

Faculty Representatives Termly Report

2017-18

Your Name: Angus O'Brien

Your Faculty & Role: Faculty Representative for Arts and Humanities (Undergrad)

Faculty Priorities:

Some of the main priorities for students in the Arts and Humanities faculty are ones that affect students across the university in its entirety: space, module selection deadlines and, well, "student satisfaction" in general. Space, as everyone at UCL except probably Michael Arthur knows, is a major concern, has been for many years now and is still not being addressed seriously by management. The module selection deadline has become an issue only this year, as UCL changed the deadline because they aren't capable (unlike every other university in the country) of publishing the exam timetable on time - meaning that students are unable now to change their module selections in second term, obviously a problem if a student has, say, a timetable clash.

A further priority which, where the first two mostly came to my attention through feedback from students in the faculty, I have given a lot of attention to due to the fact that there is very little understanding or awareness of the issue, is that of UCL East. This, to a certain degree, won't directly affect most students at UCL currently and, as such, there has been very little oversight or student input into the university's plans for this multi-hundred-million-pound project. As such, I've attempted to *peel back the layers of marketing bs* facing any attempts to find out anything about UCL's plans for the campus in Stratford, making sure to ask of the plans in all the committees on which I sit and requesting reports from those tasked to assist in planning the project. This, however, is certainly not enough and I will take it as a particular priority to try to get the union to give more attention on - and demand more from - UCL East.

Meetings in the Faculty:

In the first term (and as I will be for the remainder of the year), I've attended meetings of (within faculty) the Faculty Teaching Committee and the Faculty Library Committee alongside (UCL-wide) the Student Experience Committee and the Academic Board. This means there have been far too many meetings to report back on individually. However, in each instance I have purposefully aimed not simply to be content with having a seat at the table, but to utilise the "privilege" afforded by virtue of *not being a member of staff* on these committees to make sure the conclusions and action agreed upon actively take into account the concerns of students.

Further, for this term, one key plan I will be working on with members of faculty staff will be to organise a forum for students and student representatives within Arts and Humanities to meet together for a discussion/Q&A session. This, I believe, will constitute a positive step forward for accountability within the faculty, as well as providing an avenue through which students can actually get a sense of and directly influence the inner machinations of the faculty – which are often difficult to penetrate, even for student representatives.

Meetings with the Union:

One of the main issues the Union seems to be working on is regarding the “hidden” costs of study at UCL. This is an issue I’ve found to have come up a few times within Arts and Humanities, so is certainly something I will be looking to assist with further and I hope will be given the resources and attention required to ensure its success.

Union engagement within the faculty remains a concern, however. The reality, put simply, is that I – and this likely goes for all other academic representatives – as only one person cannot do the work the union has neglected to do over the years. The fundamental depoliticisation of the relationship between the union and the student – its membership! – has meant that many students in the faculty see very little use in the union. On a practical level, this makes it much more difficult for representatives to actually do the work of representing – when students either don’t know of your existence or don’t see the structures within which you operate as even vaguely acting on their side, it’s much harder to reach out to these students and make sure their voice and their concerns are heard. There is much more the union can be doing to repoliticise its relationship with the students – and in doing so repoliticise its relationship with the university and start effecting actual, material change for those who today tend to see such change as an impossibility.

Other comments:

If you happen to be reading this and want to ask any questions or just get in touch, my email is angus.o'brien.14@ucl.ac.uk