

Board of Trustees Minutes

City, University of London Students' Union is a registered charity (charity number 1173858) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 10834450).

4.30pm | 5 April 2022 | Online via MS Teams

Members	Initials	Meeting 1 19.10.21	Meeting 2 17.02.22	Meeting 3 05.04.22	Meeting 4 07.06.22	Meeting 5 TBC
Shaima Dallali (President) (Chair)	SD	✓	✓	A		
Ruqaiyah Javaid (VP Education)	RJ	✓	✓	✓		
Shahd Haj Khalil (VP Community and Wellbeing)	SK	A	✓	✓		
Nick Ratcliffe (Lay Trustee and Deputy Chair)	NR	✓	✓	✓		
Alan Latham (Lay Trustee)	AL	✓	A	✓		
Rumnique Gill (Lay Trustee)	RG	✓	✓	A		
Liz Williams (Lay Trustee)	LW	✓	A	A		
Clare Searle (Former Lay Trustee)	CS	A	N/M	N/M		
Vacant Lay Trustee	-	N/M	N/M	N/M		
Ibrahim Hamid (Student Trustee)	IH	✓	✓	✓		
Tofunmi Odugbemi (Student Trustee)	TO	N/M	✓	✓		

Key: "✓" = Present, "A" = Apologies given, "N/M" = Non-member, "P" = Partial attendance, 'X' = Non-attendance

Included in the circulation	Initials	Reason and Meeting Section
Philip Gilks	PG	Chief Executive (Company Secretary)
Hannah Roberts	HR	Deputy Chief Executive
Jeni Turner	JT	Head of Finance
Chris Moore	CM	Head of Communications and Business Development
Aadam Ali	AA	Clerk

Informal

Guest Speaker: Counselling and Mental Health

The Board received a presentation from James Birkett (JB), Interim Director of Student and Academic Services who gave insight into City's Counselling and Mental Health provision. JB described the service working together proactively with Student Welfare Officers who feedback to academic staff on mental health and welfare issues. A new internal appointment will be leading the service who is keen to reshape what is sometimes seen as an 'over-medicalised' environment and they are committed to making the service more accessible. In addition, recruiting culturally competent counsellors is a priority and they are being recruited through therapy networks.

NR and PG thanked JB for his presentation, and he answered the following for the Board:

- The University are recruiting diverse counsellors and are working with the Mental Health Society. They are training all staff in the service on culturally competent counselling and

neurodiverse counselling. TO noted diverse counsellors could be trained who have relevant degrees.

- On the point on the service being viewed as over-medicalised, JB explained that using Student Welfare Officers helps move away from this as they can listen to students and signpost them before referring them to a counsellor.
- JB acknowledged the disparity in access to the service between domestic and international students but noted the service is being bridged for international students.
- JB noted that he is unaware of the impact of the Union's non-compliance policy with the University's Prevent duty, but he believes the University has a good relationship with the Union and is willing to explore this.

Formal

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from SD, RG and LW. NR Chaired the meeting in SD's absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Paper: BT2132)

The Board **noted** the register, and no new interests were declared.

3. Minutes and Actions

3.1 The Board **approved** the Minutes of the meeting held on the 17th February 2022.

(Paper: BT2133M)

3.2 The Board **noted** the Matters Arising (Paper: BT2134A), noting the following:

- The management accounts action to explore depositing reserves into a fixed one-year product is yet to be explored.
- Progress has been made on the staff salary review action as PG has met with the University's Reward Manager. This was updated later in the meeting.

4. Decisions taken between the meetings

No decisions were made between this meeting of the Board and the last.

5. Items brought forward by the Chair

No items were unstarred in Section F – Starred Items for Information.

Section A – Update from the Chief Executive and Strategic Progress

6. Chief Executive Report

(Paper: BT2135)

The Board considered the Chief Executive report, which included updates on key projects, recruitment and staff matters. In the discussion PG highlighted:

- PG noted the previous few months had been challenging, particular around the murder of City student, Sabita Thanwani. The Union has provided support for students and co-delivered with the University a vigil for Sabita which was moving and well received. The Union have also organised a condolence book.
- SD has been elected NUS President at NUS National Conference.
- The Finance Coordinator has left the Union, and JT has started as Head of Finance who has settled in well.
- Since COVID-19 restrictions have been dropped, more students are returning to face-to-face enquiries, consequently, the Union is increasing face-to-face contact.
- The Advice Service review is complete. The suggestions need to be costed moving forward.

- The Board have committed funding for the catering research which has been delayed because of the response to Sabita's murder. This will be put out to students after the completion of the elections.
- PG highlighted to the Board that the relationship with the University is a risk area presently, however, work is being done to move this to a more positive place.
- HR presented a point around the External Speaker policy. The policy is being revised to enable societies to make their own decisions on their own external speakers which the Union will ratify in the background. Recent views and statements of the speaker will be taken into account, instead of just looking at historical things said by them.
- The Union's annual award ceremony will be taking place in Sadler's Hall scheduled for the 12th May. Trustees will be invited to attend.

The Board thanked PG and **noted** the Chief Executive report.

7. Strategy Update Report (Paper: BT2136)

The item was taken as read and the strategy update report was **noted**.

8. Strategy 2023 Onwards (Paper: BT2137)

The Board received the strategy timeline and paper from PG which the Board **noted**. He mentioned the following points:

- PG said that the Union has made significant developments and is progressing well against the existing strategy. He noted the importance of looking at the current makeup of the student population and seeing where the Union is presently.
- PG stated that the overarching component of putting the strategy together would be doing good research to underpin the strategy. The current strategy received excellent feedback utilising this principle.
- The research would need to be completed by December 2022, the approval and tender process will need to be signed off by July 2022. The strategy will be presented for comment from the Board before term 3 of the 2022/2023 academic year and will require approval by May 2023 before it is adopted. This will enable the Union to install structures and processes required by August 2023.
- The strategy research would cost £15,000.00-£25,00.00 which the Board could fund from the reserves. PG is also proposing for a Lay Trustee to become a Trustee Champion for the strategy to give further insight during the process with the Senior Management Team and Sabbatical Officers.

The Board noted the following:

- The Board agreed the principles were correct in putting the strategy together.
- PG clarified for the Board that the budget is formally approved at the next Board meeting, however he is looking for the Board to give an indication if they would be happy to commit to the spend for research.

The Board agreed the timeline, the indicative budget for research to come from the reserves and were happy for a Trustee champion to be nominated via circulation. **Action:** AA to gauge volunteers via circulation from Lay Trustees to be the Trustee champion in the strategy 2023 timeline.

9. Sport (Paper: BT2138)

PG presented the paper on sport which the Board **noted**. He highlighted the following:

- The Union wants to undertake a feasibility study on the Union managing sport.
- There is an option to explore the Union managing City Sport and the facilities including the gym, however this would dominate a lot of conversations around sport and has financial risk attached to this.

- This is an opportunity for the Union to create positive change in sport at City including furthering participation, engagement with local community groups and creating an active recreational sports programme.

The Board enquired about the timeline for the feasibility study. PG said that if the study doesn't take place soon, a transition in September 2022 would be unlikely and the next opportunity would be the following year. He is waiting on the Senior Leadership Team in the University but will update with further information at the next Board meeting.

10. Micro-Placement Programme

(Paper: BT2139)

The Board received an update from HR on the Micro-Placement programme which the Board **noted**. She highlighted the following:

- Last year, the Board approved the Micro-Placement programme. This programme was funded by City to allow the Union to take on several Micro-Placement students working in different areas across the Union.
- The Union is taking on 21 placement students this year selected from 50 candidates. This opportunity will bring insight and real-life work experience for students. All staff will be supervising a placement student.
- HR noted that this year travel and a meal allowance would be paid, for the placement students. However, depending on the cost of living increase and the financial landscape, this may need to be rethought next year.
- One key benefit going forward is the group of placement students will become cohesive with the Union and will act as mouthpieces.

The Board noted this programme was postponed due to the pandemic but commended the programme.

11. Lay Trustee Recruitment

(Paper: BT2140)

PG updated the Board on the Lay Trustee recruitment on how best to replace CS highlighting the following:

- After completing the skills audit of the current Lay Trustees, the results indicate the Board would benefit from more fundraising and marketing experience.
- PG said diversity is an important factor when looking at this recruitment.
- On the Appointments Committee, there are two spaces for Lay Trustees, of which AL occupies one and the other is vacant. The Board is required to decide which Trustees should sit on this Committee.
- Peridot Partners was the recruitment agency that was used in the last Lay Trustee recruitment. They yielded several strong candidates. If they were used, projected costs would be £7,000.00.
- The University has mentioned that they could provide a Lay Trustee from City Council. This would be considered only if the Union were able to find someone that is the right fit.

The Board noted that if the Union wished to seek a candidate from City Council, the person must fit the right skill set and be from a historically oppressed background. This would give the Board the opportunity to mirror the student population.

The Board **decided** that the skills sought should be around the results of the skills audit, and AA would source an additional Appointments Committee member from the Lay Trustees via circulation. The Board agreed in the first instance, PG should investigate whether any members of City Council would fit the skills required and also be a diverse candidate. If a suitable candidate is not found, then PG should instruct Peridot Partners to explore candidates for the recruitment. **Action:** PG to explore suitable Lay Trustee candidates with City Council.

Section B - Student Insight

12. Sabb Spotlight

RJ presented on the Sabbatical Officer's progress since the last meeting and highlighted the following points:

- After the killing of Sabita Thanwani the Officers have tried to be as involved as possible with student wellbeing and support for students.
- The Officers haven't received too much backlash from their feedback with students on the most recent University closure days arising from industrial action. RJ sits on the Industrial Action Working Group where she oversees how each school has been handling feedback from students and compensation claims.
- RJ attended NUS Conference with other NUS Delegates which she found insightful.
- SK has worked on Mental Health Awareness Week, campaigning on social media and has looked at best practice examples for mental health awareness. NR suggested looking at Student Minds.
- SK has worked with a number of student events including the Law Ball and Student Iftar.
- The Officers have worked with the Alumni team to confirm Sadler's Wells as the location for the upcoming SU Awards.

The Board **noted** the verbal report.

13. Student Insight | Term 2 Check-ins 2022 Report

(Paper: BT2141)

Ryan Ginger (RyG) the Union's Membership Insight Coordinator delivered a presentation on the Term 2 Check-ins report. Some headlines included:

- The Union completed check-in calls in February after doing this this last year. The Union made 7000 calls of which 1549 students answered and completed a check-in (22%). The goal was to reach 1000 students.
- Calls covered topics including the teaching and learning model, online learning and planned online learning next academic year.
- Of the sample of students that were called, 69% were home students whilst the remaining were international or overseas students. 15.4% of students who checked-in said they hadn't had any in person teaching which was presented to the University.
- Some feedback themes included being well supported by academic staff, concerns around COVID-19, problems with internet access, assessments and clustered deadlines.
- RyG explained the key issues for students were poor communication, industrial action, war in Ukraine, exams, and feedback. Of the students that checked-in, 67% felt a sense of community at City and 71% were confident in the next steps on their course.
- RyG noted the main recommendations from the check-ins is for the University to adopt the proposed learning and teaching module, i.e. large lectures to take place online whilst smaller teaching seminars to take place in person, and for the timetabling team to collaborate with the different schools.

The Board thanked RyG for his presentation which they **noted**. HR noted that there had been some critical feedback from the University on the check-in calls including the questions used, the sample and the data not being representative. She suggested that the value of student insight and contacting students outweighed these concerns. The Board noted the value in the project and how much it brings to the forefront of the work of the Union.

Section C – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

No Items were submitted under this section at this meeting.

Section D – Finance

14. Management Accounts

(Paper: BT2142)

JT presented the Management Accounts from February 2022 highlighting the following:

- The accounts show that the Union is on target to meet a deficit budget at year end. Thus far, the Union hasn't been in a deficit position. This is due to the Union having frontloaded income and undertaking a budget reforecast exercise in December 2021.
- Expected expenditure that will contribute towards the deficit portion are new temporary staff positions, additional recruitment costs and additional research costs (catering, advice, and academic services).
- The Union currently has large cash balances and JT will be exploring how to invest surplus cash into various investment opportunities which she will report to the Board.

The Board **noted** the Management Accounts.

15. Budget 2022/2023

(Paper: BT2143)

PG presented the Budget 2022/23 paper highlighting the following:

- The University are in the process of developing their budget. The University usually indicates the total amount for the block grant and award an increase for salaried staff for cost of living increases, of which the percentage is agreed nationally by Universities UK and UCEA.
- PG explained with these increases the budget would not be impacted too drastically.
- The proposed budget to the University includes a £35,000.00 increase from last year, giving a total requested budget of £1,030,000.00.
- PG highlighted that there are several risk areas including funding for a fourth Sabbatical Officer, advice service support and the salary review.
- Presently, the University have not committed to additional funding and therefore the Union would need to be prepared to make savings to cover any additional salary costs. PG has met with the Reward Manager in the University and the potential staff salary review increase could cost £100,000.00. PG requested a steer from the Board as to whether to pursue the staff salary review due to this risk and financial implications.

The Board noted the balance between providing the same services and output whilst having fewer resources would be difficult. PG noted the Union has operated with less before, but this would affect output.

The Board **decided** by majority decision for PG to continue pursuing the salary review.

Section E - Starred items for approval

No Starred Items were submitted for approval at this meeting.

Section F - Starred items for information

16. Summary of all Executive Committee's since the last meeting of the BoT

(Paper: BT2144)

This item remained starred so was not discussed and was **noted** by the Board.

17. Summary of all Student Council's since the last meeting of the BoT

(Paper: BT2145)

This item remained starred so was not discussed and was **noted** by the Board.

Section G - Other

18. Any Other Business

- i) The Board expressed interest to hear from City President, Professor Anthony Finkelstein on the University's strategy and timeline.
- ii) PG noted he would send the election results to Trustees when this would be confirmed on the 6 April 2022.

19. Trustees Only Business

All staff left the meeting, and this section of the meeting has no minutes.

Date of the next meeting: 4.30pm, Tuesday 7 June 2022

Board Clerk: Adam Ali