



**Date:** Monday 06 February 2023  
**Time:** 18:00 – 20:00  
**Venue:** Bentham House LG17 Lecture Room

## Union Executive

### Minutes

**Chair:** Deniz Akinci, Union Affairs Officer

Members:	P	AP	AB
Angel Ma, LGBTQ+ Officer			X
Angela Escobar Brown, Elected Officer From EZ	X		
Margaret Chung on behalf of Callie Yoo, BME Students' Officer	X		
Demetri Alvanis & Chiamaka Agu, Elected Officer From AZ	X		
Deniz Akinci, Union Affairs Officer, Chair	X		
Hamza Ahmed, Education Officer	X		
Harper Taylor-Hanson, Trans Officer	X		
Manon Simmons & Sasha Green, Women's Officer (Job Share)	X		
Mary McHarg, Activities & Engagement Officer	X		
Nick Miao, Elected Officer From WCZ	X		
Oluseyi (Seyi) A Osibamowo, Equity & Inclusion Officer	X		
Umair Mehmood, Welfare & Community Officer	X		
Vaania Kapoor Achuthan, Sustainability Officer	X		

In Attendance:
Jeff Saddington-Wiltshire, Representation and Democracy Manager
Samira Lily Chowdhury, Democracy Assistant, minutes
Simon To, Director of Policy, Governance and Advocacy
Rhiannon Ellis, Representation and Democracy Coordinator, minutes
Rupinder Sandal, Interim Head of Societies and Projects
Charu Gorasia, UCL's Chief Financial Officer
Student Observers (Udaya Goel, Jenna Ali, Muhammad Nusseibeh, Camilla Cerruti, Rachel Lam, Xin Huang, Dimitris Dimitropoulos)

### 1. Preliminary Matters - Welcome and Introductions

Union Affairs Office (DA) warmly welcomes attendees to the zone and asks attendees to introduce themselves.

### 2. Matters for Discussion - Informing Union Exec members about UCL finances

(CG) UCL's Chief Financial Officer has been invited to the zone to give an overview of UCL's financial strategy. She first provides an executive summary of UCL's income and costs from the last financial year. She also states that UCL plans to update their financial strategy soon, as it was last updated in 2018. CG emphasises how financial sustainability is paramount for UCL to maintain their mission of academic excellence.

CG states the following:

UCL currently has financial challenges, which have been exacerbated by current high inflation costs and the fact that they have very high fixed costs. UCL has limited opportunities to grow its income, partly due to the cap on tuition fees for home students. CG states that this capping is necessary in order to not increase the debt burden of home students.

The current economic climate has caused a significant hike in UCL's energy costs: they have increased by 155% this year. Unlike other universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, UCL does not have an endowment fund it can rely on and does not receive a large income from private enterprises.

UCL's income is partly used to pay for equipment, digital/estate investment, repair/maintain buildings and their sustainability strategy. UCL also has to repay debts: for instance, they owe money to the European Investment Bank.

UCL's financial sustainability is at risk, particularly as its income is limited and costs are rising. CG emphasises that UCL is working extremely hard to mitigate financial risk.

UCL's strategy involves investing in UCL to maintain its competitiveness, so it can continue attracting international students and research grants.

She states that some financial options are not feasible; for instance, they cannot fall back on reserves and cannot borrow anymore as they already have £580 million worth of debt.

UCL is assessing whether they can gain income from selling some of their assets: for instance, selling businesses not in use.

Their plan also includes reducing capital expenditure reduction by 30% through decreasing spending on UCL's buildings, infrastructure and equipment.

After her presentation, CG gives attendees the opportunity to ask any questions about UCL's finances.

NM (Elected Officer From WCZ) asks CG why UCL does not meet the UCU's (University and College Union) demands for a pay rise that is in line with inflation. CG responds, stating that UCL has already offered staff a pay rise of 5%, which she states is more in line with private-sector pay increases than public-sector. She states that UCL's income is limited, so they cannot keep increasing their costs.

International Students Officer (UG) asks whether students can get compensated for class missed due to staff strikes. CG states that the strikes will not affect students uniformly, as the UCU's planned 18 strike days would not impact any 1 student continuously. She also states that UCL has implemented mitigations to prevent students from being severely impacted by strike action; for example, students will not get assessed on subject matter that they missed due to strikes. She also states that in the current economic climate, it is not affordable for most universities across the country to meet the UCU's demands, as they are asking for a 15.4% pay rise this year; for instance, UCL would have to find more than £170 million in order to match the UCU's demands.

Attendee states that CG frames UCL's voluntary resignation scheme in a positive light. CG replies that she is agnostic towards the scheme: she states that many professional services and staff feel it is time for them to leave, and they appreciate receiving an upfront, tax-free lump payment. CG emphasises that nobody is forced to resign and that the scheme allows early academics to move into more senior roles that otherwise would not have been available. Attendee asks about UCL cutting staff's pensions. CG responds by stating that UCL does not legally control the valuations of pension funds, as trustees of pension funds do this. She also states that this is an issue across most sectors, not just universities.

### **3. Matters for Discussion - NUS National Conference policy submission**

JSW explains that each university union can send a policy proposal to the NUS National Conference, which the NUS will then lobby for. UCL's submission involves asking the NUS to lobby the government to provide more support for international students. No amendments were made to the policy submission.

### **4. Matters for Discussion - Collaboration between Zones/Chairs**

DA states that he wants to prioritise more collaboration between zones to ensure that each policy goes to the relevant zone.

### **5. Matters for Approval - Approval of minutes from the last meeting**

Minutes from the last meeting are approved.

### **6. Matters for Approval - Referendum on NUS affiliation**

HA (Education Officer) proposes that the SU holds a referendum on NUS affiliation. He believes that the SU should disaffiliate from the NUS for the following reasons:

The affiliation cost is £38,000, which HA says they could reinvest into SU if no longer affiliated with NUS. He states that the NUS has historically been a powerful force for representing students, but now they have become politically weak.

JSW clarifies that a SU referendum on NUS affiliation is already overdue, as the last referendum was in 2017.

MN (President of Palestinian society) states that this is a social justice issue, as he does not believe it is right that a Black Muslim woman was removed from her democratically elected position. He states that Queen Mary's Student Union has already voted to disaffiliate from the NUS.

OAO (Equity & Inclusion Officer) argues that the zone should focus less on the NUS's political controversies and more on its lack of power. She states that she spoke to NUS's Vice President, who could not offer any support to students for the current cost of living crisis.

Member asks whether it is possible to rejoin the NUS, if they become disaffiliated. ST (Director of Policy, Governance and Advocacy) clarifies that this is possible.

MH (Activities & Engagement Officer) states that NUS is not a useful organisation anymore, as they have no tangible power to lobby national and regional governments. MH states that there are many other avenues for lobbying; for instance, the SU is using their local and national connections to enact change. She states that the Union has significant lobbying power on its own, as they are the UK's biggest campus university and the UK's biggest student union.

Member asks why the NUS has lost its lobbying power. ST responds, stating that the NUS changed their legal structure and reduced fees to make its organisation smaller, which diminished its lobbying abilities.

MS (Women's Officer) asks the minimum number of votes needed for a referendum to be quorate. JSW states that 5% of UCL student body needs to vote for the referendum to be quorate; according to Union's bylaws if they do not reach 5%, the Union Executive has to decide the next course of action.

VKA (Sustainability Officer) reminds members that not the current discussion is not on whether to disaffiliate from the NUS; rather, it is about deciding whether to hold a referendum. She states that they should trust in the judgement of UCL's students.

HA states that all the Sabbatical Officers agree that the NUS has become a defunct institution. He also reminds members that it is entirely possible to rejoin the NUS later if they manage to regain their previous lobbying power.

Passed with 73% of the vote.

#### **7. Policy Proposals for Ratification - Re-affiliation of RUMS Clubs**

MH gives overview of policy to zone: current RUMS Clubs can reaffiliate if they have been disaffiliated. RS (Societies Programme Manager) clarifies that this policy includes making RUMS clubs the exception to the Union's duplication rule, which is the idea that the Union can only accept 1 type of each club.

Policy passes with 10 votes.

#### **8. Policy Proposals for Ratification - UCLSU Sustainability Training**

VKA gives overview of UCLSU Sustainability Training. She wants sustainability training to be a part of leadership training for all officers and committee members.

Policy passes.

#### **9. Policy Proposals for Ratification - Supporting the campaign for a London-wide rent freeze**

Policy passes.

#### **10. Matters for Information - Minutes from AZ2203**

Members approve minutes.

#### **11. Matters for Information - Minutes from EZ2203**

Members approve minutes.

#### **12. Matters for Information - Minutes from WCZ2203**

Members approve minutes.

#### **13. Officer Updates and Questions - Sabbatical Officers**

There are no questions.

#### **14. Officer Updates and Questions - Student Officers**

There are no questions.

#### **15. AOB**

There is no other business.

Chair:	Deniz Akinci, Union Affairs Officer
Signature:	Deniz Akinci
Date:	16/02/2023