

STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT 24/25 – MAY 2025

VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNITY AND WELFARE REPORT

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HIGHLIGHTS SINCE LAST STUDENT COUNCIL:

Academic Year 2024/25

As this is my final report for this term, I am incredibly proud to reflect on the projects, initiatives, and events led under the Community and Welfare remit this year. It's been an honour to serve in this role, and I am grateful for the trust and support of the student community throughout. Below is an overview of my key work and achievements.

MANIFESTO UPDATE:

1. Welfare Committee 2024/25 – Empowering Student Leadership

The Welfare Committee this year was more than just a support network, it became a platform for leadership development and student empowerment. One of our primary aims was to ensure that members not only had a voice but were encouraged to take ownership of their ideas and lead initiatives that mattered to them and their peers.

To build knowledge and capacity, we delivered **specialist workshops on drug awareness and harm reduction**, helping committee members understand the realities and risks students face and how to support their peers safely and sensitively.

Our committee's standout project was the development of a **student-led Instagram video series** designed to support student wellbeing. These short videos offered advice on coping with anxiety, managing panic attacks, and improving sleep routines. The campaign, developed *by students, for students*, reached over **8,000 views**, proving the power of relatable, peer-driven content.

2. Picnic: May Day Picnic - Community Garden Chill-out Session

On **Thursday, 1st May 2025**, we hosted a relaxing and much-needed **Picnic Day** at the **Community Garden on Frenchay Campus**. This event was designed as a **chill-out session** to give students a break from the stress of the exam season. The Community Garden provided the perfect serene outdoor setting for students to unwind, connect, and recharge.

The event was **drop-in style**, meaning students could come and go as they pleased, allowing them to fit the event around their busy schedules. We provided a variety of **free food and refreshments**, including snacks and drinks, ensuring that students could enjoy some comfort during a hectic period. In addition to the food, the atmosphere was enhanced with **background music**, which created a relaxing vibe for those taking a break from studying.

The aim was to provide a space where students could reflect, relax, and refresh their minds, ultimately supporting their **mental health** and **well-being**. This event was not just about food and relaxation; it was also a social experience. Students had the chance to **connect with one another**, meet new people, and build a sense of **community** outside of the classroom. The informal, outdoor setting encouraged students to engage in conversations, share experiences, and support each other through the challenges of the exam period.

3. Anti-Sexual Violence Awareness & 'We Are Here' Campaign

This year, I had the privilege of participating in the **"We Are Here" citywide campaign**, a collaborative effort involving:

- UWE, UoB and their Students' Unions
- Bristol City Council
- SARSAS, The Bridge, Safe Link, and Bristol Women's Voice

The campaign aims to raise awareness of the free, confidential, and specialist support available for those affected by sexual violence. As part of this, I participated in the creation of an **awareness video** that will be shared across partner platforms.

Additionally, we ran **Anti-Sexual Violence Awareness Week**, featuring campus stalls, resource-sharing, and interactive activities. These efforts are vital to fostering a culture of consent, safety, and solidarity.

4. Employment & EDI: Bridging Students and Employers

On **1st May 2025**, I had the privilege of working with the **UWE Careers & Enterprise team** and the **Inclusive Practice Forum** to host a special **employment event** that focused on **equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in recruitment**. This event aimed to provide an honest, open space where **students and employers** could engage in meaningful discussions about the challenges and opportunities in making recruitment more inclusive and accessible.

We designed the event with a particular focus on **Global Majority** and **low-income students**, groups often underrepresented in many sectors. The event included:

- **Roundtable discussions** exploring current recruitment practices and how they can be made more inclusive.

- A **student panel** featuring students who shared their **lived experiences** of navigating the recruitment process and the challenges of workplace inclusion.
- An **employer panel**, where businesses shared **best practices, case studies**, and discussed the challenges they face in building more inclusive workplaces.

The event also included a **live stream on Instagram**, which attracted around **400 student participants**, further extending the reach of the conversation.

By providing both **students** and **employers** with a space to **reflect, share ideas**, and **learn from each other**, the event created a valuable learning environment for all involved. The discussions highlighted the need for businesses to commit to **continuous improvement** in EDI practices, and many employers expressed their commitment to reviewing and enhancing their recruitment strategies.

Through this initiative, we were able to raise awareness about **equitable hiring practices, mentorship programs**, and the importance of fostering diversity and inclusion across all industries. It was rewarding to see the willingness of both students and employers to engage with these complex issues and collaborate on creating a more **inclusive workforce**.

5. Vegan Cook-Off Competition

The **Vegan Cook-Off Competition** held on **29th April 2025** was an exciting and interactive event that saw students get creative in the kitchen. Held in the **S Block, Frenchay Campus**, the event attracted a large turnout, with **students participating in teams** to prepare vegan dishes using pre-supplied ingredients. The 4 cooking stations, each with a **central ingredients table**, created a vibrant atmosphere of teamwork and culinary exploration.

This competition was designed to:

- Promote **sustainable eating** through veganism, raising awareness of plant-based diets and their environmental impact.
- Encourage **teamwork, creativity**, and **fun** as students worked together to create unique vegan dishes, following structured recipes but also adding their own flavours and spices.
- Foster a sense of **community** and **healthy competition** among students, while also celebrating the joys of cooking and sharing food.

The event was not just about the food; it was an opportunity for students to **learn new skills**, discover **plant-based alternatives**, and have an enjoyable, relaxing time away from the pressures of their studies. The judging panel, which included several **SU Vice President Societies and Communications, UWE Staff Member and me**, provided thoughtful and constructive feedback on the dishes, while also acknowledging the creativity and effort involved.

The competition, students were able to **enjoy the dishes together**, share their feedback, and bond over their shared experience. The event received **positive feedback** from participants, with many expressing a desire for more similar events in the future. This was a testament to the growing interest in **sustainable living** and the importance of creating **interactive, community-driven events** that are not only fun but also meaningful.

6. Student Experience Awards 2025

The **Student Experience Awards 2025** were a highlight of my term, and I was proud to collaborate to organise and host this celebration of our students' incredible efforts and achievements. On **6th May 2025**, we came together to celebrate the students who've made significant contributions to UWE's vibrant campus life. The event was a culmination of many months of nominations and shortlisting, with **344 nominations** received in various categories.

It was an inspiring experience to read the stories of students who have gone above and beyond in supporting their peers, engaging with the community, and driving positive change. These nominations demonstrated the resilience, creativity, and passion of our student body, highlighting how much students are invested in making UWE a better place.

7. Drugs and Alcohol Q&A Session

In light of ongoing concerns around drugs and alcohol use among students, I organised a **Q&A session with the UWE Drugs and Alcohol Practitioner**. The session aimed to provide students with accurate, confidential, and easily accessible information about **drugs and alcohol services** available at UWE, as well as strategies for **harm reduction**.

The session was recorded, and the video will soon be uploaded to ensure that the **information is accessible to a wider audience**. This initiative is part of a larger commitment to **promote student wellbeing**, and I am hopeful it will continue to spark conversations around **mental health, substance use, and creating a supportive environment** for all students.

We have also discussed potential future collaborations to improve **peer-led initiatives**, so that students can feel more comfortable seeking support from others who may have similar experiences.

8. International Student Advisory Committee – Launched!

On **29th April 2025**, we officially launched the **International Student Advisory Committee**, a groundbreaking platform designed to amplify the voices of international students and empower them to play a central role in shaping their university experience.

The launch event was filled with energy and purpose, creating a space for open dialogue, valuable feedback, and meaningful discussions. There was a collective commitment to driving positive change for international students at UWE. This committee is about more than just policy—it represents a movement toward greater **visibility, empowerment, and positive transformation** for international students. Together, we are working to create a university experience that is inclusive, supportive, and truly representative of all students.

9. Reasonable Adjustments to Deadline (RA2D) – Policy Review

One of our most pressing campaigns involved advocating for improvements to the **Reasonable Adjustments to Deadline (RA2D)** policy. The policy change—from 14 to 7-day extensions—sparked widespread concern, leading to the creation of a **Task and Finish Group**, in which I played an active role.

Key developments include:

- Over **400 students** responded to a targeted survey, highlighting mental health impacts of the shorter extension
- A new **application system** is in development, allowing students to apply once per assessment period, significantly reducing admin burden
- Despite stable academic outcomes, student wellbeing remains a top priority

Based on findings, the 7-day deadline will remain for now, but a **subgroup** is being formed to explore further support improvements, including a potential renaming of the policy to "**Reasonable Adjustment to Coursework Deadline**" for clarity. The final report will be submitted to the **May Academic Board**.

10. Supporting Students with Credit Control and Re-enrolment

One of the ongoing challenges that some students face during their time at UWE is financial difficulty, particularly with regards to credit control and fee payments. This academic year, I worked closely with the **Credit Control team** to ensure that students in financial hardship weren't unfairly penalised or excluded from their education.

A key part of this initiative was acting as a **mediator** between the **Credit Control team** and **Students**, some of them had withdrawn due to unpaid fees. By facilitating open and honest discussions, we were able to come up with **flexible payment plans** tailored to the students' individual circumstances, allowing them to **re-enrol in their courses** and continue their studies. This support was crucial for students who were at risk of falling behind or having their academic progress interrupted due to financial barriers.

Additionally, the ongoing **engagement with the Credit Control team** has ensured that students are not only aware of available financial support, but that they have a point of contact should any issues arise. By fostering a **student-centred approach**, we were able to promote understanding and empathy in the often stressful process of managing tuition payments.

The students who benefited from these efforts have shared positive feedback, with many grateful for the opportunity to finish their studies without the added worry of financial strain. This initiative has reinforced the importance of providing equitable access to education for all students, regardless of financial circumstance.

Final Reflections

This year has been one of collective progress and heartfelt student advocacy. From creating safe spaces and tackling complex welfare issues, to uplifting student voices and breaking new ground in inclusion and support, we have made strides that will resonate beyond this term.

I want to express my deepest thanks to all students, committee members, collaborators, and SU staff who contributed to these efforts. It has been an absolute honour to serve as your **Vice President Community and Welfare**.

Let's continue to build a university experience where every student feels seen, supported, and empowered.