

STUDENT UNION ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

This document provides an overview of the work conducted by the Student Union team in the academic year 2020-2021.

Pascal Senn

Student Union President 2020-2021

Submitted 25 May 2021



Regent's University London
STUDENT UNION

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The Student Union executive team is the official representative body for all students attending Regent's University London.



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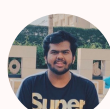
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STUDENT UNION SPRING 2021

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INTRODUCTION BY PASCAL SENN

I am proud of the work the Student Union team has collectively done this past year through some really difficult challenges. We have managed to adapt to the circumstances with resilience and laid the foundation for a reinvigorated union for years to come. We have been through a lot and delivered countless improvements to the student experience which has earned many in the team commendation. Yet one accomplishment I would highlight has been our ability to be vocal and consistent representatives for students coping with pandemic-related difficulties. This includes delivering incremental yet significant improvements to the online learning experience, delivering better resources and processes for mental health and academic support as well as championing the cause of a prompt and safe return to on-campus learning.

I have personally also appreciated the spirit of open, candid communication and collaboration in the Student Union with my peers. That positive atmosphere has facilitated the positive work we have collectively accomplished and of that I am proud. That is incredibly important in a working environment, because when we ought to be coming together with mutual respect in order to produce good work. I have seen both Regent's and the Student Union specifically develop incredibly quickly over my four years here and I'm excited to see what is to come in their brighter days ahead! I wish you well and extend my sincere appreciation to everyone in our community for making this experience utterly enjoyable and unforgettable. Thank you.

FINANCIAL REPORT

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the operation of Regent's, the Student Union's expenditure was significantly reduced this year. The Student Union executive team had to adapt and think out of the box in how we might deliver on the promise of a positive student experience in a variety of new ways. The Covid-associated transition to online learning for our student community meant that we had to engage with students in the virtual domain. The social and academic events thus both became virtual gatherings via Microsoft Teams instead of being held on our campus venues. Whilst this was not the setting we would have liked or intended for our events, hosting events virtually did present some minimal opportunities too and allowed us to substantially reduce our operational costs. Any other additional costs we largely fixed costs which had to be guaranteed. Those costs include our official subscription to the National Union of Students, our executive officers' bursaries and the salary for the Sabbatical Student Union President.

TEAM EFFORT

I am grateful this year to have had the dedicated support of both Vice-Presidents without whom the tumultuous task of responding to the challenges of 2020 and 2021 would not have been possible. The Vice-President of Academic Affairs Anya Nikolaeva worked diligently and honourably in her leadership of all six council presidents and in our collective representation of students' issues during a most difficult time. Notably, Anya was instrumental in our continuous advocacy for improvements to the online learning experience in regular meetings with Mark Allinson, Lawrence Phillips and Gill Stark, among others. Anya also assisted in the installation of Student Voice Questionnaires which helped our team to monitor the wellbeing and needs of the student community from afar. Likewise, Anya was also crucial in the integration of Student Representatives into the Student Union Councils during the transition of university structure which led to the creation of Student Voice Meetings as replacements for Programme Committee Meetings.

The Vice-President of Student Experience Davis Goldenberg worked admirably on a number of initiatives to complement the academic experience of students with a social and extracurricular component. Davis was reliable and tirelessly supportive of her team which included the Social Events Officer, the Academic Events Officer, and the Societies Officer. Together they ensured that in an unpredictable year students could still count on a positive experience with enriching virtual events and talks. Davis was instrumental also in growing the Student Union's portfolio of active societies even beyond the number it had been during pre-Covid times. Lastly, Davis also pursued her own projects which included her creation of the first Student Union magazine called 'Babel'.

Together with the whole team, the Student Union delivered many great accomplishments which were fundamentally all the fruit of collective efforts. We supported the University during the active promotion period of the National Student Survey which actually had a higher turnout this year than years prior. We capitalised on the opportunity of engaging students through social media and we pressured where necessary for the University to deliver a prompt and safe return to campus, including delivering graduations this year.

On behalf of the student community - thank you all.



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ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

The Psychology and Psychotherapy Council President Tessa Lange has exceeded her role in fulfilling her duties as Council President this year. She has been a reliable member of the Student Union who has provided the team with valuable insights into the Psychology and Psychotherapy Programme through students' feedback addressed in the council. Tessa also organised an event which helped students with choosing the right career path in the field of psychology. The Psychology and Psychotherapy Council delivered valuable insight also in relation to matters on an institutional level pertaining to the new learning design framework RADAR and for ways to improve the overall online learning experience for students.

The Film, Media and Performance Council President Luis Garcia has also exceeded his duties as the Council President. He has been a formidable representative this year for his programme. In particular, the work of his Council was instrumental in bringing the necessary attention of university management to the additional support needed for creative students as a result of the change to online learning. The FMP Council regularly fed back issues to the Student Union team which were taken up subsequently by the relevant staff members in order to create change and advocate for the needs of students in the programme. Luis was a reliable and organised member of the Student Union team and consistently communicated his concerns and ideas constructively to the benefit of the team. In particular, he has been working on facilitating campus access for the students in his programme area throughout this year, speaking up in every Senate and Programme Committee Meeting and later in the Student Voice Meetings about this issue. As a direct result of his efforts, there have been classes, workshops and practice sessions on-campus this year which have highly benefitted students. The work of the FMP Council has clearly improved the academic student experience for the students it represents. In addition the council also organised several events this year with outside industry speakers which have also been to the beneficial of students.

The Business and Management Council, first led by Vanessa Hoffmann and then Reem Al Saud, has had a productive year in vocally advocating for its students. Vanessa and Reem have ensured the sustenance of positive engagement and student presence in their council, communicating relevant issues and feedback to the Student Union team. The insights passed on from their council have helped to shape improvements in the programme and in the online learning experience. They have both been valuable team players throughout and done exceptionally well in their roles.



ACADEMIC AFFAIRS CONTINUED

The Fashion and Design Council President Tanyo Obiazi was elected in the summer and delivered an impressive effort in her first semester, which she continued into her second term into the spring. Tanyo joined the Student Union with a positive attitude, motivation and dedication to improve the Fashion and Design programme areas. The council has accomplished several notable improvements, including setting up council pages on Blackboard to enhance communication with the wider student body. This helped to create easier access to resources in the library for instance. Tanyo led her council exceptionally well and attended all meetings and always contributed to the Student Union team with relevant comments and feedback. For her work, Tanyo has been commended by her peers in the Student Union team, by members of staff, and above all, by the students she was duly elected to represent in the Fashion and Design Council.

The Liberal Arts Council, led by Chaznane Fidahoussen, created a new social event for liberal arts students this year in association with faculty called the 'Liberal Arts Café'. The council also contributed to vital discussions regarding improvements to the online learning experience. The council president Chaznane did well to recruit new members, setting it up for a successful year ahead.

The Graduate Council, led by Roma Shivani Advani, has done well as a newly formed council in its prime responsibility to bring more visibility and advocacy to graduate students studying at Regent's. This has been especially important given that graduate representation used to be split across various councils and were therefore under-represented. Shivani did well to jumpstart this newly-formed council and for that we are grateful. The Graduate Council has some growing to do over the coming years, however it is well established thanks to the work of Shivani and her council peers.



STUDENT EXPERIENCE SOCIAL EVENTS

In the first semester Social Events were led by Rai Rodrigues who did a good job of delivering enriching events during the freshers' week in the autumn as well as the subsequent events throughout the autumn term. Rai was an engaged member of the Student Union team and helped to drive enthusiasm in the university for her events despite the difficulties associated with online delivery. Rai had a successful week of virtual social events during freshers' week this semester. The week started off with Bingo Night with around fifteen attendees. She then had a speed friending event with twenty-one attendees. For that event attendees were turning on their cameras and speaking to one another so it was rather successful. Then followed the pub quiz which had around ten participants. The next event was an origami challenge with around thirteen participants.

These events were successful in giving freshers' the opportunity to meet other students virtually and have a good time socialising with one another. Rai did well with these fresher's week social events and also received notable support from the Vice President of Student Experience, Davis. The other events throughout the semester, including a cooking masterclass and a 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' game show were among other events which enriched to the student experience.

Sara, who has led the Student Union social events team since the spring term 2021 also did a good job of engaging students despite the circumstances associated with online learning. During freshers' week Sara hosted a number of events designed to enable socialising between new students including the 'Fresh Excuses to Meet' event and a game show night. Everyone was very engaged and excited to participate so the events were a lot of fun. These events were a great start to the semester. Sara had recruited a team of six other students to assist her in the planning of her events who also deserve credit for the delivery of social events in the spring term. During the term Sara hosted more events including a speed friending event and a cocktail-making session. While the efforts of Rai and Sara are both commended, it is undeniable that the Student Union did struggle with the delivery of social events due to the challenges associated with online interactions. Nonetheless, both Rai and Sara displayed great dedication and thoughtfulness to their work and tried hard to ensure students received the student experience they deserve.



STUDENT EXPERIENCE ACADEMIC EVENTS

Saatwik Maheshwari, the Academic Events Officer, delivered three events during the autumn term:

- Risks and Rewards of a Family Business – 5 October 2020
- Human Governance in a Post-Pandemic World – 15 October 2020
- What Does the Fashion Industry of Tomorrow Look Like? – 26 October 2020

The Risks and Rewards of a Family Business event was rather successful with great speakers and around fifty attendees including both students and staff. The event was a collaboration with INSEAD. 'Human Governance in a Post-Pandemic World' was also a great event with forty three attendees, also including students and staff. Lastly, 'What Does the Fashion Industry of Tomorrow Look Like?' event was the least successful in the autumn term with around thirty attendees.

In the spring term, Saatwik hosted 'The Creative Process: In Conversation with Creatives', which took place on 18 February. This event was really great and went smoothly. The next event was 'Ethics and Philosophy in the 21st Century' which took place on 11 March. This event had to be postponed to this date because there were not enough speakers by the time the originally-planned date. This event was organised in collaboration with staff members. 'The Oil Industry in Perspective' was the next event which took place on 25 March. This event was also postponed from its original date because of the postponing of the previous event and due to difficulties associated with the academic events organisation itself. Overall, the academic events which did take place this year were good and enriched the student experience. However, the academic events team did have several shortfalls and for that the necessary changes have been made.



STUDENT EXPERIENCE SOCIETIES

This year the role of Societies Officer was largely led by the Vice President of Student Experience, Davis Goldenberg, who did an admirable job of supporting the societies officer to be able to fulfil their job. The portfolio of societies expanded this year despite the fact that the Student Union had to operate online. In the autumn term, the most notable societies event was the Psychology Society event, where the society had invited a member of the Metropolitan Police to speak about the application of psychology in the field of law enforcement.

By the spring term Johannes, the Societies Officer, was in regular email contact to all society presidents to have ensure consistent communication. The five societies which were active during this period were; the Hebrew Society, Marketing Society, Nordic Society, Climate Society, and Volunteer Society. Johannes got updates from the presidents regularly and passed them onto Davis to be fed back to the Student Union team.

