

**City, University of London Students' Union Standing Report**

**Summary**

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

- Sabbatical Officer Key Highlights/Priorities
- Student Feedback
- Vision 2020 Implementation
  - The Student Experience
  - Developing Communities
  - Academic Experience Impact
  - Students' Next Steps
  - Supporting Students
- Other Updates

Two actions required.

**Recommended Action**

Senate is asked to **note** and **discuss** the report.

**Publication: Open**

## City Students' Union Senate Report | September 2018

City, University of London Students' Union is an independent charity that works in partnership with City. The Union is student led, by 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. The following report outlines the Unions progress and priorities over the recent period for the attention of Senate.

### Sabbatical Officer Key Highlights/Priorities

The elected sabbatical officers, Kristina, Tuna and Nazia, have action plans that further their manifestos and student priorities, these can be seen at: [www.citystudents.co.uk/student-voice/studentofficers](http://www.citystudents.co.uk/student-voice/studentofficers). Below are some of the sabbatical officer's highlights and priorities.

	Heading	Rational
1	<b>Stronger community at City</b> (Strategic Priority 2)	City is made of students from across the world with different backgrounds, cultures and ways of defining themselves. The Union will be working to improve the representation of liberation groups, international students and postgraduate students. This will improve their ability to feel part of a community at City.
2	<b>Reducing stress levels during the assessment periods</b> (Strategic Priority 3)	The Union will continue to build on the excellent work it delivers through the Study Well campaign during the winter and summer assessment periods. In addition City should ensure anonymous marking for all assignments and that pre-exam sessions are in place across every programme. In addition the Union wants to see exam timetables released one week earlier at a minimum.
3	<b>Programme rep system development</b> (Strategic Priority 3 and 5)	Although there are over 600 reps across the campus, the quality of the scheme is not as consistent as the Union would like to see. The Union, over a period of time, would like to move all programme rep elections to online and there will be a real push during this academic year to raise awareness, enhance the training and complete a review of the system.
4	<b>Lecture capture</b> (Strategic Priority 3)	Although lecture capture is a great learning and revision tool for students, it is not widely used across all courses due to attendance concerns and IT issues. The Union wants to see an opt-out system is introduced for all lecturers instead of an opt-in and all rooms (40+ capacity) are lecture capture enabled.
5	<b>Free printing</b> (Strategic Priority 3)	Students pay for all kinds of mandatory academic printing from their own pockets, which is an extra burden on their already very tight budgets. The Union wants City to allocate a yearly budget for print credit for 2019/2020 and beyond.
6	<b>Developing academic societies and student media</b> (Strategic Priority 2)	The Union has ensured there is a great range of academic societies' across the institution, however these societies need to now become great themselves. The union will be working the societies' to improve events, engagement and their offer to students. Student media has been a weak area of the Union for a number of years. The Union wants to ensure a working radio station and a print/online media presence.

## Student Feedback

The following are some examples of recent feedback the Union has received from students:

### Table Tennis

During the last half of 2017/18 a table tennis table was installed by CitySport in Tait Level 1 by the vending machine. This table was very popular with students and engaged students who would not normally participate in sport. This table was removed due to health and safety concerns and noise issues, which caused a great deal of student dissatisfaction and a petition to be created signed by hundreds of students. The Union, with CitySport, is looking to purchase two football tables to go in the Courtyard Café space to replace this and to meet student demand. This ensure students who do not want to go to the bar can still participate in on campus games.

### Timetables and signage

The most common concern raised to the Union during welcome week was the lack of knowledge by students of their timetable and where to go. It would appear that the information on this to some students was not sufficient and on campus signage could be drastically improved. As City has an interesting approach to labelling its buildings, students would often find it difficult to find rooms such as the Great Hall and Tait Building.

## Vision 2020 Implementation

The following report provides an update on the work the Union has carried out to further the priorities of its strategic plan, which can be found at: [www.citystudents.co.uk/about-us/strategy](http://www.citystudents.co.uk/about-us/strategy).

### Priority 1: Experts in the student experience

#### Union Elections

The Union is in the process of running its Autumn Elections. The nominations for our current elections opened on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> September at the start of Welcome Week and will close on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October. At these elections the following positions will be elected:

#### Executive Committee Positions

- Disabled Student Officer
- Postgraduate Taught Representative
- Postgraduate Research Representative

#### Student Council Positions

- Student Council Chair
- 3 Representative from each School

#### NUS Delegate Positions

- 6 NUS Conference Delegate

The Returning Officer is from NUS and the Deputy Returning Officer is the Union SU Head of Membership Development. Having an active Union Executive Committee and Student Council is vital in supporting priority 1 and the Unions ability to be experts in the student experience.

#### Engaging in National Research

The Union collaborated with 27 other Students' Unions to deliver a 'Student Lifestyles Survey' delivered by trendence RESEARCH. The survey looked at the academic and lived experience of students at City and how they intersect to report holistically about their time here. The areas

of questioning included: extra-curricular activity, housing and transport experiences, the cost of being a student, recruitment & retention, employability, wellbeing and protected topics around sexual violence and hate crime. The data from this survey will be used to underpin local and national lobbying work, ensuring that our work is evidence-led.

### **Annual Survey**

The Union annual survey had 751 responses from across the institution and has provided the Union with some clear areas that need to be worked on. Some key areas are highlighted below:

- Only 62% of students know who their programme representative is.
- 58.1% of students think the Union run City Buddies, but only 21.3% realise the Union runs academic advice.
- Time is the biggest barrier to engaging in Union activities.

A full report with recommendations is going to the next Board of Trustees.

## **Priority 2: Developing Communities**

### **Student Societies**

Student societies continue to be the main way that the Union engages students across the university, with 84 societies at the start of the 2018/19 academic year. The ambition is to have 125 societies by the end of 2018/19. This includes increasing the remit of academic societies to cover every single discipline taught at City, with a new Societies Intern employed part-time by the Students' Union to improve support for these societies.

While many societies are still recruiting members over the coming weeks, 635 memberships have already been purchased, with 421 of those since the beginning of the Freshers' Fairs. A full list of societies can be seen at: [www.citystudents.co.uk/getinvolved/societies](http://www.citystudents.co.uk/getinvolved/societies)

### **Welcome Week**

Welcome Week 2018 has been a great success for the Union and included nearly 100 activities and events catering for a wide demographic of students over a two-week period. Our work this year focused on supporting students with their transition not only into University life but also into life in London. Some of our highlight events from this year include: daily speed meets, a Boat Ball on the Thames, a Retro Games Night run across two spaces, including one alcohol-free, multiple trips around London and the introduction of our 'Northampton Square SU Hub', which created a physical space outside of the Tait Building for students to meet the Union. Attendance across all events has been very positive.

At the Freshers' Fair this year the Union is excited to share that we welcomed 4,784 students to the Business Design Centre across two days. The feedback from stall holders and attendees continues to be very positive and is proving to be a key event in the transition for students to City. The Fair was supported by a team of staff and student volunteers who gave out 4,000 Welcome Bags, phone card holders and academic wall planners. The Union continued using our barcode system for students joining societies from 2017 with some tweaks to streamline our service. Membership across all societies is already increasing, something which we hope to see grow over the coming weeks.



The Union has also embraced its mascot, the Carrot over welcome week to bring a bit of fun to its activities. We will be doing some further communications over the year to share the history of the Union mascot.

### Priority 3: Academic Experience Impact

#### Programme Representatives

Programme Representatives continue to be a key priority of the Union. In the 2017/18 academic year there were a number of positive developments for the Programme Representative system including a revised training program, an increase in the amount of programme representatives, new incentives and introduction of hoodies which Programme Reps could purchase to promote themselves on campus.

The 2018/19 academic year will see further developments including:

- The Union running a pilot online election for Programme Reps in the Law School to further democratise the system and provide them with a greater level of independence
- A Programme Representative Review project undertaken by the Union in partnership with Student and Academic Services
- The introduction of new handbook to supplement the training they will receive.

## NSS Question 26

The National Student Survey (NSS) results were released on Friday 27 July. The NSS asks a final year students a series of questions about their experience at university, one of those questions is the following:

**‘Q26.The students’ union (association or guild) effectively represents students’ academic interests.’**

This is the second year this particular question has been asked; however, questions on the Union have been included since 2012. The Union has consistently been in the bottom quartile of students’ unions in London and nationally until 2017 when the Union entered the second from bottom quartile.

The Union is pleased to report that City Students’ Union has seen a massive improvement over the past 12 months. The Union’s strategic KPI is to be in top quartile of Students’ Unions in London, which we have now achieved. Below are the London results.

Institution	Actual value 2018	Actual value 2017	Increase / decrease (%)
The University of West London	74%	79%	-5%
St Mary's University, Twickenham	63%	62%	1%
<b>City, University of London</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Roehampton University	61%	62%	-1%
London South Bank University	59%	61%	-2%
London Metropolitan University	59%	55%	4%
Brunel University London	57%	60%	-3%
University of East London	57%	57%	0%
Middlesex University	56%	62%	-6%
Imperial College London	56%	61%	-5%
University of Greenwich	56%	55%	1%
Kingston University	55%	57%	-2%
Queen Mary University of London	55%	58%	-3%
The University of Westminster	53%	58%	-5%
Goldsmiths' College	53%	50%	3%
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London	53%	N/A	N/A
St. George's, University of London	50%	59%	-9%
Birkbeck, University of London	50%	45%	4%
Royal Holloway, University of London	50%	53%	-3%
King's College London	46%	N/A	N/A
University College London	44%	N/A	N/A
University of the Arts, London	43%	57%	-14%
The London School of Economics and Political Science	36%	42%	-6%

The Union is also in the top quartile of students' unions nationally and we believe we can improve on this further in 2018/19 with additional investment.

#### **Priority 4: Students' next steps**

##### **Leadership Academy**

The Union Leadership Academy is an accreditation which offers students the opportunity to utilise their leadership roles and voluntary activities and achievements to develop key competencies that employers look for. This is the second year of the Academy running, funded by Santander.

The Academy has been relaunched in September and registration for the 2018-19 Leadership Award will open to students on 1st October 2018.

Further information on the academy can be found here:

[www.citystudents.co.uk/getinvolved/leadershipaward](http://www.citystudents.co.uk/getinvolved/leadershipaward)

#### **Priority 5: Supporting students**

##### **Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Working Group**

Since May 2018 the Union has been involved with the work of the Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Working Group, contributing to the development of the wider project as well as the upcoming report to Council. The areas the Union has contributed to in depth include the case studies and the wider Higher Education context. The Union will continue to have an input into this important work and Sabbatical Officers plan on launching a wider campaign over this academic year.

#### **Other Updates**

##### **Appointment of External Auditors**

As the Union took on its own financial management on 1 August 2017, the Union need to appoint its own External Auditors. The Board of Trustees established a panel to conduct the process for identifying a suitable external auditor for the Union. The panel included two Trustees, the Chief Executive, the SU Head of Finance and Operations and the City Head of Finance.

A number of Auditors were invited to tender to be the Union Auditors for the next three years, starting from the 2017/18 academic year. In total the Union received 4 responses, to which the panel shortlisted 3 companies.

In the tender document they were asked to provide a fee and approach to create the annual financial statements including the following:

- Profit and Loss Account
- Balance Sheet
- Detailed notes to the accounts, including accounting policies
- To undertake a full audit of the financial statements
- To produce, calculate and file the annual Corporation Tax return if applicable
- Filing of financial statements to Companies House
- Production of a detailed management/audit findings report, identifying areas of interest or concern arising from the audit process that the auditors believe should be brought to attention of the trustees and senior management of City' Students' Union

On August 28, the panel interviewed all shortlisted companies, which included a presentation and a series of questions. The interviews were strong from all candidates, yet the panel reached a unanimous decision.

The Board of Trustees then agreed to appoint Knox Cropper as the external auditors for the academic years 2017/18 to 2019/20.

### **Mobile Phone Chargers**

As a manifesto commitment in the recent election, the Union has installed one mobile phone charging station in the Tait Building and has purchased a second station for Bunhill Row. The charging stations are to support the fact that students can spend significant periods of time on campus, especially during the assessment period, and do not always have the means to charge their phones.

Students' Union Sabbatical Officer Team 2018/19