**Arms Trade Action Group minutes – 16th May 2025**

**Attendance:** Syed Saddath, President (SS), Fern Warwick, EPS Student Rep (FW), Max Williams, Sustainability Officer (MW) and James Lindsey, Director of Community and Representation (JL)

**Staff:** Paige Archer, Student Voice Coordinator (Democratic Engagement) (PA)

**Apologies:**

**15:04 - Start**

SS – Welcomed everyone and gave a synopsis of the last meeting to remind the group.

Syed asked Fern for any feedback they gathered?

FW – I haven't heard much back after reaching out, although it is exam season

SS – could you give your views again for JL to hear?

FW – I am personally happy with the policy as it is written at the moment, a few concerns over how we can actually implement it. I suggested promoting education view points instead of asking the university to remove certain companies from their promotions when it comes to job hunting for students.

To avoid any potential defamation issues etc. Aiming to make students more aware of their choices form a sustainability perspective.

SS – Over to Max for anymore student feedback

MW – I spoke to some students studying sustainability-based courses. Generally gained positive feedback from students on the policy and had no major issues, edits or concerns.

SS – We think that this policy should be implemented as its great from a sustainability standpoint. Students are considering sustainable options as UoB and some people wouldn't even know they are being complicit.

We want students to have the relevant information.

JL – Thank you for this info.

I appreciate and understand the lens of sustainability on this policy. However, it was not submitted through this lens or with that intention.

If sustainability is the channel we wish to take here we need to make it explicitly clear which it is not at present.

Questions could be raised as to why we are concentrating on the sustainability of arms trade as opposed to other capitalist issues.

MW – Whilst i appreciate form a global perspective the concept of arms trade is political, i don't see this policy itself as political. This policy doesn't mention politics; it's coming from an ethical perspective in my opinion.

There is no mention of any particular company name or particular event.

SS – We all agreed at the last meeting that we’re focussing on the sustainability with this, not politics.

FW – Within the policy, it does say that we have our own ethical policy, and we do not hold the university to the same account, but we do encourage them to adopt a similar policy.

So, i think that the way we agreed on this is with a similar type of interpretation. That it is encouraging the university to adopt these practices.

JL – I appreciate those point, but we cannot get away from the fact that this is political, as sustainability itself can be a political view on the world.

If you wish to direct this policy to focus on sustainability, this will need to have edits.

SS – James what are you recommending we do?

JL – The policy references investments and other activity. You are asking the university to go and do more than what the Guild is doing. We need to look at the actions and think about what is within our charitable objectives to do.

MW – I have a suggestion of wording.

What if we were to replace the start with, ‘We at the guild have ethical views, we think the university should have ethical views, we think the university can go further...’

JL – Yes, exactly.

Referring to the first bullet point, we need to tie this back to students. The university will say they already do not invest in a company where 10% or more of their profit comes from munitions.

We need to be clearer on do we think ethically students disagree with this.

MW – There has been a lot of student's interest on this so we can add to that.

The university may be legally transparent on these things, but not clear to students

SS and MW discussed the university’s need to be more transparent by making this info more accessible to students via a webpage for e.g.

JL – It’s hard for us to argue that this impacts students as students. We’ve got to be clear on how it impacts students.

SS – The money the university makes from these connections is then spent on the student experience?

JL – my suggestion would be around student consultation on new partnerships with companies who have connections to munitions. Creating some kind of role for students in that process.

SS – Maybe PGRs?

MW – Adding in something like, ensuring the university is being consistent with its policies. I agree with what you're saying James.

JL – This point here - “to halt the promotion of employment opportunities associated with the manufacturing and development of armaments or munitions;”

Is this an issue?

SS – Fern mentioned this last time.

MW – As i mentioned last time, this is similar to our fossil free careers policy, perhaps we should look at that.

JL – The final point is similar to our refugee policy.

Do we need to duplicate ourselves?

SS – I don't know if we should remove these points, but we should reword them.

MW – this is what it says in the fossil free careers policy for context -

*“Inviting oil and gas companies to advertise with the university adds legitimacy to the idea that these companies are an acceptable part of our society and our future.*
 *The University and its Careers Service should ensure that its recruitment activities and those of societies on campus are in line with the University’s publicly stated ethical principles of sustainability, as in its declaration of a climate emergency.*
 *The Guild and University have a responsibility to its students to promote jobs with a future.*
 *Ending this university’s complicity in career pipelines into the oil and gas industry is an effective method of showing solidarity with communities affected by these companies’ operations.”*

The group discussed various wording options, but nothing is set in stone at this time.

SS – I think it’s more about saying the employment opportunities you provide should align with your views as a university.

FW and JL discussed the following addition- Lobby the university to be explicit about the ethical status of an opportunity of what is present to students for them to make informed decisions. We’re not saying don't promote it, were saying be transparent.

SS – The university should have a model for recruitment, which would them scrutinise companies. Like a screening.

JL – Unsure if this is too much detail.

MW – As a thought to combine these thoughts, could the fourth bullet point be replaced with a combination of education, yearly review of what students are interested in. Maybe the Guild or university do annual focus groups?

SS and JL agreed with MW.

SS – Yes, I think consistent review is a good idea.

JL - Yes, this puts students at the heart of it.

The first bullet point is very much pointing to ‘end all investments. Can we amend this to ‘or encourage the university to decrease it’s percentage’. To be more realistic and achievable?

This potentially woud increase the likelihood of action moving. Thoughts?

MW – I personally think it’s better to have a more actionable policy. Agreed.

SS – We want them to cut off arms investment, but we know this isn't easy so gradually moving away is what we’re expecting?

JL – We need be succinct with this if we can.

Perhaps we should get more into the wording in the second review.

FW and MW to meet to draft the wording, whilst SS is on annual leave. Draft to be sent to PA, SS and JL by midday Friday 23rd May. Meet with James for further discussion 29th May.

Approval meeting set for June 2nd/June 4th

JL left the meeting at 15:57

**CLOSE – 16:00**