



Date: 28/11/2019
Time: 18:00 – 20:00
Venue: John Adams Hall

Education Zone

Minutes

Chair: Jim Onyemenam, Postgraduate Students' Officer

Members:	P	AP	AB
Adrita Kabir, Population Health Sciences Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep	✓		
Ahina Ip, Brain Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep (Job share)	✓		
Alexia Koch, Built Environment Undergraduate Faculty Rep	✓		
Ashley Slanina-Davies, Education Officer, Chair		✓	
Baneen Almoud, Population Health Sciences Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep	✓		
Brittany Eldridge, Arts & Humanities Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep (Job share)	✓		
Dory Ghanem, Medical Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep	✓		
Emer O'Driscoll-Paton, Arts & Humanities Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep	✓		
Faisal Ali, Institute of Education Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep	✓		
Fei (Sophie) Yuan, Built Environment Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep	✓		
Frank Gatheru, Engineering Sciences Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep			✓
Georgia Constantinou, Medical Sciences Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep	✓		
Graham van Goffrier, Mathematical & Physical Sciences Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep		✓	
Habiba Diab, Brain Sciences Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep	✓		
Haiying Liang, Institute of Education Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep			✓
Honghao Zhang, Built Environment Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep	✓		
Izabella Wodzka, Arts & Humanities Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep (Job share)	✓		
Jameela Nagri, Population Health Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep	✓		
Jiaqi (Kitty) Guo, Institute of Education Undergraduate Faculty Rep	✓		
Jim Onyemenam, Postgraduate Students' Officer	✓		
Jin Li, Social and Historical Sciences Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep			✓
Julian Laufs, Engineering Sciences Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep	✓		
Katherine Forster, Arts & Humanities Undergraduate Rep	✓		
Khush Thakur, Mathematical & Physical Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep			✓
Lina Algurashi, Laws Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep	✓		
Lorenzo Faggiano, Social & Historical Sciences Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep (Job share)	✓		
Maria Silva Abreu Lopes Feio, Brain Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep (Job share)			✓
Max Tscheltzoff, Trans Officer			
Nikita Joji, Medical Sciences Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep		✓	
Nilisha Vashist, Women's Officer			
Philippa Harding, Brain Sciences Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep	✓		
Samuel Barnes, Social & Historical Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep	✓		
Sandra Ogundele, Black & Minority Ethnic Students' Officer			
Sepehr Sharafi, Social & Historical Sciences Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep (Job share)	✓		
Shail Bhatt, Life Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep			✓
Tom Höbold, Mathematical & Physical Sciences Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep	✓		
Umang Pandey, Laws Undergraduate Faculty Rep			✓
Valentina Spiteri, Life Sciences Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep			✓

Xuyi Wang, LBGQ+ Officer			
Zohar Mendzelenski-Steinberg, Disabled Students' Officer			
Zvezdin Besarabov, Engineering Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep	✓		

In Attendance:
Aimee Connolly, Research and Evaluation Assistant, minutes
Danielle Swanson, Advice and Advocacy Manager
Laura Sanchez Perez, Undergraduate Mathematics Lead Department Rep
Simon To, Leadership, Development and Change Manager

1. Introductions

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. As there were a number of new members, everyone introduced themselves.

2. Minutes and Action Points

The minutes of the last meeting were unanimously approved and apologies were noted.

The Chair updated members on action points from the previous meeting:

- There is a meeting upcoming regarding the Wet Lab Supervision Framework.
- The issue regarding library access will be raised at the next Library Committee.
- All other actions were in progress or completed.

3. NUS Delegate Opportunity

The Chair informed the Zone that nominations for the NUS Conference Delegate elections are now open and encouraged everyone to put themselves forward. Information has been circulated and can also be found on the Union's website.

Action: Members to consider running in the NUS Delegate election.

4. Policy Proposal: Students Support the UCU Strike

The Chair introduced the first policy and opened the floor to comments. A policy briefing was circulated for members to read during the discussion.

The Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep for the Institute of Education queried about how to proceed with deadlines due during the strike period. The Advocacy and Advice Manager noted that students should check with course administrators in the first instance. UCU have agreed that staff won't work back the hours missed, however there will be no penalty for students missing class during this period, including those on Tier 4 visas. Some staff are putting up Lecturecast recordings from last year and students will not be assessed on content that has not been taught. The Leadership, Development and Change Manager confirmed that students should meet deadlines they have set during the strike period if no alternative arrangements have been made.

A discussion arose regarding a line in the proposal stating that the Union should "provide reasonable financial support to any UCL student groups who are partaking in action to support the strike." Members queried the legality of providing financial support in this case and the Postgraduate Students' Officer confirmed the Union could not. There will be a Learning Opportunities Fund organised by UCL which will be put in place to try to mitigate the learning impact on students. An

amendment to remove the sentence from the policy proposal was put to the Zone and passed.

The Engineering Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep questioned whether some points in the proposal were contradictory in nature and if the Union should focus more on direct support or on providing information. The Postgraduate Students' Officer clarified that it is possible to both inform and support; it is important to give information on the impact of the strike to students, however the Union can also encourage students to support the strike.

The Chair called for a vote and members voted on the amended policy.

Vote	Number
For	20
Against	1
Abstain	1

Decision: The amended policy was carried.

5. **Policy Proposal: Changes to EC Policy**

The Social & Historical Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep introduced the proposal, explaining a case of a student who, having had a bereavement in their family, experienced difficulty with getting appropriate extenuating circumstances; the requirement that evidence needs to be provided within one week has proven to be difficult for them. Several members added to this issue, confirming that within the confines of the NHS, it can often be more than one month until a person may receive the opinion of a medical professional, which adds additional stress to students. Providing legal documents may be difficult also, especially for international students who may have to pay to get the document translated. It was also noted that in the case of death certificates, a student may be terribly affected by a bereavement, but not necessarily within the familial circle that would be able to apply for a death certificate.

The Advocacy and Advice Manager noted that every faculty approaches this differently, with some being more forgiving. The Postgraduate Faculty Rep for Laws suggested that the deadline could be placed on a case by case basis, with consideration for the individual's situation. Members also discussed EC policies in other universities, where students are allowed to self-certify in their first case.

The Leadership, Development and Change Manager commented that the Education Officer and Welfare and International Officer are pushing for a trust system, whereby evidence would not be required. Breaking that trust would result in disciplinary procedures. It was requested that members should email any examples of situations where students have been negatively affected by the current policy, as this will help the Union to lobby UCL on this.

A discussion around finance arose, with members querying if there is any financial support for students who have to pay for medical certificates, death certificates etc. While there is no specific fund in place, students can apply to the Financial Assistance Fund or for an emergency loan. It was suggested that a discussion could be had with Ridgmount Practice about these charges, as many UCL students are registered there.

The proposal was put to a vote and members voted on the policy.

Vote	Number
For	20
Against	0
Abstain	0

Decision: The policy was carried.

Actions: Members to send the Education or Welfare & International Officer examples of cases where the current EC policy has been ineffective for students.

The Advocacy and Advice Manager to research the possibility of reviewing the cost of receiving a medical certificate from Ridgmount Practice.

6. **Policy Proposal: Postgraduate Application Fee**

The Arts & Humanities Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep introduced the policy. The Union has worked on this issue before unsuccessfully and the university maintains that the fee is to deter speculative applications being made. The proposer argued that those applying should be able to look at different options and that the fee only acts as a deterrent for low-income students.

The Social & Historical Sciences Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep suggested that it could be implemented on a progressive tier, based on means. A number of members pointed out how much other universities charge their postgraduate applicants, with 9 Russell Group universities not charging any fee.

Some members argued for a progressive system, while others argued for no fee. It was queried whether we know how much is made through PGT application fees annually and what the financial gap would be if the fee was gotten rid of. It was also noted that a lack of a fee could lead to more applications and more administrative work, which would add another cost.

The Chair confirmed that there are other ways to deter speculative applications, other than through financial means. The Leadership, Development and Change Manager stated that a progressive system would be quite costly - especially at PGT level, as there is a lack of data from Student Finance. Members suggested students could provide evidence (such as tax returns) of being from a low-income background. It was noted, however, that this can be difficult for international students, especially with associated translating costs.

Members queried where the funding would come from and how many applications there currently are. The Chair proposed that this information would be sought and the proposal would be deferred to the next Education Zone meeting. Members agreed and the motion was deferred.

Decision: Motion deferred to next Education Zone meeting.

Actions: Postgraduate Students' Officer to follow-up on how many applications are made to PGT courses and how much is made through these applications.

7. **Policy Proposal: PGR Supervision Duties**

The Engineering Sciences Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep introduced the policy, stating that PGR

students often do not know their rights within the duties given to them by their supervisor. Often research students can be overwhelmed with their supervision duties, but feel they cannot say no to requests made by their supervisors. There is a lack of clarification as to whether they should be paid for these duties or if they are required to do them.

An amendment was proposed to add “rights” to the policy proposal before “duties and responsibilities” and this was accepted by the members.

Students agreed that providing more information could only be a positive thing. The proposal went to a vote and students voted on the amended policy.

Vote	Number
For	20
Against	0
Abstain	0

Decision: The amended policy was carried.

8. Skills Gap

The Chair started by noting that skill gaps arise through discrepancies between students when they arrive. There will be an institutional Changemakers project working on skills gaps, as decided at the last Student Experience Committee. The details of this project are still to be determined – it could focus on the variability of the incoming student skillset and design modules to fill those gaps, or it could look at the content and assessment of courses and ensure that the skills required for these match with those required in the job market. The Chair opened to the floor for comments.

The Engineering Sciences Undergraduate Faculty Rep noted that in first year Computer Science they assess students’ ability and offer two courses for students to choose from, one being at a more advanced level.

The discussion turned to citing issues and plagiarism. Many UG students may not know how to cite and PG students may have used a different system in their UG. Similarly, sometimes students don’t come from an academic background and so may not have this ability. LinkedIn Learning was suggested as a great tool for filling skills gaps and it was commented that these courses could somehow be incorporated into modules. It was also noted that often there are courses to support with technical skills, but they may be hosted by a different department, so students are not aware.

The Postgraduate Students’ Officer commented that students in Law are often paired with other Law students from a different area of speciality, so that they can share knowledge. The discussion ended on this note and the Chair invited members to send any further comments on skills gaps via email.

Action: Members to send ideas for Changemakers Faculty Project to the Education Officer.

Members to send any comments on skills gaps to the Postgraduate Students’ Officer or the Education Officer.

9. Fundraising for Arts and Humanities PhDs

The Arts & Humanities Postgraduate Taught Faculty Rep started the discussion and noted that most Arts & Humanities PhDs are self-funded, with some research students even considering quitting because of the financial stress. The Postgraduate Students' Officer noted that more scholarships are needed across the institution and that the Education Officer is working with the Head of Student Finance in UCL on this, specifically to create more BME scholarships.

It was suggested that the university should do an analysis across the university to find out where there are imbalances in the number of scholarships provided. The Leadership, Development and Change Manager suggested that there are many other funding opportunities available online also, however it was agreed that these are often not available to international students or students from Arts and Humanities.

10. Module Registration and Information

The Chair requested any feedback on the new module catalogue to be sent in so that it can be improved for coming years.

Members commented that on Portico they are able to select modules that are not open to them, some students register for modules and never receive a rejection or acceptance and that some modules are not included in the module catalogue. The Leadership, Development and Change Manager requested that members ask Course Reps to compile this information and feed it back to the Union, so that they can use it to make changes.

Action: Members to email comments about module registration and information to Education Officer.

11. Input Into/Outcomes from Committees

The Chair suggested that members read the Officers' reports and noted that they will feed back comments raised in the meeting to committees. It was requested that any further comments be sent via email.

12. Changemakers Faculty Projects

The Chair requested that any suggestions for individual faculty projects be sent to students' faculties.

13. Phineas Mascot Consultation

The Chair notified members that the consultation has closed and the results are now on the website. If students have any queries, they can get in touch.

14. Questions to Officers

There were no questions for the Postgraduate Students' Officer.

14. Any Other Business

There was no other business. The Chair thanked everyone for coming and wished them a happy holiday season.

Chair:	Jim Onyemenam, Postgraduate Students' Officer
Signature:	
Date:	