

STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT 24/25 – FEBRUARY 2025
STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT REPORT

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HIGHLIGHTS SINCE LAST STUDENT COUNCIL:

HIGHLIGHTS

WE WON AND STILL PUSHING FOR MORE (NATIONAL LOBBY DAY 23RD OCTOBER)



Last October, the UWE Students' Union Presidents, along with other SU reps across the UK and NUS members, had the chance to meet with MPs in their respective regions. For us, that meant meeting with MPs Karin Smyth, Carla Denyer, and Claire Hazelgrove in Westminster during the NUS National Lobby Day. This was an incredible opportunity for us to push for essential changes focused on improving student welfare.

We also backed Alex Sobel MP's amendment to the Renters' Rights Bill, which aims to offer better protection and stability for renters. With the rising costs of rent and limited student accommodation options, this amendment is crucial for ensuring students' rights are protected when navigating the rental market.

I'm excited to share that, thanks to the collective voice of NUS, we achieved one of the biggest wins – the Renters' Rights Bill now prevents landlords from demanding multiple months of rent upfront. Additionally, our efforts helped secure an amendment that stops students from being locked into rental contracts more than six months in advance. This gives us greater flexibility and reduces the stress of planning for the next year.

In conclusion, NUS National Lobby Day was a pivotal moment for us to directly engage with policymakers and advocate for changes that benefit students both now and in the future. It was truly empowering to see how our combined efforts brought us closer to building a fairer, more supportive, and inclusive environment for all students.

REFRESHERS FAIR

It was a real pleasure to welcome both our new and returning students at this year's reFreshers Fair, held on our Frenchay campus on January 30th. The energy was amazing as I saw so many excited faces, both familiar and new, ready to kick off their journey at UWE. The event was a fantastic chance for everyone to dive into the wide range of clubs, societies, and resources UWE offers, giving them the perfect opportunity to start their university experience off on the right foot.

MANIFESTO UPDATE:

What I am currently focused on and what has been accomplished so far:

1. DIVERSITY DAY

I'm excited to share that the long-awaited date for Diversity Day is finally set! This year, we'll be hosting the event across all our campuses, with the following dates: Glenside on January 25th, and Bower Ashton and Frenchay on February 27th. we can't wait to celebrate our cultural diversity together. Let's make this a day to remember!

2. STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY

I'm working alongside other Presidents to team up with the UWE Careers Team and provide tailored support throughout students' academic journeys. Our goal is to ensure that students are fully equipped to tackle university challenges and make a smooth transition into successful careers after graduation. We've already set up regular catch-up meetings with the Careers Team. Additionally, I'm pushing for the introduction of drop-in sessions at the Student Union across our campuses, run by Success Coaches. These sessions will help raise awareness about the services the Careers Team offers and guide students on how to access and make the most of these valuable resources.

3. REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT:

Reasonable adjustment

As we all know, UWE's decision to reduce the deadline for reasonable adjustments from 14 days to 7 days has been disadvantageous for students who need these adjustments. In response to this decision, a working group was formed through our advocacy, and we do meet fortnightly. So far, we've had six meetings, and we've included four students to represent us in advocating for more student voices during the discussions.

Our discussions in the working group have included concerns about staff capacity, uncapped resits, and patterns in which RA2D usage timeframes are used. We've also been looking into data analysis to better understand these patterns and have invited experts from IT and Blackboard to explore practical, inclusive solutions. The timeline for this project aims to have any recommendations presented for final approval at the May Academic Board.

Black history month:



As the lead, alongside my co-leads Lubyna and Habib, we successfully celebrated Black History Month 2024, themed "Reclaiming Narratives," through the collective efforts of students and staff at UWE Bristol. Together, we honored and amplified Black voices within our community. A key highlight was the Black History Hall of Fame, which showcased the remarkable achievements of our Black students and staff, with their inspiring stories displayed in D Block and online. Additionally, we hosted a thought-provoking discussion on "Success Stories as a Black Person and Reclaiming Narratives" on October 25, 2024, featuring Dr. Rogers Griffith and Jo Forbes-Cooper. The conversation was truly inspiring, bringing our community together to reflect on these significant narratives.

Transportation

Building on last year's success in organizing regular catch-ups with First Bus to discuss transportation issues and student concerns, I've had a series of meetings with them over the past year. During these discussions,

we addressed several student complaints, including dissatisfaction with bus services, safety concerns, and specific challenges faced by students commuting to and from the Bower Ashton campus. In our most recent meeting, First Bus assured us that they'll follow up with potential solutions to improve bus routes, including better timekeeping, increasing bus frequency, and ensuring that Bower Ashton routes are more reliable. They committed to providing an update on these proposed changes before our next scheduled meeting. Through our ongoing partnership with the university, we're also working on sending UWE community concerns to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA).

Accommodation

I'm serving as a Board member of the One City Living Rent Commission, which was established by Bristol City Council and the City Office to explore ways to make Bristol an affordable living rent city and empower tenants' rights in the Private Rented Sector. I also invited Lubyna to join and be included in the commission. I attended the second meeting for the Bristol Living Rent Commission, where we're currently discussing a rent control policy. The goal is to prevent landlords from increasing rent for a certain period, providing more stability for renters.

Additionally, UWE Bristol's newest accommodation on the Frenchay campus, Purdown View, has been a major step forward in addressing the accommodation crisis. This facility includes 900 bedrooms, offering a mix of en-suite rooms, shared bathrooms, and studio apartments. The new accommodation has significantly helped alleviate some of the accommodation challenges and has resulted in fewer complaints compared to last year.

International Student Advisory Committee

As we all know, we've submitted the proposal for the committee, which currently requires some adjustments that we're already working on. I mentioned that I would update the Student Council on its progress at our next meeting.

The latest update on the International Student Committee is that we've decided to move the initiative to an advisory role and the of the committee out of the Partnership Board and transition it into an SU forum/agenda, in collaboration with the Global Office. As we plan its operation, we've agreed that any student concerns raised during meetings will be handled by the Presidents and brought up as needed. We're also considering hosting an open discussion for our first meeting and brainstorming how the process will evolve moving forward. Additionally, I'm working on securing funding for the forum.

Meeting with CBL,

I initiated a CBL meeting with the Presidents to proactively address and mitigate the ongoing assessment concerns and frequent student queries that have been emerging from the College of Business and Law. The goal of this meeting was to identify key issues, discuss potential solutions, and ensure that students' concerns are addressed in a timely and effective manner, ultimately improving their overall experience within the college.

4. COST OF LIVING AND FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

University Transformation Project

As we are all aware, universities are currently facing significant financial challenges, and with the university undergoing a two-year Transformation Project, I am focused on ensuring that the restructuring and merging of teams do not negatively impact the wellbeing and support that students need. In particular, I am prioritizing areas where delays in feedback and responses have been an issue, such as assessment offence feedback, financial support, and information point services. Ongoing consultations are taking place, and I am working closely with our advice team, staff, and fellow Presidents to identify the root causes of these concerns, especially in areas where students are experiencing delayed feedback.

Community ladder

I am pleased to inform you that I have secured trustee support to increase the community ladder fund by £3,000. We now have £10,000, up from the initial £7,000, and this has been officially approved. The additional funding will help support both students and staff during these challenging financial times, with the goal of alleviating financial hardship and poverty within our community.

STUDENT GOVERNOR UPDATE

Board Of Trustee

- I have chaired three Board of Trustees meetings so far and the next one is scheduled on the 18th of March 2025.
- The Trustee Subcommittees, including the Appointment Committee, Staff Committee, and Finance and Governance (FandGP) Committee, have been established, with Trustees, including our student trustees, volunteering to join each committee. It's been great to see such active involvement from everyone.
- The Trustees expressed their satisfaction with the CEO's report and the progress of all ongoing work, noting that everything is moving along smoothly. It's great to see the positive momentum and continued success.

Board of governor

- For the Transformation Project, I've been advocating for prioritizing student interests in all decision-making, particularly when it comes to student feedback and welfare. I make sure that student perspectives are at the heart of every consultation process.

- I presented an update to the Board, highlighting the President's progress, achievements, and ongoing work, along with updates on the activities happening within the Students' Union. It was a great chance to keep everyone in the loop and showcase the impact we're making.
- I arranged my second 1:1 meeting with the Chair of the Board of Governors to update him on student concerns and the challenges we're facing. It was a valuable opportunity to keep him informed and discuss potential solutions.
- I also organized a 1:1 meeting with Sir Steve and the other Presidents to address current issues, particularly around transport, reasonable adjustments, and other student concerns. We also provided updates on our manifestos and discussed ways to tackle these challenges together.
- I've scheduled another 1:1 meeting with Carolyn, a lay governor, to discuss how the Board is functioning and explore ways to enhance it by amplifying student voices. It's a great opportunity to work together on improving the overall student experience.

OTHER IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES:

- I attended the Luna Festival on February 29th at the Frenchay campus, where I had the pleasure of welcoming and meeting both new and current students from diverse backgrounds. It was a fantastic experience to exchange ideas, listen to their stories, and connect with them as they shared their experiences with me.
- I chaired the first Exec meeting on October 24th, along with the subsequent ones, where the Presidents and PTOs discussed their manifestos and explored ideas from students. It was a great chance to collaborate and get a deeper understanding of the issues and ideas that matter most to our student community.
- I'm co-chairing the Partnership Board between UWE and the Students' Union. Our most recent meeting was on October 22nd, 2024, and the second one is scheduled for February 12th, 2025. It's been a rewarding experience to collaborate closely with the university to strengthen our partnership.
- I attended the Global Stall Fair for international students, which was organized by the Global Office. It was a great opportunity to connect with students from all over the world and explore the various resources available to support them.
- I attended the second meeting for the Bristol Living Rent Commission, where we're currently discussing a rent control policy. The aim is to prevent landlords from increasing rent for a certain period, which would provide more stability for renters.