STUDENTS' UNION UCL

Education Zone
Minutes

Date: Tuesday 31 October 2023
Time: 18:00 – 20:00
Venue: Taviton Street 14-16 Room 347

Chair: Shaban Chaudhary, Education Officer

Members:	P	AP	AB
Ahmad Ismail, Equity & Inclusion Officer		X	
Anji Suri, Trans Officer	X		
Bella Qureshi, Faculty of Laws UG Rep	X		
Connar Mawer, Faculty of Medical Sciences PGR Rep (Non-Clinical)	X		
Diksha Shahakar, Faculty of Arts and Humanities PGT Rep	X		
Elisa de Aragao Bibay, Women's Officer	X		
Ellen Durban, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences PGR Rep	X		
Emma Pearlstone, Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences PGT Rep	X		
Georgina Wilson-Cousins, Faculty of the Built Environment PGT Rep	X		
Hilary Tang, Faculty of Arts and Humanities UG Rep	X		
Issy Smith, Postgraduate Officer	X		
Jacqui Lee, Institute of Education PGT Rep	X		
Jianing Zhou, Institute of Education PGR Rep		X	
Kerem Isik & Yuvraj Jadeja, Faculty of Life Sciences UG Rep	X		
Luna De La Llama Kempeneers, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences PGT Rep		X	
Manya Gupta, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences UG Rep	X		
Menglong Bao, Institute of Education UG Rep	X		
Micah Gerstner, LGBQ+ Officer	X		
Michael Chan, Faculty of Life Sciences PGT Rep			X
Mihika Kulkarni, Faculty of Brain Sciences PGT Rep	X		
Naif Alrehaili, Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences PGR Rep		X	
Padhmaja Varadaraj Ravichandar, Faculty of Population Health Sciences PGT Rep	X		
Philip Greger and Suzanna Chen, Disabled Students' Officer		X	
Pranshu Goyal, Faculty of Engineering PGT Rep			X
Preetika Bharti, Faculty of Laws PGT Rep	X		
Rawleka Wilson and Rachel Lim, People of Colour Students' Officer	X		
Rong Zhou, Faculty of Engineering UG Rep	X		
Shaban Chaudhary, Education Officer, Chair	X		
Shirui Fan, Faculty of Medical Sciences PGT Rep	X		
Solon Tono Fountzopoulos, Faculty of Medical Sciences UG Rep (Non-Clinical)	X		
Sophie-Jayne Bush, Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences UG Rep	X		
Tianxin Pu, Faculty of Brain Sciences UG Rep	X		
Tuamoru Odii, Faculty of Brain Sciences PGR Rep	X		
Vi Wang, Faculty of the Built Environment UG Rep	X		
Yasmin Garcia-Sterling, Research Students' Officer	X		
Yolanne Lee, Faculty of Engineering PGR Rep	X		

Quorum: 19

In Attendance:

| Jeff Saddington-Wiltshire, Representation and Democracy Manager, Minutes |
| Carol Paige, Policy and Research Coordinator |
| Nicole Izurieta & Steph Esuola, Scheduling Team. |

1. Preliminary matters – Welcome and Introductions

Education Officer warmly welcomes all members to first Education Zone of the year and asked staff members present to introduce themselves.

2. Preliminary matters - Brief overview of Education Zone

Representation and Democracy Manager, Jeff Saddington-Wiltshire (JSW) gave overview of Education Zone, outlining details of the voting process and the content of meetings.

Shaban gave an overview of the zone. Emphasised that we will have different guests attending the zone to reflect some of the key priorities relating to Education at UCL.

3. Announcements - Rep Election Results

Education Officer, Shaban Chaudbary (SC) 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. Special Guest – Scheduling Team

Nicole Izurieta (NI) and Steph Esuola (SE) were invited to attend Education Zone to provide an update on Scheduling at UCL.

NI and SE delivered a presentation and explained that the priority for the Scheduling Team this academic year is to release earlier, simpler timetables whilst reducing the administrative burden for staff and making best use of the space at UCL. They will do this by making improvements to systems and supporting departments, for example, by producing 'Clashing Reports'.

SE highlighted that lots of feedback had been gathered previously, however, it is important to capture the student voice through focus groups, surveys, Academic Rep Engagement and Governance Board to ensure that the latest student views are captured. This will hopefully increase student satisfaction with Scheduling. A Menti Poll was produced and the following responses were given by attendees:

Question	Yes	No	Specific Feedback
Are you happy with your timetable?	6	15	
Do you find your timetable easy to use?	13	9	
Do you have timetabling constraints?	10	11	Part-Time jobs, modular or part-time students were seen as significant constraints. Sometimes teaching occurs on the same day and if a student cannot attend this can lead to

			more issues, especially if classes are taught at Birkbeck with no Lecturecast facilities. This is an Estates issue which NI and SE will feed back. Commuting students also have numerous issues with Scheduling, particularly if there are last minute changes which impact their travel plans. Student Officers, Clubs and Societies are often frustrated at not being able to book spaces.
Do you want the timetable to be published earlier?	13	2	
Did you receive your first choice of modules?	10	3	Module selection can come late for some Departments and Programmes such as Science and Technology Studies. For students doing joint degrees, such as PPE, there needs to be a diversity of choice available.
Would you like to have recorded lectures and spend more time in person in smaller classes?	10	7	It was noted that hybrid learning for larger courses should be difficult. A lack of Lecturecast for some lectures, particularly if it is mentioned in SORAs can be a discrimination issue.
Do you want classes to be spread out across the year?	11	5	

Additional feedback:

Education Zone members would prefer to have classes condensed into a few days rather than spread out across the week.

International students are paying significantly higher tuition fees so the education they receive should be of the highest standard with work being marked on time, for example, Anatomy Grades for Life Science students still have not been released.

There were numerous discussions about Scheduling flexibility if a student has a SORA, this will be explored in more detail as part of the planned focus groups. It was noted that flexibility within Scheduling is particularly difficult as UCL has a vast student body but with limited room space.

Attendees outlined that there is frequently not enough time to move between classes and the 'UCL Hour' to give 10 minutes of travel time is inconsistently applied.

There were numerous issues whereby the administration of Departments and Faculties fell outside the UCL system. For example, MSCi Architecture students do not have an online timetable. Lots of

sessions, particularly in Life Sciences and MAPS are not being recorded. Similarly, for Life Sciences and MAPS, module selection is manually updated by Administrators.

Questions:

How would the exam structure work with the potential of classes in Term 3?

This is just a possibility to be explored?

Who decides the timings of lessons, particularly 08:00 lectures at UCL East?

These are Departmental decisions.

Who decides when the Lectures will be?

Usually departments do and then Central Timetabling will come up with a schedule.

Conclusions and final remarks:

There was a consensus within the room indicating that students prefer in-person lectures, but content should be recorded for accessibility purposes.

Attendees were given an open question to ask about their ideas to improve timetabling, NI and SE will include this feedback as they try to implement changes and improvements.

Finally, NI highlighted that there will be future focus groups for students to provide their feedback.

5. Officer Priorities – Education Officer

SC provided an update of their priorities for this academic year and specifically focused on:

- Academic Reps and effective feedback loops.
- Democratic participation particularly with an upcoming General and Mayoral Election.
- International students particularly supporting students who had been impacted by Covid-19 and the Marking & Assessment Boycott which has impacted graduation and job prospects.
- Ensuring that students are assessed in a genuine and authentic way.
- Reviewing space on campus, particularly as UCL is based in central London.
- Continuing to push for a new Students' Union building as a new social hub on campus.

Academic Reps and feedback

6. Officer Priorities – Postgraduate Officer

Issy Smith (IS) also provided an update on their priorities, particularly relating to Education:

- Increase the effectiveness of the Academic Rep system focusing on effective feedback, linking with the Sabbatical Officers and Networking.
- Following up with the Chief People Officer regarding the rights and contracts for Postgraduate Teaching Assistants.
- Work with the previous Research Students' Officer regarding the experience of Postgraduate Research students with disabilities.
- Making gradual improvements to ensure that the academic year is not solely focus around Undergraduate students.

7. **Officer Priorities – Equity & Inclusion Officer**

IS also outlined the priorities of Ahmad Ismail, the Equity and Inclusion Officer:

- Review and refine the structure of EDI Reps across UCL.
- Input in to further reviews of the Term 3 structure.
- Help international students make the most out of their time at UCL.

8. **Matters for Information – Staff Updates**

JSW highlighted that the Representation and Democracy Team had primarily been focusing on Rep Elections, Academic Rep Returns, an incoming Student Officer Review and preparing for the Leadership Race in March 2024.

Policy and Research Coordinator, Carol Paige (CP) explained that the role of the Policy and Research Team is to provide briefings and policy expertise to Policy Zones throughout the academic year. CP also encouraged attendees to read through the Priorities for Education Report.

9. **Matters for Information – Advertise additional UCL committee positions**

JSW promoted vacancies for Academic Board and Education Committee which will be circulated via email. Members were reminded that to make Faculty-wide changes they can raise issues at their respective Faculty Education Committees. Whereas policies and ideas to influence UCL-wide education issues can explored at Education Zone.

10. **Matters for Information – Outcomes from and inputs to UCL committees**

Not discussed.

11. **Matters for Discussion – Agree priorities for the academic year**

SC provided an overview of the priorities for Education Zone which were discussed at the Policy Summit meeting on Saturday 28 October:

- Facilities, Spaces
- AI use
- Communication (Department, Central)
- Attendance
- Personal Tutoring
- Internship/Research and Postgraduate Job opportunities
- Assessment and Feedback

Further ideas were also discussed:

A centralised appeals process for SORAs if students wish to raise a complaint about a Departmental decision. It was acknowledged that there are inconsistencies and bias within the appeals system, particularly regarding assessments, as the same staff members within a Department are reviewing Appeals. Work is also underway to introduce two 'free passes' per academic year for self-certification.

It was also noted that the Careers Service appear to be overwhelmed with attendees struggling to book guidance appointments.

There was additional support to consider the experience of Postgraduate students who have learning difficulties. This will likely be picked up in the work that IS has been exploring with the previous Research Students' Officer.

Timetabling and scheduling for Postgraduate students was also cited as a key issue, particularly for Postgraduate Taught students who have a compact academic year.

Finally, there was general consensus that communication between the different roles within the Academic Rep system needs to be improved with SC wanting to increase the amount of funding in this area.

12. Matters for Discussion – Feedback about teaching

There was a brief discussion about students struggling to understand British accents and colloquialisms. Translation software and tools were cited as reasonable solutions to this problem, however, there implementation across UCL is fairly sporadic.

13. Matters for Discussion – Social time between Academic Reps

Not discussed – although this is a priority for SC and IS anyway.

14. Matters for Approval – Elect one person to Union Executive

There were four candidates for the Education Zone representative on Union Executive:

Georgina Wilson-Cousins
Manya Gupta

Rong Zhou
Sophie Bush

With 38% of the votes, Sophie Bush was successfully elected.

15. Any Other Business

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record	
Chair:	Shaban Chaudhary, Education Officer
Signature:	Shaban Chaudhary
Date:	13/11/2023