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Executive summary

This paper is a summary of the Students' Union's current activity. The following areas are covered.

1. Sabbatical Officer Key Highlights/Priorities
2. Strategic Plan 2019-2022 update
3. Key Updates
4. Updates on recent work
5. Programme Representation
6. Union Advice Service update

Action(s) required from the Committee:

The Union would like Senate to note and discuss the report.

The table below outlines which committees/groups have already seen the report and the resulting outcome/action from discussions.

Committee date	Committee title	Outcome/action	Action date	Paper version number

Chair's Note: Senate December 2020, SU Standing Report

Students' Union Standing Report Key Points

1. Sabbatical Officer Key Highlights/Priorities

Key features of sabbatical work includes campaigning for Culturally Competent Mental Health Services, campaigning for student value-for-money, working with the University for a No detriment policy, and conducting student check ins.

2. Student Voice Plan

Since the approval of the Student Voice Plan at July's Education and Student Committee, significant progress has been made in a number of areas, including: the development of the Big Ideas Platform, the Academic Communities project, and Programme Rep Training.

3. Union Advice

The service worked toward the launch of the Money Advice service, with the initial offer for this service focused around budgeting advice and the short-term loan scheme. The service launched on the first day of Term 1 2020/21. The Union has recruited its first Academic & Money Advisor.

4. Student Members Meeting / Annual General Meeting

This academic year's Student Members Meeting (Annual General Meeting) took place online on Tuesday 24th November from 17:00 until 19:00 and over 160 students attended. At the meeting we were joined by City, University of London's Deputy President Professor David Bolton, who outlined City's plans for Term 2's academic activity and took questions from the floor. Seven motions were debated.

City, University of London Students' Union is an independent charity that works in partnership with City, University of London. The Union is a student-led organisation, whose leadership comprises both sabbatical and part-time elected student officers with the support of a professional staff team to ensure we are positively impacting on the student experience. This report outlines the Union's current priorities and recent progress towards its objectives.

Sabbatical Officer Key Highlights/Priorities

The elected sabbatical officers, Saqlain, Ruqaiyah and Shaima, have been working hard over term one to develop key priorities reflective of their manifestos and meet the needs of students at City. Below are some of the sabbatical officers' highlights and priorities.

	Heading	Information/Update
1	Culturally Competent Mental Health Services (Strategic Priority 4)	Led by the Vice President Community and Wellbeing, Shaima Dallali, the Union has recently launched its campaign for culturally competent mental health and counselling services at City. Shaima submitted a motion to the Union's annual Student Members Meeting and students voted in favour of this approach.
2	Islamophobia Awareness Month (Strategic Priority 3)	Activities and events are well underway. Our VP Education, Ruqaiyah Javaid, delivered a live speech with Samayya Afzal to talk about Islamophobia in Higher Education. SU President, Saqlain Riaz, spoke at an event about Muslims in leadership which took place at Queen Mary Students' Union
3	Value for Money (Strategic Priority 2)	Saqlain, Shaima and Ruqaiyah want better for City Students. They are continuing to build a campaign around Tuition fees and Value for money. They hope to shape dialogue and decisions at both the local and national level.
4	No Detriment Policy (Strategic Priority 4)	Led by the Vice President Education, Ruqaiyah Javaid, the Union have begun talks via City's committee process lobby for the reintroduction of a No Detriment Policy, as seen during the previous lockdown during the last academic year. The Union would like students to be benchmarked against prior attainment to ensure their grades are not affected by this pandemic. An additional paper has been submitted to this committee.
5	Student Spaces (Strategic Priority 3)	Through their attendance at the University's Space Management committee, the Union are lobbying for more student spaces that are better designed for accessibility and inclusiveness.
6	Student Check- Ins (Strategic Priority 4)	We've been presenting the data from our Student check-ins , in which we called around 2.500 Students to ask about the first few weeks of term and how they're doing, to the deans of each school. We will be lobbying for them to act on the feedback and our recommendations. An evaluative report on this work this has been submitted to this committee.

Additional Officer updates can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)



The Union launched its new Strategic Plan on the 1 August 2019. The plan was developed by the Union based on wide-ranging research engaging students via surveys and focus groups, canvassing key colleague opinion at City, and entering into dialogue with the Union Board of Trustees through a series of stakeholder interviews.

The strategy can be viewed at: www.citystudents.co.uk/strategy/

The strategy has provided the Union with a renewed focus on the issues and activities that students care about, which has led to four clear priorities:

- **Priority 1: Making you stand out from the crowd**
- **Priority 2: Making the most of your money**
- **Priority 3: A platform for driving improvements**
- **Priority 4: Health, happiness and community**

Each of the above priorities are implemented by an individual priority group. Priority Groups are responsible for, but not limited to, leading on implementing the operational plan for their respective priorities and overseeing the relevant activities; monitoring the performance of the activities of the priority against the strategic actions and KPI's.

More recently, Priority Groups have developed a set of key deliverables which will support the Union to keep track of the main milestones for the year. The Board of Trustees will be receiving the revised operations plan at the meeting on 1 December alongside the regular update reports.

The Union have also recently recruited a Membership Insight Coordinator. This role will be key in supporting the Union to develop a plan for completing all necessary research to achieve our operational plan, as well as leading on decision-making around how to ensure we continue to collect timely feedback from students relating to COVID-19.

Green Impact and Sustainable Development Goals

The Union continues its work on sustainability. Work with Green Impact for 20/21 has begun with a regular Working Group meeting to develop and agree an action plan to enable a 'very good' award to be achieved this year.

The Union is mapping its activity against the previously signed Sustainability Development Goals. Work will start with City's Sustainability team to map out whether a similar reporting system could be utilised.

Executive Committee/Part-time Officers update

At the first meeting of the Executive Committee, Ellie Foulger, Disabled Students Officer, was elected chair and Shadmann Islam, the Ethics and Environmental Officer, as deputy chair.

The Officers have drafted and approved an Officer Agreement, to which they will be held accountable for the duration of the Academic Year.

Officers have actively been planning campaigns and activity with the support of the Representation team and have submitted their activity as a written update to the Student Council.

Student Council

The first Student Council of the year took place on Wednesday 4 November with 25 people in attendance. The Union ran new Chair and Councillor training for newly elected students and saw a record response to standing part-time officer reports in the circulated papers. 7 motions were submitted by students and 6 passed to become new policy. New policy covers areas such as sustainability, catering provision for societies, embedding employability into the curriculum, academic re-sit periods and awareness of hidden disabilities. The Union will continue to monitor engagement with online democratic meetings.

Highlights of student council include the following:

- Students agree the University should allocate more resources to embedding employability into the curriculum across all degree courses and to re-evaluate its careers support to better support students during the current pandemic and better support BAME students.
- Students would like the Union to campaign for the introduction of an in-year resit, preferably in April or June. Under current regulations, students affected by extenuating circumstances during January assessments may not retake those exams until August that year, which can have a serious impact on the affected student's future.
- Students would like the Union and the University to offer Sunflower Lanyards through student services and raise awareness of hidden disabilities through a wider campaign to all students, as well as ensuring all staff are trained accordingly.

Student Policy Away Day

The Representation team continues with its work to ensure our active policy is acted on and updated on the website. The Union currently has 45 active policies, including 6 new policies passed at the first Student Council of this term. The active policies cover areas such as Union Development, Student Spaces, Welfare, Cost of Living, Sustainability, Liberation, and Academic Experience. The Union will ensure the Executive Committee is taking these policies forward.

COVID-19 Focus Groups (Schools & Specific Demographics)

Focus groups and demographic-targeted forums were held during the week beginning 26 October. These events were for students living in halls of residences, first-year students, and post-grad students. Students were separated into breakout rooms and asked questions about the quality of their teaching, communications from the university, and their wider expectations at university during the COVID-19 pandemic. Feedback from these forums has identified course-specific problems as well as more general themes that students have concerns over, which are being presented by the Sabbatical Officers to groups such as the Postgraduate Board of Studies.

Study Well

Last academic year, students passed policy to run Study Well more consistently and regularly throughout the year. We have organised Wellbeing Wednesdays - a range of workshops happening every Wednesday to support students with their academic assignments and other life-skills such as stress management, leadership and networking.

Wonkhe Non-Continuation Survey

The Union participated in a survey run by Wonkhe and Trendence with 30 other U.K. Students' Unions in October. The survey focused on student wellbeing and non-continuation, seeking to establish a national picture of student experiences to find out whether students were thinking about dropping out, and what they think HEI's/SU's could do to help.

Over 7,000 students took part from 121 institutions, revealing that a significant proportion are considering dropping out. City's data is consistent with the national trend.

The full slide deck from the research can be found [here](#).

The qualitative data from the survey for City raises similar issues to our School Focus Groups with students voicing concerns over: value for money and a desire for reduced fees; poor academic experience; suggestions for community events; and a desire for better and clearer communications.

Student Members Meeting / Annual General Meeting

This academic year's Student Members Meeting (Annual General Meeting) took place online on Tuesday 24th November from 17:00 until 19:00 and over 160 students attended. At the meeting we were joined by City, University of London's Deputy President Professor David Bolton, who outlined City's plans for Term 2's academic activity and took questions from the floor.

In advance of the meeting seven motions were submitted by students on Cultural Competency, Divestment, Value for Money, Academic Experience, Student Spaces and Liberation. All of the passed motions will become student policy and we will be working to achieve the resolutions over the coming months and years.

You can see the papers and motions for the meeting by clicking [here](#), and key highlights of the meeting [here](#)

Student Voice 20/21

On 29 July 2020, the University's Education and Student Committee received a Student Voice Paper. The paper was written in partnership with City and outlined the proposed approach to Student Voice and Representation for 2020-21 in relation to: i) Programme Representatives ii) wider student feedback mechanisms. The paper took into consideration changes to the design of the education and student offer from predominantly face-to-face to mainly online with some on-campus delivery for 2020-21. [The paper can be found here.](#)

Since the endorsement of the recommendations in July, significant progress has been made in a number of areas including:

- Beginning talks with the University to scope and tender for an online platform to enable continuous and meaningful feedback from students.
- Transferring its complete Programme Rep Induction training session to Moodle
- Supporting an online feedback form to enable Programme Reps to provide the Union with timely feedback.
- Implementing a plan to ensure that each subject area has least one Academic Society
- Developing improved academic impact activity

Two key features of the Student Voice Paper were a Big Ideas Platform and development of Academic Communities. Updates on both can be found below:

Student 'Big Ideas' platform

As described in the previous standing report and in the Student Voice Paper, MSL, the Union's website provider, has a function titled the Big Ideas Platform. This function allows students to table an idea they believe should be brought to the attention of the Union and of their fellow students. Once their idea is posted on the platform, they can then ask students to show support for the idea for it by voting for it. Equally, students who are not supportive of it can give it a thumbs down. This function allows students to highlight issues and advance ideas whether on-campus or remotely.

To date, the platform has proven popular and ideas are being submitted at a rate of one per week: The first idea submitted by a group of postgraduate students, proposing a How to Read Fast Workshop, received 34 votes and was successfully approved. This term, students are engaging significantly more in workshops related to academic (referencing, essay and dissertation support) and life skills (such as networking and stress management). The second idea submitted concerned City Sports Membership, as students believe it should be free for City sports team members. Students see this as an opportunity to promote community building via sports as well as a way to decrease student isolation by using the gym. A third idea on Sustainable Foods suggested more plant-based affordable options within the university canteen. This would be complemented by a campaign educating students and promoting sustainable eating within the university. Students are also looking at the language courses available at City as an extra skill that would make them more employable in the future. Students would like to see more languages free of charge, such as British Sign Language and more slots on these courses

Building Academic Communities

The Union has launched Academic Communities, a more accessible and collaborative approach to societies where the Union will offer more support (administrative and financial) to Academic Communities in order to lower their membership fees, eliminate entry barriers, and collaborate more closely with schools and departments.

Where societies currently exist, the Union is offering a comprehensive funding and support package to entice groups to rebrand themselves as Communities, and planning events in these areas focusing on employability and careers. Where societies do not exist, the plan is to recruit in these areas with less of the requirements that come with society affiliation.

In all areas, the Union is working with academic departments to build relationships and hopefully secure extra funding for these groups, designated academic staff members to support each Community, and relevant contacts for co-curricular events and activities. Already, staff in SASS and Law have been receptive to this work, and a couple of existing societies have already agreed to become an Academic Community.

Programme Representation

Since the start of term, the Students' Union has been supporting the election and training of Programme Representatives.

Election and number of Reps elected:

This year Programme Rep elections were hosted online via the Students' Union Website for the first time. 47 Courses ran their election of Programme Reps through the platform in which 146 Programme Reps were elected and the results sent to schools. For all courses that had not conducted an election via the website, they were encouraged to continue seeking nominations and to hold an election in class by a democratic method.

The election of Programme Reps has continued throughout October and the start of November as some courses have had difficulty in receiving nominations from students across the start of term.

We have received central datasheets for Programme Reps from schools. The total number of Programme Reps is 850, a significant increase from 739 in 2019/20. This figure includes those who held the role in 2019/20 that had their role extended on top of those who were elected via our Website and those elected at a course level. This number is expected to change as more data continues to be received from schools.

Training sessions and attendance:

15 Programme Rep Training sessions were held in weeks 4 and 5 of the Academic year. The sessions were hosted as online webinars on Zoom. The training was separated into two types. The Union held five induction training sessions for newly elected Programme Reps and five training sessions for Retuning Programme Reps; in week 5 there were an additional five sessions scheduled.

In total over 260 Reps attended training, a reduction from 2019/20. This reduction is in part due to the reduced number of Reps elected at the time, however the number of reps elected has significantly increased over recent weeks.

From the register of attendees, 191 Programme Reps attended induction training, 32 attended refresher training and 36 attended the additional dates.

Summary of feedback received:

Students were asked to complete a brief survey to share their experience of the training they received. In total 110 responses were received for the survey, 79 of which were from those that had attended the Induction training sessions for new reps, 19 of which had attended the additional dates, and 12 responses from those that attended refresher training.

Programme Reps were asked to feed back on the quality of the session and used choice questions to feed back on the most and least relevant activities and the best part of training and areas for improvement. The results of this survey are anonymous. EDI questions were included.

First, Programme Reps were asked to select whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- I understand my role
- The training staff were engaging
- The training staff made the information easy to understand
- The training staff made me feel welcome and part of a team
- The PowerPoint was useful and clear
- I was able to access the online session easily
- I know where I can get support if I need it
- I understand how being a Programme Rep can enhance my employability skills
- The training met my expectations

When asked if Programme Reps understand their role following the training, 55.6% said they strongly agreed and 41.7% Agreed; a total of 97.3% positive responses. All other questions followed this positive response rate of between 88% and 98% strongly agree/agree, except for “the training met my expectations” which had an 83% positive response rate and 13% said they neither agreed nor disagreed.

This is positive feedback and in line with previous year’s feedback, however, is slightly down in comparison from 2019/20. This is likely a result of the online delivery method which does not allow for as much interaction and questions as in-person which was possible in 2019/20.

When asked to rate their training overall, on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (very good) the average response was 8.28. Breaking this down by session type: on average Students rated Induction training as 8.13, Refresher as 8.92 and Additional dates as 8.47. All of these are positive responses from Reps.

We asked reps to answer which activity was the most and least relevant section of training. ‘Understanding the Role’ and ‘Scenarios’ received the highest number of responses as the Most relevant activity with 36 and 34 responses respectively. Scenarios was the ‘most relevant’ in 2019/20 and has continued to receive positive feedback.

The majority of Reps selected ‘Other’ when asked “Which activity was least relevant?” and were text responses including “N/A”, “None” and “Nothing”, this is very positive feedback and was also the case in 2019/20. The second most common response was for ‘Understanding the Role’.

The results of the feedback survey will be compiled into a separate report at the end of Term 1.

Further training and the launch of Moodle:

To ensure that all Programme Reps are able to receive their training, the Students’ Union has created the Students’ Union Programme Representative Community on Moodle. This page is designed to allow Programme Reps to access the resources they need to be successful in the role, such as the slides from training or code of conduct.

Programme Reps who were unable to attend a live session will be able to complete their equivalent training via Moodle. Here the slides and recordings from a live session are broken into sections with quizzes included to support Rep’s knowledge. We are looking forward to Programme Reps completing their training via Moodle. A register and feedback form is included in the Moodle to ensure we have data for the number of Reps completing the training and their experience.

The Moodle was launched on the 18th November and all Programme Reps that we have received data for have been enrolled as students to the Moodle.

The launch of the Moodle has been announced to schools’ Quality Officers and is being communicated to all Programme Reps via the Programme Rep Newsletter and website to ensure all Reps are able to access the Moodle and aware of the launch.

Union Advice Service Update

Union Advice is now in a position to report on service statistics from academic year 2019/20.

The below provides a table of cases by School as well as the type of advice provided:

School	Issue	Number of Cases
Business School	Academic Misconduct	25
	Appeals	22
	Complaints	10
	Extenuating Circumstances	9
	Other	3
	Disciplinary	2
Sub-Total for Business School		71
School of Arts and Social Sciences	Extenuating Circumstances	37
	Appeals	35
	Academic Misconduct	25
	Complaints	23
	Changing/Leaving Course	8
	Other	3
	Progression/Assessment	3
	Not Recorded	1
	Budgeting guidance	1
	Fitness to Study	1
Sub-Total for School of Arts and Social Sciences		137
School of Health Sciences	Appeals	37
	Extenuating Circumstances	19
	Complaints	16
	Fitness to Practice	8
	Changing/Leaving Course	4
	Academic Misconduct	3

	Not Recorded	1
	Disciplinary	1
	Other Academic Issue inc. Disciplinary	1
Sub-Total for School of Health Sciences		90
School of Mathematics, Computer Science & Engineering	Appeals	37
	Academic Misconduct	21
	Extenuating Circumstances	18
	Complaints	12
	Changing/Leaving Course	4
	Not Recorded	1
	Other	1
Sub-Total for School of Mathematics, Computer Science & Engineering		94
The City Law School	Appeals	28
	Academic Misconduct	20
	Complaints	17
	Extenuating Circumstances	15
	Changing/Leaving Course	1
	Disciplinary	1
	Other	1
Sub-Total for The City Law School		83

Overall, the service saw 461 cases during the academic year. This is a reduction from 702 recorded across 2018/19, a drop of 34%.

Typically, our largest area of work are cases relating to extenuating circumstances (EC) cases, and appeals relating to late extenuating circumstances. We saw a 47% reduction in these cases in 2019/20 compared to academic year 2018/19. We attribute the drop in EC cases and academic appeals to the Supporting Your Academic Success (SYAS) and Safety Net policies.

We saw a 17% increase in the number of academic integrity/misconduct related cases, year-on-year.

As a result of industrial action and the move to online teaching, students seeking advice on complaints quadrupled in Term 2 in comparison to 2018/19. We saw this fall away by Term 3. Anecdotally, we have heard very little by way of outcomes for these students.

The service anticipated further cases of complaint in this area near the end of the academic year. This did not materialise and the issue appears to be more complex than expected. [Recent national research undertaken](#) by WonkHE found that students who are “at risk” of dropping out were “more likely to say they were not clear about their rights and entitlements”. Further, they found “students that were not academically satisfied were significantly less likely to be aware of their rights and entitlements and how to complain”.

Advice Quality Standard

The team continued to work toward obtaining the Advice Quality Standard (AQS) kitemark. Union Advice would join only a handful of Students' Unions nationally achieving this standard, with the only other Students' Union in London obtaining the kitemark being the University of West London. Our assessment date is set for the 30th November.

Money Advice service

The service worked toward the soft launch of the Money Advice, with the initial offer for this service focused around budgeting advice and the short-term loan scheme. This launched on the first day of Term 1 2020/21.

We also recruited our very first Academic & Money Advisor.

Student Check-In Project

All Advisors took part in the Student Check-Ins project. The team had a unique role in this project in providing daily supervisory support to the career and student staff making calls to students over the three weeks. Advisors fielded a handful of complex/escalated calls.

Consultation

A significant number of City policies were amended toward the end of Term 3. All Advisors worked on providing feedback to City via the Elected Officers. The Advice Manager met with Quality and Academic Development alongside the President to discuss changes to the EC policy.

Saqlain Riaz- SU President 2020/21