



Date: Monday 30 October 2023

Time: 18:00 – 20:00

Venue: Chadwick Building 2.18

Activities Zone

Minutes

Chair: Aria Xingni Shi, Activities & Engagement Officer

Members:	P	AP	AB
Abraham Selby, Volunteering Rep	X		
Addina Binti Amran, Volunteering Rep			X
Ahmad Ismail, Equity & Inclusion Officer	X		
Anji Suri, Trans Officer	X		
Ankit Mehani, Volunteering Rep			X
Aria Xingni Shi, Activities and Engagement Officer, Chair	X		
Ashley New, Societies Rep (Performance Art)	X		
Blessing Echefu, Societies Non-Portfolio Rep	X		
Demetri Alvanis, Sports Officer	X		
Elisa de Aragao Bibay, Women's Officer	X		
Elisia Sebastian Swaby, Sports Rep	X		
Ella O'Brien, Societies Non-Portfolio Rep	X		
Ghali Moutawakil El Oudghiri, Sports Rep			X
Himanshu Keshari, Societies Officer	X		
Hrshita Agrawal, Societies Rep (Non-Performance Art)			
Issy Smith, Postgraduate Officer		X	
Jefferson Andrew, Societies Non-Portfolio Rep			X
Jiayu Louise Liu, Volunteering Rep		X	
Jingyi Ye and Yalin Chen, Volunteering Officer	X		
Lorcan O'Kane, Sports Rep	X		
Maya Khurana, Arts Officer	X		
Micah Gerstner, LGBTQ+ Officer	X		
Nick Miao, Societies Rep (Student Media)	X		
Philip Greger and Suzanna Chen, Disabled Students' Officer		X	
Rawleka Wilson and Rachel Lim, People of Colour Students' Officer			X
Seth Harris, Societies Non-Portfolio Rep	X		

In Attendance:
Julia Rooke, Representation and Democracy Coordinator
Matthew Phuklaewkla, Democracy Assistant, minutes
Rupinder Sandal, Head of Societies and Projects
Mary McHarg, Union Affairs Officer
Sindi Gjonaj, Student Observer
Brodie Ross, Head of Arts
Rupinder Sandal, Head of Societies and Projects
Henry Warne, Sports Development Manager
Anne Laybourne, Community Research Manager

D'arcy Mcguinness, Societies Development Manager
Daniel Edge, Arts & Media Coordinator
Beth Lewis, Programme Manager (HE & Sport)
Michael Senior, Activities Administration Coordinator
Olivia Russell, Societies Development Coordinator

1. Preliminary matters - Welcome and Introductions

AXS (Activities & Engagement Officer, Chair) warmly welcomed attendees to the first Zone of the year and encouraged members to introduce themselves.

2. Preliminary matters – Brief overview of Activities Zone

Representation and Democracy Coordinator, Julia Rooke (JR) gave overview of Education Zone, outlining details of the voting process and the content of meetings.

3. Announcements – Rep Election Results

JR provided an overview of the results, more information of which can be found [here](#). Turnout for the Rep Elections was 8% with 3,805 students voted and 9,824 ballots were cast across 49 positions with 66 students being elected to leadership roles.

4. Officer Updates and Questions - Activities and Engagement Officer

AXS provided an update of [their priorities](#) for this academic year:

- The Welcome Fair was a success
- Plans to launch a social media platform are going well
- Currently working on establishing a ‘nap zone’ for students to sleep and relax between lectures

5. Officer Updates and Questions - Equity & Inclusion Officer

Equity & Inclusion Officer, Ahmad Ismail (AI) provided an update of [their priorities](#) for this academic year:

- Plans to expand Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) across the institution
- Increase accessibility of participation in arts at university

- Provide more of a student experience in accommodations outside of campus, increasing a sense of community

6. Matters for Information – Staff Updates

Staff gave updates on:

- Exploring local and international opportunities for charity and social hackathons
- The Friends' Trust as a source of grant funding, highlighting that members do not have to be part of a club or society to apply
- Term 1 society affiliations; also, societies are still able to apply for affiliation past the deadline
- Grant funds are still available, so it is encouraged to keep applying
- Sports representatives have been elected to support the Sports Officer
- Plans for the Winter Arts Festival are in the initial consultation stage; planned pilot in Spring, and launch in September 2024

Staff also asked for feedback on what members would like to see in terms of the January Welcome Fair, mini-fairs or trips and visits. Some feedback given was:

- It would be good to have another mini-welcome as students would benefit from having another network available to them.
- More advertising to raise awareness of more events happening
- A societies festival for societies who are interested in hosting events
- More physical space in the welcome fair setups
- Possibility of having displays at the second welcome fair
- Uncertainty about timeslots for when certain societies would be present at the Welcome Fair, which means people looking for specific societies don't know when to arrive.
 - Staff answered that societies are welcome to ask for a better timeslot, which would allow more exposure at a better time of day.

In response to the feedback about advertising and marketing, staff highlighted that it is possible to send your society event to the Student Union marketing team who are able to assist with promotion and posters. Ways to do this are:

- Directly messaging the [SU UCL page on Instagram](#)
- Emailing su.marketing@ucl.ac.uk

7. Matters for Information – Club and Society Grant Allocation 2023/24

Staff gave updates on grants – more information on this can be found in the grant allocation master sheet, which are attached alongside these minutes. Staff emphasised that funding is still available for those who require it.

As for sports clubs grants, £100,000 has been given out so far in 3 key areas:

- Facility hire (£60,000)
- Coaching costs (£30,000)
- Kit and equipment (£10,000)

It was highlighted that sports granted are allocated according to how much money each club needs. Considering this, it was highlighted that it is preferred for clubs to have a sustainable financial model.

8. Matters for Information – Student Life Strategy Update

Union Affairs Officer Mary McHarg (MM) gave information and updates on the [Student Life Strategy](#):

- Staff are being hired to double participation and the operation will be scaled up as funding comes in.
- The [Disagreeing Well](#) programme is currently being undertaken to improve intercultural engagement.
- Currently in the planning stage of constructing a new Union building
- Working on enabling students to earn credits by participating as a union officer

A member asked about the meaning of ‘vibrant student life’ in the Student Life Strategy – MM explained that these are activities that do not fit in the other categories (Community volunteering,

performing and creative arts, etc.) and aren't being hosted by a specific society or club. An example of this would be welcome events.

A member enquired about the progress on the new Student Union building. MM answered that a feasibility study is currently being carried out.

9. Matters for Information – Affiliations, disaffiliations, disciplinary actions

AXS gave information on affiliations and disaffiliations:

- 2 new society affiliations
- Some disaffiliations due to societies having no elected principal or interim officers, or for not submitting their registry

10. Matters for Approval – Appoint 2 Sports Reps to Somerstown Community Sports Centre User Group

Sports Development Manager, Henry Warne (HW) explained that the majority of competitive sports at UCL takes place at Somerstown Community Sports Centre (SCSC), a facility which UCL does not own but has an agreement with the owners to be able to use it - this an important relationship.

It was explained that the user group is an opportunity for students to contribute to conversations about how fit for purpose SCSC is. Members from sports societies were encouraged to take up this role. Other parties involved in the user group are regular users of SCSC, as well as the school it is connected to.

Only two members came forward to show interest for the role, so they were automatically elected as representatives for the user group:

- Elisia Sebastian Swaby
- Demetri Alvanis

11. Matters for Approval – Appoint 1 Rep to Bloomsbury Fitness User Group

HW called for a representative to attend the Bloomsbury Fitness User Group in order to aid the process of continually improving the gym.

The following members nominated themselves as representative for the Bloomsbury Fitness User Group:

- Lorcan O’Kane
- Micah Gerstner

Of these members, Micah Gerstner was successfully elected.

12. Matters for Approval – Elect One Person to Union Executive

The following members nominated themselves to represent Activities Zone at Union Executive:

- Lorcan O’Kane
- Ella O’Brien
- Demetri Alvanis and Maya Khurana (as part of a jobshare)
- Nick Miao and Seth Harris (as part of a jobshare)

Of these members, Ella O’Brien was successfully elected.

13. Matters for Discussion – Agree Priorities for the Year

Members talked about what they want to achieve for the year. Some items of discussion were:

- Working towards inclusion
- Focus on having more events in order to increase connectedness and community
- Have societies working together, especially on intercultural issues and engagement
- Address accessibility, cost and resources
- Ensuring that smaller societies are represented fairly at Zones
- Support for smaller societies with submitting paperwork for high-risk activities
- Increase volunteering engagement
- Increasing clarity of prerequisites for taking part in sports events

- Increase mass-participation of events using advertising and increase the accessibility of jumping into random activities
- In societies, ensure better continuity between outgoing and incoming committees during handovers – a document that details roles and responsibilities for each position in order to keep committees and coaches accountable. This would be a flexible document which members can vote on.
- Foster a global partnership by engaging with other communities through volunteering activities.

14. Matters for Discussion – Society memberships and fees

Student Observer, Sindi Gjonaj (SG) brought forth concern about the costs of memberships and activities which has stopped them from joining societies. It was thought that tuition fees would at least go towards the cost of clubs, similar to the American education system. However, this is not the case in the UK. Apparently, costs are already subsidised at UCL, but it is still expensive.

Some thoughts that the other members provided:

- MH explained that it depends on the university to allocate fees to help run student life – it is possible for universities to provide nothing at all. Compared to other universities, UCL does not fund as much per student to help society costs.
- MH also highlighted that, in response to this, the [Activities Participation Fund](#) was set up, which gives grants of up to £250 twice a year to help with participation costs.

SG also raised another concern: it is usually unclear what the cost of society events throughout the year are, so it is hard to know what financial commitment there is.

- In response to this, Sports Representative Lorcan O’Kane (LOK) explained the reason for activities having charges: societies receive all their funding in the beginning of the year, and unless they have a good treasurer, the funding is usually all spent at the beginning. The Student Union encourages lower membership fees with charged sessions throughout the year in order to prevent lack of funding mid-way through the year, which would prevent things such as coaching suddenly dropping off.

- Societies Non-Portfolio Rep Ella O'Brien (EOB) also said that activity fees mitigate initial massive costs, by spreading the payment throughout the year. Also, having lower fees isn't necessarily a better idea because it could result in a large influx of members joining, which would make venue/facility fees extortionate.

Some other general thoughts from the members:

- Arts Officer Maya Khurana (MK) understands that finances can be a barrier, but there are free smaller events throughout the year. Larger events are expensive to run and having activity costs for these would make these events more feasible as it helps to pad costs.
- Equity & Inclusion Officer Ahmad Ismail (AI) concurs with SG - it is hard for societies to raise money, but also suggests how societies can communicate to potential members about the approximate cost of events throughout the year in order to make budgeting easier. This can be implemented for events which are certain, for example yearly balls etc.
- Another member thinks there should be more funding from the union to help subsidise costs, but MM says the union already subsidises for large events such as balls
- Adding onto this, staff mentioned that funding is can be applied for, which can go towards venue hiring for example.
- Head of Arts Brodie Ross (BR) encouraged societies to create events where student life can be experienced without cost
- A member brought up the society funding model at Imperial College London which allocates funding based on membership numbers – Zone members saw this negatively.

Finally, SG asked why university fees aren't going towards student life and raised concerns about UCL spending. MH concurred.

15. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record

Chair:	Aria Xingni Shi, Activities and Engagement Officer
--------	--

Signature:	Aria Xingni Shi
Date:	13/11/23