



Welfare & Community Zone  
Minutes

Date: Thursday 31 October 2024  
Time: 18:00 – 20:00  
Venue: C3.09, IOE

Chair: Rachel Lim, Welfare & Community Officer

Members:	P	AP	AB
Alan Salazar Guerra, Sustainability Officer			X
Amanda Ng & Rory Clarke, Trans Officer	X		
Anam Eijaz Ahmed Choudhary, Welfare Rep (Societies)	X		
Benjamin Li, UCL East Student Officer		X	
Benjamin Scalan, Accommodation & Housing Officer			X
Danilo Paganelli and Anji Suri, LGBTQ+ Officer	X		
Darcy Lan, Postgraduate Officer	X		
Eda Yildirimkaya, Equity & Inclusion Officer	X		
Elisa de Aragao Bibay, Women's Officer	X		
Kelly Chow, Social Class & Mobility Officer	X		
Lampros Mallios, Postgraduate Hall Community Officer for 109 Camden Road (Ann Stephenson, Ifor Evans, Max Rayne and Neil Sharp House)			X
Manaal Tariq, International Students' Officer	X		
Philip Greger and Suzanna Chen, Disabled Students' Officer			X
Pooja Murugakannan, Hall Community Officer for Ian Baker House and Ramsay Hall			X
Rachel Lim, Welfare & Community Officer	X		
Rawleka Wilson and Sharvari Patil, People of Colour Students' Officer	X		
Richard Hebblethwaite, Mature, Part-time & Carers Students' Officer		X	
Sneha Acharya, Hall Community Officer for Frances Gardner House and Langton Close	X		
Yiming Yao, Welfare Rep (Societies)	X		
Oskar Barltrop, Undergraduate Hall Community Officer for 109 Camden Road (Ann Stephenson, Ifor Evans, Max Rayne and Neil Sharp House)	X		

Quorum: 10

In Attendance:
Jayne Flowers, Representation and Democracy Coordinator
Colum Mackey, Head of Policy, Representation & Evaluation
Maddie Macintyre, Democracy Assistant, minutes
Sasha Lawson, NUS
Orlando Teng, NUS Delegate
Ed Lidington, Policy and Influence Coordinator

Actions Log 2024/25	Responsibility	Update due:
Develop a flowchart or similar resource to guide students to appropriate welfare services, aiming to simplify navigation and increase awareness.	WC Officer, Welfare Reps	2 December 2024

Work on policies to address affordability and accessibility issues, especially for international students who face waitlisting and high-cost options due to delayed admissions.	International Students' Officer, Accommodation & Housing Officer	2 December 2024
Collaborate with UCL mental health services to explore a peer-support model with psychology students, and to advocate for more diverse mental health professionals.	EI Officer, Disabled Students' Officer	2 December 2024

## Preliminary Matters

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair briefly introduced themselves and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

### 2. Brief overview of Welfare & Community Zone

The Chair provided an overview of the meeting process, outlining what happens before, during, and after a meeting, as well as explaining the distinction between an "idea for discussion" and a "policy proposal."

- **Before the Meeting:** Members will receive an email from the Chair, which includes the agenda and any relevant policy papers. This allows members to review and form opinions on the policies to be discussed.
- **During the Meeting:** Members are encouraged to engage in debate and ask questions to understand the policies better, with the aim of representing the views of students in their area. The Chair emphasized that members are not expected to know the views of every student, but should keep in mind the broader student body.
- **Ideas for Discussion vs. Policy Proposals:** The Chair clarified that "ideas for discussion" are informal and are raised to gather opinions and gauge feasibility, whereas a "policy proposal" is a formal submission intended to pass through the Zone and be considered by the Union Executive. Some ideas may not require formal policy to be implemented and can be acted on immediately.
- **After the Meeting:** Projects will be assigned to relevant staff or members, with support from the Chair and other interested students to bring the initiatives to life.

## Announcements

### 3. Rep Election Results

2,712 students voted

7,677 individual ballots cast across 47 positions

5.44% voter turnout

63 candidates elected

Full Results: <https://studentsunionucl.org/election/rep-elections-2024>

## Officer Updates and Questions

### 4. Welfare & Community Officer

The Welfare & Community (WC) Officer, Rachel Lim (RL), who also chaired the meeting, provided an update on their main priorities for the year. One focus is ensuring that new student accommodations offer affordable options and multipurpose spaces to improve the student experience. Additionally, RL is addressing issues related to student access to welfare services,

noting a disconnect between the services provided and student awareness. To bridge this gap, they are working on a communications initiative and invited members to get involved.

The officer also announced the release of a 'Sab Report' later in the evening, which will provide a detailed summary of recent activities and accomplishments. Members interested in specific areas covered in the report were encouraged to reach out to discuss potential collaboration.

### **5. Equity & Inclusion Officer**

The Equity and Inclusion (EI) Officer, Eda Yildirimkaya (EY), provided an update on their current projects, beginning with the lighting policy that was passed last year during Welfare Zone. Inherited from last year's EI Officer, this policy addresses safety concerns from students about poorly lit areas on campus. They acknowledged the Women's Officer for their significant role in advancing this initiative.

Additionally, EY highlighted their efforts during Black History Month, which included transforming the Phineas bar into an art gallery space during the day. This initiative aims to provide marginalized students with an opportunity to showcase their artwork in a city where exhibition spaces can be difficult to access. EY is collaborating with the WC Officer and PG Officer on restructuring the International Student Support team and enhancing the Transition Mentor Programme to improve support for international students. Other ongoing initiatives include a breast cancer awareness campaign and the implementation of British Sign Language (BSL) classes. EY reminded attendees that officers, including themselves, are subject to bi-weekly reports, which can be accessed for updates on their progress. They encouraged members to reach out with any feedback or concerns.

### **6. Postgraduate Officer**

The Postgraduate (PG) Officer, Darcy Lan (DL), introduced themselves and shared their priorities for the year, which include career support, language support, PGR community building, and engaging with academic resources. They provided an update on their work with UCL Careers aiming to bring more sectors of career fairs to campus. DL highlighted various career sector events happening around South Cloisters, including those focused on finance, law, tech, and green energy, encouraging students to engage with recruiters even if they were unsure about their future career paths.

The PG Officer stressed the need for more career events specifically tailored to postgraduate students, particularly those on one-year programmes. They acknowledged the anxiety that often accompanies job hunting and emphasized the importance of providing events that suit students' schedules and help them develop the skills needed to articulate their abilities. This initiative was particularly crucial for international students who may not speak English as their first language. DL also focused on the need for enhanced language support for international students, recognizing that a significant number of attendees, including themselves, did not speak English as their first language. They advocated for more comprehensive support in both academic and social English to help students adapt to their studies and daily communication. Finally, DL discussed ongoing efforts to combat isolation among postgraduate students through more events aimed at fostering a sense of community.

Matters for Information

## 7. Welfare & Community Teams Update

The Chair mentioned that they would email their full report to attendees, allowing everyone to read through it at their own convenience.

## 8. Outcomes from and inputs to UCL committees

The Chair mentioned that they would email their full report to attendees, allowing everyone to read through it at their own convenience.

## Policy Proposals

### 9. “The Union should lobby UCL to expand Project Period into a university-wide initiative, ensuring implementation across all buildings and in gender-neutral locations for inclusivity.”

The Women's Officer, Elisa Bibay-Mello Chaves De Aragao, presented a proposal to expand the Project Period initiative across UCL. Elisa explained that the initiative, which provides free menstrual products in some of UCL's toilets, was originally launched as a pilot project by the Women's Officer a few years ago. Since then, some departments have taken it on, though the availability of products has become inconsistent, with some buildings and departments lacking access. This disparity is largely due to the initiative being funded on a case-by-case basis by individual departments, leading to unequal availability across campus.

The Women's Officer raised concerns that there has been a decrease in the number of menstrual products available in various stalls and shared that they have received numerous emails from both staff and students about this issue. They highlighted the financial disparities between departments, noting that wealthier departments, such as the Law Department, are able to maintain availability, while others struggle to do so. In comparison to other London universities, Elisa noted that UCL is lagging behind in implementing this initiative university-wide.

The proposal calls for the Union to lobby UCL to expand the Project Period initiative to all UCL buildings, ensuring that menstrual products are available in gender-neutral locations, promoting inclusivity. Additionally, the proposal advocates for centralised funding from UCL to cover the costs, eliminating the reliance on individual departments to fund the initiative. Elisa emphasised that the aim is to make menstrual products available across all campus locations, not just in female bathrooms, ensuring equal access for all students, particularly marginalized and financially vulnerable individuals.

Outcome: Members took a vote, and the policy passed with 100% 'For'; moving into the Union Executive for ratification.

## Matters for Discussion

### 10. Agree on priorities for the Academic year.

The discussion focused on identifying priorities for the Welfare Zone for the academic year. Key points included:

**1. Improved Communication of Services:** One priority is to simplify and communicate the range of student services available at UCL. This would include creating a flowchart that helps students understand where to seek help and ensures they are directed to the right resources.

**2. Flourish Programme Enhancement:** There's a desire to improve the Flourish programme, which organizes events for students in residences. The aim is to make these events more relevant to students' interests and more accessible, especially considering issues with timing and location.

**3. Accommodation Challenges:** International students face issues with accommodation due to delayed admissions, which results in missing priority deadlines and being placed on waitlists for expensive options. There is a push to address the affordability and accessibility of accommodation for students on the waitlist.

**4. Diverse Mental Health Services:** A major concern raised was the need for more diversity in mental health service providers, particularly those who are POC or have disabilities. It's been suggested that UCL look into peer-to-peer support programs with psychology students while waiting for broader diversity improvements in mental health services.

**5. Direct Action and Accountability:** A recurring issue in accommodation has been the lack of effective action from management when issues are raised. There's a proposal to work on better communication and access to decision-makers in accommodation services, ensuring that concerns are addressed promptly and meaningfully.

### **11. Mums & Dads Scheme: Creating Community**

The Mums & Dads Scheme pairs incoming first-year undergraduates (referred to as 'children') with returning undergraduates from the same course (the 'parents') to form academic families. The primary aim of this scheme is to provide new students with advice and support to ease their transition into university life.

In this setup, 'parents' offer guidance on succeeding in university life, provide practical academic support, and facilitate socialising opportunities. They serve as a resource for students who may need help but are unsure where to turn. Additionally, 'siblings' within the scheme can help new students form friendships early in the academic year.

Key points of the discussion include:

#### **1. Challenges with Current Mentorship Programs:**

- Low attendance at meetings, especially as the term progresses, with some students not attending or losing interest after initial weeks.
- Some students feel the mentorship scheme doesn't meet their needs, particularly for international students who may need more specialized support.
- The content provided often becomes repetitive or irrelevant as students settle in, leading to disengagement.

#### **2. Proposed Improvements:**

- A shift from a one-to-one mentorship model to a more communal, peer-to-peer setup. This could involve multiple mentors (perhaps matched by interest, culture, or background) to create a more dynamic and supportive group environment.
- Introducing more engaging, fun activities to improve participation, such as team-building events like laser tag, alongside academic support, to build rapport and community.

#### **3. Suggestions for Balancing Fun with Academics:**

- While some feel activities could make the scheme more engaging, others caution that focusing too heavily on fun might detract from the academic and practical support that many students still need.
- Some students suggest that while activities are important for building connections, academic help and advice should still be a central feature, particularly for those who are struggling with university life.

#### **4. Exploration of Funding and Volunteer Models:**

- The idea of using funding to make the program more activity-based, while keeping it volunteer-driven, could help engage students more effectively. The budget could be used for fun activities that encourage interaction, while still offering academic guidance during or after those events.

#### **5. Diverse Perspectives on Transition Needs:**

- The transition scheme might need to adapt to different student groups. For instance, home students may need less guidance than international students, who could benefit more from detailed practical and cultural advice about living in London and navigating university systems.

## Matters for Approval

### **12. Elect 1 person to Union Executive**

The election for a representative from the Welfare & Community Zone to join the Union Executive Committee was held. The elected representative will be responsible for accurately conveying the views and concerns of the Welfare & Community Zone at the executive level. Members were encouraged to consider nominating themselves for this role, with those interested invited to prepare a brief 30-second introduction speech. The Chair highlighted the importance of attendance, stating that candidates should be available for scheduled Union Executive meetings. Members were reminded that this role offers a valuable opportunity to participate in debates at a higher level within the Union.

Anam expressed their interest in the role, sharing relevant experience in media, communication, and student societies from their undergraduate years. Anam reassured members of their availability to attend all required meetings. Following Anam's speech, voting commenced. The Chair explained the voting process, including the option to vote for Re-Open Nominations (RON). Only members of the Welfare & Community Zone were eligible to vote.

Result: Anam received 100% of the vote from members, successfully securing the position as Union Executive representative for the Welfare & Community Zone.

## Any Other Business

### **13. Any Other Business**

The Chair opened the floor for any other business, inviting attendees to raise any topics or issues.

**1. Accommodation Discussion:** Chair raised the topic of affordable accommodation, specifically the potential for UCL to increase the number of twin rooms to address affordability concerns,

noting that other universities had successfully implemented similar strategies. They solicited feedback on whether students would be willing to share rooms if it meant lower costs.

- Responses varied, with some expressing willingness to share for cost savings, while others noted the cultural preference for privacy. There was a suggestion to analyse existing data on the occupancy rates of current twin rooms to assess demand and cultural acceptance.
- Chair mentioned ongoing discussions with the Head of Accommodation about this issue, highlighting the need to balance affordability with student preferences and considering alternative strategies like personality-based room pairing, common in American universities.

**2. By-election for Hall Community Officers:** Chair emphasized the importance of upcoming by-elections to fill 15 vacant Hall Community Officer roles out of 19 total positions. They encouraged attendees to spread the word, especially those residing in UCL halls, to ensure active representation.

**3. Potential Welfare Role for Commuters:** A question was raised about the existence of a welfare role for commuter students. Although no specific role currently exists, there was a positive response to potentially proposing a policy to create one, as commuter students often engage less with the community.

**4. Encouraging American Students and Cultural Adaptations:** Chair shared that UCL is exploring ways to attract more American students, noting that shared accommodations are standard in the U.S. This could lead to cultural adjustments, possibly incorporating personality-based room pairing.

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record	
Chair:	Rachel Lim
Signature:	Rachel Lim
Date:	11/11/24