

City, University of London Students' Union Report

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Status: Final version

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Sponsor: N/A

Executive summary	
<p>This paper is a summary of the Students' Union's current activity. The following areas are covered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sabbatical Officer Key Highlights/Priorities -Strategic Plan 2019-2022 -Key Updates 	
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

City Students' Union Senate Report | October 2019

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, Tuna, Saqlain and Rania, have been working hard over the summer 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	Black History Month (Strategic Priority 3)	A series of events, exhibitions and promotions to raise awareness of black history and celebrate cultural diversity on campus. Further information below.
2	BAME Attainment Gap (Strategic Priority 3)	City has consistently presented with a significant BAME attainment gap. Whilst recognising it is lower than the national average, the Union believes the BAME attainment gap at City is linked directly to students feeling abandoned on campus. The Union will be raising awareness on the issue throughout the student body, as well as engaging City and schools to standardise initiatives to reduce the gap.
3	Course-Induced Stress (Strategic Priority 4)	The Union will be lobbying for increased engagement from academics around lecture capture in order to improve the student experience, as well as support students who may have learning difficulties or other challenges which may disadvantage them in their time at City, particularly addressing issues in welfare arising due to course-induced stress.
4	Assessment and Feedback (Strategic Priority 3)	Work will be conducted to understand the issues behind assessment and feedback (including inconsistency, past papers and module examples, lack of individualisation, time). Based on this work, recommendations will be presented to City.
5	Personal Tutoring (Strategic Priority 4)	The Union will be working to ensure personal tutoring training is mandatory for all tutors and basic mental health and Equality Diversity & Inclusion training is embedded within this.

Strategic Plan 2019-2022

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. This research can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

The Union hopes to be able to present the new strategy and its aspirations for the next three years to Senate at a future meeting or away day. The strategy can be viewed at: www.citystudents.co.uk/strategy/ and a hard copy will be made available for Senate members at the meeting.

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

Employability presented as a chief concern for the student body at City. Accordingly, the Union will focus on skill development, affording opportunities for students to gain workplace-marketable qualities and create networks with influential individuals and companies, empowering students to recognise their abilities and develop résumé fit for their desired sector of work or programme of study.

Priority 2: Making the most of your money

Research made clear that students had limited access to financial guidance, so the Union will be launching a financial guidance service as well as creating easy options for students to access short-term financial support. Concerns around value-for-money in student life have been shown to be increasing in the student body and accordingly, the Union will be working with City to deliver better value-for-money whilst also supporting students to make the most of opportunities to make or save money.

Priority 3: A platform for driving improvements

Disproportionate or unequal representation has consistently registered as a significant issue in the Union. Priority 3 will develop systems that track and eliminate structural inequalities in representation in order to deliver for all students. Regular research into representation in the student body is already taking place. A chief focus under priority 3 will be reducing the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) attainment gap.

Priority 4: Health, happiness and community

Consistent improvement of the health, happiness, and sense of community in the student body will always be a top concern of the Union. The Union will focus on delivering increased activities and services that develop communities and support student wellbeing. The Union Advice Service will apply for the Advice Quality Standard Kitemark accreditation, which will attest to its continuous front-line commitment to improving the student experience at City.

Next Steps

The Union has developed an operational plan to facilitate the delivery of its strategy, which will be submitted for approval to the Union's Board of Trustees on Tuesday 8 October. The Union will also be presenting its strategy to the City Executive Committee on Monday 28 October, where we hope to continue to gain support for the priorities identified above.

Key Updates

Implementing Priority Three

The Union's new strategy took effect on 1st August 2019. To support the Representation team and officers in understanding and implementing the Strategic Plan, Andrew Keenan was hired to facilitate three discovery sessions. Andrew was previously Head of Student Voice and Communications at Imperial College Union.

In advance of the first session taking place, a clear overarching objective was set: to ensure the Representation team has full confidence and capacity to deliver what the new strategy asks of them.

Throughout the three sessions a large number of ideas were generated and explored in the context of the relevant strategic aims. High-level recommendations were also given, each of which were further broken down into specific tasks.

In addition, several cross-cutting themes emerged:

- Shift to digital: the representation system would benefit from a solid foundation of digital resources, from web-first content to volunteer management software.
- Change internal working: Collaboration with the Activities and Comms teams could deliver more efficient services through earlier coordination, a shift away from print & design work to messaging support, and the cross-SU co-creation and sharing of material such as student-facing training and staff-facing communications.

- Re-engineer relationships: the new Strategic Plan is an opportunity for City SU to purposefully reform its relationships - both those with City University leadership, and with departmental figures.
- Write new narratives: City SU will benefit from a clearly defined narrative and messaging plan centred around the Strategic Plan, upon which they can build the new relationships mentioned above.

The findings of the third and final session with Andrew have just been received; the Representation team will now factor the emerging themes into the wider operational plan to ensure KPI's are met.

Programme Representation

The nomination and election of Programme Representatives has begun. As such, we have been updating the 'Staff Guidance' provisions which are sent to schools and published on the website. The guidance has been updated to give clearer election guidance, give a comprehensive role description for Programme Representatives and provide new recruitment material to encourage engagement. To coincide with the delivery of the updated guidance, the Union provided staff guidance training sessions from the 9th to the 13th September this year. These sessions worked as an opportunity to explain the support we provide as well as an opportunity to gather feedback from course officers from every school. The deadline for electing Representatives this year is the 10th October.

After Programme Representatives are elected we can begin induction training starting on the 14th October. This year, we will be running 20 training sessions between October and November. Each session will be delivered on a school-by-school basis, allowing us to tailor the session's information to the Representatives. We will have a register for each session so that we can provide courses with a list of trained reps. Programme Representatives will have the opportunity to feed back on their training both through an online form and the newly introduced 'Rep Forums', a meeting where Programme Representatives can meet with the VP Education and SU Staff to give their insight into the election and training process.

Further, we are currently rewriting and updating our 'Programme Representative Handbook', a guide which supports Reps as they carry out their responsibilities. Since becoming a Programme Representative is an opportunity to personally develop, the handbook now includes a list of relevant employability skills and mock CV write up. We have also updated our list of contacts, given better detail on attending meetings and refined many of the other sections as we aim to continually improve the support we provide. Last academic year, the handbook was delivered at the Programme Rep Reception in January; this year it will be earlier and we want our Programme Reps to have these within weeks of being trained so they can be used to full effect.

After a successful NUS Sustainability training session with the Union part-time officers, the Union is working with the NUS Sustainability team and City's Sustainability team to provide a session for our Reps, where they can learn about the SDGs and develop their own understanding of how to tackle any relevant issues. We want our Representatives to be active and engaged this year; attending additional events such as the Sustainability session is one way we can encourage Programme Representatives to participate as much as possible. We want to reward Representatives who are active and, as such, any Rep who attends: Induction training, 2 SECs, 2SSLCs and an additional event will receive a letter of recognition for their work.

Programme Rep Review

A review of student representation has been successfully completed by the Union and Student Voice on behalf of City. The purpose of the review was to measure the effectiveness of student engagement in decision-making about their academic programme. The review drew on student and staff views about how the current student representation system is working and the latest practice within the sector. The review primarily focuses on academic representation with the addition of the role and effectiveness of Student Experience Committees.

The main aims of the student representation review were as follows:

1. To assess the effectiveness of the student representation system within the University.
2. To review staff and student views on how the current system is working, identifying the latest practice within the sector and any improvements to be made.
3. To identify and assess the role and effectiveness of Student Experience Committees.
4. To produce recommendations for the current student representation system to implement in the upcoming academic year 2019/20.

A report outlining the findings has been produced and is currently under consideration at the relevant committees. A workshop has also been held with colleagues across different Schools to explore the findings further.

School Engagement

The Union is improving its work in conjunction with Schools to engage students. One area of focus over Welcome Week has been increasing Union presence at Cass. Some specific Cass promotion and accompanying staff were located at Bunhill Row on the Monday and Tuesday of Welcome Week to welcome new postgraduate students.

A series of events called 'The Big Union Reception' for each School are also being launched over the coming weeks to have some more focused introduction activities.

Elections

Nominations for the 26 positions of the Union October Leadership Elections opened on the 23rd September and will close on the 17th October. There are a range of positions available including Student Council Chair, Student Councillors and NUS National Conference delegate. There are four Executive Committee positions including Disabled Students Officer, Ethics and Environment Officer, International Students Officer and Raising and Giving Officer. There are four Executive Committee positions due three withdrawals since the March elections and one post being unfilled during the spring 2019 elections.

The Representation team have used social media, the Union's stall at Welcome Fair and conversations with students at lunchtime to increase awareness about the positions on offer and will continue to put resource into the autumn elections because having an active Union Executive Committee and Student Council is vital in supporting priority three of the new Strategic Plan.

Voting takes place between 4-7 November with results to be announced shortly after.

Value-for-Money

City and the Union have identified value-for-money as a key strand of work for 2019 and beyond. Following the strategy report, the Union engaged external research consultants to conduct further analysis and follow-up interviews to discuss value-for-money in more detail. The Union has recently shared these findings with City, which will help to inform the ongoing conversation.

Black History Month



Black History Month is one of the key Union campaigns for term 1 and many of the below activities will be conducted in collaboration with City.

The Celebration of Black History Exhibition

Taking place on 7 October in the Pavilion from 11am, there will be an exhibition on black history including some of City's own history whilst also sharing information about the Race Equality Charter.

Film Screening: A view into the Black Experience

A film screening will be held on the 9 October in B200 at 6pm, where, through an interactive student poll, students will be able to choose the film they wish to watch from three carefully selected titles.

Black Women Rising: a New Force in Politics– Panel Discussion

The Panel will include Rukhia Ismail (Islington Mayor) and Zamzam Ibrahim (NUS president) on the 17 October in OTLT at 5:30pm.

Food and Culture Night with Spoken Words and Poetry

This event will be held on the 24 October in the Courtyard Café at 6pm. There will be a variety of poets and spoken word artists. There will also be societies selling homemade African food. The artists will be speaking about identity, and their experiences of being black in the UK.

Further information can be found here: <https://www.citystudents.co.uk/bhm/>

Tait Level 1 Common Room

The Union has identified the real need for students to have more multi-purpose space on campus and is therefore building a case for Space Management Committee on the repurposing of the Tait Level 1 staff common room. The room currently sees limited use across the majority of the day and the Union believes this would better serve the increasing demands of students. There are a number of key reasons including:

Commuter students

"Did you know that City has the second highest percentage of commuter students in the UK? (Julie Voce, Learning at City)". "A lack of adequate common rooms and locker facilities can leave commuters feel they lack a "home" on campus. (David Morris, The Guardian)".

As a key demographic at City, this project will deliver a vital service to commuter students to make them feel comfortable and at home and give them the opportunities to pass their time in a welcoming social space. The Union have been informed that SMCSE will be prioritising commuter student support in the next academic year and envisage this project dovetailing with their ambitions, providing additional support to commuter students.

Sense of belonging

Our communal areas are not all very student-friendly and inviting. At City, we struggle to build a community and a sense of belonging. The Union believes that one of the reasons for this is the lack of student central spaces outside of canteen and cafeteria areas. The Union envisages this project contributing to a sense of inclusivity and belonging at City.

Lack of common rooms

Some of our schools and programmes have common rooms and study areas allocated only for their own students (Law, CASS UG & PG, Computer Science etc.), whereas a majority of our SASS & SHS students do not have access to such social and study areas allocated specifically. This project would cater to all students with unrestricted access across schools and departments.

Tait Building

Most of the teaching for our Health students takes place in Tait Building Levels 2 & 3; a Tait Building Student Common Room would serve as an ideal space for students using the building to relax, study, eat and spend time in between their lectures, tutorials and skills sessions that

take long hours. This project would give all our students, but especially our SHS students, a space where they can feel comfortable and at-home.

New Staff Structure

A number of new posts have been established over the summer months, funded predominantly through the VAT saving gained from moving all Union staff and sabbatical officers onto joint contracts. These roles include:

- SU Activities and Development Manager
- Academic Advisor (0.6 FTE)
- Representation Assistant
- Governance Coordinator

In recognition of the growing service that the Union provides, the position of Deputy Chief Executive has been established and the former role of SU Head of Membership Development has been removed.

This increase in resource will be key to the delivery of the Union's new strategy and help the Union continue to meet and exceed the expectations of its stakeholders and members.

Tuna Kunt- President 2019/20