

Policy Proposal: A UCL-wide policy for more welcoming and inclusive environment for student parents

To be discussed at: Welfare & Community Zone

What would you like the Union to do?

I would like the Union to liaise with the UCL administration to have a university-wide policy for making student parents and carers feel welcome at the university, through publishing clear guidelines on the rights and privileges of student parents and carers. This should include clear guidelines on bringing children to campus spaces, such as classrooms, meetings, social events, etc.

Why would you like to do this?

The majority of the student parents and carers community at the university feel that the university environment does not accommodate them in many aspects. It is highly necessary for a global university like UCL, which takes pride in being equal and inclusive to its student population, to have a clear policy on how they treat this community of students. Similar to any other inclusiveness campaign, this has to be taken up to ensure the departments, supervisors and all UCL facilities are made aware and trained to deal with matters affecting student parents and carers. For example, what is the code of conduct for supervisors while working with student parents? Is there any clause for course extensions if a student is a parent or a carer? Many student parents are under stress due to having no clarity on what rights they can and cannot exercise in the campus.

Furthermore, there is a lot of ambiguity about bringing children to campus spaces. Many student parents are left with no choice but to occasionally bring their young children to the campus to attend unavoidable engagements. Even though children are 'allowed' in libraries, they never feel 'welcome' there, as the facility is not meant to be child-accommodating. Currently, different departments at UCL follow their own policy on this matter, based on their requirements and attitude towards the issue and there is no university-wide guideline. In order to work on larger goals of setting up designated child-friendly study spaces on campus, I would like to first establish with the University and the union clear norms of bringing children to the campus.

How will this affect students?

Around 10% student population at UCL have self-declared caring responsibility, a majority of which are student parents. As a significant percentage of students at UCL are identified to have caring responsibility, this would affect a lot of their lives in reducing stress levels and feeling more welcome at UCL. Wellbeing and support policy for students who have caring responsibility shall attract more students in the future, who have valuable work experience. This would help other initiatives for making the campus more child-friendly and inclusive.