



Welfare & Community Zone

Minutes

Date: Monday 04 December 2023
Time: 18:00 – 20:00
Venue: Room 433, SSES (16 Taviton Street)

Chair: Ahmad Ismail, Equity & Inclusion Officer

Members:	P	AP	AB
Abraham Selby, Hall Community Officer for Stapleton House	X		
Ahmad Ismail, Equity & Inclusion Officer	X		
Amr Maher, Hall Community Officer for James Lighthill House	X		
Anji Suri, Trans Officer		X	
Christopher Johnson, Mature & Part-time Students' Officer		X	
Coco Lai, Hall Community Officer for One Pool Street	X		
Donna Amewu, Hall Community Officer for Endsleigh Gardens and John Adams Hall	X		
Elisa de Aragao Bibay, Women's Officer	X		
Grace Yang, Sustainability Officer	X		
Issy Smith, Postgraduate Officer	X		
James Zhou, Hall Community Officer for Frances Gardner House and Langton Close	X		
Jamila Kabir and Hanna Morris, UCL East Student Officer			X
Josh Mills, Hall Community Officer for Prankerd and Schafer House	X		
Juan Grano De Oro Fernandez, Postgraduate Hall Community Officer for 109 Camden Road (Ann Stephenson, Ifor Evans, Max Rayne and Neil Sharp House)	X		
Karam Johal, Undergraduate Hall Community Officer for 109 Camden Road (Ann Stephenson, Ifor Evans, Max Rayne and Neil Sharp House)			X
Langat Naomi, Social Class & Mobility Officer		X	
Louise Steele Saukila, Officer for Students with Caring Responsibilities			X
Lucas A H Dastros-Pitei, Accommodation & Housing Officer	X		
Manaal Tariq, International Students' Officer	X		
Max James, Hall Community Officer for St Pancras Way	X		
Micah Gerstner, LGBTQ+ Officer	X		
Maria Toigonbaeva, Hall Community Officer for John Dodgson House	X		
Mustafa Ahmed, Hall Community Officer for New Hall - Caledonian Road		X	
Mustafa Ali, Hall Community Officer for Goldsmid House	X		
Philip Greger and Suzanna Chen, Disabled Students' Officer	X		
Rawleka Wilson and Rachel Lim, People of Colour Students' Officer			X
Roger Holwerda, Hall Community Officer for Arthur Tattersall and John Tovell House			X
Saloni Mookerjee, Hall Community Officer for Ian Baker House and Ramsay Hall			X
William Warwick, Hall Community Officer for Campbell House East and West			X

Quorum: 15

In Attendance:
Julia Rooke, Representation & Democracy Coordinator
Jeff Saddington-Wiltshire, Representation & Democracy Manager
Caroline Paige, Policy & Research Coordinator
Matthew Phuklaewkla, Democracy Assistant, minutes
Aria Xingni Shi, Activities & Engagement Officer
Abby Hunt, Policy Proposer (Good Night Out Training)
Jonathan Middleton, Policy Proposer (Good Night Out Training)
Lucy Bishop, Policy Proposer (Good Night Out Training)
Alan Salazar Guerra, Policy Proposer (Fossil Free Careers)
10 Student Observers, including members from the Climate Action Society (CAS)

Actions Log 2023/24	Responsibility	Update due:
DA to contact AI regarding getting support for resolving accommodation-related issues	AI	25/01/24

1. Preliminary Matters - Welcome and Introductions

Ahmad Ismail (AI), Equity & Inclusion Officer and Chair warmly welcomed everyone to the Zone.

2. Officer Updates and Questions – Equity & Inclusion Officer

AI gave updates on:

- Issues with the Accommodation Town Hall
- The trip to Northern Ireland as part of the [Impartial Chairs](#) programme (as part of the [Disagreeing Well](#) campaign)
- Liaising with the [Medical School](#) to host a conference in March, looking to embed Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) within the curriculum

3. Officer Updates and Questions – Postgraduate Officer

Issy Smith (IS), Postgraduate Officer, gave updates on:

- Taking over links with the:
 - [Student Support & Wellbeing Service \(SSW\)](#),
 - [Union Advice Service](#),
 - [Mature & Part-Time Students' Officer](#)
 - [Students with Caring Responsibilities Officer](#),
 - Remit for Union Student Staff
- Implementing a Town Hall for Student Staff in the new year
- Working with the [Doctoral School](#) and [SSW](#) to support neurodivergent students
- Working on improving employment rights, especially for Postgraduate Teaching Assistants (PGTAs)
- Working together with other Sabbatical Officers on accommodation issues

4. Matters for Information – Staff Updates

Jeff Saddington-Wiltshire (JSW), Representation & Democracy Manager, gave updates on:

- Preparations for the [Leadership Race](#) (Nominations open on 29th January)
- Nominating Yourself sessions, which are happening on Wednesday and Friday

Caroline Paige (CP), Policy & Research Coordinator, gave updates on:

- The [2024 Student Priorities for Wellbeing Report](#) will be coming out soon
- Work on bringing together Student Unions from across the Russell Group to form the '[Russell Group Students' Unions](#)'. Manifesto for this is currently being written
- Wrapping up the term and planning for next year

5. Matters for Information – Policy Proposals Update

Julia Rooke (JR), Representation & Democracy Coordinator, gave updates on policy proposals that did not make it to Zone due to legal issues etc. For example, removing calories from menus.

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

AI sits on the [UCL Education Committee](#) and gave updates on work regarding the [Programme Excellence Project](#), as well as plans to restructure the academic year to allow for an optional January exam period as well as provisioning Term 3 for activities, events, travel, conferences, etc.

AI also sits on the [EDI Committee](#), and gave updates regarding this:

- Monitoring the current performance of the [Disagreeing Well Programme](#)
- The [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#) through the [LGBTQ+ Equality and Implementation Group \(LEIG\)](#): there were issues with the reception of this plans and discussions are now being held about how to better involve students with the plan

7. Policy Proposals – Good Night Out Training

Abby Hunt, Jonathan Middleton and Lucy Bishop, Policy Proposers, delivered their Policy Proposal to the Zone on providing [Good Night Out](#) (GNO) training and accreditation to Union bar staff in order to improve and promote student and staff safety within the bars.

Topics are not limited to sexual violence, and also include LGBTQ+ and racism-related issues. The University would receive resources on this, and there would be checks every three months to track training and see how things are going.

Questions from the Zone members:

Can the check period be reduced to every month?

This is something on GNO's side, and this is just to check in with UCL that procedures are being correctly followed and that the University is still accredited with them.

What happens if UCL fails the checks?

This is just a check to discuss progress and to see if staff are following procedures correctly. GNO offers support for Universities should they require it.

How does this compare to [Active Bystander Training \(ABT\)](#)?

ABT is not enforced/tracked as much as GNO training. However, it is still encouraged for students to complete both as they offer a more holistic and informative approach.

Are situations such as spiking covered in GNO training?

Yes, this is something that is covered.

With this, the Zone members voted on the policy. The policy passed with 100% in favour, so it will be escalated to the [next Union Executive meeting](#) for further ratification.

8. Policy Proposals – Fossil Free Careers

Alan Salazar Guerra (ASG), a Policy Proposer from the Climate Action Society (CAS) gave presentation on implementing [Fossil Free Careers](#) at UCL. This would involve:

- Refusing all new relationships with oil and gas companies,
- Decline to renew any relationships with oil and gas companies after the contractually obligated period ends
- Adopt a publicly available Ethical Careers Policy that explicitly excludes oil and gas companies from recruitment opportunities
- Officers, should aim to promote the campaign and its objectives with relevant university faculties, academic departments and the UCL Careers department

A brief introduction was given, explaining how gas and oil companies drive the climate emergency. A random sample survey was carried out on a sample size of 62 students at several places on campus, and results indicated that 75% of respondents were in favour of banning oil and gas companies.

The most affected groups of students were also considered: Engineering students who would like to work with such companies – they offered the solution that these students are still able to join any societies who invite said companies to their events, and are able to still receive career advice on how to join these sectors.

JSW reached out to the [UCL Careers Team](#) regarding this proposal as they would be affected by this policy. Their response has been attached alongside these minutes. A key point to note from is this is that if the policy does pass, it still needs to be agreed to with parties other than UCL Careers, such as the [Engineering Sciences Faculty](#), [Engineering Society](#), [Women's Engineering Society](#), and ultimately the [University Management Committee \(UMC\)](#), who will be making the decision.

There were some concerns and questions regarding this proposal:

The relationship between UCL and oil & gas companies is very important for student and society events – companies may be reluctant to come, as they have already voiced concerns about this in the past when students were against their presence at outreach events. It would be good to have sessions explaining these companies and their ethical practices to students, rather than just cutting the relationship.

ASG said that it says a lot that the companies do not want to come back. While he recognises that this relationship is important for students who would like to pursue a career in these fields, UCL needs to follow its own ethical principles and terminate these relationships. Moreover, other institutions who have already passed this policy have a similar code of ethics to UCL - so if they can do it, UCL can too.

The presentation is very well done – however I think another solution could be for UCL’s innovative students to get into these companies and drive change towards a better organisation from the inside.

A member didn't think that fossil companies are innovative enough, as the climate threat has been around for a long time and not much has changed at all. They said that at the end of the day, decisions come from CEOs and shareholders, so students can't get in and change it. Also, these companies are incompatible with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

What is your stance on similar issues such as fast fashion?

There are definitely many other industries that need to be addressed, but this policy is the start of a long process to reduce unethical companies at UCL over time.

This concern was voiced by several Zone members: I appreciate the poll and trust that it was done well, however I feel uncomfortable about how representative the student opinion poll of just 62 samples is. It would be good if we could have a wider perspective on what people think.

Yes, 62 people is a low turnout and is not representative, as the survey was done over a short amount of time in-person. However, it is better than nothing, and hope that the Zone members today are representing the student voice. The proposer also mentioned the difficulty of getting students to vote, as there is usually a low turnout. Currently, CAS are running an open letter to staff and societies to get wider support and are in conversations with UCL Careers right now.

I have some concerns about student welfare and would like to know more about how this is considered in the plan. For example, loud protests would disrupt those who are trying to study at libraries. I would like some clarification to make sure people won't be too disruptive in trying to gain support for the policy.

Protests are important for change and people have the right to protest but agree that student welfare needs to be considered. The proposer would love to work with those concerned to manage welfare-related queries.

Have you spoken to any engineering societies about this?

Yes, they tried to reach out to as many societies as possible, including Engineering Society and [Engineers Without Borders Society](#). Members of these societies, when asked, gave opinions in favour of the policy proposal, and agreed that alternatives are available.

Do you have any demographics of who the 62 respondents in the sample are?

They asked people in the Main Quad or Student Centre in order to maintain a random sample, but time constraints made it difficult to get more participation.

How will societies conduct events with companies such as Shell or BP if the policy does pass? Would there not still be protests to cut ties with these companies?

It is indeed true that there are a lot of societies who are against this, but the proposer recognises and wants to maintain the right to protest.

This policy was voted on by members of the zone, and passed with 53% in favour (8 'for' to 7 'against'). Therefore, this policy proposal will be escalated to the next [Union Executive meeting](#).

9. Matters for Discussion – Student Officer Review

JSW gave a talk on the [Student Officer Review \(SOR\)](#), which aims to optimise the delivery of the Student Officer system in order to best fulfil its purpose, which is to:

- Represent marginalised identities or common interest amongst students
- Form vibrant and inclusive communities to promote a greater sense of belonging
- Advocate and influence positive changes within the Union

As a summary of actions in the SOR:

- Largely keep the operation of [Liberation Networks](#) the same, but rename them to 'Community Networks'. Moreover, each of their corresponding Student Officers will be renamed to 'Presidents'.
- The Disabled, People of Colour, and Women's Students' Networks will have a committee below them consisting of a Welfare Officer and a Treasurer. Presidents will be able to add their own committee roles, such as Events Officer or Secretary.
 - A new network will be formed, called the International Students' Network. It will be structured in the same way as above.
 - The LGBTQ+ Network will be organised in the same way, but there will be two Co-Presidents, each responsible for either Sexuality or Trans related issues.

- The Mature, Part-Time and Carers Network will have a committee including more roles: Secretary, Social Secretary, Welfare Officer, Treasurer, with an option to add more roles.
- Remove the Social Class & Mobility Officer and formalise a Union Cost of Living Campaign.
- Remove the Sustainability Officer as there is already considerable overlap.

Questions:

As a sustainability society, who can you contact to do events if the Sustainability Officer is removed?

There are a range of alternative people you can contact to set up events, this includes the Events Team and the Sabbatical Officers.

How will network leaders be elected?

This will be done in the [Leadership Race](#).

Would the LGBTQ+ Network be run as two big networks within one?

They will be two coexisting sections.

Is there any way for Officers to contact their Representatives on matters?

Yes, their contact details are available on the SU website, and Officers are free to contact JSW or any other staff for assistance with this.

Discussion on the idea of a Men's Officer:

A Zone member asked if there was ever the idea of having a Men's Officer to promote men's mental health at the Union. Responses to this:

Micah Gerstner (MG), LGBTQ+ Officer, said that this is something that is spearheaded by the UCL Sports Team (an example would be the [All Jokes Aside](#) campaign), and the Sports Officer works on topics such as this. Also, MG thinks that it should be up to students to promote Men's Mental Health Month as nobody is paid to do this. They also added that there are ways of influencing this, such as through societies or by submitting policy proposals.

There was some concern amongst members that by having Sports-related bodies promoting Men's Mental Health, it would alienate men who do not participate in sports. Some members said that there should be an effort to promote it more generally.

IS said that this was a good point, but perhaps it does not need a whole officer and can be managed with a little oversight which can be delivered by the Union Marketing Team. Existing frameworks can be adapted for this application.

Elisa de Aragao Bibay (EAB), Women's Officer, had a concern about having a Men's Officer not attached to any Liberation Groups (for example, the Women's Officer is linked to the Women's Network; the LGBTQ+ Officer is linked to the LGBTQ+ Network). She fears that

having a free-standing Men's Officer would sectionalise and marginalise groups who would feel boxed into groups and labels such as 'Women' or 'Men' or 'LBGTQ+'.

Discussion regarding the proposed changes in the SOR:

Members gave their thoughts and opinions regarding the proposed changes in the SOR:

- There was some discussion on the name change from 'Officer' to 'President', in order to make the role more easily understood to those who are not familiar with Union processes.
 - EAB said the title 'Officer' sounds clearer, as the idea of Networks is not well-known.
 - Another member thought 'President' made Networks seem too similar to societies, and the name 'Officer' sounds more official.
 - However, another member thought that the name 'President' makes it more clear what the role entails.
 - A member said from talking to other people, it seemed that a name change would be highly effective for the perception of what the role does.
 - One said that role explanations should be signposted somewhere.
- AI gave his personal opinion that officers are overworked and would like to see their roles split and delegated. He asked what members thought of a literal separation of Officers and Presidents – the former would do Policy Zones and the latter would take on other tasks.
 - EAB disagreed, saying that Officers should to remain in touch with their networks in order to understand problems better, instead of abstracting away from the work. To manage the workload, more people just need to be hired to help out the officer. Manaal Tariq (MT), International Students' Officer, also shared a similar opinion regarding hiring more people.
 - On the other hand, MG shared the same opinion as AI, but doesn't want to be delegating all the work to the Events Officer for example to plan and manage things.

Discussion on the removal of the Sustainability Officer role:

There were varying thoughts and opinions on this:

- MG fears removing Officers could lead to Liberation Officers also being removed one day.
- Concerns that the Union would have no representative for sustainability in future. JSW agreed, but said that student engagement and participation should be a key part in driving representation at UCL too.
- During the presentation, a reason given for removing the Sustainability Officer was that it is hard to make substantial change as an individual as opposed to being part of a group. Moreover, it said that the role could be amalgamated into that of the Union Affairs Officer.
 - Grace Yang (GY), the current Sustainability Officer agreed, but mentioned that in previous years, policy proposals have been passed which have made large changes, and that individual voices can still make a difference.
 - She also mentioned that in previous years, interest in the role was high and that it is an important role to have at the Union.
 - Moreover, the Union Affairs Officer is already very busy with their work.

Discussion on UCL East Engagement:

The presentation touched on UCL East briefly, and members had some thoughts regarding this.

- MG asked if UCL East needs their own networks for support, as the campus is based quite far away. JSW said that there is a UCL East Team in the Union for this.
- The Hall Community Reps would like to do events with UCL East accommodations, but struggle to implement this because of the physical distance.

Discussion on the LGBTQ+ Network Change:

MG had some concerns that the LGBQ+ President could overshadow the Trans President in terms of roles and responsibilities, and would like some security so that the Trans Officer can remain.

10. Any Other Business

Donna Amewu (DA), Hall Community Officer, asked if the Union can assist with their role in resolving accommodation-related problems. AI asked if they could send an email to him so that this could be dealt with. IS encouraged them to come to Town Hall to discuss this.

Minutes approved as a true and accurate record	
Chair:	Ahmad Ismail
Signature:	Ahmad Ismail
Date:	12/12/2023