



Date: Tuesday 31 January 2023
Time: 18:00 – 20:00
Venue: Bentham House LG17 Lecture Theatre
Chair: Hamza Ahmed, Education Officer

Education Zone**Minutes**

Members:	P	AP	AB
Abdulaziz E S A Abdulhadi, Faculty of Medical Sciences PGT Rep	X		
Andrea Franchini, Faculty of Engineering PGR Rep	X		
Angel Ma, LGBTQ+ Officer			X
Angela Escobar Brown, Faculty of Laws UG Rep	X		
Aria Yu, Faculty of Engineering PGT Rep			X
Avanija Menon, Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences UG Rep			X
Azure Lo, Faculty of Life Sciences PGT Rep		X	
Callie Yoo, BME Students' Officer	X		
David Chandler, Faculty of Arts and Humanities PGR Rep			X
Denis C Yegon, Faculty of the Built Environment PGT Rep			X
Emma Francis, Research Students' Officer	X		
Gabriel Huang, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences UG Rep			X
George S Ponodath, Faculty of Population Health Sciences UG Rep	X		
Georgia M V Constantinou, Faculty of Medical Sciences PGR Rep			X
Graham W Van Goffrier, Mathematical & Physical Sciences Postgraduate Research Faculty Rep	X		
Greg Koc, Faculty of Life Sciences UG Rep (Job Share)			X
Hamza Ahmed, Education Officer (Chair)	X		
Harper Taylor Hanson, Trans Officer		X	
Harriet R Israel, Institute of Education PGT Rep	X		
Henry R Wilson, Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences PGT Rep		X	
Joy Han, Faculty of Brain Sciences UG Rep			X
Julia Wojciechowska, Faculty of Arts and Humanities UG Rep	X		
Kairan Mai, Faculty of Arts and Humanities PGT Rep			X
Kenta Tsuda, Faculty of Laws PGR Rep			X
Kerem Isik, Faculty of Life Sciences UG Rep (Job Share)	X		
Krystel C Fernandes, Faculty of Brain Sciences PGT Rep	X		
Madigan Dockrill, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences PGR Rep			X
Manon Simmons, Women's Officer (Job Share)		X	
Marine-Oceane L G Verdez-Scholler, Medical Sciences Undergraduate Rep		X	
Nandni Nandni, Faculty of Laws PGT Rep		X	
Noha Soliman, Faculty of Brain Sciences PGR Rep			X
Oluseyi (Seyi) A Osibamowo, Equity & Inclusion Officer	X		
Ramota Adelakun; Roemann Osman, Faculty of Population Health Sciences PGR Rep			X
Sara Motwani, Built Environment Undergraduate Faculty Rep			X
Sasha Green, Women's Officer (Job Share)	X		
Sianne Chinwuba, Population Health Sciences PGT Rep	X		
Tianyi Yao, Institute of Education UG Rep	X		

Veronica A Boron, Faculty of Life Sciences PGR Rep			X
Xiaoyu Guo, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences PGT Rep			X
Yasmin Garcia-Sterling, Faculty of the Built Environment PGR Rep			X
Yasmine Abdu, Faculty of Engineering UG Rep	X		

Quorum: 17

In Attendance:
Jeff Saddington-Wiltshire, Representation and Democracy Manager
Rhiannon Ellis, Representation and Democracy Coordinator, minutes
Student Observers: Deniz Akinci, Chloe Yu, Lily Filer

1. Preliminary matters - Welcome and Introductions

Hamza Ahmed (Chair, HA) welcomed everyone to the third Education Zone Meeting

Deniz Akinci (DA) Highlighted that a new proposal is being taken to Welfare and Community Zone on Thursday 2 February regarding fossil fuel free careers. As something similar had been brought to Education Zone previously DA asked if any zone members would be willing to attend Welfare and Community Zone to share feedback from the previous discussion held at Education Zone.

2. Announcements - Leadership Race nominations

HA announced that the Leadership Race nominations are now open until 6 March 2023 and encouraged Zone members to nominate themselves and promote nominations amongst those they represent. HA and DA also offered to speak with anyone interested in nominating themselves.

Click here to read about the Leadership Race and all the available positions -

<https://studentsunionucl.org/leadership-race>

3. Matters for Information - Staff Updates

Jeff Saddington-Wiltshire (JSW) also spoke about the Leadership Race and informed students that about the support offered by the Representation and Democracy Team. JSW also mentioned that Faculty Rep elections will continue to be held in the October

elections. JSW has also appointed a new member of Student Staff to help run postgraduate events and they will be looking to host more cross-faculty events over the next few months.

Danielle Swanson (DS) informed the zone that they have recently appointed two specialist money/budget advisors as throughout Term 1 over £57k of hardship funding has been given out to students from the SU. The emergency grant in particular has had a lot of uptake with over £10k going towards 68 students receiving £150 grants. DS also highlighted that the Advice service has been seeing a lot of queries regarding housing support. DS also explained that UCL provided the SU with £750k from savings made from the strikes last year and encouraged Zone members to promote the available hardship funds to those they represent.

You can find information regarding the hardship funds here –

<https://studentsunionucl.org/advice-and-support/support/financial-support>

DS reminded members that it is the start of LGBT+ history month and there are lots of activities and events on the website.

You can find the full list of events and activities here - <https://studentsunionucl.org/lgbt-history-month-past-present-and-future>

4. Matters for Information - Outcomes from and inputs to UCL committees

HA said that there haven't been many committees as they are currently being restructured. UCL have recently employed Kathryn Woods Pro-Vice Provost (Student Academic Engagement) and HA will be co-chairing the student-staff partnership committee with them and a few members from Education Zone will also be included.

HA also explained that the TEF student submission has been sent and we are now awaiting to outcome to determine whether UCL is bronze, silver or gold for teaching excellence.

5. Matters for Information - Follow up on action points from previous meeting

HA reported back to the Zone on feedback shared at the last meeting regarding issues with plug sockets, toilets and room bookings.

HA advised that the library team are aware of the plug socket issues but they will take time to fix.

HA has spoken with the toilet facility team and they have explained that it will take a year for improvements to be made as they are awaiting confirmation on development proposals. Funding has been allocated and hopefully it will be resolved for the next academic year.

HA has spoken with the registrar regarding room bookings, and something is already in place regarding improvements. This year they will be putting in an interim timetable and room booking system and it should be ready by Term 3. HA will provide further updates once progress has been made.

6. Matters for Discussion - UCU Strikes

HA reminded students that in the most recent referendum regarding UCU strikes, students had voted for the SU to support strike action.

You can find the results for the last referendum here –

<https://studentsunionucl.org/referendum-ucu-industrial-action#:~:text=6%2C290%20students%20voted%2C%20including%20275,%40ucl.ac.uk.&text=On%20Monday%2024%20October%2C%20University,the%202022%2D23%20academic%20year.>

HA explained that he has been receiving a few emails from Student Reps expressing their concerns about the 18 days of strikes and how this will impact their learning. HA asked zone members for their feedback.

Member – Students are being told that they don't have to be informed if their lecture is cancelled or if their lecturers are striking. During the cost of living crisis it was felt that

lecturers should be telling students if they are striking as this strike action could equate 18 different journeys to campus to then be told class is cancelled.

Member – Agreed with the previous point and asked how the hours of missed teaching are going to be compensated. They highlighted that over 9 hours on one of their modules is going to be missing due to the strikes.

Member – International students can pay between £15k-£40k per year and it is not fair to be paying for tuition fees if they are not getting taught.

HA responded and said that they are part of the strike mitigation group and professional services are trying to deal with this.

Julia Wojciechowska (JW) – How much pressure as the student body can we push on the University? The more of us that support the teachers the better? They expressed that students should feel annoyed they are missing lectures, but it is not the lecturer's fault.

JW – Expressed that they are aware of students who are paying for fees themselves are calculating how much each missed lecture/teaching session would cost and then are planning on not paying their fees. What is the UCL policy around this? What are the repercussions if you don't pay your fees? Are there any late payment fees?

DS responded as explained that if students withhold their fees, they are putting themselves at risk as they will go into debt status, and this will effect whether they can complete their degree and graduate. DS also explained that if a student is in tuition fee debt and then they apply for the Financial Assistance Fund then you would not be eligible for help until your fees had been paid. The University does not calculate a daily fee for each lecture/teaching session and the only accommodation that has been made is that students will not be assessed on content they have missed. DS also added that we won't know how many lecturers are going to be striking for the full 18 days as they may not be able to afford it and therefore some UCU members may just work to their contract which means teaching will go ahead

but if there are any other duties not in their contract such as personal tutoring, they may not do this. The purpose of strikes is to be disruptive and that is why lecturers do not tell anyone that they are striking.

Member – Last year the University gave money to the SU which came from savings from the strikes, is this open to international students

DS responded and said that all SU funds are open to any enrolled UCL student. The UCL Financial Assistance Fund is also open to any registered UCL student.

You can find more details about all available hardship funds here above

Member – Raised that there is a class action lawsuit at the moment which is around suing Universities for disruption to teaching caused by the pandemic/strikes.

DA explained that as this is a national strike and therefore national bargaining this doesn't mean that UCL is offering the lowest amount of money. The nation needs to come to a resolution and this is not always easy for some institutions. DA expressed that as students have voted for the SU to support the strikes they cannot go to academics and ask them not to strike. DA also told Zone members that if they choose not to pay their fees then this does not help the situation as the University is using these fees to pay the academics. DA added that the Chief Financial Officer will be coming to Union Exec on Monday 6 February 2023 to speak about the University's finances.

Member – As a UCU member and PGTA they emphasised that the best thing to do would be to voice any action/discontent to the University now as these next few weeks are critical.

Member – They heard that for one of their courses there will be 5 lessons missing and exams have had to be changed. Is there anyway for students to be given the resources so they can self-learn and out of timetable classes to catch-up on anything missed.

DS responded and explained that this is unfortunately part of the disruption and as standard procedure you will not be assessed on anything you miss and there will not be any catch-up sessions for missed teaching.

Member – How much power do the professional services have? Can we clog the system with requests for compensation?

DA responded and said that some of the professional service staff will also be striking. He added that students can request compensation, but it is unclear whether any money will be given. DA understands the frustration from students and would like student feedback on what they think the University should be cutting back on so that they can pay the lecturers more.

Action DA and JSW to meet to discuss bringing this to a future Zone meeting and a further discussion on how students can actually support the strikes.

JSW expressed that some of the issues go beyond the strikes, and this is all a symptom of the Higher Education sector not receiving enough funding for years.

DA explained that the UCL Council makes the decisions at the highest level, and he would be happy to put Zone members in touch with members from the UCL Council.

Member – What can students do that do not support the strikes – should they stop attending?

DS responded and said that students should not put their studies at jeopardy and students should continue to speak to their module leaders and lecturers to find out if they are striking.

Member – They explained that they do not receive assessment feedback on time and sometimes it takes over 3 months to receive the feedback. Concerns regarding action short of a strike which may include a marking boycott. Member expressed that if students have to wait over 6 months for feedback how will they learn from their mistakes and improve.

Member – Question to HA – What do I tell students about compensation?

HA responded and said that students can make a claim to the University but there is no guarantee that they will receive any money.

Another member also responded and said students can get involved with the class action claim and there is an open letter to UCL regarding the strikes.

Member – Expressed that they didn't feel like students knew where to vote in the most recent referendum regarding the SUs stance on whether to support the strikes. They felt that 6,000 students was not representative of a 50,000 student body.

Member responded and said that it is easy to vote and it isn't an awareness raising problem, it is related to the fact that people only care once it effects them.

Member – asked a question around meeting a benchmark/quote for referendums.

JSW responded that for referendums 5% of the student population need to vote in order for it to be valid, which is one of the highest benchmarks in the country.

Member asked who decides on the 5% and if someone wanted to change this how do they do it?

JSW responded and explained that a student would need to submit a policy proposal and then it will come to a Zone to be discussed and voted on and then it will go to Union Executive for a further discussion and if it passed there it will lead to an amendment in the SUs bylaws. There will need to be a 75% majority in Union Executive for it to pass. JSW also added that if students wanted to hold another referendum regarding supporting the strikes then they would need to get 250 signatures.

Member asked how does signature collecting work?

JSW responded – Those who wanted to hold the referendum would need to explain what their petition was about and then gather students' names, UPI number and

UCL email addresses so that they can confirm they are students. Students can gather this data and put it on an excel sheet and then send it to the SU. Then Union Exec will decide on the full schedule of the referendum.

DA added that the current position on the strikes is held until November 2024.

Member raised that if students are Postgraduate Research then they can also become a UCU members and they can participate in the ballots and access the UCU hardship fund, in addition to being part of the Students' Union.

Member – Can the SU gather more data throughout the year regarding the strikes – prior to strike action and then during.

DA responded positively to this and asked JSW whether a poll about the strikes could be sent out to the Student Reps.

Action JSW, DA and Danielle Bradford to meet to discuss this further.

Emma Francis (EF) – Raised that if students are being asked about their opinions of the strikes than they should be signposted to the UCU website where they can learn about the reasons why they are striking.

Member also added that if students should have more than a yes or no option as sometimes it might be that they don't have enough information.

EF Highlighted that due to the strikes PhD students who are paid less are being asked to cover for the lecturers striking.

Member – How many SUs are supporting the strikes

JSW responded and stated that there are lots of SUs supporting them but didn't have an exact figure.

7. Matters for Discussion - Experience of PGTAs

HA asked members for feedback on the PGTA student experience

EF raised that they have been in contact with the PGR Faculty Reps and they are working on compiling a report outlining the issues PGTA's face. Some of the main issues surround getting contracts and pay being lower at UCL compared to other institutions. They will be sending this to the Doctoral School and they asked if HA would like to be involved.

HA responded saying they would like to be involved and they will speak in more depth outside of the meeting.

Action: HA to meet with EF

Member – Faculty Rep for Law and they said that there are issues with getting PGTA contracts in the Law School

HA responded and said that they have spoken with the Dean of the Law School and they mentioned that they are aware of issues with contracts and would like student feedback on this.

Member – Question for HA – Can you provide an update in a newsletter about pay for PhD students.

Action: HA to include PhD pay in a future update.

8. Matters for Discussion - Supervision/Personal tutoring

HA explained that one of the Pro-Vice Provost Student Academic Engagement's remints includes overseeing the supervision and personal tutoring system, they need feedback in order to make improvements.

HA also informed the Zone that they spoke to the transition mentor team about the current system and the potential of extending it to Term 2 and to extend it second year students as well, and they have said that is unlikely that this will happen due to a low uptake. The team did say that if individual programmes wanted to create their own version for second years then they would be happy to support the implementation. The

team did however advise HA that they are thinking of developing a transition mentor scheme for PG students to help them get used to UCL.

Feedback from Zone was positive about the PG transition mentor scheme

JW raised that it might be better to focus more on increasing the events in the departments rather than having a structured programme. It was felt that students can find out more information at an event and you can meet more people. Member asked HA if there could be a rule that tells faculties that events need to be done. HA said he would meet with member to speak about this.

Action: HA to meet with JW to discuss

Member said that in Engineering at the beginning of Term they have an event for years 1-4 to come along and solve an Engineering problem together and then they can win a prize. They spoke very positively about this and felt it could be replicated across other faculties.

Member explained that they were a transition mentor and they said that the topics they are given to speak to their mentee about aren't very good. They mainly focus on welcoming them into London and career prospects rather than things like how to use Moodle. They also highlighted that RUMS have something called RUMS mums and dad and they mentor the younger students which has been more effective than the transition mentor programme. They also suggested that it would be good if departmental societies were allocated funding and then they could run the events for each faculty.

Member raised that they used to receive funding from their faculty but due to cuts they have had to reduce the number of activities and what is available at the events for example doughnuts.

Member highlighted that in the IOE students come to campus to attend lectures and then they go home as they are all teachers and will be working whilst studying. There is also a high proportion of students with children/caring responsibilities. They suggested that if

there was a mentor system where you could set up a quick Zoom call or a text message that would be better for them.

Member raised that in regard to personal tutoring they have been told that they need to complete a two-page document in order to get an appointment with their personal tutor. It was felt that this is a barrier for students, and it will put students off getting on contact. It was also felt that if the situation was urgent then students shouldn't have to be filling in a document and there should be drop-in hours available.

Multiple Zone members also agreed that completing a form is not appropriate and there should be office hours available.

HA responded and also highlighted that there appears to be inconsistencies across faculties with the personal tutor framework. Some have very positive experiences and others have very negative experiences with little to no contact from their personal tutors.

Callie Yoo also expressed that students should be assigned to personal tutors with similar ethnic backgrounds or gender orientations. It was felt that this would help students form better relationships with staff as they would be able to relate to one another through lived experiences.

Member raised that they would prefer to have someone that is different to them so that they can learn.

Member suggested that students should be able to indicate a preference as to whether they would like a personal tutor with similar characteristics.

Member asked whether it would be better for personal tutors to receive more training so that they can better support students from different backgrounds to themselves. However other members in the zone felt that training would not be sufficient compared to lived experiences.

HA shared that these were good ideas however practically this is unlikely to happen due to shortages of staff.

DS also raised that the University wellbeing team also faces this issue where their service consists of mainly white female members of staff, but they do signpost students to other organisations that might be more suitable. For example, organisations that offer counselling in first languages rather than in English as a second language. DS also highlighted that this is something that wouldn't be possible when it came to personal tutors.

Member – They are part of the Brain Sciences Faculty and they said that there are huge gaps where some students don't even know they have a personal tutor and some are more helpful than others.

Action: HA will feedback all of this information to the Pro-Vice Provost Academic Student Engagement.

9. Matters for Approval - Approval of minutes from the last meeting

Minutes approved

10. Officer Updates and Questions - Education Officer

Question from member - Lead Department Reps have raised concerns that they don't know what the format of their exams are going to be e.g. short questions, multiple choice etc. What should I tell them?

Seyi Osibamowo responded and said that they are having meetings with the assessments team, and they are currently working on how to make students feel more comfortable with the exam formats. There is also a meeting around marking and making sure students know where to get information about their exams and who to contact if they need support.

Question from member – Response time from lecturers are bad and in some cases students are not hearing back for months, what do I do?

HA advised member to contact their faculty and raise a complaint

Question from member – are there any policies regarding alcohol in exam settings as students were being given alcohol after exams.

Action: HA will send a follow up email to the member with any policies.

11. Officer Updates and Questions - Equity & Inclusion Officer

N/A

12. Any Other Business

N/A

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record	
Chair:	Hamza Ahmed, Education Officer
Signature:	Hamza Ahmed
Date:	08/02/2023