

**Elle Gray
President**

Union Council – April 2008

Sabbatical Elections

This year saw the most diverse range of candidates standing for elections that we have seen in many years. We held a “Sabb Q&A session” for prospective candidates to find out more about the roles before submitting their manifestos, and this was very well attended. The elections “Question Time” roadshow with all candidates, saw hustings being taken to students in Halls, rather than expecting anyone who wanted to hear prospective candidates speeches to come to the Union five nights in a row. Although there were only a few students attending each of the Halls events, it still reached a wider audience than the Union events.

At the Union, the people in attendance were mostly campaign supporters who have already decided who they will vote for! I would encourage the new Sabb team to continue this format – but to hold freshers general meetings in Halls in the first couple of weeks in October, to get students used to voting/discussing/being involved in stuff. The media was excellent, with candidate videos used for the first time. As an addition to this I would strongly recommend the use of Online Voting, especially as we have so many part time students, distance learners and those on collaborative programmes. If we are to be truly representative we must ensure all students can vote.

Union Strategy

This process still continues, and we have been researching the way other Students’ Unions have been formulating their consultations and 3-5 year plans.

Legitimacy of Students’ Unions – NUS course

I attended this course with Steve Baker (Membership Services Manager) and Rena Ellis (Chief Exec). It was a fascinating event that gave us loads of skills and ideas for the way forward for our Union.

Ethics, Equality & Diversity Committee

We have Just elected our Disabled, EU, International and Mature students’ Reps – however we still have one place unfilled – Post Graduate. After talking to other Post-Grad reps in other Unions I have found that their University gives them the e-mail addresses for all post-grad students. This allows them to get candidates, do research and advertise PG events. I will be asking the University if we could have the same arrangement.

The committee is still working on the Hate Crime reporting centre, with the reporting forms provided by the police causing a significant delay. We were told they would be available in two weeks, nearly three months ago.

One World Fashion Show – March 1st.

The 3rd time this event has been held, and the best! All the usual Fairtrade clothing modelled by sports clubs and societies, as well as performances from the Sikh Society, Dance Club, Malaysian, Afro-Caribbean and Tibetan dancers with the New Music Society providing the DJs and loads on interesting stalls.

Graduation Ball

Plans are underway to make it an unforgettable night, with extra attention paid to small details to make the event feel really special.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) – Student Written Submission

This is possibly one of the biggest pieces of research we will be doing this year, to provide the student perspective in the University’s Audit. We will be specifically looking at :

1 – How accurate is the information that the institution publishes about itself? (eg Prospectuses, programme descriptions, adverts).

2 – Do students know what is expected of them to be successful? (Course/examination information).

3 – What is the Student Experience as a learner like, including teaching and learning opportunities, support received and access to learning facilities?

4 – Do students have a voice in the institution and is it listened to? (Course reps on University boards/ feedback/student governors).

I have met with a couple of departments and attended an open forum/feedback session in one department which was excellent – but more work needs to be done to get a full picture.

International Women's Day

Union Council voted last year to support international Women's Day, so this year our Women's Rep organised an acoustic night in Via Lattea which was really successful, and a demo in Guildhall square which I spoke at about discrimination of women in the workplace and in relation to University fees.

NUSSL Conference

I attended the NUS purchasing consortium conference, which had great sessions on Ethical & Environmental sessions. I will be working on the Sound Impact – Environmental audit of the whole Student Union – before I leave, so we will hopefully get the "Most Improved" award next year.

Academic appeals

I dealt with a number of these while Andy was on tour, and it would seem that the majority of students are not given the full advice as set out in the Universities own Handbook of Student Regulations. This will definitely be forming part of the QAA Student written submission.

John Denham Visit

We were lucky enough to get half an hour with the secretary of state for Universities, Innovation & Skills where we let him know about the hardship and huge debt problems that students are facing today. He refused to discuss the Fees Review in 2009.

NUS Conference

The Biggest news is that the controversial Governance review that was being pushed through by the NUS leadership (which would make the whole organisation weak and less democratic) – fell by 25 votes. Now the review should have the chance to be properly debated, with the good bits kept and the dangerous bits removed.