

BA Society
Open Meeting & First Year Representative Hustings

Minutes

Present: Rebecca Brooks, Olivia Tidswell, Rory Little, José María Arroyo Nieto , Tadhg O’Keeffe, Nathaniel Walker Hale, Josh Brian, Reece Oosterbeek (Treasurer), Isabel Vallina-Garcia (President), Mark Burrell, Hans Yu (Computing), Christoph Kehle (Sports), Annalise Higgins (Secretary), Marcel Weiss (Ents), Pooneh Nazari (Catering), Parwana Fayyaz (Women), Stephen Bayley (Welfare)

I) Hustings

Minutes of hustings circulated separately to members of the BA Society.

II) Open meeting

New entrants: Caroline White-Nockleby, Jacqueline Veraldi, Iyeyinka Omigbodun, Oliver Hailes.

Meeting opened at 8.20pm

With more than 20 members of the BA Society present, the meeting was declared quorate.

A. Approval of previous minutes.

The attendees were asked to approve the previous minutes. Minutes were approved by a show of hands (no dissent).

B. Matters arising from the minutes

No matters arising.

C. Review of standing orders.

It had become necessary to consider a minor modification to the wording of Standing Order 4.2. as the Catering Manager cannot allow alcohol purchased from but not served by the catering department to be served in the BA Rooms (e.g. bottles of wine). The BA Society should update its wording to comply with the requirements imposed by the license holder; the BA Society does not have control over licensing rules.

The Committee proposed changing the words “purchased through” to “served by” in Standing Order 4.2 so that this will now read “Only alcohol served by the Catering Department may be consumed in the BA Rooms”.

Vote taken with a show of hands, all in favour.

D. Questions to the committee.

Question: Relating to the new Master candidates: what does the BA Society intend to find out about and ask about? There are a number of issues students are driving, one of which is the responsible investment. What questions you will raise in terms of key issues that master has

control over, if you meet the candidates?

Answer: The President explained that the BA Society at this stage has very little information other than that a small number of representatives will meet the candidates at receptions. Issues affecting BAs within the College, including access to facilities, accommodation, and bicycle storage were mentioned.

Follow-up question: These are operational issues (for example converting baths to showers). What about BAs opinions on bigger political issues? The Master is a figurehead for the College.

Further follow-up question? What are the implications of you meeting with the master candidates? Do BAs have any influence?

Answer: The BA Committee explained that at this stage they had not been provided with further procedural information.

POI: Last change happened in 2012, so there is not a recent precedent. The Master is a Royal Appointment.

Question: Is there or was there a forum whereby students could funnel interests or things they would want to be raised regarding choosing of the master? You had a list of operational concerns – where did that come from? How might students add to it if they have different (political) concerns.

Answer: The President explained that she had presented a list of concerns that she was aware of because they had been brought to the Committee. If any students have things you would like to see in College – via us via Liaison committee – can write a proposal & present to College. The BA Committee noted that their role is to represent all BAs' views to College; if members of the BA Society want the Society to take any political position a mandate for doing so needs to be sought via a motion submitted in advance to an open meeting so that all interested members of the Society can attend, discuss, and vote.

Question: Might be a good idea in the next few days calling for questions that people would like to put to the candidate? Could filter out operational issues.

Answer: The Committee agreed to sound out opinions within College so that they were adequately prepared if presented with the opportunity to converse with candidates for Master. However, they would have to contact the College and could not guarantee that such an opportunity would be made possible.

Question: Could there be a follow-up? Could people be informed.

Answer: College will make the appointment and announcement. It's not clear what details students can reveal, as above, the BA Committee will seek further information. The Committee doubts that this will be possible because job appointment processes are usually confidential

Question: In my opinion, just the fact that select members of the BA Committee might meet the candidates is relevant. Many other people would like to know that candidates have been selected & BA Society is meeting those candidates. Knowing the process has started, can you share it with us?

Answer: As above, we will try to prepare with knowledge of BA concerns, but the process will likely be confidential.

Question: Sorry to belabour this topic, but if the fellows are involved in the appointment, what's the relationship between fellows and masters? What relationship do we have to the fellows? I want more communication with fellows and more sense of human connection. Don't want to talk to administrators. Some fellows might be a useful intermediary.

Answer: As above, the minutiae of the appointment process for Master are not available to students. Most committees we go to are chaired and run by fellows. Fellows do get involved with proposals sent to various College committees. The Committee cautioned against overstating the BA Society's influence and noted that a reception is not a student-focussed occasion.

Question: I take the point that it's an informal setting. But given the candidate is coming to the College site surely there is an opportunity to request a more formal process. It seems artificial for that not to be formalised.

Answer: As above.

Question: Could we seize and twist it to our ends? It doesn't hurt to ask.

Answer: As above

POI: There already is an anonymous form for submitting information to the BA Society anonymously should people wish to privately share their views. The Committee will also send an email.

Question: Are we just talking about divestment? Maybe we'd have more luck if we didn't present ourselves as angry. This isn't a democracy. Could we exert our soft power? Frame this as opportunity in a particular political moment. Now is the time for Trinity to look like a sexy liberal college that it's already wanted to be. Shift gears to lobbying for change.

Answer: The BA Committee noted again that their role is to represent all BAs' views to College; if members of the BA Society want the Society to take any political position a mandate for doing so needs to be sought via a motion submitted in advance to an open meeting so that all interested members of the Society can attend, discuss, and vote.

Question: Do we need to canvas BAs before taking a political position?

Answer: Yes, as above. But *POI:* The BA Society did pass a motion at an Open Meeting to

become a signatory to an open letter regarding Fossil Fuel investments last year.

POI: Also, a Responsible Investment Society exists in the College and is a good forum with which to engage.

Answer: The President explained the College Liaison committee recently fed back to the BA Society and TCSU that it is aware of student interest in divestment and related responsible investment issues. The College has made it clear that they are willing to listen to student concerns at the meeting organised for that purpose and scheduled for next term. There will be an open forum next term in College. They are still confirming venues and locations. This will be College-wide.

Question: What if we want to disentangle divestment from other issues? I am talking about divestment in substance.

Follow-up statement from non-committee member: The Master has incredible influence. There are many interests and desires & could materially affect a lot of people's lives. I personally support what people have been saying.

Question continues: What would the committee do if members of the BA Society petitioned in support of a particular political stance on divestment?

Answer: The BA Committee doesn't think that individual opinions of the committee members should be relevant. The Committee has undertaken to represent the views of those who it represents. The BA Committee noted again that their role is to represent all BAs' views to College; if members of the BA Society want the Society to take any political position a mandate for doing so needs to be sought via a motion submitted in advance to an open meeting so that all interested members of the Society can attend, discuss, and vote.

Question: Was the 2017 motion about the letter or about the substance?

Answer: Reference was made to the minutes of the 2017 Open Meeting, which are available here:

<http://basociety.net/docs/minutes/2017-11-21.pdf>

The motion submitted to the meeting was: "That the BA Society moves to support the call for the College to divest from its investments in fossil fuel companies (see attached letter)"

After discussion at the meeting the motion that passed was quite explicitly about the letter, and the minutes note that when asked "What is the motion exactly" the proposer replied "The motion is to support the letter, i.e. adding the BA Society as a signatory to the letter", and "The motion to add the BA Society as a signatory to the letter passes".

The current BA Committee has resolved that it understands that this as a mandate to communicate to College that the Society was made a signatory to an open letter (and to continue to do so). By becoming signatory to the letter the Society became supportive of that letter's position as it was articulated in 2017 in the letter. The letter specifically asked "Trinity College to divest from all direct investments from the top 200 fossil fuel companies as soon as possible, and to divest from all indirect investments in the top 200 fossil fuel companies within 5 years." The current committee understands the resolution, recorded in the historic minutes as 'add[ing] the BA Society as a signatory to the letter' to have been a clearly articulated and discrete resolution regarding becoming a signatory to that same letter and its specific content, and it has not been taken as an ongoing mandate that can be transferred to expressing the entire Society's support for related issues. It remains accurate that the BA Society was made signatory to the letter in 2017 in the form that it was put to the Open Meeting in November 2017. A mandate for any further political views expressed on behalf of the entire society continues to require an Open Meeting to be held where all members of the BA Society were invited to an open discussion and given the chance to vote on a motion (submitted at least 48 hours in advance).

POI: The 2017-2018 President was involved in meetings as a follow up to the motion passing last year. The timeline to move investments out could be short – but road-mapping of it is what takes time. The Trinity Responsible Investment Society is involved.

Question: On this topic – from a purely practical perspective – I imagine the people who are making investment decisions think that students will move on – I think it would be more worthwhile to focus on changing the culture. Creating an impression of continuity would be helpful.

POI: There is literally a separate society for that – the Trinity Responsible Investment Society. Measuring representational views is difficult, but that is what the BA Society has to do. TRIS' goal is to create structures that won't let the idea leave.

Question: Are we going to watch Love Actually this December? *Answer:* Yes.

Question: Other events planned for Christmas?

Answer: They are on the term card for the first few weeks of December. Events to be held later than Christmas will be sent out later. 3rd December is the Committee's next meeting where these events will be discussed.

E. Motions submitted to the meeting

No motions were received before the deadline of 48 hours before the meeting.

F. AOB

No further business

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Meeting closes at 9.14pm --