# Minutes 19 September 2024

**Present:** Daniel Bedford (DB) (joined meeting at 1pm); Philip Bremner (PB); Anna Bryson (AB); Marie Burton (MB); Beverley Clough (BC); Richard Craven (RC); Simon Flacks (SF); Marie Fox (MF); John Harrington (JH);Matthew Howard (MHo) (left meeting at 3pm); Arwen Joyce (AJ); Smita Kheria (SK); Kay Lalor (KL); Andra Le Roux-Kemp (ARK); Emma Milne (EM); Rebecca Moosavian (RM); Raza Saeed (RS); Helen Salford (HS); Diksha Sanyal (DS); Mini Saxena (MSa); Marie Selwood (MSe); Mitchell Travis (MT)

# 1. Apologies

Alex Green, Elisabeth Griffiths, Marie Hutton, Emma Jones, Kirsten McConnachie, Colin Moore, Alex Powell

# 2. Approval of Minutes and outstanding Action Points

## 2.1. Meeting 16 May 2024

Board approved the minutes.

## 2.2. Action points from previous meetings

Board reviewed the action points.

# 3. Invited speaker: Penny Carey

The Board heard from Penny Carey (PC) (Head of the Committee of Heads of University Law Schools). PC provided budgetary insight on the challenges faced due to university finances, and the impact on funding for societies and conferences.

PC proposed setting up a Charter for a Coalition of Law Schools, offering the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) as an example for how this could be done.

RM asked how the Chartered Association of Business Schools sat with the Business learned society. PC confirmed that they sit under the CABS but appear to still be independent.

EM asked if an “Association of Law Schools” would mean that once a Law School had paid the corporate membership, the academics in that Law School would be members of all the learned societies without paying further membership. CP confirmed and advised funds would be allocated to each learned society, as agreed by the Association.

RM commented such an arrangement could result in the SLSA losing independence of funding.

EM asked if institutional memberships are easier to fund, compared to individual memberships. PC confirmed that right now yes, but institutional memberships are likely to be the next form of funding to be cut.

SK asked about conflicts of interest and the potential challenges that a Chartered Association might bring and possibly of the SLSA losing its influence and independence. PC confirmed that the dominance of the Deans of Law School would potentially be a challenge; as would ensuring the academics are represented.

PC left the meeting.

# 4. HEI Crisis

## 4.1. Institutional funding of conference

The Board discussed the idea PC proposed.

SK suggested we might want to consider our timelines for the conference in relation to university annual budget cycles.

PB suggested we request a SLSA representative sits on CHULS.

EM raised question of institutional membership and whether a group should come together to look at reinstating this. SK agreed and suggested adding bulk offers for conference memberships.

RM and RC supported the notion of coalition, but that it needs to be carefully considered to ensure the SLSA does not lose its independence.

BC highlighted that we should consider the benefit of SLSA membership and value beyond attending the conference. SK supported and suggested a group to come together to review what membership offers and what more we could offer as an “enriched package”.

**Action**: JH to keep discussing options/ideas with PC. See about possibility of SLSA member sitting on CHULS.

**Action**: Group to pull together firm suggestions of ways forward for January Board BC, MT, SK, PB, JH, reach out to CM.

# 5. Core business

## 5.1. Website, Webmaster and CRM

JH summarised the work so far and the two options that have been identified by the working group. Outlined that as many members as wish should come to the demos, and following that the Board will be asked to approve

Board asked to approve the working group to go ahead with the demos and how they should progress once a platform is identified.

SK noted happy for the demos to go ahead, but wanted the Board to review two proposals in full detail and approve.

Board agreed that ASAP the demos should go ahead and then full and detailed proposal to come to an extraordinary Board meeting to approve.

**Action**: CM to organise the demos with Lewis and send dates and joining instructions to the Board.

**Action**: Once demo completed, working group to construct full, detailed brief of each company’s offer.

**Action**: EM to organise extraordinary Board to decide which company to approve, emphasizing need for quoracy.

## 5.2. Conference Host Requests Relating to Retention of Surpluses

MH talked through key issues outlined in the paper.

DB highlighted that additional costs not included in the expression of interests for a conference should be seen as a potential outcome and that an institution covering that should not be considered to be retaining part of the surplus, but that the surplus (and thus donation to the SLSA) will be lower due to unforeseen costs.

JH agreed, but noted that the sum sought by Ulster was distinct from this, as it had not been determined with reference to specific costs.

SK noted that the request from Ulster for retention of the surplus was about more than just the cost, but also recognition of success of the conference for the Law School and thus the School being able to share some of the financial success, while promoting socio-legal studies.

PB noted that the amount of surplus kept relates to the cost that the University is prepared to absorb if the conference is less of a success.

MF noted that a policy might be helpful as Schools’ expressions of interest are submitted with limited information of the process of organising the conference. Some costs are fixed and cannot be absorbed.

SK noted the she can understand the reasons why we do not want a formal agreement with conference organisers (as outlined by MH) but that we should have an internal policy in terms of what we expect of an organiser and how we will respond to changing circumstances related to the conference.

**Action**: MH to reconvene group (SK, KL, MHu) to rework the paper to consider a policy and text for expression of interest. Draft EOI by 21 October 2024. Draft policy for discussion at the January Board.

## 5.3. Annual conference

JH advised the Board we need to start the process of conference host expressions of interest for the 2027 and 2028 conferences.

**Action**: JH to convene committee to secure hosts for the 2027 and 2028 SLSA conferences.

## 5.3.1. Portsmouth

Nothing further to add to the written report.

## 5.3.2. Liverpool

**Budget**

MF outlined that the University of Liverpool are concerned that not increasing the registration rates will result in a loss and therefore proposed all rates increased by 10%.

JH updated the Board that the SLSA had proposed that the early-bird rate should stay at the 2024 rate, alongside a 10% increase for all other rates in light of inflation. The SLSA and Liverpool conference team would then publicise that the SLSA are not raising the member’s early bird rate, in light of HEI funding crisis.

EM noted that if Law Schools are prepared to pay £295 for conference attendance, then a 10% rise is unlikely to be a great concern.

RS, AB and SK noted that there is inflation impact on travel and accommodation and so supported fixing the rate at 2024 level.

PB noted that the balancing of the budget depends on the likelihood of the sponsorship targets being met. If they are then we can keep the early-bird rates at 2024 levels, but if not then there is a significant deficit.

DB confirmed that some publishers were unhappy about the £750 rate for Portsmouth and therefore he felt that the figures from Liverpool for sponsorship were inflated and unlikely to be achieved.

HS noted that they had contacts with a local law firm they are hoping will support from and had already received £2,000.

MF outlined that the conference team also hope to receive journal financial support.

JH proposed:

* Keep SLSA Full member early bird rate the same as 2024.
* Keep SLSA ECR membership early bird the same as 2024
* Other two early bird rates rise by 5%
* All other rates increase by 10%
* The SLSA will absorb the impact on the surplus if keeping the rates the same reduces the surplus.

Board agreed.

JH raised the cost of the dinner, specifically the cost of the AV.

MF confirmed they had gone back to the venue to reduce the AV cost by lowering the tech and lighting provided. Also had reduced to one plenary. Outlined the plans for the plenary.

SK suggested that the AV should only be approved if the sponsorship is available and not part of upfront cost: spending at this time of tighter budgets needs to focus on the essentials and not the extras. Extras include recording the plenary.

JH asked if the conference team had built in contingency. MF and HS confirmed it was built in. PB advised that it is included in the projected surplus, with a higher surplus if the contingency not required.

JH asked for a revised budget with highlighting the points raised.

**Action**: MF and HS to submit revised budget to JH, SK and PB.

**Deadlines**

MF requested Board approve call for papers move to 13th December.

SK noted that stream convenors have not been asked to update their description before the call goes out and this needs to happen before the CfP is sent. DB noted that the stream convenor completed this task last year.

**Action**: BC to contact KM to follow up on requesting stream convenors update the stream descriptions.

EM asked if the deadline could be pushed back to middle of W/C 16 December to allow members headspace from teaching to write their abstracts.

DB confirmed the admin can set the allocation of papers to stream convenors prior to the CfP closing of the date, so this admin work does not need to impact the deadline.

SK and PB queried if the pre-Winter Break deadline was required.

DB noted that the pre-Winter Break deadline allowed for more time to work out the programme.

Board agreed a pre-Winter Break deadline, but moved to the 18th December.

**Posters**

MF asked if the SLSA would approve greater space for posters, including online space, impact would be that people who are unable to attend could still participate.

EM queried if that would undermine the model of funding if people could participate without paying to attend.

HS confirmed there would be a fee to submit a poster but not attend.

DB noted that Portsmouth saw withdrawal of several posters after papers were accepted as delegates did not want to present a poster instead of/as well as a paper.

BC noted that a poster could be a mechanism to support engagement after the removal of hybrid, and would favour no cost to submit.

JH questioned if there would be a cost to the conference team to provide online or in person poster displays beyond the usual offering.

MF noted no operation costs and that the charge would be to increase the surplus.

SK raised concern about who submission would be open to if there was no cost to delegates – only members, not how we have run poster sessions before. Also noted there would be an operation cost of some form attached.

HS noted that there could be an online session where people talk about their poster, in which case a cost would be appropriate.

Board agreed the Liverpool team could take the idea forward with a cost.

Secretary note: Liverpool team need to involve PGRs in discussions about the posters, as this has been a key PGR process in the past.

**Action**: HS and MF to return full proposal for posters to JH, SK, BC, MSa and DS.

**Action**: HS and MF to liaise with PGR reps about the posters and changes to the process and cost to delegates. Proposed format, especially charging, to be shared with JH and SK for view before being launched.

## 5.4. SLSA Archive

RS had developed the proposal, with advice from MSe and JH. JH summarized.

AB asked about the IALS resourcing to understand the gap we need to fill; whether we need to deposit yearly or perhaps 5-yearly; we need a policy, particularly on digital depositing due to the vulnerability of the digital data and also a policy on privacy; queried if the model for employment of an archivist the best approach.

PB noted that the costs for the archivist seemed reasonable. The SLSA can afford up to £3,500.

RS outlined the issues and difficulties the SLSA face with their archiving right now.

Board approved progression of the archive work, subject to adoption of changes proposed by AB.

**Action**: RS to progress the archive strategy, once implemented changes proposed by AB.

## 5.5. EDI Members’ Survey

AW advised the EDI survey is ready to launch. The survey will be emailed to membership on 16th October and then in e-bulletin shortly after, will also be shared on social media. Liaising with EG about social medial campaign.

**Action**: MSe to liaise with AJ to publicise the EDI survey.

# 6. Officer Reports

## 6.1. Chair

JH requested four people to review the policies as part of work for the CIO (need to be reviewed regularly – has been six years since drafted and approved). The group will review the policies, recommend any changes and report back to Board for approval at the January meeting.

**Action**: JH, RM, RC, AB and MSa to review policies and return to January Board with suggested amendments. Include CM in privacy policy due to his past idea re how to make this policy easier to operate.

## 6.2. Vice-Chair

Nothing further to add to the written report.

## 6.3. Treasurer

PB reported that shortly the SLSA will receive the surplus from Portsmouth. The income might take us above our financial protection limit for a single account, but this will not last long due to expenses.

JH asked about the opening of the high interest account. PB confirmed complete for Lloyds, but still need to confirm signatures before can open the Co-op account.

## 6.4. Membership and Data Protection Officer

CM sent apologies. Report received.

## 6.5. Recruitment

Nothing further to add to the written report.

## 6.6. EDI Committee

Nothing further to add to the written report.

JH thanked the committee for launching the survey and continuing the mentoring scheme.

DS to join EDI committee.

**Action**: AJ/BC to add DS to EDI mail list.

**Action**: MSe to update the website and EM to update SLSA internal documentations.

## 6.7. Precarity Representative

AJ continuing to monitor the use of the precarity box on grants forms.

AJ requested approval of definition of precariously employed. No precarity box on the Internationalisation grant form.

Board approved language and inclusion on Internationalisation grant.

**Action**: MSe to check forms and republish with the definition, including Internationalisation grant form.

## 6.8. Newsletter and Web Editor

Nothing further to add to the written report.

## 6.9. PGR Representative

Nothing further to add to the written report.

## 6.10. International Liaison

SK provided brief update to the Board on the socio-legal event organised with USAID and colleagues in the Ukraine, and their subsequent work to set up a socio-legal group within the umbrella of Ukraine’s sociological organisation.

**Action**: SK to send brief report MSe for newsletter.

DS to join International Liaison Committee.

**Action**: MSe to update the website and EM to update SLSA internal documentations.

## 6.11. Social Media

EG sent apologies. Report received.

MSa reported that LinkedIn seems a good option. Board agreed that a LinkedIn account should be set up.

MT advised Bluesky has 10m members, so is somewhere we should be posting.

EM, BC & SK agreed with LinkedIn as a platform for us.

**Action**: EG to set up LinkedIn account and start posting.

**Action**: EG to continue posting on X/Twitter and on Bluesky.

## 6.12. Blog Editor

Nothing further to add to the written report.

## 6.13. YouTube Channel

ARK reported handover on 20 September with EM and will then start to work on developing future videos.

## 6.14. Publishers’ Liaison

Nothing further to add to the written report.

## 6.14.1. Publishers Engagement with the SLSA Guidance

Rolled over to next meeting.

## 6.15. Open Access

Nothing further to add to the written report.

## 6.16. Stream Secretary

KM sent apologies. Report received.

## 6.17. Administrator

Nothing further to add to the written report.

# 7. Conferences

## 7.1. Postgraduate Conference

BC updated the Board that MMU have received a favourable rate for hotel rooms meaning they are now under budget. There is a contingency written into the budget.

BC asked about deposit management. PB confirmed that this is best managed by the SLSA via PayPal.

Board happy to approve the proposal.

**Action**: BC and MMU team to progress plans, liaising with DS and MSa.

EM asked if those attending should be members. SK noted that the purpose of the PG conference is to encourage membership as the event is targeted at primarily first year PhDs, and to some extent second years, many of whom won’t already be our members and expressed concern about excluding them, and previous PG conferences have not had such a requirement, and the places for them fill up very quickly.

It was agreed that any requirement of membership needs to be communicated in that light, with note that first year of membership for PGRs is free.

**Action**: BC to draft call, including the need to be a member (free first year). Share with JH and SK prior to release.

## 7.2. One Day Conferences

JH reminded the Board that the support of the SLSA is available for one-day conferences. One way to do this is to engage with other societies. Normally this includes moral, rather than financial support.

# 8. Prizes and Competitions

## 8.1. Book prizes

Nothing to report. Prize is open for entries.

## 8.2. Article prizes

Nothing to report. Prize is open for entries.

## 8.3. Grants

The Board confirmed the membership of the Grants Committee. Committee members are: Rebecca Moosavian (chair); Philip Bremner; Simon Flacks; Alex Green; Elisabeth Griffiths; Matt Howard; Marie Hutton; Colin Moore; Alex Powell; Richard Craven.

**Action**: MSe to update the website and EM to update SLSA internal documentations.

RM raised a concern about awardees changing the nature of work completed with their grants. Asked the Board to consider if we need a clause in the guidance related to this.

SK recommended that we review the nature of change queries that we approve/reject. Board do not need to approve changes, can be processed by the committee in consultation with JH and SK.

AB agreed a clause might be a good idea, particularly a note around potential ethical consideration.

Board agreed that language from the committee would be helpful so that a decision could be made at the January meeting.

**Action**: RM and Grant Committee to draft language for a clause in the grants guidance about changes to fund usage. Report back to the Board for discussion (and approval).

## 8.4. Seminars

Nothing to report. Competition open.

## 8.5. Impact Fund Awards

MT requested increase in the overall fund.

PB advised against an increase and that funds could be topped up on an ad hoc basis depending on available funds. Will consider the overall budgets yearly.

MT requesting a further member to join the Impact Committee.

EM to join impact committee.

**Action**: MSe to update the website and EM to update SLSA internal documentations.

## 8.6. Contributions to the socio-legal community

JH advised details and a poll would be sent via email to determine the person awarded.

**Action**: JH and EM to organise poll for award.

# 9. January Board Meeting – Date and Format

JH asked the Board if we should move the September meeting to online and only meet in person in May, asking the Board to commit to being in person in May.

RM noted that there are positives to both, but noted the costs could be spent on other SLSA activities.

Board approved September and January meeting online, May in person.

**Action**: EM to send poll to determine date for January meeting (and if possible the May meeting) to Board and set dates.

# 10. Any Other Business

SK proposed we send information about SLSA funding opportunities to Law Schools (those who support us and those who currently do not) to advertise what membership of the SLSA provides.

**Action**: MSe and JH to pull together email to be sent with Newsletter.

**Action**: MSa to share list of contacts they hold with MSe.