



**Date:** Tuesday 12 December 2023  
**Time:** 18:00 – 20:00  
**Venue:** Bentham House LG26 Lecture Theatre, Hybrid

**Union Executive  
Minutes**

**Chair:** Mary McHarg, Union Affairs Officer

<b>Members:</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>AP</b>	<b>AB</b>
Ahmad Ismail, Equity & Inclusion Officer	X		
Aria Xingni Shi, Activities and Engagement Officer		X	
Elisa de Aragao Bibay, Women's Officer	X		
Grace Yang, Sustainability Officer	X		
Issy Smith, Postgraduate Officer	X		
Mary McHarg, Union Affairs Officer	X		
Micah Gerstner, LGBTQ+ Officer	X		
Philip Greger and Suzanna Chen, Disabled Students' Officer	X		
Rawleka Wilson and Rachel Lim, People of Colour Students' Officer	X		
Shaban Chaudhary, Education Officer	X		
Sophie-Jayne Bush, Elected Officer from Education Zone	X		
Ella O'Brien, Elected Officer from Activities Zone	X		
Donna Amewu, Elected Officer from Welfare and Community Zone	X		

<b>In Attendance:</b>
John Dubber, Chief Executive
Carl Salton-Brooks, Director of Student Experience
Jeff Saddington-Wiltshire, Representation & Democracy Manager
Rhiannon Ellis, Representation & Democracy Coordinator
Simon To, Director of Policy, Governance & Insight
Matthew Phuklaewkla, Democracy Assistant, minutes
Zach Taylor, Policy Proposer (Good Night Out)
Abigail Hunt, Policy Proposer (Good Night Out)
Nick Miao, Societies Rep (Student Media)
Seth Harris, Societies Rep (Non-Portfolio)
Anji Suri, Trans Officer
8 Other Student Observers

## 1. Preliminary Matters - Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, Mary McHarg (MM) warmly welcomed members to the zone.

## 2. Sabbatical Officer Updates – Any relevant updates on priorities or assigned policies

- The Equity & Inclusion Officer (AI) and LGBTQ+ Officer (MG) gave updates on implementing [Pronouns in Class](#), including meetings with the [UCL Student and Registry Services](#) (SRS) to centrally implement pronouns on Portico.
- The Education Officer (SC) revealed that good progress is being made on the Elite Athlete Academic Flexibility policy, as well as working on the Russell Group Students' Union manifesto alongside the Postgraduate Officer (IS).
- IS also had an interview to be on the Student Advisory Committee.
- MM is currently working with the London School of Economics (LSE) Student Union on supporting the [London-wide rent freeze](#).

## 3. Matters for Approval – Approval of minutes from the last meeting

Minutes were approved.

## 4. Amendments to Governing Documents – Student Officer Review (SOR)

As a summary, the plan of the SOR is to:

- Create new Networks to support their respective Officers, in addition to the already-existing Disabled, People of Colour, and Women's Students' Networks:
  - International Students' Network
  - Mature, Part-Time & Carers Student Network
  - Research Students' Network
  - LGBTQ+ Network (Previously two separate Networks)
- Remove the Social Class & Mobility Officer and Sustainability Officer
- At a later date, review the roles of the Accommodation & Housing Officer and UCL East Students' Officer.
- Every other aspect of the Student Officer System will remain the same.

Questions were answered by Representation & Democracy Manager (JSW):

*Regarding removal of roles, would these changes happen at the end of the academic year?*

Yes, those already in these positions will retain them until expiry at the end of the year.

*Why are the Social Class & Mobility and Sustainability Officers being removed?*

Unlike the Disabled, Women's, or LGBTQ+ Networks, the Social Class & Mobility Officer does not easily fit into any existing structures at the Union. Some students may relate to social class issues, but there are not really any activities done at UCL relating to this.

Also, these roles are already duplicated at UCL. For example, the Social Class & Mobility Officer overlaps with the [93% Society](#), some existing Sabbatical Officer policies, and Union policy. Sustainability is duplicated by some Union Affairs Officer duties, as well as the Sustainability Council, Ambassadors and numerous societies.

Moreover, sustainability and social class are large issues that are arguably better tackled by committees rather than individuals. Staff are open to reanalysis regarding these reasons.

The Chief Executive (JD) also added that the UCL Students' Union has many Officer roles compared to other Unions across the country, which has implications:

- Low voter turnout due to large selection of roles
- Not enough supporting staff for Officers
- Duplication (as mentioned earlier)
- Many roles are elected unopposed or with no candidates at all
- High workload due to the lack of supporting committees

The purpose of the SOR is to create better support networks for Officers, reduce duplication and create simpler, more competitive elections. However, like JSW mentioned, the SOR is not perfect and it is up to students to decide the best course of action.

*How many Officers will remain after the SOR?*

14 will remain.

*Will Network Officers be renamed to 'Presidents'?*

Based on feedback from students and staff, no. The name will remain as Network Officers.

*How will Network Committees be elected?*

Main roles will be filled during the Leadership Race, and smaller roles will be filled during any smaller elections such as by-elections.

There were some concerns and discussions regarding this plan:

- There was a sentiment shared by multiple Zone members that sustainability and social class issues should have an individual forward-facing figurehead to lead the campaign, and that processes should be streamlined instead of just removing the Officer.
  - For example, this is already seen with the Equity & Inclusion Officer.
- 'Sustainability Officer' is a professional working title, which gives a good boost to CVs.

- A member highlighted the fact that one third of students at UCL come from private schools, so the Social Class & Mobility Officer is still important and the workload should be allocated amongst a dedicated committee working on this.
- Students may not be aware of the reasoning for removing Officers, so it could send the wrong message that UCL does not care about sustainability or social mobility, for example.
- Some Zone members wondered why the roles were being removed, seeing as other minority groups at UCL have their respective Officers – for example, the LGBTQ+ Officer.
- In regards to splitting the sustainability workload across different parties, the current Sustainability Officer (GY) commented that, while the current Union Affairs Officer is very committed to sustainability, the next one may not be as so. Moreover, it would be increasing the workload on society presidents.
- The Education Officer highlighted that UCL is a large institution, so it should have an accordingly large number of representatives.
- A student observer said that low voter turnout may be because the Union does not advertise roles enough. JSW said that it is a challenge to get new students in communication channels for advertising, and said that while they try their best to advertise, it will not reach everybody owing to the large number of incoming students. However, the Leadership Race does see a large increase in advertising.

Some suggestions were offered:

- AI said if Officers are removed, their roles could be split amongst the Sabbatical Officers with feedback loops to the 93% Society for example, in the case of the Social Class & Mobility Officer. Another member also suggested if the president of societies such as the Climate Action Society or 93% had a larger role in Union processes, such as a guaranteed seat for them at policy zones.
- A forward-facing figurehead could still remain, but with a much-reduced workload – these people would just represent the opinions of societies and related parties.
- The Education Officer suggested that the voting system could be made more streamlined, instead of removing roles.

The amendment was voted on in three parts:

- Implementing Network changes: *Passes, with 100% 'for'*
- Removing the two Officer roles: *Does not pass, with 82% 'against'*
- If a review of Officers should be done at a later point: *Passes, with 100% 'for'*

## **5. Amendments to Governing Documents – Changing ‘Union Affairs Officer’ to ‘President’**

The policy proposal aims to change the title of the ‘Union Affairs Officer’ role to ‘President’ for a variety of reasons, including increased influence and recognition. More information about this can be found in the proposal attached to these minutes. A key point of this change is that the ‘President’ would remain an equal trustee with the other members of the Sabbatical Officer team, and there would be no changes to the responsibilities of the role.

Thoughts and discussion from Zone members:

- AI commented: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”.
- MM, the current Union Affairs Officer, felt that the name change will impact how people approach the role, for better or worse.
- Members agreed that the title ‘Union Affairs Officer’ does not sufficiently convey the responsibilities of the role. Some others disagreed, saying that the current title makes sense. Alternative titles were proposed.
- People of Colour Students’ Officer Rachel Lim (RL) expressed concerns that the name ‘President’ would have implications on the flat hierarchy structure. She also added that students may be unaware of what the Union Affairs Officer does due to a marketing problem.
- AI expressed a similar opinion to RL regarding the impact on the flat hierarchy structure. They cautioned for new ‘Presidents’ to be reminded of their equal status.
- JD added that the flat structure is a legal requirement as all trustees have an equal say. He also thinks that the Union Affairs Officer should be recognised for their work and responsibilities, and this would be more clear to future employers.
- Director of Policy, Governance & Insight Simon To (ST) also added that another aim of the proposal is to make the President a focal point for students so that they are able to signpost any incoming queries to the relevant Sabbatical Officer.

This amendment was voted on in two parts:

- To make the change at all: *Passes, with 77% ‘for’*
- To make the change immediately (MM abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest) : *Passes, with 75% ‘for’, making MM the new President of UCL Students’ Union.*

## **6. Ratification of Policies – Scrutiny of Union Processes by Student Media**

Papers giving more information on this policy have been attached to these minutes.

A question was asked on why this policy is needed – MM explained that this is to make it official Union policy, which may encourage media societies to attend Zones.

This policy proposal was voted on and **ratified with 75% ‘for’**.

## **7. Ratification of Policies – Fossil Free Careers**

Papers giving more information on this policy have been attached to these minutes.

A considerable portion of Zone members held the view that this policy should be discussed at Education Zone first, as this policy would impact students who enrol at UCL seeking to work in a field related to oil and gas companies. A vote was held, it was decided that this policy would go to EZ first.

## **8. Ratification of Policies – Good Night Out Training**

Papers giving more information on this policy have been attached to these minutes. It was a unanimous decision with no disagreement – **ratified, with 100% ‘for’**.

## **9. Matters for Discussion – Updates from and into the Board of Trustees**

MM reported that Students’ Union UCL has unfortunately lost the legal battle against Birkbeck taking over the Student Central Building. The Board of Trustees has appealed against this decision.

## **10. Matters for Discussion – Israel-Palestine Briefing**

The Director of Student Experiences (CSB) discussed rules and legislation relating to freedom of speech in the context of the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine.

## **11. Matters for Information – Minutes from AZ2301**

All minutes approved.

## **12. Matters for Information – Minutes from EZ2301**

All minutes approved.

## **13. Matters for Information - Minutes from WCZ2301**

All minutes approved.

**14. Any Other Business**

Women's Officer Elisa de Aragao Bibay shared news that fundraising for the [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence](#) has now successfully concluded. She warmly offered her thanks to those who lent a hand to support the cause.

<b>Minutes approved as a true and accurate record</b>	
Chair:	Mary McHarg, Union Affairs Officer
Signature:	Mary McHarg
Date:	11/01/24