



SOCIAL POLICY COMMISSION 18/19

Meeting #8
University of Malta, Take Off Events Room
8th January 2019, 17:00

MINUTES

NB: A number of students were present as part of the viewing gallery during today's KPS meeting. Those who participated will be referred to as 'student 1', 'student 2', and 'student 3'.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner):

- 1) Approval of the agenda - *Approved nem con*
- 2) Approval of minutes – *Approved nem con*

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Before moving on to the discussion of the survey, we are going to discuss a note that we would like to issue as KSU this evening. We sent it to you earlier on this afternoon. In light of recent events, we felt that we should give our opinion given that it is a pressing issue. Do you have any amendments from your end or anything you would like to add to it?

Vote on press release – *Approved Nem Con*

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Since the vote has passed, we will be launching it later on today. Moving on to abortion, we have Prof. Liberato Camilleri with us today. He will be delving into the statistical techniques when issuing a survey and the importance of issuing a survey on such a controversial topic. Later on, we will also be going through the questions one by one to see whether you approve of them.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: Would it be possible to discuss the questionnaire first please?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Yes of course.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: Basically, this survey comprises questions that are partly categorical on an ordinal scale. The tests that will be needed for the purpose of this survey include the chi-square test and also the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis test to compare mean-rating scores on the ordinal scale. When one is going to carry out a study, the relevant population is that of around 11,000 students. A sample of 1,000 students would guarantee a 3% margin of error, that of an average of 600 students would guarantee a 4% margin of error, and around 380 students would guarantee a 5% margin of error. Hence, the



bigger the sample size, the bigger the margin of error of the results. Is this survey going to be published online?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Before deciding whether it is going to be put online, we have to take a vote.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: If you are going to conduct it online, then the sample is going to be convenient because anyone who participates in the survey will automatically be included in the study. There are other more popular sampling methods, which include stratified sampling. It is possible, when issuing a survey, that you have more females than males who fill in the survey. Hence, you have a bias between the groups. If we see that the samples are disproportionate, we can still target the number of males by getting some paper-based questionnaires. Another way of collecting the data, which is commonly used, is called stratified sampling, which is where the participants are stratified by, for instance, their gender. However, the survey at hand is sufficient for statistical analysis. First of all, there are no open-ended questions. There is nothing wrong but the fact that all the questions are close-ended makes it easier for statistical analysis.

Student 1 (viewing gallery): There is an ethics committee at the University of Malta through which all survey must go. Is that applicable to this survey too?

Professor Liberato Camilleri: Probably yes.

Student 1 (viewing gallery): Have you considered the ethics committee?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We are still in the preliminary stage so, prior to deciding on this matter, we have to take the students' perspective.

Michael Piccinino (KNZ): The survey that is going to be issued is going to be issued by KSU on behalf the Social Policy Commission. A survey issued by a University student is related to different matters. Here we are working vis-à-vis KSU Standing Orders. The survey that will be issued will be targeting University students, but it does not equate to a survey for a thesis. No University board should dictate what KSU does and does not do.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: The main problem with ethics is when it comes to recovering data. It is possible for anonymity to disappear but, in the case of the survey at hand, people will remain anonymous throughout.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Given that there are many new faces today, we would like to point out that this is a student-based meeting. Hence, if you are not students you have no vote and you cannot speak. If you are a student but you do not form part of an organisation, then you are not entitled to a vote but you can voice your opinion.



Professor Liberato Camilleri: The first question is related to the course where the participant is studying in. There is the science cluster, the civil science cluster, the humanities, and of course another cluster, which is the social science cluster. This question is important when it comes to conducting such a survey. Gender is also essential when carrying out such a survey. Age, although important, is not as important as the other variants.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): In fact, with regards to age, 95% of University students fall under the age bracket of 18-23 years of age.

Student 1 (viewing gallery): The third question is the leading question, but it is being asked badly.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: I am here as a statistician and I am simply justifying whether or not they can be disseminated for statistical purposes. The questions can be changed, added and reduced.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: The fifth question is a Likert scale question where the participant is to select their level of agreement as to whether or not abortion should be legal in the circumstances laid down in the question.

Student 1 (viewing gallery): Science is important. You are telling us about science in surveys. The very question in the survey alters your result as we all know. Hence, we must be very careful when it comes to our scientific approach.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: Yes of course but then these questions can be approached and reviewed between all the members present today to make them more approachable. For example, one can add more options. Here there are seven different items, but one can add more as it is not a problem to do so statistically. With regards to the last question, I can use the chi-square test to see the associations between the different options on the one hand and whether or not it should be legalised.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): If you have any more queries with regards to the statistical aspect of this survey, you can ask Professor Liberato Camilleri.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: As it stands, there will be no issues when carrying out the statistical analysis as the questions are all close-ended. If you wish to add open-ended questions, feel free to do so. However, they are harder to analyse.

Student 1 (viewing gallery): My opinion is that we must be very careful when it comes to conducting this survey. Science justified the holocaust. We cannot take people down the wrong path. This is a very important meeting. It is important to see what the intention of students is and not what they want. Democracy can be the worst form of government when everything becomes evil because everyone causes damage to each other. In that case, some people have to stand up and say that we are moving in the wrong direction. There is no reason why Malta



should move in the wrong direction like the rest of the world. We should ask a question about love and not death.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We are going to go through the questions later on in the meeting but the whole scope of this KPS meeting is to look at the students' perspective. In no way are we just targeting the student organisations, but we are taking a holistic approach and targeting all University students.

Student 1 (viewing gallery): Yes of course. What you want for students is good life and good love.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: Which aspects would you want to include in the survey?

Student 1 (viewing gallery): I think it is about love. The questions should be what you feel about love, what you feel about children being born, and what you have experienced in love.

Benjamin Charles Cassar (JEF Malta): How will you ensure that only students will be answering the questions in the survey?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): The plan is to email it via registrar and send it to all University students. There is the function to make it specific to University students.

Professor Liberato Camilleri: The questionnaire will be devised online, then an email will be sent to the registrar. The questionnaire link will be sent to all University students. Then, only University students will be able to access that link.

Michael Piccinino (KNZ): To answer the questions, you have to log in to your account. Unless you log in to your University account, you will not be able to answer the questions in the survey. My question is more focused on what happens after the survey rather than on the survey *per se*. Will the survey results be the position of the Social Policy commission or will there be another discussion?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): After today's KPS meeting, we will be meeting up again to discuss the results of the survey. Only then can we reach a decision as a Social Policy Commission. This was a vote taken in the last KPS meeting. The vote was taken on issuing a survey, with the final stand adopted by the Social Policy Commission being based on the survey results.

Edward Attard Selvagi (S-Cubed): Do we know which data sets will be compared at this point?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): As of yet, we have not yet confirmed which data sets will be compared because it depends on the statistical significance.



Student 1 (viewing gallery): Who decided to issue this survey?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): A KPS meeting on abortion was held in December and the Social Policy Commission, which comprises student organisations present for the meeting, voted for the issuing of a survey. They felt that the students' perspective on the matter should be based on a survey issued to all University students rather than solely those who are present for the KPS meeting. We will also be holding a public consultation session so that students can make an informed decision when the survey is issued.

Carla Galea (KSU President): This was decided by the students. Hence, if the students decided that such a topic must be tackled in such a way, then there should not be any further discussion about this matter.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Do you have any more questions?

Student 2 (Viewing Gallery): Do the University Bible Group (UBG) have a say in this matter?

Christian Aquilina (KPS Coordinator): As per the Standing Orders, given to the fact that UBG did not attend 3 consecutive KPS meetings, they now lost their right to vote in KPS meetings.

Geoff Cuschieri (University Bible Group): We didn't receive any emails.

Christian Aquilina (KPS Coordinator): UBG are included in the KPS mailing list and have received previous emails. We also contacted executive board members via Facebook.

Geoff Cuschieri (University Bible Group): So, we can't vote?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Unfortunately, you can only give your view on the matter, but you have lost your right to vote in the KPS meeting.

Karl Baldacchino (MIRSA): Would it be possible to add open-ended questions such as the reason why they have chosen particular options?

Professor Liberato Camilleri: They are much harder to analyse. However, if the audience would prefer to include an open-ended question, then one can possibly add it.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We will now be delving into the questions one by one.

Question 1

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): In the first question, we listed all the faculties at the University of Malta together with a number of Institutes.



Michael Piccinino (KNZ): I think that Junior College should also be included as one of the options for the first question as KSU represents University students and Junior College students.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Yes, we can add it as one of the options.

Alexander Sammut (Pulse): In fact, KSJC are present here today.

Vote on including Junior College students collectively – Approved Nem Con

Question 2

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): With regards to gender, 'other' is according to the ethics guidelines therefore it has to be there.

Student 1 (Viewing Gallery): I think it should be male, female, and not applicable.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): It has to be according to the University Ethics Guidelines. We included gender because a male's perspective can differ from a female's perspective.

Vote on question remaining as is – Approved Nem Con

Question 3

Tano Bugelli (UESA): Would it be possible to have a scroll-down menu for age?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): I do not think you can add the option of a number. It only allows a response validation.

Benjamin Charles Cassar (JEF Malta): I think there is a way to add a birth date.

Student 2 (Viewing Gallery): Including one's full date of birth can make a person easily identifiable.

Benjamin Charles Cassar (JEF Malta): Will we be using the University email?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): If we are going to do it University-based, we will be making use of the University email.

Michael Piccinino (KNZ): The system uses your email to log in but from thereon forth your answers will be anonymous.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): For statistical purposes, requesting the age of the participant rather than the day, month and year, is much more feasible.



Vote on whether to request age or day/month/year – Approved Nem Con to request age

Question 4

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): The fourth question is the starter to the survey as it is asking a fundamental question; should abortion be legalised. It is the question that many people ask. Feel free to object to the inclusion of this question or to suggest any amendments.

Student 1 (Viewing Gallery): I would like to object to the inclusion of this question. The first question should be whether you believe in love.

Andre Camilleri (MHSA): But like that you are assuming that love has to do with abortion.

Student 1 (Viewing Gallery): Where there is love between young people, the chance of abortion as a choice reduces impressionably.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Let's not deviate from the scope of this meeting because the whole point of this survey is whether it should be legalised or not.

Kayleigh Cassar (Third Eye): The whole point of this survey is to decide whether abortion should be legalised or not.

Student 2 (Viewing Gallery): I think that, if we do not include such a question, then we would be assuming that everyone knows what abortion is. The first question is very misleading, and I do not personally think that it is impartial. It is a very delicate subject. Since abortion in Malta is illegal, we need to be careful what to say.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): On that point, we held a consultation session and we also organised a KPS meeting on abortion. Hence, we have done our best to educate students on this subject. What we can suggest is including a description delving into the definition of abortion.

Student 2 (Viewing Gallery): I think we should include a question prior to this one asking whether the participant is fully aware of what abortion is. I think it is a legitimate question.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): What I forgot to mention is that, before issuing the survey, we will be holding a public consultation session for all the students to get a full view of what abortion is. A general meeting not only for student organisations but for all University students. What we can do is take a vote on attaching the minutes, together with the survey, to the email that will be sent to all University students.

Andre Camilleri (MHSA): I think that the question should be altered slightly due to continuity.



Vote on change to yes / no – Approved Nem Con

Karl Baldacchino (MIRSA): If the motivation of the study is to see the students' voice on the subject, it is a complex subject. If the scope of this survey is going to be to represent the students' voice, I think that we should include open-ended questions.

Michael Piccinino (KNZ): I disagree because, if we are going to conduct this survey with open-ended questions, then the end result that is going to arise therefrom is going to be very problematic as it will give too much room for interpretation to attack people based on their reasons.

Student 3 (Viewing Gallery): I think that, for any survey, you must define the main word behind the scope of the survey. Even on this subject, many do not understand what abortion really means. From surveys I have done, people take for granted what others may have heard. I think that it would be more fairly carried out.

Warren Farrugia (ALLT): In the last KPS meeting, something was mentioned relating to decriminalisation. I do not know what the current stance is in Malta. Is abortion decriminalised?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): No

Warren Farrugia (ALLT): Should it be included as part of the question?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We could either insert a description regarding what is abortion and maybe go into detail with respect to decriminalisation, or include the amendment proposed by Andre Camilleri, or else leave everything as is.

Michael Piccinino (KNZ): If we are going to put questions in the survey to ask whether a person is fully aware of abortion, then we would be losing the whole scope behind the survey.

Benjamin Charles Cassar (JEF Malta): I agree.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Do you agree that the question of whether you are fully aware of what abortion is should not be included in the survey and that a description of what abortion is should be included in the survey?

Liam Axisa (ELSA Malta): I agree that the description should be included, but it depends on the source.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): In the case of those who attended the last KPS meeting, we came to a consensus that we are going to hold a public consultation session so that students can have an informed intake on the subject prior to casting their vote in the survey. What will be mentioned in the description will only be scientifically proven and will not include an opinion from our end.



Edward Attard Selvagi (S-Cubed): So the public consultation session will be a reiteration of the last consultation session held by KSU?

Student 1 (Viewing Gallery): This University is a good University. So, fulfilment is not possible unless communication leads to communion. The world needs the wisdom of direction.

Benjamin Charles Cassar (JEF Malta): With all due respect, what does this have to do with this discussion?

Student 1 (Viewing Gallery): You are the people of the world. Where do you want to take the worlds?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We need to proceed to a final vote.

Student 2 (Viewing Gallery): Are you aware of the different types of abortions?

Andre Camilleri (MHSA): The definition of abortion is not that simple because it is very subjective.

Student 2 (Viewing Gallery): There are different types of abortion. I think we should still include whether the participant is aware of the different alternatives. Many believe that there is only one way and that is it. People should know that there are different alternatives.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We will be delving into this in the public consultation session.

Final Votes on Survey

No description on abortion or further clarifications on the matter in the questionnaire

Approved:

- Votes against – 3
- Abstentions – 6
- Votes in favour – 13

Should there be your inclusion of the question “Do you believe that abortion should be legal in certain cases?” (yes / no / in certain cases) or should it be kept the same

Approved Nem Con for the question to be kept the same



Live streaming of the public consultation session

Approved Nem Con

Changes to question 5:

- Change to “When a mother’s life is endangered” – Approved Nem Con
- Change to “Life threatening illness on the child” – Approved Nem Con
- Keep “Rape” – Approved Nem Con
- Change to “Any form of disability of the child” – Approved Nem Con

KNZ left

MPSA left

- Keep “Financial instability” – Approved Nem Con
- Keep “Any form of addiction” – Approved Nem Con
- Keep “Not being ready for parenthood” – Approved Nem Con

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Should we add anything else?

Liam Axisa (ELSA Malta): I think we should add “not wanting a child”.

Adding ‘teenage pregnancy’ to the options found under question 5

Approved Nem Con

Adding ‘not wanting the child regardless of the above’ to the options found under question 5

Approved Nem Con

Final Question

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Would you like to suggest any amendments?

Edward Attard Selvagi (S-Cubed): Would it be possible to add more brackets?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): It is based on science, so I don’t think that it is scientifically possible to do so.

Liam Axisa (ELSA Malta): In the first nine weeks of pregnancy, one may have a non-intrusive abortion. However, after you can have an invasive abortion. Both of these fall under the first three months of pregnancy.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Just to clarify, the first option will be divided in two: 1) non-intrusive and 2) intrusive.



Liam Axisa (ELSA Malta): Yes.

Approved Nem Con

Vote on inclusion of note

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Would it be possible to add a small note as to what intrusive and non-intrusive refer to?

Approved Nem Con

Vote on inclusion of question about love

Rejected:

Votes Against – 21
Abstentions – 1
Votes in Favour – 0

Vote on inclusion of question: "Do you think that there could be possible health damages to the woman after an abortion?"

Rejected:

Votes Against – 12
Abstentions – 7
Votes in Favour – 3

Vote on inclusion of question: "Should women have a choice whether to do an abortion?"

Rejected:

Votes Against – 9
Abstentions – 10
Votes in Favour – 3

Vote on method of distribution

Approved Nem Con

Benjamin Charles Cassar (JEF Malta): Will a GDPR statement be included?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We will look into it. We would like to point out that the results will be analysed with SPSS.

Meeting adjourned – 19:08