



**Date:** Tuesday 06 June 2023  
**Time:** 18:00 – 20:00  
**Venue:** LG26 Bentham House, Hybrid

## 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  |
| 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             |
| Rhiannon Ellis, Representation and Democracy Coordinator, minutes           |
| Simon To, Director of Policy, Governance and Advocacy                       |
| Student Observers – Alfie Hall and the Plant Based University Campaign Team |

### 1. Preliminary Matters - Welcome and Introductions

Deniz Akinci (Chair) welcomed members to the last Union Executive of the year.

### 2. Matters for Approval - Approval of minutes from the previous meetings

Minutes were approved.

### 3. Matters for Approval – Bye-Law Tidy

Jeff Saddington-Wiltshire (JSW) provided an update explaining that it is good practice to review the Students' Union bylaws on an annual basis to ensure that they are functional and fit for purpose. The amendments include:

- Removal of the reference to 'Members Meetings'
  - o This change has been made because there is no longer a room big enough to have these meetings and therefore they will not be quorate.
- Threshold for referendums and Sabbatical Officer no-confidence is now set to 1%.

- This means that the threshold for referendums has increased from 0.5% to 1% meaning a minimum of 500 students need to sign a petition for a referendum to be called.
- The threshold for a Sabbatical Officer no confidence vote has been lowered from 2% to 1% as it was felt that if there was a minimum of 500 students expressing a concern regarding a Sabbatical Officer then that would be sufficient. This was also debated on during a previous Union Executive meeting and is benchmarked against other Russell Group Students' Unions
- Removal of reference to 'Union Council'
  - This change has been made as it has now been replaced by Union Executive
- Officer titles and the meeting that they attend
  - This change has been made as there were some inconsistencies with what Student Officers attended which zones
- Wording regarding aspects of referenda
- Activities Zone to have ownership of the Club and Society Regulations
  - This change has been made as they are the experts in this area and as Union Executive does not have sufficient experience to give an overview of these regulations it would be better placed in the Activities Zone.
- 28 day membership requirement for Activities Reps has been removed
  - This change has been made because they are elected in October and therefore it could be physically impossible for anyone to stand for an Activities Rep position because they wouldn't have had membership for long enough.
- Specific detail about how NUS National Conference Delegate vacancies are addressed
  - This change was made because there was an incident where delegates had to be elected in a Union Executive meeting due to there being 15 vacancies. The changes now mean that those elected in any cross campus ballot can put their name forward to be an NUS delegate.

[Vote passes at 100% - Amendments approved](#)

#### **4. Policy Proposals for Ratification – Supporting Students in Sex Work**

- Mary McHarg (MM) presented and explained that this is a lapsed policy and they would like this to become active policy again as the SU should be supporting students in sex work.
- DA asked what are we asking for?
  - MM responded and explained the policy is asking for resources to be provided to students and if a student is involved in sex work and has a disciplinary then they will be supported by the SU to make sure that this is not used against them. The policy is also asking that the SU actively provides support for students in sex work
- DA asked what is the Nordic Model?

- MM explained that this is the criminalisation of the purchase of sex which would mean that those taking part in sex work would be unable to report anything to the police if they need.
- Nick Miao (NM) asked what support is the SU currently providing?
  - MM responded and said that there are resources available in the advice service.

Vote passes at 86% - Policy Approved

## 5. Policy Proposals for Ratification – Use of Amazon vouchers and products

- MM presented and explained that this policy lapsed this year and they would like to make this active policy again. This policy does not mean that there is an outright ban on the use of Amazon, however it asks that it is used as a last resort. MM also explained that previously this policy has not been as publicised however if it passes they would like it to be extended out to societies and student groups.
- NM asked if they are part of a student group and they have limited funds what should be done and is there any support?
  - MM said to apply for grant money

Vote passes at 83% - Policy Approved

## 6. Policy Proposals for Ratification – Plant-based motion

- Alfie Hall (AH) presented and explained that this policy proposal is about getting the SU food outlets to become 60% plant-based by the 2024/25 academic year and then increase by 10% each year subject to a positive financial and social yearly review. AH added that the reason this has been proposed is because animal agriculture is a leading cause of climate change and lots of this research has come from UK Universities such as UCL. AH also explained that there is a lot of precedent for this change as similar policies have been proposed at other UK institutions.
- AH explained that they have actively reached out to all of the members of the Welfare and Community Zone before the policy was proposed, and they have also met with James (Head of Commercial services in the SU) who said that they were happy with the proposal. AH also added that the Union outlets are already 50% meat free.
- JSW shared some feedback from Alec (Catering Manager in the SU) – Alec said in terms of implementation, could there be some clarification on whether this is just pre-packaged sandwich items, or whether this also involves confectionary items in the convenience stores.
  - AH responded and said that in the proposal it was relating to the pre-packaged sandwich and ready-meals items rather than confectionary items and drinks etc.
  - Vaania Kapoor (VK) also said that in the proposal it states ‘main meals’ and this is because this is where the main carbon emissions come from, compared to sides etc and this is where the main source of calories and sales the Union makes.

- JSW shared further feedback from Alec who asked what would the criteria be for the annual review?
  - o AH responded and said that the lead Sabbatical Officer and James would be in charge of the review.
- UM shared that their only concern is that the Union is currently 50% meat free, whereas this policy is asking for 60% plant-based which means that there will be the removal of dairy products etc. UM asked for the figures around what is the current percentage of plant-based products vs meat-free and what would the effect be? What types of products would be removed?
  - o DA asked for further clarification from Alec
  - o VK responded and said that they have asked for the figures from Alec, however they have not received anything as of yet. VK did however say that when the Union went to default plant milk that had two positive implications – 1) it removed an allergen which is dairy, 1 in 3 students are dairy intolerant. 2) it helped boost sales of plant-based milk and sales have increased by 30%. Therefore removing dairy is unlikely to have a substantial impact.
  - o AH responded and said that this is about making a just transition and ensuring that the plant-based items are nutritious and nice to eat.
- NM asked in terms of actual practical changes, is this to replace the existing options in the SU outlets to more plant-based options?
  - o DA said yes
- NM asked a further question asking what the options are?
  - o DA responded that James would be looking at the options and they would decide based on which meat products sell the most and then remove those where sales are lower.
- NM asked a question about how the review would take place?
  - o DA explained that if after the first year there are no issues socially or financially then the policy will continue. If there are issues the Sabbatical Officers and the Senior Leadership Team in the SU will review the options and then bring it back to Union Executive. The Board of Trustees also has the overall oversight of the Union and therefore if it is damaging the Students' Union then it can be put to a stop.
  - o VK also shared that James and the Sabbatical Officers will review the proposal and they would then bring back their findings to Union Executive.

Vote passed with 86% - Policy Approved

## 7. Matters for Discussion – Feedback about Union Executive

- JSW reminded everyone to complete the survey which can be accessed here - [https://studentsunionucl.org/webform/policy\\_zone\\_feedback](https://studentsunionucl.org/webform/policy_zone_feedback)
- Members asked for refreshments to be provided at the meetings

- UM asked how is the membership for Union Executive decided?
  - o DA responded and said that every few years a Sabb team does a democratic review and this current structure was decided on in 2018.
  - o JSW explained that Liberation Officers and Sustainability Officer are in Union Executive because they encapsulate everything the SU needs to be in terms of inclusive and sustainable.
- NM asked why aren't there other Student Officers on Union Executive? They felt that the Accommodation and Housing Officer should be on Union Executive because of the housing crisis.
  - o UM responded and said that Union Executive is there to decide on policies affecting large amounts of students and therefore it might not always be relevant for the Accommodation and Housing Officer, compared to the Liberation Officers for example.

#### **8. Matters for Information – Minutes from AZ2204**

Members approved minutes.

#### **9. Matters for Information - Minutes from EZ2204**

Members approved minutes.

#### **10. Matters for Information - Minutes from WCZ2204**

Members approved minutes.

#### **11. Officer Updates and Questions – Sabbatical/Student Officers**

There are no questions.

#### **12. AOB**

- DA explained that there has been three discussions amongst the Sabbatical Officer Team surrounding the role of the Union Affairs Officer and he gave an update on the proposed changes to the role.
  - o The first change involves fixing the position of Chair of the Board of Trustees to the Union Affairs Sabbatical Officer and this will become effective from 16 July 2023. This decision has been made within the Sabbatical Officer team as the decision on who Chairs the Board belongs to them.
  - o The second proposed change is to re-name the Union Affairs role to President. This change would take place in the next Leadership Race Election period. The remit of the role will not change. DA explained that this is something Union Executive will need to discuss and then vote on before the next Leadership Race.

- DA asked for feedback from the zone members and advised that they would be sending out further information via email over the next few weeks.
  - o MM added that the name change to President will also put UCL in line with the majority of other SUs in the country. MM said that the role of Union Affairs is the role of President, however there will be implications of changing the name.
- Seyi Osibamowo (SO) fed back that whilst the role is not changing, considerations need to be made around the impact and influence that the name change has and how it will be perceived by students when it comes to the next Leadership Race. SO also said that it is unclear how students will view the the role of the President compared to the other Sabbatical Officers, in addition to how this will change the dynamic in the Sabbatical Officer team. SO also said that this adds a lot of pressure to the individual in the President role and there has also been issues with students creating societies to become the President so that they can just add it to their CV. SO expressed concern around whether the name change would impact the quality of student running for this position.
- NM said that by having the Union Affairs role it provides the Sabbatical Officer Team with a flat structure, however by changing the role to President it would change this dynamic within the Sabbatical Officer Team. NM also shared that it has been confusing understanding who leads the Students' Union as there are six Sabbatical Officers, and therefore more should be done to provide further context to the student body.
- NM also asked in terms of external engagement how is this currently managed?
  - o DA responded and said at the moment when the Sabbatical Officers introduce themselves, members of UCL did not understand what the role of Union Affairs is and they would then introduce themselves as the President so that they understood.
  - o DA also said that in regards to the flat structure, it falls with the staff team during the handover to explain the situation and set the flat structure and emphasise that there is no managerial elements to the role.
  - o NM said that it would be difficult to convey this as currently society Presidents do have managerial oversight and therefore it would be confusing when looking at the Sabbatical Officer structure.
- SO also shared that when it comes to the Leadership Race are students more likely to run for the President position over the other Sabbatical roles, because they think that the title implies that you will be able to complete your priorities more easily if you have that hierarchial title even if it is not hierarchial in practice.
  - o DA responded and said that it could actually increase the participation for all of the positions.
- NM asked if there are different terms for the role at other SUs?
  - o JSW explained that Unions have different names for the roles and different structures for example a President and then Vice-Presidents, or President of Education and President of Welfare to keep the prestige of the President title, but also keeping the flat structure.

- NM responded and said that if all of the Sabbatical Officers were uplifted to President of their remit, then this would also cause more distance between the Student Officer positions.
- NM asked what was the name of the role previously?
  - Simon To (ST) responded that the role has had multiple names which included – finance, democracy, administration, services, communication, engagement officer.
  - ST also said that when the SU moved to the current structure research was conducted with students and at the time they were undecided about whether there should be a President. At the time there was a lot of change including the renaming of other positions and it was felt that due to this it would be better to keep the Union Affairs title as it was.
  - ST also said that other SUs do also have the Union Affairs title, in addition to names such as General Secretary, Internal Affairs or External Affairs.
- NM asked what was the problem with having the title Union Affairs other than external outreach?
  - DA responded and said that the external outreach was the main problem as no one understands what the role is. DA said that due to the nature of the role you are not always engaging with people that are aware of what a Students; Union is/does.
  - DA said that UCL students who are not involved with the SU and do not know what the role of the Sabbatical Officer is, by changing the name to President it will help students understand that there is a student leader that they can go to.
  - SO added that this issue could also be lessened now that the Chair of the Board of Trustees is now fixed to the Union Affairs role because now that officer can introduce themselves this way.
    - DA responded and said that this may not be the case as they have been the Chair of the Board this year and they still experienced these issues of people not understanding their role.
- UM added that when they met with the Kenyan Students' Union President they said that there should be a President at UCL so that there is one direct contact.
  - DA said that they have not met anyone externally that think it makes sense that UCL does not have a President.
- NM fed back that it depends on what the SU is trying to achieve. NM said that it would be better to have a President for external influence, but that would change the Sabbatical Officer dynamic because if there is a President it will automatically make it a hierarchical structure. NM said that they like the current structure and they felt that it works fine for internal influence, however they understood that this may be more challenging for external influence.
  - NM asked whether the Sabbatical Officer team want to focus on external influence or internal influence.
  - DA said that it is not choosing one or the other because external influence helps to influence internally at UCL.

- NM said that if the name is changed then the dynamic will change and the question is around whether it is worth it.
- NM asked about what the relationship is with the NUS at the moment?
  - MM said that they want to try and improve the relationship and they did speak with the London representative this year. However it felt very unfocused and it was more the NUS finding out information rather than supporting the SU.
- Sasha Green (SG) said that they are not convinced about changing the name, however if the decision to change the name is made then the other Sabbatical Officers should also be uplifted to Presidents of their respective areas as it would add more equality between the other Sabbatical roles. SG also raised that this would provide more clarity that Sabbatical Officers are the lead roles.
  - SO agreed with this and said that originally they had been given the option of potentially changing the other roles to Vice President's which would lengthen the role names. SO also shared that they do not want the Union Affairs role name to be changed, however if all of the other roles were also uplifted to a President title then that would be a better approach.
  - SO said that there are also concerns from SU staff team surrounding hierarchical issues with changing the role to President.
    - DA responded and said that the benefit of not changing the name is for the staff rather than students or Sabbatical team.
    - UM added that by having a CEO of the Students' Union it comes across externally like they are the lead of the organisation even though the Sabbatical Officers are the leaders.
- Rhiannon Ellis (RE) provided feedback on their time as a President of a Students' Union and said that there are pros and cons to the role title. They said that by having a President it does give clarity to external bodies and UCL staff that there is a specific student leader, however the title will change the hierarchy in the team and it puts a lot of pressure on the person in the President role as students will automatically go to them rather than the other positions.
- NM said that if the name change does go ahead, will there need to be more staff support as there is additional workload on the President.
  - JSW said that Katerina as Leadership Executive Assistant does a lot of the support for the Sabbatical Officers.
  - NM said that there could potentially be more emails directed to the President compared to the other roles and therefore they may need extra support.
  - JSW said that this could be reviewed in the staff team.
- NM asked whether there is an option to rename all of the Sabbatical roles?
  - DA said that there is not enough time to do this
- NM said that if the Union Affairs role was changed to President and the other roles remained in their current form, this would hurt the hierarchy more than changing all of the role titles at the same time.
  - DA responded and said that by naming everyone President then it doesn't change the situation.



- UM said that the President name could be changed now and then review the rest of the roles in the next academic year.
- JSW said that if this is going to be pursued one proposal will need to be shared with the wider Union Executive which needs to be agreed on.

DA closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their contributions this year.

| <b>Minutes approved as a true and accurate record</b> |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Chair:  | Deniz Akinci, Union Affairs Officer |
| Signature:  | Deniz Akinci                        |
| Date:   | 30 June 2023                        |