

# Faculty Representatives Termly Report

2017-18 (Termly Report 2)

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**Your Name:** Iida Kayhko

**Your Faculty & Role:** Social and Historical Sciences Postgraduate Taught Rep

## Faculty Priorities:

It is clear that students, taught Masters students in particular, feel overlooked in some College and Faculty decision-making. In particular, the changes to module selection deadlines were met with significant animosity by many Masters students. Some students communicated to me at the time that they felt ignored by the university; undergraduate and research students spend longer at the university, and are thus given more personal guidance during their time here. Masters students, as one student put it, are “cash cows” for the university. This is obviously not a situation unique to UCL but reflects more broadly the conditions faced by PG students in the UK. This has been mitigated somewhat by the great work that a lot of course and lead departmental reps have been putting in, but remains an issue for many people. It is important that students have the support of their reps and the staff in their department in seeking help in any issues they face.

In the SHS faculty, the most pressing student concerns are related to space (for classes, independent study and leisure) and the provision of facilities such as lockers. Crowded classrooms and lecture theatres, inaccessible buildings to those with restricted mobility, lack of storage space during the day and sometimes the lack of chairs or desks are problems that keep coming up and that affect all students. UCL is attempting to address these issues, and schemes such as pop-up libraries and new lockers are helpful — but it has to be noted that this remains the most consistent and widely felt complaint, and cited by many students as the most negative aspect of studying at UCL. I’ve brought up these issues consistently in Faculty meetings, and I’m happy to report that lockers for student use will be installed in all departments that can accommodate them, and that some departments are seeking to acquire more chairs with fold-down desks.

Further, issues relating to visa advice for international students have been brought to my attention on a few occasions this year. Students have claimed that UCL visa advice services are not helpful and that the advice they receive sometimes amounts to staff reading out Home Office online guidance instead of tailored advice. This has caused significant distress to some students, who have received repeated automated emails about visa compliance (described by one

student as “hostile”) even after replying to these emails and stating that they were in the process of renewing their visa. I’ve taken these complaints further in the Union, although it is so far unclear how the university is seeking to change the inadequate and threatening service provided to students.

Finally, the UCU strike affected almost all students at UCL earlier this year. I was disappointed in the way in which the university and many staff members communicated (or failed to communicate) strike-related information to students and I was happy to be able to communicate more in-depth information to Lead Reps ahead of the strike to make sure students were kept informed.

### **Meetings in the Faculty:**

This term, I have attended Faculty Teaching Committees and Library Committees. I have brought up the fact that some departments in the Faculty were sending automated emails to students stating they would have to enter into Learning Agreements over classes missed during the UCU strike. This was not in line with faculty policy, and the Chair sent an email to departments reminding them of this — making sure that students who did not wish to cross picket lines weren’t punished for this display of solidarity.

Further, I’ve made sure library closure details were communicated more clearly to students, and that locker availability was improved.

### **Meetings with the Union:**

I’ve been disappointed with the fact that Union Council meeting proceedings aren’t effectively communicated to the wider student body despite their importance to the university. I’d encourage all students to look at meeting agendas on the Union website and to not hesitate to contact their Faculty Reps or other officers to find out more about how the Union works and what it can do for you.

I’ve been pleased to see the Union take important action on BME representation and in combatting changes to attendance monitoring. It’s also positive that a quorate Members’ Meeting was successfully held this year — hopefully more students will continue engaging with the Union.

### **Other comments:**

Any students wanting to know more, don’t hesitate to email me at [iida.kayhko.13@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:iida.kayhko.13@ucl.ac.uk).