



Date: Thursday 26 March 2020
 Time: 18.00-21.00
 Venue: Online Meeting on Microsoft Teams

Board of Trustees Minutes

Chair: Ashley Slanina-Davies, Education Officer

Members:	P	AP	AB
Aatikah Malik, Welfare & International Officer, Vice-Chair	✓		
Aimee Connolly, Student Trustee (AM)	✓		
Ashley Slanina-Davies, Education Officer, Chair	✓		
Carol Paige, Democracy, Operations & Community Officer	✓		
Clare Bracey, External Trustee (Non-UCL)	✓		
D'Arcy McGuinness, Activities Officer	✓		
David Ruttenberg, Student Trustee (DR), via skype	✓		
Deepan Banati, External Trustee (UCL Staff)	✓		
Mary Basterfield, External Trustee (UCL Alumni)	✓		
Tishuana Mullings, Student Trustee (TM)	✓		
Vlad Dinu, Student Trustee (VD)	✓		

In Attendance:
Alex McKee, Head of Student Engagement & Communications
Catherine Barrow, Interim Head of Finance
Debbie Nichols, Head of Operations
Jim Onyemenam, Postgraduate Students' Officer
John Dubber, Chief Executive
Rebecca McLoughlin, Minutes
Nilisha Vashist, Women's Officer
Sandra Ogundele, Black & Minority Ethnic Students' Officer
Simon To, Leadership Development & Change Manager

1. Welcome & Introductions

The Chair welcomed the Board to the meeting. It was noted that the Student Trustee (AC) would be joining the meeting late.

2. Declaration of Interest

The Chair asked if there were any declarations of interest. The Student Trustee (VD) asked for confirmation on what this meant. The Chair responded that a declaration of interest is for members to declare any benefit (usually financial) from any matters likely to arise from the

business in the meeting, this benefit may be in respect of members of the Board or their family and associates. None were declared.

NOTED

3. Update on UCL's overall response and key issues for students

The Chair gave an overview of UCL's response to the current Coronavirus outbreak. The Chair confirmed that UCL has stopped all face-to-face teaching. All exams have been cancelled and replaced with either coursework or timed online exams. Masters students have no in person projects and all summer placements/internships have been cancelled.

The Chair noted that UCL have three different levels of in its crisis response governance structure. The Silver level has been split into 2 groups:

The Aquamarine stream which is dealing with issues from now until September and the Sapphire stream which is looking at from September onwards. The Sabbatical Officers are represented in all of these streams and the Chair confirmed that the Sabbatical Officers have already been feeding into all of the Aquamarine stream discussions and will shortly be also joining all of the Sapphire stream groups.

- The Chair outlined the key issues for students has been general anxiety and not knowing how their education will be affected. The Sabbs have been working to support UCL with improving their communication with students. There is also a lot of uncertainty around assessments and online teaching. A big concern for International students has been not knowing if they can get back home and issues about what will happen with their visas as a consequence.

The Chair noted that there has been some key wins for the Union such as:

- Getting UCL to let students out of their accommodation contracts early with no financial penalty.
- Obtaining quicker access for students to the financial assistance fund and ensuring this fund is topped up so will not be depleted.

The Chair added that they would like to personally thank the Union team for their incredible response. The Democracy, Operations and Community Officer said that they would like to thank the Chair who has done incredible work over the last two weeks.

The External Trustee (Non-UCL) asked if the Union had been in contact with NUS. The Black & Minority Ethnic Students' Officer confirmed that they participate in a Coronavirus update every

Tuesday with NUS which they found very helpful as they get to see what other Institutions are doing. They encouraged anyone interested in joining the meeting to let them know.

The Student Trustee (VD) mentioned that they are currently working on trying to get better exam conditions for students in the Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, but it has been hard trying to get in contact with departments.

The External Trustee (UCL Staff) asked if the Union have been in contact with other students' unions to see how they are coping and managing their internal systems during this time. The Chair responded that they have been in contact with Sabbatical Officers from other Unions but their response seems to be more about securing involvement in their university's decision-making bodies. The Postgraduate Students' Officer agreed and added that the Union's Sabbatical Officers are fortunate to be part of the decision-making at UCL and are able to ensure that the UCL approach is student focused. The Chief Executive added that they have also been in touch with other students' unions in London about how they are managing their responses to the situation and that there was a regular information exchange between the London SU Chief Executives.

The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) asked what is being offered to home students regarding their accommodation and also what has caused the most concern for students. The Chair replied that a few home students have stayed on in Halls even though they have been asked to leave. UCL will be moving them all into one building this weekend. The Chair commented that they have found that one of the biggest concerns for students has been financial and they have been pushing UCL to ask students to get in contact if they are struggling financially.

The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) asked how Union staff have been coping. The Chief Executive confirmed that they have been in touch with all Union staff regularly over the last few weeks through email and that all staff were regularly speaking with their line managers. The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) noted that they were pleased to hear about the regular communication to Union staff.

The Chair thanked all the Union staff involved in the recent elections and noted that three of the current Sabbatical Officers will be returning for a second term next year.

RECEIVED

4. Update on the Union's response, business continuity arrangements for critical functions and future plans to meet student needs

The Chief Executive gave an overview of the Union's overall response and noted that it has been a challenging few weeks for the staff team as they had moved rapidly to close the Union's face to face services and move to online delivery. The Chief Executive confirmed that since the last meeting of the Board, they had activated the Union's Emergency Response Team which

comprised the Union's Senior Management Team, the Education Officer and the Postgraduate Students' Officer. This team are meeting every day to manage the Union's transition to remote operation. Firstly, all the Union's activities and services were moved to remote operation which was a monumental task and now the Union is concentrating on how to keep everything operating remotely. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Union's main priority was always the safety and wellbeing of its staff and members.

The Chief Executive confirmed that they have been working closely with UCL and have been mirroring their decisions and steps whilst also supporting the Sabbatical Officers to challenge UCL where necessary to ensure that student's needs are prioritised. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Union has moved from a shutting down phase to now seeing how we can best serve students in this new way.

Advice Service

The Head of Student Engagement & Communications outlined the changes to the Advice Service and confirmed that the service has now moved completely online with calls being taken through Microsoft Teams. This information is also on the Union website. They confirmed that the Advice Service is now down to two advisers and the Advice & Advocacy Manager is producing weekly reports on the number of queries received and trends emerging. The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) asked if the Advice Service is able to manage all the queries they are receiving. The Head of Student Engagement & Communications confirmed that they are, as most of the current queries are quick, short queries.

The Student Trustee (VD) asked what were the most frequent issues from students. The Head of Student Engagement & Communications responded that most of the current queries related to finances and housing.

Marketing & Communications

The Head of Student Engagement & Communications gave an overview of the current communication strategy and circulated two links to the Board which are also on the Union website homepage: [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and the [student priorities](#) we are working on

The Head of Student Engagement & Communications confirmed that the Union have set up a facebook community page which over 700 students have already joined. The Union graphic designers have been offered out to other parts of UCL to help out if needed. There is also a planned live questions & answer session with the Sabbatical Officers.

The External Trustee (DR) commented that they have not really been affected by the current circumstances and that they may be able to assist with any questions or advice. The Head of

Student Engagement & Communications replied that this would be very useful and would arrange a meeting with them outside the meeting.

The Student Trustee (VD) asked what the Union has been communicating to students regarding tuition fee refunds. The Head of Student Engagement & Communications responded that this topic has not been included in the frequently asked questions section as at the moment the Union is concentrating on safeguarding student interest with things moving online. The Chair confirmed that at the moment they are concentrating on accommodation rent liability, issues regarding online assessment and the wellbeing of students. However the Chair noted that if the Union are mandated by students to act on this then they will.

Volunteering Service

The Head of Student Engagement & Communications confirmed that the two main areas in volunteering are student-led projects and one-off volunteering. These have both had to stop. At the moment volunteering is working towards when they will re-open and are reaching out to community partners to see how they can do this. They are also trying to move to online volunteering and are looking at mutual aid opportunities.

The Student Trustee (VD) asked about NHS volunteering. The Head of Student Engagement & Communications confirmed that this has been done directly through the UCL Medical School and they have been in touch with the UCL Director of Student Support & Wellbeing regarding support for students. The Societies & Media Manager has been working with RUMS (medical students) on signposting students.

The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) commented that there had been lots of fantastic work going on and commended all staff involved.

Clubs & Societies

The Head of Student Engagement & Communications confirmed that all in-person events and foreign travel have been cancelled. The elections went ahead online with all officer training moving online along with all clubs and societies awards. A new award has been introduced for the most inventive online activities. The Board noted that there has been lots of financial implications with refunds for events and payment of suppliers. Clubs and societies are moving from shutting down phase to moving all activities online. The Head of Student Engagement & Communications added that they have been working with other students' unions and with an external provider on this.

The Head of Student Engagement & Communications noted that TeamUCL activities have been cancelled. Project Active have been trialling some online sessions which have proved really

popular so far and are being opened up to Union staff. The Activities Officer confirmed that they have been working with other Activities Officers across the UK regarding good online activities.

The External Trustee (UCL Staff) thanked everyone for the update and asked if the Union have thought about the impact this will have on student numbers next year. The Head of Student Engagement & Communications replied that at the moment the Union is concentrating on getting back to business but will think about this in the coming weeks especially with when the Union starts planning for the Welcome Period. The Chair added that the Union will keep the Board updated on student initiatives and get the Board's input on these. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Union will soon begin the annual planning round for next year.

The Chief Executive asked the Board how often they would like to meet before the end of this academic year. The External Trustee (UCL Staff) replied that they would welcome an increase in the frequency of Board meetings and noted that early indications from UCL are that student numbers overall will be lower for next year with a large decrease in international students and a potential increase in home students. The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) agreed that they would like to meet again more frequently to discuss what financial help the Union will be receiving from the Government and UCL.

The Chair responded that they had recently met with the Provost and be reassured that UCL will support the Union, although the specifics have not yet been agreed. The Interim Head of Finance confirmed that they have been having regular meetings with the UCL Director of Finance & Business Affairs and UCL are aware of our issues and are looking to support us. The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) said that was good to hear and UCL should be offering to help the Union. The Chair confirmed that they would return to this matter under Any Other Business.

Democracy

The Head of Student Engagement & Communications confirmed that they had to suspend election campaigning on campus and move online. Overall the elections received a 12.8% turnout (14% last year) which was good considering the recent industrial action and having to close down the campus. They also confirmed that all Faculty Reps are meeting with the Chair as Education Officer, the Postgraduate Students' Officer and the Leadership Development and Change Manager, to check in on them and discuss student concerns. Policy Zones and the Union Executive are being set up to hold meetings online with some Policy Zones holding weekly meetings to discuss issues and concerns during this period. A near daily update was also being sent to our network of Academic Reps. The Student Choice Awards are still going ahead with the ceremony being held online. The deadline for applications has been extended and the awards had been adapted to recognise staff during the coronavirus outbreak. There was also work to guide departments to hold their Staff Student Consultative Committees online.

The Student Trustee (VD) asked how the Union was supporting Academic Reps on the tough topics they are currently dealing with. The Head of Student Engagement & Communications replied that this was being addressed on a case-by-case basis and the Chair confirmed that involves getting Academic Reps together on similar issues and getting them to present their case together.

The Head of Student Engagement & Communications advised the Board that the Postgraduate Students' Officer was currently responding to the local UCU branch regarding a letter from them asking UCL not to facilitate online learning. However, UCU have said that they are no longer supporting this stance in the current situation.

Commercial

The Head of Operations confirmed that all cafes and bars and the fitness centre have closed. All the excess food from the cafes was donated to a local food bank. All memberships to the fitness centre have been frozen and at the moment they are working through the student staff rotas to ensure that all wages are covered.

Human Resources

The Head of Operations confirmed that the Interim Human Resources Manager will be staying on until June when the Human Resources Manager returns from maternity leave. They noted that there is currently a freeze on all staff recruitment. The Interim Human Resources Manager has been sending out communications to staff regarding working from home and staff wellbeing.

Systems

The Head of Operations noted that the Systems team has been ensuring that all staff are able to work from home and access systems remotely. A step by step guide has been sent out to all staff.

Facilities

The Head of Operations noted that all the Union buildings have been locked down and any access to these buildings have to go through them.

The External Trustee (Non-UCL) asked if the Union are aware of how Union staff are managing to work from home now the schools are closed and also if any staff are self-isolating. The Head of Operations responded that Union has made allowances for staff who are unable to work from home due to caring responsibilities. They are also not aware of any staff currently self-isolating at home.

The Student Trustee (VD) asked if the Union predicted if any staff may have to be laid off due to the current circumstances. The Head of Operations responded that this was not in the planning and our aim is to support staff in the current situation and ensure that the Union maintains its

current staff capacity for when we are able to reopen face to face services. However, the Union is exploring the Government's scheme to enable staff to be 'furloughed' for a period of time to save money during the current closure period.

The External Trustee (UCL Staff) asked how the Union buildings were being secured as they are currently vacant. The Head of Operations confirmed that UCL Security are onsite looking after the buildings and the Union is in regular contact with them.

Finance

The Interim Head of Finance explained that the finance systems were not set up for agile working. The Systems team have been working on ensuring that Finance staff can access the finance systems from home. This is now up and running. At the moment the Finance team are concentrating on refunding students and paying suppliers whilst also ensuring there is still the same level of checks completed. The Interim Head of Finance confirmed that they will also be reviewing the Union's financial processes in more detail.

The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) asked what has been done to fix the VPN (Virtual Private Network) access. The Interim Head of Finance replied that they have been using the Exchequer helpline who confirmed that this system does not work well through VPN access. The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) noted that the Union should be able to get it to work properly and perhaps the speed is not fast enough. The Interim Head of Finance responded that this has been passed back to the UCL Information Services team but it is possibly due to the network capability of the staff at home. The Interim Head of Finance confirmed that they are meeting with the Systems team on Monday to discuss this further. The External Trustee (UCL Staff) suggested that they can give some tips to the Finance team about how to get the best out of VPN access and asked if they can help in any way to let them know. The Interim Head of Finance confirmed that they are having regular meetings with the UCL Director of Finance & Business Affairs and their team who have been incredibly supportive.

The External Trustee (Non-UCL) mentioned GDPR and that this needs to be looked at now staff are working from home. The Head of Student Engagement & Communications confirmed that GDPR has not been relaxed.

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5. Financial Impact and Planning

The Interim Head of Finance confirmed that all commercial outlets have been closed down and they are now modelling what expenditure the Union will be incurring against the reduced income. They noted that currently they are looking at liabilities and the financial performance at the year end. The Interim Head of Finance said that they are focussing on cash flow at the moment. There are also discussions taking place on what support they will receive from UCL and if the Union are

covered by the Government furlough scheme. It was noted that the Union currently forecasting an outflow of £1.2million up to the end of this financial year due to the closure of the commercial services.

The Head of Finance gave an overview of the Union's reserves and suggested some options for undesignating some of the funds to enable the additional costs of the closure period to be met. This included the Big Ideas Fund and the Shenley Soprtsground Fund.

The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) asked about the proposed redesignating of the Shenley reserve funds and asked where this had originally come from. The Interim Head of Finance confirmed that we are allowed to do this as these funds are unrestricted. The Chief Executive stated that the Union have two large reserve funds for Shenley. One is restricted funds which the Union cannot move. The other reserve is unrestricted but has been historically designated for the development and maintainance of the Shenley Grounds.

The Chief Executive noted that the Union would like to pay all student staff up until the end of July who are on zero-hours contracts. This could be done at a cost of around £200k. The Chief Executive also noted that UCL may be able to help with these funds and there is also the possibility of applying for support through the furlough scheme. The Activities Officer noted that not all student staff would be paid up until the end of July as all reception staff would finish up when term ends in June. The Head of Operations confirmed that the Union has already produced dummy rotas until the end of term so are aware of how many hours students would have been due to work. The Head of Student Engagement & Communications confirmed that this had been done during the budget reforecasting as the Union had to look at what they were due to spend up until the end of the financial year.

The External Trustee (UCL Staff) asked if the Union has had a discussion with UCL about receiving financial support from them so the Union does not have to use their reserves.

The Student Trustee (VD) asked where the restricted funds came from and why were they restricted. The Interim Head of Finance confirmed that some of the funds we have are restricted funds which means there is a legal covenant attached to them and legally we can only use them for the stated purpose.

The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) suggested that UCL should be stepping in to help the Union in this situation and that they suggested that the Chair and Chief Executive request an increase in the Union's grant this year to help meet the additional costs.

The Chief Executive agreed with the point raised by the External Trustee (UCL Alumni) about putting a clear case for support tp UCL before changing the Union's reserves. The External

Trustee (UCL Alumni) also suggested that this can also be used as part of the block grant negotiation. The External Trustee (UCL Staff) commented that the Union will definitely need some reserves for next year and that UCL would be in a much better place to support the Union this year, rather than next year.

The Board agreed that if UCL say no to offering support to the Union, then the Board can arrange a further meeting to discuss using the designated funds. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Union will approach UCL and say that the Board have asked if they will offer additional financial assistance. The Chief Executive will report back to the Board following UCL's response. The Board agreed for the Union to approach UCL and ask for financial assistance through to the summer.

RESOLVED

The Democracy, Operations & Community Officer stated that they are currently contacting student staff about their wages to let them know when they will be paid up until. They asked the Board for their guidance on when student staff should be paid up until. The Chair confirmed that they would like the Union to pay 100% of their wages with the funds coming from UCL, reserves or the furlough scheme. The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) suggested that this be given a time limit as to when it will be reviewed as to give an ongoing commitment would be unaffordable. The Chair suggested that it be time bond with when it was expected their employment would end. The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) confirmed that if the overall cost is around £200k, they would be happy to support this. The Chair asked if any members of the Board objected to this. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Emergency Response Team have discussed this and the Union are concerned about student staff wellbeing. Some student staff are distressed about their finances and this would give them reassurance. The Board noted that the furlough scheme may cover this and if not UCL may be able to assist. The External Trustee (UCL Staff) asked if this was reflected in the cash flow statement. The Democracy, Operations & Community Officer confirmed that it was included with the Union paying 100% of student staff wages.

The Board agreed to let student staff know that they will be paid 100% as per their rotas up until 1 July.

APPROVED

6. Update on Elections

The Head of Student Engagement & Communications thanked all staff involved in the recent elections given the unprecedented circumstances.

NOTED

7. Any Other Business

The Chair asked the Board if they would like another Board meeting before the next scheduled meeting in June. The Board agreed that they would. The end of April was suggested and the Chair confirmed that they would work to confirm a date.


ACTION: The Chair to confirm a date for an additional meeting.

The Chief Executive said that the Union had received good news just before the closure. UCL has awarded the Union £30k for scoping works on the refurbishment of the Lewis's Building. The Union have also been awarded £25k for scoping works on the future of the Shenley Sports Ground.

The Activities Officer confirmed that the Union has won the Varsity Series for the fourth year running.

The External Trustee (UCL Alumni) thanked all staff and the Sabbatical Officers for leading the Union through this difficult time and stated that they were proud to be associated with the Union.

The Chair added that the Chief Executive has been circulating clear communications to staff in trying to establish this new way of working. The Chair requested any feedback about the meeting to be sent to the Leadership Development & Change Manager.

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record	
Chair:	Ashley Slanina-Davies
Signature:	
Date:	29/07/2021

Action List

Actions	
The Chief Executive to approach UCL to request additional financial assistance to the Union to meet the costs of the closure of the commercial services.	Chief Executive and Head of Finance
The Chair to circulate a date for an additional Board meeting at the end of April.	The Chair