

Scrutiny Committee – Officer Report Template 2023/24



Prachi Bhatt – Education Officer:

Please fill in your report as best as you can. It will be reviewed by Scrutiny Committee within a week of submission and it will be returned with some questions. After you receive them, you will record a short video answering these so students can be informed about your report.

Note: Not everything you work on will be part of your manifesto so please mark whether it is or not. This includes if the idea was changed or updated after you were elected.

Please find the list of committees/sub-committees/boards that I am a part of because as an Education Officer, one of my main duties is promoting the academic interest of students in university policy meetings

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| Senate | Curriculum and Quality Sub Committee |
| Education Committee | Periodic Development Enhancement Review |
| Risk Management Sub Committee | Blackboard Ultra Delivery Board |
| Learning Environment Sub Committee | Post Graduate Research Sub Committee |
| Education for Sustainable Development | Tutoring Enhancement Board |
| Senate Student Discipline Committee | CSSAH Restructure Task and Finish Group |
| Assessment Strategy Working Group | NSS and SAES Steering Group |
| Students Skills and Employability Sub Committee | Senior Tutor Forum |
| Programme Approval Panels | Civic University Environmental Board |

Work title (This could be a campaign, project, or another thing you are working on): UoL Unlocked [A handbook for international students that compiles important information that they 'must' know]

SMART Goal:

Is this related to your remit or manifesto? N

Update (250 max): If you wish to have a look at the handbook, please click [here](#). (Students can download it in the form of PDF as well)

- Being an international student myself, I know first-hand how frustrating and tiring it is to not find relevant and accurate information when you're moving to a new country, which is why I created this handbook that has all the necessary information that the international students 'must' know before they arrive in the UK and also when they start their journey in the UK. (Its more like an icebreaker thing)
- All the information has been verified against the guidelines provided by the government and official organisations such as UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) and some of the information is from my personal experience as well.

Wins or Challenges:

- **Wins:** It was received very positively by students, university staff members (including the executive board) and SU staff.
- **Challenges:** The very basic challenge faced while collecting information is rectifying whether it is true or not. And as this information was specially collected and compiled for students, it had to be accurate and not misleading. There are lots of resources available on the internet that provide information for international students but it is important to keep in mind that every piece of information that students come across is verified against the information provided by the government officially because this handbook is uploaded on the University of Leicester Students' Union website.

Traffic light status: 

Next steps: The editable version of this handbook is present with the marketing team and I will be requesting any of the officer from the next executive team if they want to make sure that the information related to visas and fees is accurate and signposts to the relevant government pages, if not, then marketing team of our students' union has volunteered to make sure the information is consistent in upcoming years as well.

Work title (This could be a campaign, project, or another thing you are working on): Student - Faculty partnership was one of the very first point on my manifesto and some areas that I have identified which can bridge that gap are:

- **Academic Rep visibility** as reps can be the first point of contact for students in their cohort when they face an issue. They attend the Student Staff Committees (SSC), College Education Committee (CEC) and they also represent student voice on a couple of university level meetings along with me where they can raise the issues or provide feedback about things happening in their school that they are happy/unhappy about.
- **Personal Tutoring** because for a student, throughout their academic journey, having a staff member who they can contact upon any difficulty without hesitation plays a huge role. Even if their personal tutor is not able to resolve the issue for them, they can surely signpost the student to relevant service offered by the University/Students' Union.
- **Reviewing assessment policy** because regular reviewing of the assessment policy helps to ensure that the quality of assessments is maintained as well as rectifying any potential biases or inequities in assessment practices.
- **Consistent timetabling** because as a student, I had lectures and labs scattered throughout the day and that was not a problem but the real problem was having a lecture at 9am and then having a lab at 4pm which would mean I'll have to stay on campus all day because commuting to and from was not be feasible. And later I discovered it was not only an issue for me, but for other students as well.
- **Timely return of marks and feedback** has again been something that is affecting mostly every school, the turnaround time for course works/assessments is 20 days but it takes longer sometimes and the feedback provided is not in depth so the students don't have room to make improvements for their upcoming course work/assessment.

SMART Goal:

- **Academic Rep visibility:** Increasing academic rep visibility and engagement across student cohorts to improve student support and representation.
- **Personal Tutoring:** Enhance accessibility and effectiveness of personal tutoring by implementing a streamlined communication system and ensuring timely support and guidance for students.
- **Reviewing assessment policy:** Revise assessment policy to maintain quality standards, address biases and promote equitable assessment practices.
- **Timely return of marks and feedback:** Improve timeliness and depth of feedback on course work/assessments, aiming for a turnaround time of 20 days and ensuring comprehensive feedback for student improvement

Is this related to your remit or manifesto? Y

Update (250 max):

- **Academic Rep visibility:** I have been working with the Voice team to increase and improve communications with the reps via school rep check-ins, Students' Union Education Committee (for college reps), having a dedicated email address where the reps can send their queries on. I am continuing the 'Academic Rep of the Month' award (you'll get an idea about it in a bit) and I have managed to contact the Internal Communications manager from the university to suggest including the college reps in 'The Citizen: Education' takeover done by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education – Prof. Liz Jones). You can have a look at the article [here](#).
- **Personal Tutoring:** I have been working with the Dean of Personal Tutoring (Richard Craggs) by providing feedback gathered from the students on the new and improved Code of Practice in the Tutoring Enhancement Board for personal tutoring. Besides that, I had a meeting with the college reps about what they think has been going on in their college in terms of personal tutoring and they were more than happy to conduct a survey about it and the survey results were then passed on to the Dean of Personal Tutoring.
- **Reviewing assessment policy:** I have been an active part of the Assessment Strategy Implementation Group by providing feedbacks from a student perspective.
- **Timely return of marks and feedback:** Archie (SU President) and I have been involved in the TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) Action Plan which is a joint plan between the University and the Students' Union and I have made sure that the university executive staff members are aware of the parity between the timeline of when marks are returned and that feedbacks are in depth so that students can improve and do better in their next course work/assessments.

Wins or Challenges:

- **Wins:** We have recruited college reps which are our newest addition in the academic representation system, they will be acting as a bridge between school reps and the university staff members within their college. The 'Academic Rep of The Month' award has motivated reps to engage even more effectively. Besides that, inclusion of college reps in 'The Citizen: Education' takeover has showcased the importance of reps within the university as well. The survey conducted on personal tutoring was extremely effective and has helped the Dean of personal tutoring map out the areas which lack consistency. Being involved in the Assessment Strategy Implementation Group meant that student perspectives are being heard in policy development, contributing to a more inclusive and effective framework.
- **Challenges:** Sometimes engagement with course reps is not sustained due to limited resources. And when it comes to personal tutoring, there are chances that the new code of practice is not being implemented in every module.

Traffic light status:

Next steps:

- Having a check-in with college reps about personal tutoring like if the code of practice is being followed or not, are there any inconsistencies coming up within their college in terms of personal tutors not contacting their tutees or not having personal tutor check-ins.

- Making sure my successor is happy with continuing the 'Academic Rep of The Month' award as it makes the student reps feel seen and heard.
 - Making sure that my successor is involved in future TEF action plan meetings so that they have recent updates on assessments, feedbacks and turnaround time for assessments.
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Work title (This could be a campaign, project, or another thing you are working on): Study – Buddy Matching/ Revamping Peer Mentoring System

Being an international student, I do understand the necessity of having someone mentor/guide you when you arrive in a new country and which is why Study – Buddy Matching was an important point on my manifesto. I was unaware that the Students' Union runs a Peer Mentoring Scheme which is similar to the Study – Buddy Matching idea I had in my mind and since coming into my role, I started getting more idea about how the Peer Mentoring Scheme works. I found out that even though the system is brilliant and has the right matching criteria, there is still room to make it a bit more informal so that students willingly enrol themselves rather than us asking them to enrol. With that in mind a revamp of peer mentoring system is taking place now.

SMART Goal: Revamp the Peer Mentoring Scheme to enhance accessibility and participation.

Is this related to your remit or manifesto? Y

Update (250 max): A Peer Mentoring Working Group was setup that got all the key SU staff members together who are interested in revamping the scheme. That includes the Peer Mentoring Co-ordinator, Director of Membership Services, Support and Representation Manager and Liberation Officer (Jade Thomas). Possible revamps are:

- A special International Peer Mentoring scheme for January intake as pilot and hopefully for the September intake as well.

Wins or Challenges:

- **Wins:** Establishment of a Peer Mentoring Working Group comprising of key SU staff members that fostered collaboration and diverse perspectives in the revamping process. Plans of introducing international peer mentoring scheme for January intake demonstrating proactive steps towards improving support for international students.
- **Challenges:** Ensuring adequate resources and support for implementing and managing the revamped scheme, including training for mentors.

Traffic light status:

Next steps:

- Developing clear guidelines and criteria for the international peer mentoring pilot program, ensuring alignment with the needs of the January intake.
 - Establish channels for ongoing mentor support and feedback, facilitating continuous improvement and adaptation of the program.
 - Conduct regular evaluations of the revamped Peer Mentoring Scheme to assess its effectiveness and areas of further improvement.
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Work title (This could be a campaign, project, or another thing you are working on): Mitigating Circumstances

SMART Goal: Propose specific amendments and enhancements to the existing mitigating circumstances policy to improve its effectiveness and clarity.

Is this related to your remit or manifesto? N

Update (250 max): I initially proposed this idea in SELT (Senior Education Leadership Team) meeting and the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education – Prof. Liz Jones) suggested that it would be ideal if I can start with a review of current policy which is why as an initial phase of this project, I had a meeting with the Dean of Education (College of Science and Engineering – Prof. Mervyn Roy) who looks after the mitigating circumstances policy along with Jade (Liberation Officer) and we conducted a review of the current policy. Additionally, I also mapped out a need to have a guide that helps students understand how to file mitigating circumstances and recognised that it already exists and just needs to be promoted more.

The possible areas where the policy can be enhanced are:

- Recovery period after being hospitalised
- Sporting Fixtures
- Distance Learning work commitments
- GP appointments on the same day when assessment/exam/coursework is due

Wins or Challenges:

- **Wins:** One significant win was the consensus among the Dean of Education (College of Science and Engineering), Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) and other academics on the need for policy enhancements.

- **Challenges:** The challenge was balancing the desire for more flexibility in the policy with the need to maintain consistency and fairness in decision-making.

Traffic light status:

Next steps:

- Moving forwards, drafting the proposed amendments to the policy by also incorporating feedback from the key university and students' union staff members.
- Developing a communication plan to inform students.
- Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the enhanced policy.

Work title (This could be a campaign, project, or another thing you are working on): Fees and Income representation on campus

Most of the queries that I have received as the Education Officer have been around student fees. Looking at all those cases, I mapped out the need for Student Fees and Income to have a presence on campus, even if it is just in the form of drop-in sessions that the visa team currently holds. This not only fosters open communication but also establishes transparency and trust between students and fees and income department which is an integral part of their academic journey, to be honest.

SMART Goal: Establish on-campus drop-in sessions with the Student Fees and Income department to enhance communication, transparency and trust between students and the department, fostering a supportive academic environment.

Is this related to your remit or manifesto? N

Update (250 max): As per protocol, I presented this idea to the Support and Representation Manager (Ian Bruce) of the Students' Union first, then we had a meeting with the Director of Membership Services (Kumaran) of the Students' Union and then I presented this idea to the Academic Registrar (Nuala Devlin) of the University and she got me in touch with the Director of Student Support Services (Angela Truby) who along with the International Student Experience Team arranged a meeting with the Director of Finance (Katherine Inns) who was extremely receptive of this idea and was happy to implement it as well.

Wins or Challenges:

- **Wins:** Facilitated direct communication between students and fees and income department that established a sense of trust on fee-related matters. Overall student experience was enhanced by the availability of these sessions on campus for students to seek guidance on urgent fee-related issues.

- **Challenges:** The volume of students wanting to attend these drop-in sessions was huge so from now on, ensuring adequate staffing and resources to accommodate the implementation of these drop-in sessions will be vital. Another challenge is across managing expectations of students in terms of queries that the staff members can resolve because sometimes their case might be a little complicated which might need attention from a senior staff member from the student fees and income department and in that case, their issue might not get resolved immediately in the drop-in session.

Traffic light status: 

Next steps: As a pilot project, these drop-in sessions were supposed to run till Easter only, but as the number of students attending these sessions has been more than we estimated, I will try my best and convince the student fees and income department as well as the student support services to run these sessions for the next academic year too.

Work title (This could be a campaign, project, or another thing you are working on): Students' Union Education Committee

Students' Union Education Committee had to be setup after the recruitment of our college reps. The committee meets once a month and includes all of our four college reps, two academic rep coordinators and is chaired by myself. The main motto of this committee is to foster open communication and maintain transparency between the education officer and the college reps by sharing updates, changes, issues arising on college level and university level.

SMART Goal: Strengthen communication and transparency by establishing and facilitating monthly meetings of the Students' Union Education Committee

Is this related to your remit or manifesto? N

Update (250 max): So far, the meeting has been regularly attended by all college reps and there are dedicated agenda items for each rep to provide an update about their college which has been hugely appreciated because it helps keeping the meeting in a structured format rather than all over the place.

Wins or Challenges:

- **Wins:** The formation of this committee has hugely helped in building a sense of trust and transparency among the college reps and the education officer by providing a platform for discussing and resolving issues arising at college and university level. My vision for setting this committee up was that the college reps should share any updates/concerns about anything going on within their college without any hesitation and I can surely say that this has been achieved. Besides that, there is constant exchange of information and insights among the college reps as well which helps us make informed decisions.

- **Challenges:** The very basic challenge has been finding a time where all of us are free because the college reps have their classes, I have my meetings and projects and the academic rep coordinators also have their meetings and projects going on simultaneously. At the beginning it was a bit difficult to get all of us in a room together due to our busy schedules but now as they (college reps) have provided us access to their calendars, that issue has been resolved.

Traffic light status: 

Next steps: When the proposal of having college reps was approved, it was mentioned that it will run as a pilot project first and we've had our very first review about how it is going, the next review will be after and then we will providing a comprehensive report to the Registrar and Secretary of the University. Currently, the recruitment of college reps for the next academic year are open and we've already received a good number of applications!

Work title (This could be a campaign, project, or another thing you are working on): Academic Rep of The Month Award

Academic Rep of the Month is the Students' Union way of recognising academic reps (course reps, school reps) for the hard work they have done within their courses and schools.

SMART Goal: Celebrate the outstanding contributions of academic representatives by recognizing them with the Academic Rep of The Month award

Is this related to your remit or manifesto? N

Update (250 max): The Education Officer and the Voice team shortlist reps anonymously from the feedback provided in the nomination form by their fellow students and then the Education Officer and the Voice team collaboratively puts out a post on Instagram announcing the winner. The winner is also rewarded with an academic rep of the month certificate and a rep of the month badge that they collect from the Students' Union Office and if the winner is a distance learning student, then we mail it to their address.

Wins or Challenges:

- **Wins:** This award serves as an incentive for academic reps to actively engage in their roles, leading to increased participation and it also raises awareness about the importance of student representation and therefore encourages more students to get involved.
- **Challenges:** We've struggled to get nominations for course reps as it is a voluntary position.

Traffic light status: 

Next steps: Continue recognising academic rep of the month and promote it more so that all the course reps can participate/nominate themselves because at this moment even though the reps are aware of this award, the students aren't that aware which is why we don't get nominations to a level that we expected to receive.

Work title (This could be a campaign, project, or another thing you are working on): Listening Events

Listening events is a form of exercise that the University/Students' Union conducts to collect feedback about different modules. This was a special request made by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education – Prof. Liz Jones) after the NSS result for Economics.

SMART Goal: Implement listening events to collect module feedback as requested by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) aiming to improve student experience in Economics.

Is this related to your remit or manifesto? N

Update (250 max): The Students' Union organised listening event for economics with some free tea/coffee and biscuits but there was very little engagement so again after consulting within the Voice team, we decided to get some free pizzas and reorganise the event, and to our surprise, the engagement was really good and the team was able to get feedback from the students.

Wins or Challenges:

- **Wins:** These events have provided an additional structured platform for gathering module specific feedback from students and fulfilling the PVC (Education's) request has demonstrated the Students' Union's responsiveness and commitment to address areas of concern identified through the NSS results.
- **Challenges:** The only challenge was engagement, as mentioned above, when the very first listening event was organised, there was very little engagement which was then resolved by providing incentive such as pizzas.

Traffic light status: 

Next steps: To continue conducting these listening events for other schools in the upcoming academic year as well to foster open communication and establishing a feeling of being seen and heard among the students.

*Refers to the RAG system of red (not started), amber (in progress), and green (complete).

Are there any additional activities/projects/parts of your role, that aren't captured above, that you would like to share with Scrutiny, this could for example include one to one meetings with University Staff (what have you discussed/outcomes), details of the committee meetings you've attended (highlight what your input/contribution has been and any outcomes), conferences, day to day tasks, outcome from council meetings. etc...?

Name: International Student Forum

Update: The university has started international student welcome from this year and as a part of it there were 2 International Student Forums organised for both, September and January intake. These sessions involved providing information about all the different support services offered by the university and the students' union, I delivered both of these sessions as a representative from the students' union.

Next steps and how will challenges be tackled (if applicable): I hope the university continues to conduct these forums in upcoming years as well and I would also encourage my successor to represent the students' union in these forums.

Name: Destress

Update: Destress is a 3 - 4-day long campaign (depending upon the events lined up) which my predecessor held before exams last year but this year I proposed to hold it after exams and which is why we had our first destress in January 2024. We put up a stall in library during exams that provided fruits and juice to students and after exams we had some stall activities such as sip n' paint, bollywood film night, candle making session. Apart from myself, Archie (SU president) and Jade (Liberation Officer) were also a part of this campaign.

Next steps and how will challenges be tackled (if applicable): I am continuing the medics destress started by my predecessor which be held in April and then followed by a May destress, the working group has been formed and again it will involve Archie (SU President) and Jade (Liberation Officer) along with other staff members from the Students' Union and the University such as the Wellbeing coordinator (SU), Support and Representation Manager (SU), Engagement and Insight Manager (SU).

Name: University Distinguished Teaching Fellowship (UDTF) Panel

Update: I was invited to be a part of UDTF panel which is a fellowship awarded each year to the university staff members in recognition of outstanding and inspiring contributions they've made to teaching, learning, curriculum innovation and student experience. This panel is chaired

by Pro Vice Chancellor (Education – Prof. Liz Jones) and involves other senior university academics, we then short list the applicants based on the matrix provided and reward the fellowship.

Next steps and how will challenges be tackled (if applicable): Round one of this panel is completed and round two is coming up which will decide who will be rewarded the fellowship this year.

Name: Academic Rep Forums

Update: Academic Rep Forums are held twice in an academic term and they are categorised into two types: one is for CSE/CLS and another one is for CSSAH. Course reps and school reps bring forth their ideas, feedback and suggestions on a range of topics to high level university staff. These have been successful and have helped us in improving student experience through assessments, personal tutoring and blackboard navigation.

Next steps and how will challenges be tackled (if applicable): The forum will be continued in upcoming years as well as they've been extremely useful and appreciated, not only by reps but also by the university staff members.

Name: 1-2-1 with Pro Vice-Chancellor Education

Update: Every elected officer is assigned with a first point of contact within the university and students' union. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education – Prof. Liz Jones) is my contact within university and we meet every month to discuss what's going on in the university and the students' union, it is my place to bring up any urgent matters that needs university's attention to be resolved.

Next steps and how will challenges be tackled (if applicable): N/A

Name: RAISE Planning Committee

Update: Research, Advancing and Inspiring Student Engagement (RAISE) is a conference that offers opportunity for all students, staff and anyone interested in university and college higher education to showcase their practice and research. This year, the University of Leicester is hosting this annual conference in September and I was invited to be a member of its planning committee. The conference will be in hybrid format and my responsibility is to make sure our distance learning students are engaging with this.

Next steps and how will challenges be tackled (if applicable): Contact the DL reps to spread a word about this conference happening in September so that students can submit their practice/research on time.