

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 | 7 June 2022 | C103, Tait Building

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	✓	✓	A	
Nick Ratcliffe (Lay Trustee and Deputy Chair)	NR	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Alan Latham (Lay Trustee)	AL	✓	A	✓	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	N/M	
Vacant Lay Trustee	-	N/M	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
Aadam Ali	AA	Clerk

Informal

Guest Speaker: Professor Susannah Quinsee

The Board received a presentation from Susannah Quinsee (SQ), Sian Thurgood (ST) and Dominic Davis (DD) on City the progress for the City strategy. It was noted the proposed strategy would be submitted for approval by City Council at the end of June 2022 and that they are keen to work collaboratively with the Union, in particular on the first pillar of the strategy being student experience. The University received positive feedback on the recent student strategy day and have tried to involve students at every point of this process as City wants to put students at the heart of the strategy and improve student employability. Other areas highlighted as a priority by students were diversity, community, and student communication.

SQ, ST and DD noted that the strategy is the vehicle to making City truly student centred, noting the desire to be a preferred choice for students. DD noted that City wants to, on one hand, get the basics right, but also explore improving wellbeing and belonging especially after the pandemic. This includes looking at the digital presence of City and aspiring to have a 24/7 service for students.

The Board thanked SQ, ST and SS for their presentation, and commented with the following:

- The Board noted the depth and breadth of the strategy but asked about the challenges associated with having a 24/7 tailored and personalised presence with students and the need for this to be aligned. The Board also commented that ultimately the success of this service would be down to budget. DD commented that he was keen to develop strategic partnerships and develop the workstreams in the strategy to achieve this level of service, and that City' funding model has a high reliance on income from student fees.
- The Board noted that funding from alumni could be capitalised on going forward.
- The Board enquired about what success would look like and about KPIs of the strategy. ST noted that the student personas and success benchmarking are included in the workstream one document which she is happy to share with the Board. She also noted that KPIs would follow out of this process.

Formal

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from SK and AL.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Paper: BT2146)

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 5 April 2022.

(Paper: BT2147M)

3.2 The Board **noted** the Matters Arising (Paper: BT2148A), noting the following:

- The management accounts action to explore depositing reserves into a fixed one-year product will be explored in summer 2022 as part of the student micro-placement scheme.
- The staff salary review is covered in PG's CEO report.
- LW joined the Appointments Committee and PG is waiting to hear back from City Council on suitable nominees that fit what the Union is looking for in a new Lay Trustee. The Board advised to look at external options to recruit if City are not able to provide any suitable candidates that fit the criteria.
- LW declared an interest in becoming the Union's strategy champion as part of the strategic review process. PG suggested discussing via correspondence to give the expectations of the role.

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: BT2149)

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

- PG highlighted the section on NUS as read which noted developments on the NUS antisemitism review. He highlighted that there had been a lot of scrutiny of the Union

given that SD is the NUS President-elect. He noted this is a risk for the sector and that there had been some mention of the Union in the media.

- PG noted that work had continued towards the staff salary review. The workload for this has been impactful to the SMT as they have rewritten all job profiles. The expectation is that after this process, staff salary costs could increase by £100,000.00.
- The SU awards were a success and PG thanked everyone that delivered it.
- The Trustee away day will be taking place on the 12 July 2022 in person only.

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

- The Board suggested that the SU Awards date could be diarised in advance for next year to maximise attendance.
- The Board enquired about student groups. HR responded noting that next year, to increase membership and activity, the Union will be reviewing its free membership scheme for societies to have one free member.
- The Board enquired about the acquisition of Urdang and how this would affect City. PG noted that Urdang will become part of a school like the other schools. PG explained that Urdang consists of 450 performing arts students which will bring a different experience to City. Additionally, Finsbury Town Hall will become a venue that City will be able to utilise.

7. **Strategy Update Report** (Paper: BT2150)

This item was taken as read and the strategy update report was **noted**. PG highlighted the Organised Fun proposal for academic societies which he was hopeful would make the Union sector leading. Organised Fun are already looking at opportunities for academic societies and PG will bring a further update to the Board at a later date.

8. **Charity Commission Complaint - BDS** (Paper: BT2151)

PG presented the Charity Commission Complaint – BDS paper highlighting the following:

- PG noted that he had already sent the documentation and emails to Board members but is bringing this paper to make Trustees aware of the current situation with the Charity Commission.
- PG stated that at this stage, the Charity Commission have notified that a complaint has been received, however they haven't decided if they will formally investigate yet.
- The Union has been offered legal advice from Bates, Wells and Braithwaite Solicitors (BWB) via NUS.
- PG is highlighting this as a potentially risk going forward and wants to make Board members aware that a potential investigation could be made. PG will update the Board on the development of this going forward.

The Board noted the following:

- The Board noted the paper and complaint highlighting the divergence from previous legal advice and asked what the actual risk levels would be. PG noted that currently, the risk is very low, as the BDS policy has been displayed on the Union's website but not implemented.
- PG noted that legal advice could have been taken before the policy was displayed on the website, to reduce the risk to the Union if similar situations arise in the future.

9. **Staff Survey** (Paper: BT2152)

PG delivered a presentation on the Staff Survey results and covered the following:

- PG noted that this is the first employee engagement survey which the Union has done exclusive to the organisation.
- The cost of the survey is £1,000.00 and is good value for money as the survey and results are put together by consultants on behalf of NUS. The survey allows for

anonymous benchmarking between departments of a set number and allows the Union to benchmark its scores against other similar Unions which can be chosen.

- The response rate from the Union's staff was 100%, which is positive and shows that staff were trustful of the survey and to give feedback. This should be balanced by the fact that the Union has 22 members of staff.
- PG explained the scoring system to Trustees noting that red shows the lowest score bracket moving up to orange, blue and then green.
- Overall scores were predominantly positive showing as green in some areas and most other areas needing some improvements, showing as blue. Reward is the lowest scoring area showing as red.
- On EDI, overall scores were mixed showing green and blue. The lowest score in this section was around belonging.
- On the leadership, scores again were mixed overall. The lowest scoring sections were around the leadership creating a compelling vision which the SMT were expecting. The leadership team are aware that the vision needs to be refocussed for staff as after the pandemic, a lot of the workload of staff has been task focussed, therefore the vision needs to be reset.
- On learning and development, scores were generally positive. Some work needs to be done to make staff aware of various learning and development opportunities which already takes place, however, they may not appear to be labelled as such. PG said this should be covered in induction when a new staff member starts.
- On reward, this was the lowest scoring area with various red scores around staff not feeling they are paid competitively and the overall feeling of being valued. PG confirmed that staff at the Union are paid competitively against other Unions, but potentially not against City. This impacts significantly on other areas too across the board contributing to the feeling of being undervalued. One action that will possibly mitigate this is the upcoming salary review for staff.
- PG presented the action plan at the end following the survey results for the Board to **agree on**.

The Board thanked PG for his presentation and made the following comments:

- The Board noted the difficulty for staff to be promoted from within and how this contributes to feeling undervalued and lowering staff retention scores. PG explained that at the Union, it is challenging for Coordinators to be promoted due to the number of Managers and Senior Manager roles that there are and that recruitment for these roles only happen when someone leaves which doesn't happen often.
- The Board asked about salaries in the University compared to salaries in the sector. PG elaborated that the Union pays competitively and higher than some Unions in London. City salaries are slightly higher which is the trend in Higher Education institutions. The challenge is that Union staff have joint contracts with the University and therefore a comparison to University salaries often occurs.
- The Board asked about the wage gap for staff members from backgrounds facing historic inequity and how differently they are paid. PG said that pay for staff of different levels are paid on a scale, similar roles are paid on the same scale as other roles with similar responsibilities in the Union. PG noted that the question of how these staff members are paid in comparison to the University or the wider sector is unknown.
- The Board enquired about EDI and how staff from more diverse backgrounds are being recruited. PG confirmed all applications received are anonymised as part of the selection process and candidates are not known until interviews are sent out. RG noted that the EDI Committee needs more momentum going forward and that more could be done. PG also noted that at the Union, it is unlikely to have mass vacancies for established roles making change slower.
- The Board asked PG about flexible working and how flexibility e.g., for childcare arrangements would be considered. PG noted that this would depend on the role, as

student facing roles would be expected to be on campus during opening times. Another factor would be the contracted hours of the post. Overall PG noted that the Union is flexible where it is possible to be.

- The Board asked about exploration of having an in-house HR role or service as part of the action plan. PG noted that several members of staff wanted to explore this therefore it has been included. The Board noted the risks but agreed a light touch review should be completed. The Board **agreed** the action plan.

10. External Speakers Policy

(Paper: BT2153)

The Board received the proposed policy which HR presented. She highlighted the following:

- The proposed policy was written as a result of the Sabbatical Officers working with a consultant. It is proposed for approval however, the policy is linked to City's code of practice and freedom of speech policy, both of which are being reviewed. This is in part due to the government's Speech Bill being proposed as law.
- The policy will in essence, cut the waiting time for external speakers to be approved from 20 to 15 days. This is in part to support students by giving more support to organise events with guest speakers, and to also safeguard them. The popularity of the speaker or topic spoken on may give an indication of the number of attendees which will require support and security where necessary.
- The policy will give societies an understanding of the risks of speakers and the process.
- Low risk speakers will be approved by the Union's team, medium and high-risk speakers will be approved with the University.

The Board noted the following:

- LW noted that the topic could hold more relevance rather than to look at the speaker personally. SD noted that from her own experience, ultimately, the speaker and their reputation will be of utmost relevance rather than the topic.
- The Board noted that once a platform is given to a speaker, the speaker could use that to talk about any number of things. Consequently, who they are should be considered.

The Board **approved** the policy.

11. Sport

The Board received a verbal update on Sport from PG who noted the following:

- The University have agreed to look at the Union's involvement with clubs and community sport.
- The Union have commissioned Organised Fun to look at how the Union could be involved in sport going forward and what could be improved for students.
- PG noted that he would send an update from Organised Fun and this piece of work in future.

The Board **noted** the verbal update and commented the piece of work was very positive.

Section B - Student Insight

12. Sabb Spotlight

The Sabbatical Officers presented on their progress since the last meeting.

RJ highlighted the following points:

- A lot of RJ's work has been around the strike action and lasting effects of the pandemic which aren't following the typical October to July academic year.
- RJ is hoping to allow for students who do not follow the traditional learning cycle to be reached by the Union and is speaking with schools.

- RJ is dealing with a high number of extenuating circumstance cases from the Law School.

SD highlighted the following points:

- She has noticed a high number of academic misconduct cases. Initial indications show they have tripled in comparison to previous years.
- SD was pleased with the SU Awards and was happy to see students being rewarded for their impact.
- SD has been involved with the informal interview process for two Deans.
- SD has also sat on the Hybrid Review Workshop. This is continuing to find the right balance of in person and off campus support.

The Board **noted** the verbal report and commented with the following:

- The Board commented positively on the Sabbatical Officers being part of the City strategy process as they are sitting on different workstreams.
- The Board noted that Urdang being included in this is positive also, and SD commented she visited Urdang, and they are being involved in the strategy process. Urdang also already have a society which will fit into the Union and will be supported.
- The Board noted that student facing services should be aiming to be 100% student facing now.
- RG asked about the counselling services at City. SD reported that the department has found it challenging as most of their staff left the organisation however, they have recruited new counsellors and the service has made big strides forward.

13. Catering Research

(Paper: BT2154)

PG presented the Catering Research paper to the Board presenting the following to the Board:

- PG noted the research would bring a clearer picture of the current catering services on site, and what could be improved. The research piece also reviewed the number of outlets and current quality and suggests that less outlets with more distinction between them would work better for students, making them a destination for students to want to visit.
- The research also looks at diversity within each outlet and maps what is available on campus currently verses what is available nearby for students off campus.
- PG noted the importance of community for students, and how essential it would be for Trustees to consider the long-term planning and review of the service on campus and what it will develop into.
- PG suggested that the Union should consider quality, value for money for students and the overall student experience.

The Board noted from the research that some University staff members felt they would prefer to eat with other staff instead of students. PG clarified that previously there was a staff-only café on campus which didn't have a high footfall therefore it was closed. Some staff members still would like this, but PG feels they would be in the minority. PG also noted that the services on campus should have a more unique offering and the possibly of bringing in franchises such as other Universities have with Subway, could be explored.

The Board thanked PG and **noted** paper.

Section C – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

No Items were submitted under this section at this meeting.

Section D – Finance

14. Management Accounts

(Paper: BT2155)

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

- The accounts show that the Union is on target to meet a deficit budget at year end which was set by the Board at the beginning of the year.
- The accounts show £4,000.00 income from City's contribution to printing over Freshers' Fairs. Income from communications and shop sales is below budget.
- The income looks static mainly due to most of the Union's income being the block grant at the beginning of the year and due to gaps in recruiting staff and the associated costs. As a result, the expenditure is slowly catching up to move the Union to a deficit position.
- Other expenditure includes £10,000 in June and July for the micro-placement programme and also survey costs for catering, sport, staff survey and an academic society survey.
- JT has met with each department in the Union to see how best they can spend the remainder of their budget to ensure a deficit position at year end. This set of accounts is from April, and additional costs for elections and the awards are yet to be reconciled.
- JT will be organising training with society leaders on how to claim expenses and manage their budgets effectively.

The Board **noted** the Management Accounts.

15. Budget 2022/2023

(Paper: BT2156)

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

- PG is asking Trustees to approve the budget in principle and to take the figures outlined as an indication.
- A different approach has been taken in that budgets have been put together by Senior Managers from scratch giving a better understanding of what exactly funding will be spent on.
- The University is covering the cost-of-living increases.
- The staff salary review will potentially increase costs by £100,000.00.
- The current budget is showing a deficit, however, the University have agreed to fund the fourth Sabbatical Officer position, therefore reducing the deficit by £35,000.00. The Union has committed to spending £25,000.00 on the strategy review from the reserves as approved by the Board at the last meeting.
- PG said that the Union will be working to reach a break-even budget.
- JT noted that going forward, some temporary roles such as Representation Assistants and other student temporary staff will not be continued going forward making a saving of £30,000.00.
- PG stated he would have a final outcome with figures at the Trustee away day.

The Board thanked PG and JT for presenting the budget paper and made the following points:

- The Board asked if merging with Urdang would present additional costs. PG mentioned that this would be unlikely and have little impact due to Urdang having only 450 students.
- The Board enquired about City increasing capitol or if they will look at existing buildings to be renovated. SD responded and said City Council is investing in some buildings, in particular the Bayes School in Finsbury Park.

The Board **approved** the Budget paper 2022/2023. PG thanked JT and the other Senior Managers for their work in putting the budget together.

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: BT2157)

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: BT2158)

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

Section G - Other

18. Any Other Business

SD thanked the Board and wished the new Sabbatical Officers luck in the next year during their term. PG thanked the Sabbatical Officers for their work and efforts during their term.

19. 2022/2023

(Paper: BT2159)

PG presented the list of Board of Trustees meetings to take place in 2022/2023 which Board **agreed**. The Board noted that an online option should be made available to promote flexibility but also noted attending the Board meetings in person is necessary.

20. Trustees Only Business

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

Board of Trustees away day:

Tuesday 12th July 2022

Date of the next meeting:

4.30pm, Tuesday 13 September 2022

Board Clerk:

Adam Ali