

Postgraduate Officer – February Report

Name: Issy Smith

Section 1: General Update

I've been working on:

- Mature students' experience
- PGTAs' rights, usage, and contracts
- Improving and feeding back on PGR and PGT Welcome and Induction. Linking it in with the SU and what we offer.
- Launching and coordinating a SU-wide collaborative working group on increasing PG engagement with SU services

Section 2: Sabbatical Officer Priorities

1) Research, Masters and Mature students have an inclusive programme of events and activities; feeling valued as members of our community and supporting their wellbeing.

Across SU working group to look into PGR/PGT engagement with SU activity

- First meeting had. Workshops in March/April with both PGRs/PGTs and staff to decide on priority areas including expansion of activity for our PG community
- Plans underway for a PG BBQ in June on main quad.
- Will look to include child-friendly areas as well as fun activities, seating areas, gazebos, to cater to all.
- PG Summer plans to kick off soon. Intend to expand this initiative to a more UCL-wide programme.
- 4-week PG salsa course with Salsa Society in the works for May
- Have given my support for the affiliation of 4 PG-related societies. Outcome pending.

2) Research and Masters students have a respected voice and are able to make informed choices, to better their education.

More PG Rep Lunches carried out which has allowed me to meet with a range of reps and hear their experiences.

- More planned for March and onwards.
- I may diversify the meet ups to end of day drinks/meet on a suggestion from one of the reps.

March workshops with PGR and PGT reps to decide on SU priorities for our PGR and PGT student body for the next year onwards.

Given opportunity to PGR/PGT Faculty Reps to sit on the Research Ethics Change Advisory Group in my place and feed in their experiences to shape future ethics application processes in future for all research ventures.

When meeting, I am increasingly trying to encourage academic reps to get in contact with PO for any issues that they are lost on and need guidance. Especially for Faculty Reps. Next steps: There seems to be a certain disconnect between PO and academic reps, a plan needs to be created for better communication and knowledge of support available and what PO can do for academic reps.

Mature Student focus groups pending. Mature Society and PT and Mature Officer contacted to arrange.

- designed to prioritise recommendations made to resolve pain points in recent studies on the mature student experience.

3) Students are financially supported in their time of need, so that they are able to achieve their potential.

British Library Cyberattack - loss of digital resources.

- Heavily impacted PG students, in particular final year PGR. Looking into ways to support students impacted.

- DocSchool happy to approve any extensions to Research due BL issue, but does not help with funding in CRS period. Hardship funding could help, but need to verify that it can offer support for this type of issue and need a campaign to make PGRs in particular aware of the financial support available.

- Issue brought up with both Pro-Vice-Provost (UCL Library Services) Paul Ayriss whose team will inform me when guidance is published for those impacted. Received update from BL on progress too (Paul Ayriss got in touch with BL). Shared with those who raised the issue.

- Also brought up with Provost.

SU cost of living group

- I chair the group primarily. Main themes are accommodation, travel, and food poverty.

- Looking to engage further with the London Student Assembly to put some of these asks to the Mayor.

- Further thought needs to be put into how to mitigate some of the issues we are aware of rather than just reporting. Need to look into reviving the UCL counterpart of this group to have wider reach and impact.

PGTAs

- New action plan created to try once again to tackle issues around PGTA contracts, pay and usage.

- Usage and experience currently covered by the Quality Standards Committee's Task and Finish group on PGTAs who are currently generating a report based on surveys on/within departments. Norbert Pachler Pro-Vice-Provost (Quality and Standards) is leading and has informed me that results will be out "soon".

- Re-engaging with HR on PGTA pay and maternity leave. (Re updating Code of Practice)

- Improve FAQs on Arena PGTA Opportunities Hub

- PGR special edition newsletter by SU to include an awareness campaign around PGTAs and the rights they have, as well as signposting.

4) Students who work know their rights and are developed, rewarded and

recognised by their employer.

Student staff forum

- Another organised in March where management will attend. Organised in a more private room than Phineas to provide a comfortable space to share experiences. Management will provide some answers to questions posed at last meeting.
- Monthly Commercial Newsletter to go out to student staff to promote better communication and awareness around the things Commercial team do.

Section 3: Attendance at important Union meetings and events

1) Union meetings attended and main outcomes

Interview panel for Head of Policy, Representation, and Evaluation. We have appointed, details not public yet.

Zones: UE, Activities x2

Chaired Board of Trustees: updates on bank situation and approval of financial statements, SU building by architects, and the Impartial Chairs programme.

Shift in Hanger, learnt more about commercial and met some lovely student staff!

Safeguarding training

Freedom of speech OFS consultation: confirmed our response and key points for consultation.

Disciplinaries

PG experience/student life group: first meeting. Priority workshops in set up.

Section 4: Attendance at important UCL meetings and events

1) UCL meetings attended and main outcomes

Library committee meeting: discussed AI and incorporating it into teaching, BL cyber attack, free digital textbooks by UCL Print.

Academic Board: discussed Estates Masterplan and densification of IOE

SU and VPO: discussed SU commercial opportunities, accommodation strategy, and lack of space on campus.

Docschool: BL cyber attack

Support to study panels

SSPC: updates from faculty reps on key issues, departmental hubs paper

Academic Communication Centre catch up: discussed a range of things including International student support on academic integrity/plagiarism. Better awareness of UK education system needed to be pushed by departments.

Provost meeting: SU building, sports facilities, BL Cyber attack, Leadership race, global engagement, bicentennial project.

Student and campus experience: update on SU building and future timelines.

Welcome and induction team: improving PGR/PGT induction, future plans.

Section 5: What progress have you made on your assigned policy proposals?

Policy: Commitment to harm reduction

Update given by Mary at last UE. Debate at UMC to follow.