STUDENTS' UNION UCL

Union Executive
Agenda

Date:	Monday, 7 October 2024
Time:	18:00 – 20:00
Venue:	B06, Drayton House, Hybrid (Teams)

Chair:	Eda Yildirimkaya, Equity & Inclusion Officer (standing in for Goksu Danaci, President)

Members:	P	AP	AB
Eda Yildirimkaya, Equity & Inclusion Officer	X		
Ana Boikova, Activities and Engagement Officer	X		
Rachel Lim, Welfare & Community Officer	X		
Darcy Lan, Postgraduate Officer	X		
Shaban Chaudhary, Education Officer	X		
Goksu Danaci, President		X	
Anji Suri & Danilo Paganelli, LGBQ+ Officer	X		
Suzanna Chen, Disabled Students' Officer			X
Rawleka Wilson & Sharvari Patil, People of Colour Students' Officers	X		
Elisa de Aragao Bibay, Women's Officer	X		
Alan Salazar Guerra, Sustainability Officer	X		
Amanda Ng & Rory Clarke, Trans Officer	X		
Kody Christiansen, Elected Officer from Education Zone			X
Jack Sibeon, Elected Officer from Activities Zone	X		
Anam Eijaz Ahmed Choudhary, Elected Officer from Welfare and Community Zone	X		

In Attendance:
Colum Mackey, Head of Policy, Representation & Evaluation
Madeline Macintyre, Democracy Assistant, Minutes
Manaal Tariq, International Students' Officer
Nick Miao, Editor-in-Chief at The Cheese Grater
Adam Cleary, Observer

Actions Log 2024/25	Responsibility	Update due:
Begin brainstorming and developing an on-campus promotion campaign for next year's Rep Elections with outlines for the campaign period and targeted outreach.	AE Officer, WC Officer	10 December 2024
Research and develop the framework for intercultural competency training, with an initial outline and materials for rollout.	EI Officer	10 December 2024
Coordinate with UCL Estates and other stakeholders to create a timeline and budget for expanding Project Period.	WC Officer	10 December 2024

Preliminary Matters

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair welcomed members to the second UE meeting of the year.

Announcements

2. Rep Elections

The discussion began with a reflection on the recent Representative elections. It was noted that participation numbers were not as high as hoped, a concern that had also been raised in prior Policy Zone meetings.

The Union conducts elections each autumn to select part-time voluntary student leaders. This year, there were 193 nominations for 75 roles, compared to 185 nominations for 69 positions last year. A total of 63 candidates were elected across 43 positions. Voter turnout, however, was 5.44%, which is lower than last year's 8%.

Plans to address this include filling 28 vacant positions through a by-election and co-option processes for roles like Faculty Reps and Activities Reps. To boost voter turnout, it was suggested that more on-campus promotion be conducted next year. An example was shared of outreach during the UCL accommodation welcome party, where students were personally engaged and informed about the elections. While this was seen as a positive first step, more could be done to improve awareness.

It was suggested that training for representatives could be enhanced with additional resources, including public speaking sessions. Extending the campaign period was also proposed to better accommodate first-year students who may need more time to understand the Union's democratic structures. Reducing staff workload on manifesto checks through automation and offering pre-nomination training for potential candidates were also discussed as potential improvements.

Feedback from one participant indicated satisfaction with their candidate training but raised concerns about the campaign period length and a lack of clarity around manifesto visibility. The need for clearer communication about manifesto publication was acknowledged.

The discussion shifted to the challenges of engaging postgraduate students, who may perceive limited benefits due to shorter academic timelines. Suggestions were made to make these roles more appealing to postgraduate students through targeted initiatives.

The campus inclusion plan was briefly mentioned, with a note that opportunities for engagement at the Canary Wharf campus may be underutilized. The conversation concluded with an emphasis on the importance of clear communication around election timelines and deadlines, with a request for further questions or suggestions.

Matters for Approval

3. Approval of Minutes from previous meeting

The Chair sought agreement from attendees to move forward with the agenda after confirming everyone was happy with the minutes from the previous meeting.

Updates on Actions:

Student Safety at Night

- Women's Officer noted a policy regarding student safety at night and improved campus illumination was initially omitted from the policy overview.

- The policy has been updated on the website, and a process review was conducted to prevent future errors.

Renters' Rights Bill

Goksu and Rachel attended Parliament on 23rd October to advocate for amendments to the Renters' Rights Bill.

- Key focus: Removing guarantor requirements and protecting students from no-fault evictions.

- Written to MPs and submitted evidence from student surveys under Parliament's code for evidence.

- Ongoing work includes analysing rent-setting processes and addressing student accommodation challenges.

University UK Blueprint

Chair presented the UUK Blueprint to the Secretary of State for Education last week.

Key outcomes:

- Increase in maintenance loans for home students recognized.

- The Union released a statement highlighting this progress but also expressed disappointment regarding the fee increase for home students.

- Commitment to continued advocacy on these issues.

Improving Transparency of Union Exec Meetings

- Agendas and papers will now be uploaded to the "What's On" events page in advance.

- Aim: Enhance visibility, encourage attendance from the wider student body, and foster more contributions during discussions.

4. Policy Approval: "The Union should lobby UCL to expand Project Period into a university-wide initiative."

The policy to expand Project Period into a university-wide initiative was brought forward to ensure its implementation across all UCL buildings and in gender-neutral locations, emphasizing inclusivity. This initiative seeks to address accessibility issues that arose after the initial pilot program launched successfully but lost momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic. During that period, departments independently managed supplies, leading to inconsistencies such as varying brands, allergen risks, and some products being placed in paid vending machines by cleaners without the university's oversight.

The revived working group now aims to centralize the program, ensuring a consistent standard across campuses and securing steady funding from UCL estates. This will eliminate reliance on individual departmental budgets or ad hoc solutions. The policy was previously discussed and voted on at the Welfare & Community Zone meeting, where it received unanimous support.

At the current meeting, the Policy Zone was tasked with ratifying the policy and agreeing on the Sabbatical Officer who would oversee its implementation. After deliberation, Rachel Lim, the Welfare and Community Officer, was unanimously chosen to lead, given their extensive involvement with the project since summer. The decision also included the possibility of involving additional officers in related meetings to strengthen advocacy and ensure collaborative leadership.

Sabbatical Officers

5. Sabbatical Officer Priorities & Updates

President, Goksu Danaci (GD):

The President provided updates on the ongoing Students' Union building scoping project. They shared that tours of various Students' Unions across the country are underway, in collaboration with architects, to refine the building's designs. They emphasized their advocacy with UCL senior stakeholders, urging the prioritization of student needs, and highlighted the Provost's commitment to meeting the project timeline. GD is collaborating closely with Ana and UCL Estates to ensure the final design aligns with student expectations.

In addition to their work on infrastructure, the President reported progress on the Union's **Commercial Strategy 2024-2027**. Together with the Head of Commercials, they are drafting a Commercial Marketing Strategy to enhance the Union's offerings while reviewing partnerships with external organizations to internalize more services. They noted that the Union is in a secure financial position and is actively exploring sustainable financial practices in partnership with the Finance Team and the Sustainability Officer.

On the external relations front, GD attended the **2024 Labour Party Conference** with Ana Boikova (Activities Officer), where they engaged with key policymakers, including Bridget Phillipson MP and Baroness Jacqui Smith, to discuss educational priorities. Locally, they met with Cllr Sabrina Francis to explore partnerships with Camden Council and joined Rachel Lim (WC Officer) during the **NUS National Lobby Day** to advocate for students' interests on issues such as housing, transportation, and safety. Additionally, they recently connected with the Deputy Mayor of London for Environment and Energy, Mete Coban MBE, to discuss sustainability initiatives relevant to UCL students.

Postgraduate (PG) Officer, Darcy Lan (DL):

The PG Officer shared several updates on their recent initiatives and achievements. They have been working closely with UCL Careers to expand career support tailored specifically to postgraduate students. These efforts include discussions on optimizing the communication strategy for career offerings, which will be featured in the upcoming Postgraduate Newsletter. DL encouraged postgraduate students to watch for their biweekly emails for more information on these resources.

The **PGR Induction Working Group** has successfully planned both an online induction and an in-person networking event for postgraduate research students. At these events, the PG Officer hosted digital and physical stalls to highlight how PGR students can engage with the Students' Union and access its support. They also collaborated with UCL central teams, such as Entrepreneurship, Student Support and Wellbeing, and UCL Careers, to make these sessions comprehensive and engaging.

Building on their commitment to fostering community among PGR students, who often experience isolation, DL has partnered with Research Student Officer Jamie Wong to plan and deliver social events. One of their standout initiatives is the **PGR Supper Club**, which provides students an opportunity to enjoy subsidized dinners while connecting with peers and forming new friendships. This event has been highly successful, with attendees staying to socialize long after the formal end of the event.

Activities & Engagement (AE) Officer, Ana Boikova (AB):

The AE Officer is working on several initiatives to enhance accessibility and engagement within UCL's clubs and societies. One key project is the **Refreshers Programme**, developed in collaboration with RL. This initiative, set to launch during Winter Welcome Week, aims to provide free taster sessions year-round, making it easier for students to explore new activities. Additionally, the **Varsity series** has been expanded to seven days, introducing new events such as cycling, kendo, karting, and esports. To better support student-led groups, activities reception hours have been extended to 10 PM on weekdays and Sundays.

AB is also collaborating with the Education Officer on a policy to secure Wednesday class exemptions for students representing UCL in competitive sports. Efforts are underway to streamline processes for **Student-Led Projects (SLPs)** involving clubs and societies, and to revive the **Mandy Walker Games**, which will foster alumni engagement through mentorship and funding opportunities. Discussions with UCL Estates are ongoing to prioritize the development of dedicated sports facilities.

To further support students, weekly officer surgeries are being held every Thursday. AB has also coordinated space tours to help club leaders familiarize themselves with bookable spaces, including those at UCL East. Other ongoing projects include initiatives like the **Intercultural Summit**, **Discover the UK**, and **Discover London**. Ana is also addressing feedback-related action items, such as improving the participation fund and resolving issues with reimbursement timelines, to ensure smoother operations for clubs and societies.

Education Officer, Shaban Chaudhary (SC):

The Education Officer shared several updates regarding their priorities for the year. They have been in discussions with the Provost and Vice Provost for Faculties to explore how Deans and their

respective offices can better support the academic representative (Rep) network. This initiative is a key focus, aiming to enhance engagement and secure more funding for Rep teams.

SC also attended various **Faculty Welcome events**, emphasizing the vital role that academic Reps play in shaping the educational experience at UCL. A major priority for SC this year is addressing the treatment of international students. They have met with the Provost to discuss how to foster a cultural shift in the way international students are perceived and treated, advocating for a more respectful and supportive approach. The Education Officer is collaborating with the UCL Students' Union and other organizations to make sure international students remain a priority for future government policy.

Additionally, SC is working closely with the Director of Student Experience and the Associate Director of HEDS to establish working groups aimed at enhancing skills and extended learning opportunities in Term 3. They are also developing a **Skills Development Framework** in partnership with the Strategic Planning and Partnerships Manager.

Another area of focus for the Education Officer is assessment and feedback. They are actively engaging with the Executive Director of Student Services & Registrar to discuss potential improvements to module selection, assessment processes, and overall programme quality. SC highlighted the need for better recognition of students' work outside the classroom, particularly advocating for a credit system similar to that introduced by Manchester Metropolitan University. This system would offer academic credits for student reps, and Shaban is exploring how a similar model could be implemented at UCL.

Equity & Inclusion (EI) Officer, Eda Yildirimkaya (EY):

Eda Yildirimkaya (EY), the Equity & Inclusion (EI) Officer, shared several updates from their work. They explained that a key initiative involved launching a mandatory intercultural competency training module for society committee members to increase cultural awareness, particularly addressing issues such as the alcoholic vs. non-alcoholic event ratio that caused tensions in some societies. This training is being discussed as a priority, especially for welfare officers, and may become mandatory for all committee members.

Additionally, EY has been working with the UCL East Student Experience Board and the commercial team to explore creative food solutions on campus, aiming to make food options more inclusive. They're also collaborating with UCL East departments to offer their spaces for society collaborations and workshops, with a focus on media societies.

Regarding the **Gender Expression Fund**, EY is engaging with the Policy & Research and Advice Team to evaluate student experiences, seeking additional support from UCL's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) team. They mentioned lobbying for more funding for the fund due to its positive impact on student life.

EY is also working with the Estates team and the Women's Officer on a lighting policy to address safety concerns around poorly lit areas on campus, especially during the winter months.

In collaboration with the POC Officer and the Advice Team, EY is exploring a peer-to-peer mental health support scheme, focusing on students with relevant experience, such as those in psychology or mental health fields. Additionally, they have started a **Breast Cancer Awareness**

campaign and are continuing their work on the **Liberate Art Gallery**, which aims to uplift marginalized student voices through art.

They provided some context on the **Liberate Art Gallery** project, acknowledging that while there weren't enough submissions for **Black History Month**, they are refining the concept and considering a termly or annual gallery instead of focusing on one month. In response to a question about food diversity, EY clarified that while the plan to offer a variety of cultural snacks was discussed, logistical challenges arose due to UCL's policy on NUS-approved suppliers, which limited the ability to source from smaller businesses, particularly for Black History Month.

Welfare & Community (WC) Officer, Rachel Lim (RL):

RL has outlined several key initiatives and goals for the year. One of their main priorities is improving the visibility and accessibility of UCL's mental health resources. They aim to map out all available services more effectively so that students are better informed about the support they can access, addressing concerns about the inconsistency of staff triage. In line with this, RL is working on improving communication efforts with students, proposing more casual touchpoints between staff and students to ensure better engagement with available resources.

RL is also focused on improving the international student experience by enhancing the **International Student Orientation (ISO)** and working with Ridgemount Practice and A&E to ensure that international students are better informed about the support available to them. They have highlighted the need to address the knowledge gaps that many international students face about the services UCL offers. Additionally, RL is involved in efforts to improve welfare training across the university, ensuring that staff and students are equipped to respond effectively to welfare concerns throughout the academic year. This includes pushing for ongoing **Active Bystander Training**, especially with the new Office for Students (OFS) policy in mind.

On the accommodation front, RL is working on rent-setting and the **Student Accommodation Strategy**, aiming to align UCL's offerings with other London universities in terms of affordability and quality. New buildings are being constructed to provide better-priced rooms for students. They are also working on the establishment of a **Chill Zone**, a dedicated space for students to relax, especially in the busy final weeks of the term. Additionally, RL is involved in the ongoing development of **Project Period**, which provides support for menstruating students.

In their role, RL is focusing on improving collaboration between students and staff, notably through initiatives like the **Student/Staff Network Partnership** and the **Personal Tutor Steering Group**. These efforts aim to standardize the student experience across departments, ensuring consistency in the support students receive. RL is also working on improving the communication process around UCL's **Financial Assistance Fund** (FAF), advocating for clearer communication about fund eligibility and rejections to prevent students from entering the process with false expectations.

Lastly, RL continues their work on the **Intercultural Summit**, a project that brings together cultural societies to increase awareness of available support and improve connections among diverse student groups. Through these initiatives, RL is committed to enhancing student welfare, fostering better communication, and ensuring that UCL's resources are more effectively utilized.

6. Questions & Discussion

RL brought up a discussion about the need for officers to disclose which committees they are involved in, to enhance transparency and accountability as it would allow the Union to better track who is involved in what. SC expressed concern about the complexity of UCL's governance structure, mentioning that it's difficult to even understand the structure themselves as sabbatical officers.

The complexity is attributed to UCL's large number of faculties and departments, which have their own governance, creating overlapping structures. This has made it difficult for many officers to grasp how everything fits together, even after extensive discussions. It was suggested that providing clarity on the various committees and possibly holding a masterclass on UCL's structure would be beneficial.

Another concern is the sensitivity of some committee memberships. There are confidential groups where members are not allowed to publicly share information, which raises the question of how much should be disclosed. It was noted that while it makes sense to disclose which committees officers sit on, sharing the full details of these committees—especially those involving sensitive information—could be problematic.

The conversation then shifts to the issue of officers' access to certain resources. The sustainability officer noted that currently only Presidents have access to certain systems, such as booking rooms, despite other officers, like the Treasurer, also requiring this access. This limitation is recognized as an ongoing issue that has yet to be resolved with UCL, and the AE Officer expressed frustration over the lack of resolution.

Policy Proposals

7. International Students' Officer Membership for All Zones

The proposal to make the International Students' Officer a voting member of all Zones and the Union Executive (UE) was successfully passed. This decision required an amendment to the by-laws, which define membership and voting rights within the zones and UE.

To pass the amendment, a 75% majority of UE members had to vote in favour. With 19 members on UE, and 15 voting positions (including job shares), 75% of 15 votes equates to 11.25, meaning that at least 12 votes were needed for the change to pass.

The vote resulted in 12 votes in favour, securing the necessary majority for the amendment. This change ensures that the International Students' Officer will now have voting rights across all zones and on the Union Executive, reflecting the officer's expanded role in representing the international student body.

Any Other Business

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

(The meeting finished at 20:03)

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record

Chair:	Eda Yildirimkaya, Equity & Inclusion Officer
Signature:	
Date:	20/11/2024