

Reports from the Sabbatical Officers

Report from the Vice-President

- The first major area of work for me has been on housing and living expenses. I started the **GU Housing and Living Expenses (HALE) campaign**, with a GU Council motion and policy.
 - We reached out to our membership to learn about the realities of housing and obtained an early win in the Phased Deposit scheme for private providers who advertise with the University Accommodation Centre, in the initial phase of my term.
 - To involve MCRs in building college-based campaigns, I developed and distributed a housing toolkit for MCRs.
 - We have also worked with the Office for Intercollegiate Services for transparency in housing and living expenses by greater clarity and transparency by colleges on the number and kinds of rooms available and rent ranges.
- I have been working on the **Graduate Rights campaign** of the University of Cambridge Graduate Union.
 - This year, I have worked with stakeholders from across the University, particularly around *awareness building*, as part of which we are releasing a 'Know your Rights' series.
 - As part of this campaign, I have secured three major wins: an official University of Cambridge 'Research and Resources Overview' form for setting expectations in research projects, improved training modules for students in research courses and making it more accessible to students on Moodle and the University of Cambridge anonymous student feedback pilot on supervisors and supervisions.
 - Besides these three wins, I launched the campaign for **Mandatory Supervisor Training** for supervisors of all postgraduate research students, and in what I regard as my biggest win as a student leader, the steering committee of the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL) has kickstarted the procedure for implementing this now!
 - As part of the Graduate Right and Welfare campaign, I also released the **Personal Welfare Handbook** for students that I worked on last year, from my time as the GU Part-time Welfare Officer.
 - Over the past few months, I have secured better **Departmental Welfare** in various departments with at least one welfare champion in each department for welfare signposting, accessible to all students.
 - Last but not the least, I have been leading the GU campaign on **anti-casualisation**, having proposed and passed policy on this, back in March 2019. As a follow up on this policy, the Graduate Union worked with Cambridge UCU on the *Raise the Bar* initiative for all workers on casual or temporary contracts.
 - Under this, I put emphasis on **fair appointments to teaching and research opportunities** for students in the University of Cambridge, and the University has now heard this demand! A digest of good practice in ensuring equitable

access to teaching opportunities will be compiled from Faculties and Departments and circulated very soon.

- As a BAME student in Cambridge, there have been times when I have felt the presence of unconscious bias and subtle racism in the University space. I felt addressing this was a priority point for me and therefore launched the **Campaign for Race Equality and Awareness using Training and Engagement (CREATE)**. Under CREATE, there are three major areas of focus: *Showcasing postgrad BME voices and experiences within the university, eliminating unconscious bias and discrimination within the university and creating communities of support for BME postgraduate students.*
 - As part of this, I was able to secure assurances from the Equality and Diversity team about better training of staff and building safe spaces for BAME postgraduate students.
- As the Union's primary **engagement officer**, I initiated engagement drop-in sessions and had engagement sessions with the MCRs.
- In my capacity as **Chair of the Executive Committee** of the Graduate Union, I worked on promoting greater accountability and launched an intersectionality forum of liberation executive committee officers.
- Last but not the least, a historic move recently was the successful referendum for the **merger of the two student unions of Cambridge**. I am spearheaded the initiative, along with the 7 other sabbatical student leaders of the student unions of Cambridge.

Report from the Welfare & Rights Officer

Apologies that I am unable to attend today's council because I am ill. Just a few updates on what I've been working on over the past few weeks:

- New-SU - I'm sure we will discuss this in more detail, and Alessandro will update further, but a very exciting time is ahead for postgraduate representation in Cambridge! We've been working really hard to form the proposals for a new student's union that has now been voted through by referendum.
- Strikes - Working from our Motion to Support Fair and Equal Pay (passed at Council earlier this term), and our anti-casualisation (Raise the Bar) campaign, I have been working closely with UCU in the build up to the strikes, and have been focusing on providing clear information for students from the Graduate Union. We have a page on the Graduate Union website (<https://www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk/support-and-advice/strikes>) which includes a summary of information about the strikes, and links to sign up to alternative study groups, teach-outs and mentoring systems. I have been supporting students running support for the picket lines, and have had a really great turnout so far. These strikes particularly affect postgraduate students, as many postgrads are members of UCU (and all can become members for free - <https://www.ucu.org.uk/free>), and the issues being struck over (the gender pay gap, casualisation, over-work and under-payment) particularly affect our membership. If anyone wants to run a teach-out, or is keen to help with mentoring students in lower years do get in touch.
- Opposing Prevent - I've been working with Alessandro and Edward (CUSU President) on the University's response to the Government's Prevent Review. I also hosted a panel with people campaigning against Prevent on a national level to discuss and

plan how we oppose Prevent in our Universities. I'm setting up a meeting on this so would be very happy if anyone wants to find out more, and also to hear from anyone who currently sits on their college's Prevent Committees (email me! welfare@gradunion.cam.ac.uk).

- Childcare - Our outgoing Families Officer, Karthick, has done a lot of great work on this campaign over the last year. He's going to write a blog post for our website outlining this work and his hopes for the future. I've been working on getting University Cards for partners of students, which should be possible but requires pressure on the University. I'm also working with the Childcare Office (who have gathered a lot of data), and with Karthick's survey, to gather information about the provision at different colleges for students with families, with the aim of putting this together as a resource by early next year. The CUSU Women's Campaign is also interested in taking up Childcare as a central campaign, so I had a meeting with the Women's Officer and our Families Officer to discuss running this as a joint campaign in the future.
- Supporting Student Sex Workers - I hosted a workshop at the start of November on how we can support student sex workers, and I am very happy to share the notes and resources from this with anyone that wants it. I will be gathering information from students on how they best think the Student's Union can support student sex workers, so again, get in touch if you want to know more.