

## The Student Summit, Chelmsford 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022, 4-6pm

Microsoft Teams & Chelmsford 92

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1.1 Attendance; Executive Committee			
Samantha Rothwell	Student Chair	ТА	
Shankar Sreenath	President	Р	
Akshay Kumbalath	Vice President: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	Р	
Nithin Raj	Vice President: Business and Law	Р	
Rahman Abdul Salam	Vice President: Science and Engineering	Р	
Rohit Dhyani	Vice President: Health, Education, Medicine & Social Care	Р	
Sharmeen Jawad	Vice President; Health Care Practice	Р	
Merin Manoj	B&L Faculty Rep (Chelmsford)	Α	
Louise Still	HEMS Faculty Rep (Chelmsford)	A	
Graydon Thorpe	HEMS Faculty Rep (Chelmsford)	A	
Jeffin Francis	S&E Faculty Rep (Chelmsford)	А	
Emma Wong	Disabled Students' Rep (Chelmsford)	А	
Arjun Murali Muraleedhara Kurup	International Students' Rep (Chelmsford)	А	
Connie Battram	Mental Health Rep (Chelmsford)	A	
Nana Boakye		A	
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- Online student comment: I did not know about a lot of the cost-of-living measures that were being put in place. Would be good for information to be shared better, as students don't know of the SU work. As a mature student, not on or near campus so cost of living impacts are very different (travelling, parking). Where the SU is impactful like in accommodation, I would like more information on this.
  - SJ: These are valid concerns, something we are working on. We know it is difficult for students in the cost-of-living crisis, something we are looking to raise with the SU and NUS. Lack of communication has been a big thing which is being worked on. These concerns are on board already.
- 3.3 Online comment: Has definitely been hard for everyone, students would appreciate any help, and these do sound like good initiatives. Agree that this information needs to be spread more ie canvas announcements

RD: Very good point, lots of students don't know about resources. One of my campaigns is increasing awareness and making videos about the resources the SU has and how students can make resources. One of the videos will be on funds the university provides.

SJ: Please check our Instagram accounts to see more information about cost of living, as we will be sharing updates for students.

Online student comment: not all of us use Instagram, so posting items for students on different platforms would be very useful. Such as MyARU or Canvas.

AK: All of the events that we have been running are on the website, so make sure to head to the events calendar on the website to see what is happening in the future.

- 4. FLY: Opens the floor for student questions:
- 4.1 Q-Card questions:

Does the SU run any international projects that students can get involved with?

AK: Global week is a celebration of cultures and communities within the university, sharing food and festivals and we have a lot in involvement from students to deliver this.

FLY: Holi and Diwali celebrations have been popular in the last year and the website is the best place to find out about all of these.

4.2 Online Student question: Hi, can you speak more on the hardship funds for home students? Are there any grants that students can be aware of?

RAS shared a link to hardship fund info

FLY noted SU independent advice service.

- 4.3 Online student question: There is little accommodation for international students how we resolve that?
  - SS: We are aware that it is hard to find accommodation we are pushing the university to support students who are struggling and we are providing sign posting to these services.
- 4.4 Online student question: Could you make for example, an international student guide on which energy provider that can be most economical for students or water companies that subsidise the bills too?

RAS: I am campaigning on cost-of-living crisis, for all, not just international students – many do not know their tenancy rights so I am hoping to make them aware through a renter's guide which will be published in December to support new intake in January as well.

4.5 Student in the room: There is conflict occurring in accommodation in the student village. I have been told that issues such as late-night noise and taking out refuse are building up into conflicts which are impacting students' mental health. I have experienced theft of my food from halls. The university security does not help. Could the SU help to set agreements between students?

SS: Have you tried contacting the residential services or security team?

Student: They were not able to help and said we had to solve it ourselves, but we cannot monitor the space all the time to prevent theft. We need to go to lectures and have a social life.

SS: You should continue to raise this with the security team.

Student: I would suggest the SU setting up a roommate contract with the SU witnessing agreements.

RD: I have experienced something similar – you should be able to report this a halls assistant and they are managed through the residential services team.

Student: I have, but the issue keeps happening. International students do not know what to do in this situation. I have told them that they have rights by their tenancy agreement but they afraid to reach out for help. During my campaign for an SU rep role the students do not see the relevance of the SU as they do not think they can help. We are spending money on cameras to try and resolve this. FLY: We can raise your concerns with the residential services to see what can be done.

FLY / RAS

## 5. Peer Wellbeing mentors

5.1 Introduced Peer Mentoring scheme; providing the link between students for students as formal counselling may seem daunting. Based in the SU 4-7pm Mon – Thurs.

We deliver events and social activities eg: craft sessions, Pets as Therapy dogs.

We have dedicated social media pages and we work in collaboration with Mind to support mental health.

Counselling and Wellbeing services have online drop-in workshops for students on various topics including responsibilities and pressures.

Counselling sessions are available in blocks of 6 sessions which can be renewed if needed.

Access is through bookings online or drop into to see the wellbeing mentors who can help you book as session. We plan to deliver help a friend sessions / suicide prevention.

The unsilenced network is available to students too for victims of harassment and we can provide a list of other mindfulness workshops, apps etc for self-help, and links to external services.

JV: We recognise the shared goals to support students and what a good job the peer wellbeing mentors do!

- 6 Officer updates:
- 6.1 SS: Working to deliver workshops for students on IT services and skills (eg: Canvas, emails etc) which you need to succeed as a student.

I want to support students to bring money back into the students' pockets by hosting a student marketplace and supporting student businesses

Student in the room: International students are not allowed to start a business due to visa conditions SS: international students can work for up to 20 hours per week so we would work with them to understand what the best way is to address that and work within that where necessary.

The Big Pitch is another example where students can be involved with business proposals and development.

Student: Networking is a key factor in business and student life. Students are not getting to know each other as we have not had the opportunity to network. What events can you provide as an SU?

- I have attended some events and no one was there.

SS: There are alot of platforms for networking and we have societies and clubs where likeminded people from different backgrounds can mix and meet. Are you a society member?

Student: Yes; it is dull as we don't interact or achieve anything of value.

Not many people will go out of their way to talk to others. I have no opportunity to network. You should host events with free drinks to get people to join. It may seem easy to find people online, but it is hard and not many people use Linked-In.

SS: is it professional networking you are looking for? We have hosted fresher's social events and promote events online. For example the futures festival is happening now with networking events and 'handshakes' where you can meet new people from different places. Keep looking at our website – we are trying to host events which students will engage with.

Student: I run some of those societies and we hosted events which you attended – can you tell us what more you would like to see?

Student: I will reply online later.

RD: My campaigns are: plagiarism and essay mills approaching students to sell them assignments. I want to raise awareness of the problems with this and highlighting to international students the need to do proper referencing and use the UK writing style, not using essay mills, as this will also build their skills for job hunting.

Incubation centre – building mentorship and resources for students who want to start businesses. Awareness and signposting of services using videos –for example the SU advice service can be confused with university advice service; videos will help to clarify where students should go for help. Student in the room: where are the videos located?

RD: we are currently working to create these and they will be out in January.

6.3 NR: Workshops for FBL students with guest speakers for career development and unleashing creativity. I am currently looking at which speakers to book for January.

Looking at progression after university and supporting the engagement with the employability services. Working with futures festival, including job fairs and placement sourcing, interview prep and CV building.

Awareness of UK driving rules for international students to be shared before they arrive in the UK. Hoping to deliver a video supported by UK driving instructors to share information.

RAS: Creating a renters guide to support student understand their rights and not be afraid of addressing tenancy concerns, working with residential services to deliver accommodation drop ins to address concerns directly. We have already hosted this Cambridge and want to do the same in Chelmsford.

Free food has been brought into the SU – porridge and soup sachets and fruit are in baskets in the SU spaces for students who might be skipping breakfast due to cost-of-living issues.

Working to promote nightline with the faculty and wellbeing teams – this is anonymous trained student advisers to speak to and support students calling the phone line.

Refreshers events including gaming tournaments and parties which I will share on website and social media.

Student in the room: Do you handle queries about S&E issues? Are any of your campaigns for S&E students? Students cannot afford laptops with CAD software – why do we not have library facilities for that?

RAS: We meet regularly with faculty staff and I can raise this issue there. There are also hardship and laptop funds available for those who need financial help.

AK: you should raise this issue via your course rep

Student: I am the rep and I emailed my course leader – I have not had a reply yet – I couldn't attend the SSLC as the link was not sent.

RD: In your lab do you have the software available? The budget has been affected by COVID cover so there may be access in your lab facilities on specific computers but the library.

JV: Where the software is available - is it open and accessible?

Student in the room: weekdays only until 10pm but not weekends when the campus is closed. The library is open all the time but the software is not there. We can't use the labs when there are timetabled lessons in there and we need to have time out of the labs too.

RAS: We can ask about the opening hours with the faculty.

RAS

6.5 AK: Cost of living campaign: we reviewed the hardship fund for international students and made it simpler and more accessible. I have added the links in the Teams chat.

We lobbied the university to a £1 meal so that all students can have a cheap hot meal each day. We used NUS data to lobby for this.

We have held drop-in sessions specifically in Cambridge for accommodation.

Transportation costs are also high and in Chelmsford we have shared info on a student discount which was not widely known - we are working to see if we can improve these offers.

Additional courses and workshops for AHSS students building additional software and skills trainings based on forum feedback

Mental health campaign: supporting return and settling back in after covid – will be delivering a series on MH podcast with the C&W service. Recording starts tomorrow!

Student: Do you have an audience for the podcasts? There are thousands of podcasts why would they listen to you? lots of people have far more knowledge than you!

AK: we will work with The ARU counselling & Wellbeing team to share with students and use the expertise of the staff which is related to the particular student experience at ARU.

6.6 SJ: 3 campaigns: prayer spaces – there is a lack of spaces for faith groups in Chelmsford. I am trying to ensure they have a suitable space and planning is underway – I hope renovation work will be complete by end of June (subject to approval)

EDI strategy working with ARU staff to foster community and awareness of EDI issues. Staff training and student training will be developed.

Transport costs, particularly for placement students. Cost of fuel and energy is a barrier to students getting to placement so I am looking at how we can reduce costs and support these students.

We met with MP Vicky Ford last week to look at avenues for cost-of-living support.

 $HEMS\ communications\ issues\ and\ placement\ problems\ -\ bringing\ the\ gap\ for\ students\ and\ helping\ faculty\ understanding\ them$ 

Student in the room: When will the renovations be announced and are there current plans?

SJ: These are new plans which are still being developed.

## 7.0 FLY opens the floor to questions for Officers:

7.1 Student in the room: Will the SU be hosting the world cup? Is there a broadcasting issue preventing this – we have not seen any promotion?

SS: There will not be any broadcasting issues, but we are struggling to balance the screening decision with concerns around LBGT / human rights issues associated with Qatar.

Student in the room the views of the government does not represent the opinion of the people of Qatar, and football is a good opportunity to bring people together and build community – not showing it is more divisive.

AK: I understand the emotion behind wanting to enjoy football together – we are meeting with the LGBT rep and want to find a way to screen the football without suggesting that we support the Qatar. How we can screen the games but show support to those concerned communities. Student in the room: The world cup was hosted in Brazil and poverty was a huge issue. The points you make are very valid about human rights, but Qatar being singled out when other host nations have had issues may cause concern amongst Muslim students. Cultural boundaries exist differently everywhere – football allows people to come together. We should not prevent a screening because of the cultural context here when other host countries have not been handled in this way before.

Student in the room: LGBT and workers rights need to be supported but we want the opportunity to support the England team – they are not supporting the Qatar government. There are resources and events dedicated to many liberation groups and months dedicated to different issues – there has never been anything for Muslim groups.

SS: We are trying to hear everyone's voices and we do want to hear from our Muslim students. Student in the room: A new Qatari student has told me that he has felt isolated and unwelcome due to his nationality. Can the SU be more welcoming to Qatari nationals? For the World Cup there should be mutual agreement with LGBT students that helps everyone feel included.

EH: For clarity: the letter opening the discussion about screening the world cup came from the LGBT Rep – The request was not to screen, but the letter closed with a request to hear wider student opinions.

SS: This is a place to have these discussions

FLY: AK has spoken with the LGBT rep and can discuss with you the proposal regarding how to screen the world cup and include all parties in the discussion.

Student in the room: As a Muslim student I am proud that a Muslim country has developed so far over the past 40 - 50 years and is utilising its resources and providing citizens and the world with the world cup. It would be great to work with the LGBT reps to find a way to host the screening.

	AK: thank you for your perspectives and we would love to find a solution which everyone will be happy with.  SJ: All officers have been approached by different groups, societies and individuals and now we are hearing from all of you. We've heard lots of perspectives and thank you for bringing your thoughts to us. This is a helpful conversation which will allow us to make the decisions which we hope will work for everyone.	
7.2	Student in the room: The president of the NUS was removed from her role on the first day of islamophobia awareness month due to historic tweets which disagree with NUS opinions. She was the first Black, Muslim Women to hold this position. The investigation and outcomes reached by NUS are flawed. What is the SU's stance on this?  SS: Details of the investigation have not been made public due to confidentiality and personal details. We have reached out to NUS to help us understand the processes.  Student in the room: NUS have made a choice not to release details and so she was exposed to the court of public opinion. She found out on twitter and the process was unfair.  SS: The information about the process which has been withheld is confidential due to the HR processes. We want to ask about this with NUS.  Student in the room: NUS have not followed the correct procedure and therefore the decision is inherently unfair, and I cannot trust NUS to make a fair decision. Our SU being aligned with NUS is a concern to our Muslim students.  SS: We will try to understand the process in more detail to find out what happened during the investigation and the dismissal.  FLY: To clarify: there have been 2 investigations; one against the elected president of NUS and one against NUS as an organisation. The outcome to dismiss the president came from an external investigation by an independent barrister.  Student in the room: What is your opinion as an SU?  JV: It is important to us that we are listening to you and hearing your concerns and then hearing what the NUS response is — this will help us to find out as much as we can. We are remaining neutral until we know more.  Student in the room: what does this mean for Muslim students who have pro-Palestinian views?  Would this affect them working with the SU?  EH: No. Unless there was a concern around hate speech or similar. The student body have diverse political views, staff do not involve their political opinions and are officers are elected from a range of perspectives and poli	SJ
3.0	FLY: Introduces and opens application for the role of Chair of the Group Chat (to be taken up for April 2023)  Expression of interest from Mustafa Akhtar online 13 votes in the room: all approval.	

9.0 FLY: Voting for charities which will receive £2 per NSS survey completed by students at ARU.
(subject to approval by ARU)
Details of each charity explained
Chelmsford:
Interact: 3 votes
One Pound Warriors: 2 votes
Gold Geese: 2 votes

Cambridge:
Jimmy's: 1
Bliss: 0
CPSL Mind: 2

This information will be passed to ARU for consideration during their marketing of the NSS survey.

FLY

Minute	Action Arising	Person Responsible
4.5	Issues of student conflict ad food theft in halls to be raised with accommodation services to identify solutions and routes for students to address these issues.	FLY / RAS
6.4	Officer to query and clarify access and opening hours of labs with computer software needed as part of FSE courses.	RAS
7.1	Officer to consider and agree an approach to support LGBT communities whilst screening the World Cup in SU spaces.	All Officers
7.2	Officers to discuss concerns around the dismissal of the NUS president with NUS.	SJ / All Officers
9.0	FLY to share NSS charity votes results with the SSOG committee via Tony Bickley	FLY