

# 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 | 06 December 2022 | AG06, College Building, 280 St John Street, EC1V 0HB

Members	Initials	Meeting 1 13.09.22	Meeting 2 06.12.22	Meeting 3 28.02.23	Meeting 4 23.05.23	Meeting 5 17.07.23
Gesmina Tsourrai (President) (Chair)	GT	✓	✓			
Aaminah Patel (Deputy President)	AP	✓	A			
Yavuz Emin Kafadar (Deputy President)	YK	✓	✓			
Fortune Sampson (Deputy President)	FS	✓	✓			
Nick Ratcliffe (Lay Trustee and Deputy Chair)	NR	✓	✓			
Alan Latham (Lay Trustee)	AL	✓	✓			
Rumnique Gill (Lay Trustee)	RG	P	A			
Liz Williams (Lay Trustee)	LW	✓	✓			
Vacant (Lay Trustee)	-	N/M	N/M			
Ibrahim Hamid (Student Trustee)	IH	A	A			
Tofunmi Odugbemi (Student Trustee)	TO	✓	✓			

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
Sayed Alkadiri	SA	Interim Deputy Chief Executive
Jeni Turner	JT	Head of Finance
Chris Moore	CM	Head of Communications and Business Development
Aadam Ali	AA	Clerk

## Formal

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

GT welcomed SA, the Union's Interim Deputy Chief Executive who would be covering for HR for the next 14 months whilst she is away on leave. Apologies were received from AP, RG and IH. IH noted to AA that he supported all items that were presented for approval at this meeting and would have voted to approve if he were present. HR noted she would need to leave the meeting early.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

(Paper: BT2222)

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 13 September 2022.

(Paper: BT2223M)

- 3.2 The Board **noted** the Matters Arising (Paper: BT2224A), noting the following:
- The management account action paused whilst other priorities are focussed on and until the Finance Team are back to full capacity.
  - Lay Trustee Recruitment item currently delayed due to capacity, PG will be liaising with Peridot Recruitment.
  - The Student Officers have no current update on speaking with the original students who proposed the BDS motion as part of the Legal Advice Follow up action. Still to be done, but the Officers will be taking this away.
  - The Charity Commission has been emailed by the Chief Executive following the September 2022 decision from the Board on the Legal Advice. Information has been made available on the Union website. The Charity Commission has confirmed that their contact is now closed.
  - HR has notified City and Union Staff affected by the Board's decision to not go ahead with Green Impact currently.

#### 4. Decisions taken between the meetings

GT updated that one decision was made via correspondence since the last meeting. The Board approved the External Speakers policy which was passed by a quorate vote on the 18<sup>th</sup> October and was announced by PG on the 19<sup>th</sup> October. The policy has now been implemented for students.

#### 5. Items brought forward by the Chair

No items were unstarred in Section E Starred Items for Approval and therefore, all would be taken as approved except for item 15- Sabbatical Officer Salary 2023/2024 which GT, FS, YK and TO abstained due to the item being a conflict of interest as they could run in the next Sabbatical Officer elections.

No items in Section F – Starred Items for Information were unstarred therefore all these items were noted. GT noted to Trustees that agenda item 21- Student Trustee Recruitment had not been circulated but a new option had been proposed to the Appointments Committee following interviewing five candidates. GT said the outcome would be shared with Trustees.

At the start of the meeting, as Chair, GT decided that agenda item 12- Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements For the Year Ended 31 July 2022 (Confidential) would be discussed first after which, the agenda was discussed in order numerically.

### Section A – Update from the Chief Executive and Strategic Progress

#### 6. Chief Executive Report

(Paper: BT2225)

The Board considered the Chief Executive report, which included updates on key projects, recruitment and staff matters which PG presented. He highlighted the following from his report:

- PG updated that SA had joined as the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and a member of existing Union staff has moved into the role of Insight Coordinator. The Union will recruit for five roles over the coming months including three additional posts funded via City.
- The Love Wins event was very successful following incidents of homophobic and transphobic vandalism on campus. Several high-profile members of staff have signed the LGBTQI+ Inclusivity pledge which will be followed by an action group.
- As part of additional funding awarded by City for Quick Wins, the Union have organised cinema nights with over 100 attendees and an exciting Winter Festival amongst other

engaging activities. Both the Union and City have been successful in building student communities and creating belonging for students.

- There has been positive progress with UniTu the digital student feedback system and contracts have been signed. Eventually this will speed up resource time for Student Academic Representatives.

PG clarified the following for the Board:

- That the three new roles in the Union would be ongoing and fully funded and would equate to a 27% increase in the block grant year on year including cost of living increases and the salary review increase.
- The future strategy that the Union is working on will be fit for purpose and will dictate what funding will be spent on. The Union is currently well resourced and can ask for further resources if required.
- The Love Wins event may continue being a yearly event as part of the academic calendar but ultimately would be led by the LGBTQI+ community of students and staff. The Union is trying to progress conversations around cultures and behaviours as part of the LGBTQI+ Action Group. Part of their remit is looking at celebration and solidarity and this may include further events for other LGBTQI+ dates throughout the year.

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

## 7. Strategy Update Report

(Paper: BT2226)

The Strategy Update Report was taken as read by PG. PG highlighted the Advice Quality Standards (AQS) Kitemark audit is taking place in January 2023. This award demonstrates the high-quality service the Union provides with advice. CM is working on monthly communication messages to students in preparation for the National Student Survey (NSS) focussing on the Union's impact.

The strategy update report was **noted** by the Board.

## 8. New Strategy Update Report

(Paper: BT2227)

PG presented the New Strategy Update report and mentioned the following:

- PG received an update from Social Engine last week. Progress made was good.
- A staff workshop was held which staff felt very positive about and was a good start to the process.
- In addition, twelve stakeholder interviews were held, and a new survey had been launched and developed. The target response was 1500 but this was exceeded with 1692 responses.
- PG met with Social Engine to discuss how staff could be well represented in the strategy following the commitment from the Board of Trustees in the staff survey actions. PG outlined the proposal and additional cost to the Board, which to ensure all voices are heard, a workshop will be held with four distinct groups within the Union including: Senior Managers, Middle Managers, Coordinators and Student Officers. The Board were supportive.

The Board discussed the following:

- The Board did not want to mismanage expectations on implementation due to resource limitation. LW further identified that Social Engine have an ambitious vision and she would not want this sacrificed due to budget which would need approval in the next budget cycle and she advised budget is prioritised also.
- PG and HR agreed, HR said that it would be important to agree a robust governance system and operations plan to help achieve the vision but what the resource will look like exactly in the future is difficult to say. LW noted that implications of the strategy would be years long and that it would set out defining characteristics of how the Union

sets itself apart as a service provider. PG said that when students decide to come to City, they make their decision based on the student offering and curriculum but in addition, the student experience which the Union is critical to.

- PG highlighted that the Senior Management Team were responsible for the delivery of the strategy, but the Trustees would be responsible for the direction. Part of the strategy will be forming new partnerships, communities and income streams. PG said the Union needs to be brave and ensure that what it currently does is fit for purpose and if whether students are recognising this and if not, review if this resource be used elsewhere.
- PG suggested that once the final report is received, a working group is set up with Lay Trustees and Student Officers to identify implications of the strategy.

The Board **noted** the Future Strategy Update report.

## 9. Confidential: Sport

(Paper: BT2228)

PG presented the paper on Sport. He highlighted the following:

- At the previous Board meeting, PG spoke about what the Union could do to add value to Sport at City if the Union managed competitive (BUCS and LUSL), social and recreational student sport (collectively referred to as Sport Development). Currently, PG is sitting on a joint working group on Sport.
- The Union commissioned an external feasibility study on Sport Development and the Union which was favourable. After reading this, the joint working group agreed to recommend to City SLT that the Union would be a viable option to manage Sport Development.
- PG noted the importance of exploring what the right model for City would be, and PG has submitted a proposal to City for the Union to manage Sport Development. PG clarified this would not include the facilities which run at a loss and would be a high-risk area for the Union.
- The budget for Sport including British Universities and College Sports (BUCS) and London University Sports League (LUSL) affiliations would be provided by City and would need to be ringfenced if agreed. PG confirmed that budget for Sport would not be subsidised by other budgets in the Union. One risk area is hire spaces and transport costs due to the high demand in London.
- PG noted that Sport at City would likely focus on community, wellbeing, physical and mental health. The aim would be to increase opportunities and belonging. PG requested a steer from the Board if they would be happy for him to proceed.

The Board discussed the following:

- The Board enquired how broadly Sport would be defined. For example, chess or dance could be considered sports and foster a social environment as a result.
- The Board noted that there are some societies that exist that already contribute to these interests (e.g. Dance Society and Chess Society) and how these groups are supported.
- The Board noted that this is a great opportunity for the Union and demonstrates the faith that City has in it. PG said there are risks and opportunities which are worth exploring but overall, it shows that the Union is relevant and can make a difference.
- The Board noted that Unions that run Sport have far more opportunities to engage students. The Board agreed Sports groups should be built around fun and belonging, and new Sports should be welcomed which the Union would be open and inclusive to.
- PG highlighted that BUCS membership is expensive and other local league options could be researched when looking to expand opportunities. The Board also pointed out sponsorship could be sought after by teams.

- PG suggested that students could become coaches or referees. He said there isn't an issue with equipment currently but more around renting spaces to play due to the high demand in London.
- PG clarified that students currently pay an annual membership around £50. This could be reviewed as not all sports teams require the same amount/type of equipment and expenditure, some Unions have a pay as you play option additionally.

The Board **agreed** to continue proceeding with the proposal on Sport.

## Section B - Student Insight

### 10. Sabb Spotlight

(Paper: BT2229)

GT presented on her progress as President and highlighted the following points:

- The Cultural Festival event which saw a high number of students attending and involved various cultural societies, was very successful.
- The Union provided free haircuts on campus for men who had a talk as part of recognising men's mental health and a video was created asking men on campus when they last cried, combatting stigma.
- GT said that she has pushed for increased engagement with students and the Union has been very active on social media.
- GT is also considering student safety on campus after various incidents have taken place. A meeting with the police will be taking place before the end of the year which she will be attending.

FS presented on his progress as Deputy President and highlighted the following points:

- FS leads the mental health portfolio and will be talking with the University on the cost-of-living crisis impact on student mental health. FS has worked on Black Futures Month aiming to harness the creativity of black students and utilising their potential. Events as part of this celebration included a sip and paint night, Black Interns Employability panel and a volleyball match.
- FS helped a student get back on their course who did not have the finances to continue studying. FS took this to management and the student was reinstated.
- FS has been working with City on the mental health charter. He is supporting the creation of five student posts for students to be involved with to implement the charter and explore best practice.
- FS raised an action at the Senate on Academic Boards and Academic Progression which has previously hampered international students from working in the UK after graduating.

GT presented AP's progress as Deputy President and highlighted the following points:

- AP has lobbied for a Cost-of-Living Working Group which has been established.
- AP is organising events for Islamophobia Awareness month such as PREVENT awareness stalls and act of kindness sessions.
- AP is organising a campaign for shariah compliant student loans.
- AP is continuing campaigning on decolonising City and will be working to create a student EDI Committee.

YK presented on his progress since starting as Deputy President and highlighted the following points:

- YK is working hard on affordable food on campus and confirmed there are £3.50 saver meals on campus for an evening meal and 99p for filtered coffee at certain outlets on campus.
- YK has worked to make free sports hall slots for students to use.

- YK is fostering communities in Sports by organising a sports night for captains every week. These will now take place every fortnight instead due to low attendance.
- YK updated that 29 new societies had applied this term. He helped students start the Iranian Society and PhD Society.

GT explained the Union's position on upcoming UCU strike action. The Sabbatical Officer team has decided to remain impartial and instead focus on students that will be affected by the strike action. The Team have improved communication with students on the strike action by producing flyers and posters and launching a strike hub which would simplify how to make a complaint. The Union will also be organising study spaces with free hot drinks for students affected by the action who are on campus.

GT noted that the Sabbatical Officer team will be working on supporting students during the UCU strikes, supporting student mental health and wellbeing, continuing work on the LGBTQI+ Taskforce and building relationships with City's Jewish Community over term 2.

The Board thanked the Sabbatical Officer team and commended them on their work and **noted** their reports.

## Section C – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

### 11. EDI Committee

(Paper: BT2230)

GT updated the Board on the LGBTQI+ Action Group highlighting the following:

- Following homophobic and transphobic vandalism on campus, the Action Group was set up to address issues and build confidence in students and staff to challenge any negative behaviour.
- The Union worked collaboratively with City and the LGBTQI+ Society President on the Love Wins event which was very successful.
- Most sabbatical Officers received LGBTQI+ training.

The Board **noted** the EDI Committee update.

## Section D – Finance

### 12. Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements For the Year Ended 31 July 2022 (Confidential)

(Paper: BT2231)

GT welcomed Stephen Anderson (SAN), Audit Partner and Christian James (CJ), Audit Manager from Knox Cropper LLP who presented the statements. Both were only present for this agenda item and highlighted the following:

- SAN read the Trustee Report for Trustees as required to as part of the presentation.
- SAN said that the Union made a deficit in total of £17,000 which was planned.
- Over the past years, income has increased every year and the Union was awarded £1,230,677 for 2021-2022 in the block grant which was an increase of £341,000 compared to the previous year.
- On income: Miscellaneous income has increased by £33,000. Events income has increased by £7,000 and societies income has increased by £29,000 due to events taking place again after the initial pandemic timeline.
- On expenditure: overall expenditure this year is showing as more than previous years because this is the first year that notional rent charges for the Union's spaces have been included. Wages have increased by £58,000 and research costs amount to £26,000.



- Reserves for the Union has gone down slightly but is not worrying and remains within the Charity Commission's guideline amount. The Union is currently in a healthy cash position. Reserves are currently at £572,000, of that £53,000 is restricted. The remainder can be spent in line with the charity's objectives.
- The amount from creditors has increased from £110,000 to £145,000 due to increased operational expenditure.
- The auditors are happy with the new Head of Finance JT and the new management processes and the accounting policies are consistent with last year's.
- There are no major risks to bring to the Trustees attention which is very positive.

The Board commented on the following:

- The Board expressed importance to be prudent with the reserves amount and questioned whether the current amount was sufficient. SAN confirmed that the Charity Commission recommends holding 3-6 months' worth of expenditure as reserves. Currently the reserves are at £570,000 and expenditure is at £1,300,000 which is just under the 6-month mark. The Union has a good relationship with the University and income is guaranteed year on year.
- The Board questioned about new Charities Act including cyber fraud and guidance on investment policy, and if Trustees should note anything upcoming. SAN noted that there are no upcoming major changes. If there are any changes, they would affect the 2026 accounts.

The Board **approved** the statements and thanked SAN and CJ. PG thanked JT for her work in the audit and ongoing finances of the Union.

### 13. October Management Accounts

(Paper: BT2232)

JT presented the October Autumn Accounts highlighting the following points:

- JT noted that on one of the Union's current accounts, the signatories were likely not updated during the pandemic. At the same time, the Union opened three new bank accounts, so it is possible that although these bank mandates have the correct signatories, that one of the accounts was missed by Natwest. JT has not yet had a response from Natwest but this is under investigation and it may be that authorised signatories may need to approve this, namely NR and AL for PG, HR and also SA on all four accounts and on online banking.
- On income and expenditure: minor variances are shown due to timeline differences. Staff cost is showing as the biggest cost at £11,158 but, it is still a positive variance because of delayed staff appointments.
- Timing differences with Welcome Desk transition staff, temporary staff costs and Quick Wins costs show as a favourable variance.
- The surplus amount is mainly showing under the management and operations department as that's where the block grant is coded.
- Income from the block grant is showing as higher due to the job evaluation process with all staff moving up one pay grade to the bottom spine point. In addition, the grant increase reflects cost-of-living increase and the fourth Sabbatical Officer salary.
- Cash flow is looking healthy with money in the bank.

The Board asked about the debtors risk and how big the amount of increase on interest is on the 30 or 90 day accounts. On interest rates, JT replied saying that the rates hadn't gone up yet but believes it to be a small increase. On debtors risk, one debtor hasn't yet paid for a stall hire but JT is chasing them for payment for the amount of £700.

The Board **noted** the October Management Accounts and thanked JT.

## Section E - Starred items for approval

### 14. Returning Officer Appointment

(Paper: BT2233)

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

### 15. Sabbatical Officer Salary 2023/2024

(Paper: BT2234)

This item remained starred so was not discussed and was **approved** by the Board except for GT, FS, YK and TO who abstained due to the item being a conflict of interest as they could run in the next Sabbatical Officer elections.

### 16. Finance Regulations

(Paper: BT2235)

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

### 17. Delegation of Authority

(Paper: BT2236)

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

## Section F - Starred items for information

### 18. Assembly Summary

(Paper: BT2237)

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

### 19. H&S Report 2021/2022

(Paper: BT2238)

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

### 20. Advice Termly Report

(Paper: BT2239)

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

### 21. Student Trustee Recruitment

(Paper: BT2240)

This item was not discussed, and the paper was not circulated due to new option had been proposed to the Appointments Committee following interviewing five candidates. GT said the outcome would be shared with Trustees.

## Section G - Other

### 22. Any Other Business

PG thanked HR for her efforts and recognised her work in advance of her being on leave for 14 months. He noted that she contributed to many of the Union's successes.

### 23. Trustees Only Business

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

**Date of the next meeting:** 4.30pm, 28 February 2023

**Board Clerk:** Adam Ali