

**STUDENT COUNCIL REPORT 24/25**  
**STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT REPORT**  
**KOLAWOLE SAMUEL OLURE (SAM)**  
**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> /11/24**

**HIGHLIGHTS**

**NATIONAL LOBBY DAY 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER**



The UWE SU Presidents and I had the privilege of meeting with MPs Karin Smyth, Carla Denyer, and Claire Hazelgrove in Westminster during NUS National Lobby Day, where we advocated for critical changes aimed at improving student welfare.

One of our main priorities was addressing the issue of the guarantor requirement for student housing. This policy places undue pressure on students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds or international students who often lack access to a UK-based guarantor. By advocating for its removal, we seek to make student housing more accessible and equitable for all students, ensuring that housing doesn't become a barrier to their education.

We also supported Alex Sobel MP's amendment to the Renter's Rights Bill, which is designed to provide greater protection and stability for renters. With rental costs rising and student accommodation options limited, this amendment would offer vital security to students navigating the rental market, making sure their rights are better protected in the face of challenges.

The rising cost of living was another key issue we discussed. We highlighted the increasing financial strain on students, particularly in managing essentials such as rent, food, and utilities. We emphasized the need for more robust support systems to ease this burden, ensuring students can focus on their studies without being overwhelmed by financial stress.

Another point we raised was the creation of an ombudsman specifically for student complaints. This independent body would provide students with a fair and impartial way to address issues they encounter with academic institutions or accommodation providers, ensuring that their concerns are properly heard and resolved.

Lastly, we emphasized the importance of supporting international students, who contribute significantly to the university community and wider society. We advocated for policies that protect their rights and provide them with opportunities to build successful futures in the UK, fostering a diverse and global learning environment.

In conclusion, NUS National Lobby Day was a crucial opportunity to engage directly with policymakers and advocate for changes that would benefit students now and in the future. It was empowering to see our collective efforts bring us closer to creating a more supportive, fair, and inclusive environment for all students.

## SOUTHWEST SABBATICAL DAY



On 19th August, we had the privilege of hosting sabbatical officers from across the Southwest for a day of networking, collaboration, and idea-sharing. The event brought together a diverse group of student leaders, offering a unique opportunity to exchange insights, strategies, and best practices for improving the student experience. It was an inspiring atmosphere where we could collectively reflect on the challenges and opportunities we face in our roles, while learning from each other's experiences.

We were also joined by representatives from the National Union of Students (NUS), who shared their current priorities and goals. They provided valuable insights into the ongoing work they're doing to advocate for students at the national level, including their key campaigns and their engagement with government policies. Their presence was a reminder of the importance of collective action and the role that student unions play in shaping policies that impact students' lives.

Throughout the day, we discussed various issues affecting students across the region, from wellbeing to access and inclusion, and explored ways to work together more effectively moving forward. It was a fantastic opportunity to strengthen our connections and build a network of support that will help us tackle challenges and create positive change for our communities.



Overall, the Southwest Sabbatical Day was a successful and productive event, and we look forward to continuing these discussions and collaborations. Together, we are committed to advocating for the best interests of all students, and we're excited about the progress we can achieve through continued partnership and shared efforts.

## FRESHERS FAIR



I had the pleasure of welcoming both our new and returning students at this year's Freshers Fair, which took place across all of our campuses. It was truly a wonderful experience to see so many faces, both familiar and new, filled with excitement and anticipation as they prepared to begin their journey at UWE. The energy and enthusiasm in the air were contagious, and it was inspiring to witness students from all walks of life coming together to start this new chapter. The event was an incredible opportunity for everyone to explore the vast array of clubs, societies, and resources available to them, helping them to make the most of their time at UWE right from the start.

Additionally, I invited the National Union of Students (NUS) to join us at the Freshers Fair in Frenchay, which was a great addition to the event. Their presence allowed students to learn more about the work they do and the support they offer to students at a national level, further enriching the experience for everyone involved. It was a great reminder of the vibrant and diverse community that makes up our university.



## **MANIFESTO UPDATE:**

### **Employability initiatives**

Building on the success of my previous employability event, my goal is to organize an even more impactful comprehensive program. This will include workshops, industry connections, and tailored support to empower students, ensuring they transition successfully into the workforce.

### **Cost of Living and Financial Challenges**

The rising cost of living, coupled with the current financial challenges universities face, presents a paramount concern. I will lobby rigorously to safeguard the support systems and address the plights of students. It is my unwavering commitment to ensuring that the financial constraints faced by universities do not compromise the well-being and support mechanisms crucial for students' success.

### **Representation and Inclusive Environment:**

Central to my presidency is an unwavering commitment to enhancing representation and support for marginalized student groups, diverse communities, and students with special needs. I will continue tirelessly working towards creating a more inclusive environment where every student feels valued, respected, and empowered to thrive.

### **Diversity and inclusion:**

I am dedicated to fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging on our campus. By expanding Diversity Day to include staff-student interactions, we can celebrate our unique cultures and foster greater understanding and appreciation within our community.

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

### **1. DIVERSITY DAY**

The dates for Diversity Day will be communicated as we move forward. Myself, along with Umar and Lubyna, have already held our first preparation meeting for the event. During this meeting, we worked with SU staff who will be supporting us in facilitating the event. We're in the process of finalizing the details, and we'll provide an update once everything is set and ready to go.

### **2. STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY**

I am collaborating with other Presidents to partner with the UWE Careers Team in providing tailored support throughout students' academic journeys. Our aim is to ensure students are well-equipped to tackle university challenges and smoothly transition into successful careers after graduation. We have already set up regular catch-up meetings with the Careers Team. As part of my ongoing efforts, I am lobbying for the introduction of drop-in sessions at the Student Union across our campuses,

facilitated by Success Coaches. These sessions will help raise awareness about the services the Careers Team offers and guide students on how they can access and benefit from these valuable resources.

### 3. REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT:

#### Reasonable adjustment

As we know, the Academic Board is the highest decision-making body for academic matters. Recently, UWE decided to reduce the reasonable adjustment deadline from 14 days to 7 days, which disadvantages students who require these adjustments. The decision was made without sharing relevant data or statistics.

Both the VP of Education and I raised our concerns as student representatives at the Academic Board. I'm pleased to inform you that, thanks to our advocacy for student voices, the Board has now created a working group to assess the impact of this change and explore possible solutions.

Additionally, we will work in collaboration with the newly formed task and finish group to review the change and will report back to the December Academic Board meeting. The survey released by the Presidents has received over 380 responses, providing valuable student feedback for the group. VP Community and Welfare, along with four other students, will also join the group to ensure student perspectives are included in the discussion.

#### 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 two meetings with First Bus this year. During these discussions, we addressed several student complaints, including dissatisfaction with bus services, safety concerns, and specific issues faced by students commuting to and from the Bower Ashton campus. In our most recent meeting, First Bus assured us that they will follow up with potential solutions to improve bus routes, including better timekeeping, increasing the frequency of buses, and ensuring that routes serving Bower Ashton are more reliable. They committed to providing an update on these proposed changes before our next scheduled meeting.

### **Accommodation**

I am 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 the commission. We held our first introductory meeting, and in our next meeting, we will delve deeper into the commission's remit and explore actionable ways to achieve affordable rent.

In addition, UWE Bristol's newest accommodation on the Frenchay campus, Purdown View, has been a significant development in addressing the accommodation crisis. This facility comprises 900 bedrooms, offering a mix of en-suite rooms, shared bathrooms, and studio apartments. This new accommodation has helped alleviate some of the accommodation challenges and reduced the number of complaints compared to last year.

### **International student advisory committee**

Lubyna and I are actively working on establishing an International Student Committee, with the aim of amplifying the voices of international students at UWE Bristol. This committee will serve as a platform for international students to share their perspectives, ideas, and experiences, focusing on

improving aspects of student life that directly impact them. It will also provide a channel for international students to contribute to institutional policy and decision-making.

We have submitted the proposal for the committee, which currently requires some adjustments that we are already working on. I plan to update the Student Council on its progress at our next meeting. Additionally, I have included Muhammad, our part-time officer, as a member of the committee. He is also collaborating with us to make this initiative a reality. Through the partnership board, we are lobbying the university to formally endorse and support this new International Student Committee.

#### **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 chaired the inaugural Board of Trustees meeting on 22/10/2024, and the next meeting is scheduled for December.
- The Trustees reviewed applications and conducted interviews for the two vacant student trustee positions through the Appointment Committee. I am pleased to announce that Amrutha Kotichintala and Sasirindu Hamangoda were successfully selected and approved by the Board of Trustees as the new student trustees, pending final approval by the Student Council.
- The Trustee Subcommittees, including the Appointment Committee, Staff Committee, and Finance and Governance (FandGP) Committee, were established, with Trustees voluntarily joining each committee, except for the new student trustees.
- The Trustees expressed satisfaction with the CEO's report and the progress of all ongoing work, which is proceeding smoothly.

### Board of governor

- I am pleased to announce that the Chair of the Board of Governors, Richard Bacon, along with Dr. Jodie, the Clerk of the Board, joined us at the Freshers Fair in Frenchay.
- Transformation Project:: I have advocated for prioritizing student interests in all decision-making, especially concerning student feedback and welfare. I ensure that student perspectives are central in every consultation process.
- I presented an update to the Board, which included the President's progress, achievements, and ongoing work, as well as updates on the Student Union induction, Freshers Fair, and the recent by-election.
- I arranged a 1:1 meeting with the Chair of the Board of Governors to update him on student concerns and challenges.
- I also organized a 1:1 meeting with Sir Steve and the other Presidents to address current student concerns and provide updates on our manifestos.



- I held a 1:1 meeting with Carolyn, a lay governor, to discuss the functioning of the Board and explore ways to improve it by amplifying student voices.

#### **OTHER IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES:**

- I organized a meeting with MP Claire to visit the Student Union at Frenchay campus, where she was introduced to the Student Union and the Presidents. We also had a discussion about her manifesto and the initiatives she aims to offer.
- I attended the Open Day on 12th October at Frenchay campus, where I had the pleasure of welcoming both parents and prospective students and sharing what UWE Student Union offers.
- I chaired the first Exec meeting on 24th October, where the Presidents and PTOs discussed their manifestos and explored student ideas.
- Together with VP Community and Welfare Lubyna, I was invited to speak at Dr. Guy Bialek's Honorary doctorate ceremony in conjunction with Black History Month.
- I co-chair the Partnership Board between UWE and the Student Union, with the most recent meeting held on 22/10/24.
- VP Education and I attended the Chinese Moon Festival, representing the Student Union at the event.
- I invited NUS to join us at the Freshers' Fair in Frenchay to engage with students and promote their work.
- I organized meeting in London to meet MPs to discuss key issues during national lobby day.
- Working on the student ideas passed to the exec committee.

- I represented the Student Union at the Thrive event, where I spoke about the services we offer and shared the significance importance of what the Student Union stands for.

### QUESTION TO COUNCIL MEMBERS

- **UWE Bristol Adopts the Term "Global Majority"** The university has chosen to use "Global Majority" instead of "minority ethnic group" to address minority communities. What are your thoughts on this change?
- **Communication Process:** Effective communication is crucial for reaching the wider student body. What methods of communication do you think work best for the university to engage with students?
- **Building Name Change Proposal:** The name of Union 2 (Union Shop 2) is being proposed for change. The board is considering "The Brunel." Do you have any name suggestions? Please share your ideas and send them across.