motion in general, but I don’t want the last section to make it dismissible. OUSU has already condemned the Union for its actions, and the question still remains of what a scandal actually is.

Jamie: OUCA got dis-affiliated from the University over the Nazi scandal, but this can’t be the punishment for the Union as it is not technically affiliated with the University, even though it gets some privileges from the University. This would be a different method of bringing the Union to account.

Iona: There has been no member of the Union named who is responsible for the cocktail incident. Should we be blaming the institution for it?

NP: The name of the cocktail is such a small part of the event that the bar staff are generally left to name it themselves.

Iona: The Union was awful about addressing the event after the fact, but does this mean we can blame the institution.

Rose: There was an initial poster put up, and this was then replaced with another poster.

Beth: The poster was up for two and a half hours before anybody complained about it. This suggests that it’s a cultural problem, and that it could have happened without us hearing about it if there was not a protest happening that evening.

Kate: People might have noticed the poster and not felt able to complain about it, or maybe they thought that it was wrong and did not go to the committee, but this does not mean that they were condoning the action.

Beth: I’m not saying that they were actively agreeing by not complaining, however it is evidence of a broader culture in the Union.

Rose: If you don’t come from the background of colonialism, then the cocktail may not have had the same effect.

NP: The Union Committee does have quite a toxic attitude in it, but to ascribe that to the rest of the Union members, many of who will never have gone to the Union in their entire period at university, is unfair. The Union Bar is quite a big failure, and therefore people probably didn’t read it and that may have been why it took so long for their to be an outcry. More should be done to raise awareness about what happened than condemning the Union members.

Jamie: Whether the culture problem is something about people being too intimidated or not, the issue is broader than this one instance. We should say “here are the problems with the Union”

Megan: I’m not sure about the idea of Union scandals: who is compiling the list; what counts as a scandal? I’m not sure how useful it is. Transparency is an issue, but this might not be the best way to deal with it.

Beth: This is an important point, but there are clearly some things that the Union has done which everyone would agree are not okay. How it’s going to work in practice is an issue, but there are some things that are not subjective, and I agree with Jamie that the University has to do something about the problems in the Union. I’m not trying to condemn each member of the Union: I’m a member of the Union, I use the library and I think it’s great that we have a space in Oxford focused on debate. The Union is trying to bring some progressive elements to the table; they are diversifying their speakers, bringing different debates etc. The Union is doing a lot of great work, but when there are issues to be addressed, they have to be dealt with. Even if people are not comfortable with the situation, it still needs to be addressed.

Kate: I just don’t think that sending a list of scandals around the official OUSU mailing list is appropriate, I think it would be better to make use of the student papers in Oxford.

[There is some debate here about whether or not OUSU control the email list that the Union uses to email its members every week. This is separate from the OSSL that emails everyone. The conclusion seems to be that OUSU **does** control the mailing list because it is using their software.]

NP: I don’t think that anyone in the Union could control how the mailing list works, since only the Bursar of the Union has access to the list. I don’t know what the scandal list would actually look like; the only objective scandal that I can see is the events of last Thursday. The University / OUSU have the capacity to hold the Union to account; as a result of the summer months, OUSU did not allow the Union to send out membership packs to the first years, as they had previously been allowed to do.

Jamie: There is a problem with relying solely on the student press: OUSU and the University give the Union services and therefore should be held to account by them. Also even if you don’t think that something is a scandal, you should still be aware that it has happened.

Noni: If we were to remove the second element of resolves (4) then that might be a good idea, if we want to make it more practically workable. However resolves (4) is what really gives the motion teeth, and I think that there has to be a debate in OUSU about the control of the mailing list, even if the motion falls drastically.

Iona: Who’s going to write the list? Is it going to be all the scandals ever every week?

Beth: I don’t know how it would work in practice yet, but I think that someone in OUSU would compile the list.

NP: The Union is less impacted by OUSU than by its members: what might be better is getting the members of Corpus who are also members of the Union to write in and complain officially to the Union (there is a procedure through which you can do this).

Julian: Lots of what we’re doing in the University in terms of diversity is quite token: we need something more

Megan: Can we reconsider the use of the word scandal? It sounds quite sensationalist.

Jamie: NP just talked about complaints: highlighting scandal is a necessary part of deciding whether or not you want to make a complaint. We talk about it as if there would a list of scandals every week; maybe if the Union had to do this then the scandals would stop

Kate: Practically I don’t think this is feasible. Read the student press, they pick up on the stories.

Mary: What happens to the complaints after they’re made? Couldn’t that be published instead?

Jamie: There’s a complaint committee, and they can decide to remove details in order to protect the anonymity of the complainant. This loses a lot of the substance of the complaint if it is then passed to OUSU (as happened when I was there).

Beth: Be mindful about whether you should vote on this if you are not directly affected by what has been discussed.

**VOTING ON THE AMMENDMENT:**

**For: 4**

**Against: 11**

**AMMENDMENT FAILS.**

Debating on the motion as a whole continues:

Jem: [Amendment] in resolves (4) - change “scandal” to “complaints and offences”

Beth: Taken as friendly.

Kate: [Amendment] add a resolves

*(5) To mandate the Equal Opportunities President to organise a joint complaint from Corpuscles who are also Union Members, which they can sign if they wish.*

Beth: Taken as friendly.

Move to Vote:

Overwhelming majority: motion passes.

The final version of the motion is thus (with the changes made in ***bold italics***):

The JCR notes that:

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***5. To mandate the Equal Opportunities President to organise a joint complaint from Corpuscles who are also Union Members, which they can sign if they wish.***

**Proposed: Bethany Currie**

**Seconded: Rose Shendi**