



**BIRKBECK
STUDENTS'
UNION**
HERE FOR YOU

ELLIE RIVERA

Education Student Leader



About Ellie's Role:

Ellie is an **Education Student Leader**. The purpose of this Education Student Leader is to be the lead officer for students on educational policy development. They ensure students get the highest academic quality areas including teaching, feedback and assessment and timetabling. This elected student will also work closely with Course Representatives/Academic representatives to improve education issues in the University. As well as to work on behalf of Birkbeck students to improve the student experience; Represent the needs of students in all areas of work, including University committees and leadership.

Her main responsibilities include:

- Represent the views of students at Birkbeck.
 - As a representative of Birkbeck students, be the face of the Students' Union.
 - Empower Course Representations/ Academic representatives to gain an understanding of education issues students are facing and campaigning for change.
 - Be a point of contact for Birkbeck students.
 - To proactively collect feedback and input from students regularly to ensure work is representative.
 - Attend University meetings and committees, elevating the student voice at these levels.
 - Sit on Academic Panels.
 - Meet regularly with key leaders in the University.
 - Be a Governor at Birkbeck University.
- **Work with Birkbeck University to ensure their work meets students' needs, and improve the student experience.**
 - Create initiatives to improve the student experience at Birkbeck.
 - Lobby the University for change.
 - Negotiate best outcomes for students.
 - Run campaigns, events and activities to benefit and enhance the student experience.
- **Develop a community for Birkbeck students.**
 - Create initiatives to improve the student experience.
 - Create opportunities for students to network with other students, or to increase engagement with Union activity.
- **Attend Student Union meetings.**

Ellie's Additional Postings:

In addition to her role as education student leader, Ellie has taken on partial responsibilities as an **International Students Liberation Leader** due to the previous incumbent stepping down.

This role is split with a second officer and take up approximately three hours per week.

The purpose of the International Students Leader role is to represent the needs and views of all international students at Birkbeck. she works on behalf of Birkbeck students to improve the student experience; lobby the University to make positive change at Birkbeck, attend University committees and meet regularly with leadership and create a Birkbeck community.



Manifesto:

“1. Altering the AI policy to work better for students.

I would like to ensure that the AI policy is given enough consideration to take into account students with all levels of ability in order to provide fairness. This would be done by meeting with the drafting members of the AI policy and other officers - especially the disability officer.

2. Create guidelines for lecturer’s assignment feedback.

When feedback to our assessments is limited, how are we supposed to improve when we do not understand what we can do better or what we did wrong? With this in mind, I would like to create guidelines for lecturers so that students get feedback relating to assessments giving opportunities to improve grades in future assessments.

3. Campaign for suitable timetables with consideration to travel time for each term.

During my studies, I had 1.5 hour lectures one after the other. On certain occasions I had to be in the main Mallet Street building and straight after in the Euston Road building. I thought this was unfair as the walk would take up to 15 minutes. I did not think this was fair and it would definitely not be fair for students who may have mobility issues. For this reason, I would like to ensure that at least every subsequent lecture, should take place in a nearby classroom. This would avoid missing the start of a new lecture or having to rush from one to the next lecture.

4. Adjustments on assessments covering topics that are not taught due to strikes.

As your student officer, I will liaise with our students, lecturers, and the heads of Birkbeck to come to the best outcome for students, so that the best decisions are made. This would require collaboration on your side so when you are supposed to be assessed on something that you were not taught. Then I could write to the decision makers who can get reduced questions or more fairer ways on how you are being assessed.

5. Creating an education learning page for education-focused events and resources.

This would give students clear guidance on who their relevant Learning Development Tutor are. Also, clear access and links to pre-recorded sessions on academic goals. For example, how to be more critical in essays or how to reference correctly. Also, links to future sessions are provided by the Learning Development Tutors. More information on what is and how to access Studiosity, its limits and how to use it.”

Committee Attendance Stats:

Board of Trustee Attendance:

Term 1: 3/3

Term 2: 1/1

Student Parliament Attendance:

Term 1: 1/1

Term 2: 1/1

Executive Committee Attendance:

Term 1: 3/4

Term 2: 2/2

Recommendations from Scrutiny Term 1:

Satisfaction.

Recommendation #1: More students to be aware of the academic webpage.

Recommendation #2: Expanding manifesto beyond one point.

Report

Name: Ellie Rivera

Role: Education Student Leader & International Liberation Leader

Term: Second

Manifesto Related Projects Update:

- In order to better represent the student body at our university I have conducted a survey entitled The Big 5.
- In this survey I asked questions closely related to my manifesto points in order to create change where needed.
- The results of the survey surprisingly showed that things as they currently are at university do not need much change as the majority of students answered favourably to the questions giving the impression that not much change is needed.
- My first question relates to my first manifesto point: AI policy.
- The results showed that 59% of respondents said that AI communication and understanding was clear or very clear.
- This may be due thanks to the new AI working group which has re-drafted a policy which is much more inclusive.
- Second manifesto point: feedback; I asked students to rate their feedback from 1 to 5 star, the majority of students rated it 4 stars with the average rating for student feedback being 3.71. There is a theme of inconsistency in terms of the substance of the feedback given.
- Data also shows that majority of students receive their feedback in between 4 to 6 (31 Students) 4 weeks being the overall policy for time to get feedback aligns with the university standards. Especially since 25 students said that they receive their feedback within 3 to 4 weeks. This again reflects that there is inconsistency in the times that feedback is returned to students.
- For these two reasons, a paper with 10 step guidance for markers, has been circulated around and is in the mind of the college's head of departments. The heads of the college were shocked to hear about cases where only the grade was given (no feedback) and making this paper welcome and it's on it's way to being implemented.
- I have a governors meeting coming up soon where the plan is to highlight again this paper and even before this meeting I'm presenting it to the pro-vice chancellor and the vice-chancellor of the university to discuss and make sure the 10 steps in this paper relating to feedback is implemented.

- Third manifesto point: timetables with consideration to travel time for each term. I also asked a question in my survey relating to this and surprisingly, the majority – 67% said that based on their timetable, they do not have to commute for more than 5 minutes from class to class.
- The above percentage seems positive; however, I know from speaking to students who perhaps may not have answered the survey or represent the 33% minority that some still have to commute from Malet Street to the Euston Road building.
- What worries me is that having heard from students and even from security personnel at the university, that this journey can be “dodgy” and students can feel unsafe, especially late in the evening when classes take place. Moreover, this commute takes about 15 minutes which may mean arriving late to classes or having to miss the end of a lecture to arrive on time.
- The fact that this is extremely unfair on students who may have mobility issues, along with the above-mentioned point on safety and punctuality has made me take the decision that this should be another point that I will be taking to the governors meeting and discussing with the pro-vice chancellor and the vice-chancellor of the university. This will come down to the university.
- My fourth manifesto point: assessments and strikes This manifesto point does not apply to this term as there have not been any lecturer strikes (much like the previous term).
- Due to my above manifesto point being nonactionable, one of the recommendation points from the previous Scrutiny Panel, was that I create a new manifesto point. This new manifesto point very much deals with exam and assessment stress which students face. For this reason, I have a plan to mitigate the stress that students face with activities serving that very purpose.
- The plan needs to be approved by the Executive Committee as the budget for this needs to be considered as the time that coms and all the relevant departments will invest in these activities has to be approved. Having said this, thanks to discussions on this with staff I am positive that these plans will be approved in time for next term during the exam and assessment period. Also, I could potentially get funding from the college as I have monthly meetings with heads of the college to discuss Student Union (SU) issues.

The ideas which are going to be considered for my Exam Stress Campaign in term 3 are bringing back Birkbeck; dispensing free water bottles for students in key areas like the library as hydration is a thing during exams, as well as healthy snacks; creating banners with positive, motivational, and encouraging messages around the university; playing relaxing music in campus; handing stress balls; having activities in the current SU room where support members from the college can be present if someone needs to talk; getting in touch with the archery society as they have the equipment which we could let students fire just before an exam or for 5 minutes as this can be quite de-stressing.

- I am planning on carrying out a survey asking students what they would prefer and take it from there before I ask for budgeting and actioning these ideas leaving room for suggestions in case students would prefer something else that I haven't thought of yet.

- Now to my last manifesto point: education learning page. I have updated the old page which was live during my last scrutiny panel and in collaboration with coms this has been advertised on all social media

- I have looked at the traffic which it currently has and I'm happy to say that as of the 7th of March 2024, 51 users have looked at it, there have been 29 views per users and the average engagement in time is 1 minute 7 seconds.

- The main thing that I have added is information on exam tips for the upcoming assessment period which will be important for students in the way they manage their success in the assessments and exams as well as taking care of their wellbeing.

International Liberation Leader

- Promoted the socials to students.
- Ensured plagiarism and academic misconduct is not promoted in the WhatsApp group.
- Attended socials and got to know a few international students.
- Replied to queries from international students relating to wellbeing and socials.
- International Student Day of Education - speed friending event.

Other Projects:

- Attended The Clued-up Stall in collaboration with SU Support Services and spoke to 62 students in January and 51 students in February.
- Had private talks with students facing hardships and sent them to the relevant departments when I have not been able to help myself. This includes the Student Safeguarding department and the SU Support Service. I'm very proud of this as it shows that students trust me with their issues and shows that I am trustworthy, available, and approachable. My goal has always been to make students feel safe and heard.
- Attended the Food Pantry related meetings and manned all of them.

Achievements:

- Getting the new AI Policy developed by working with the AI working group.
- Getting funding for the food pantry and Barkbeck along with William Sarenden.
- Getting 78 respondents in my Big 5 survey. This is 28% higher than the previous Big 5 questionnaire which had 61 respondents.
- Filming videos and adding post for social media.
- Contributing to the assessment Guide and Assessment project.
- Presenting my big 5 report in the Executive meeting.
- Co-hosted 2 pub quizzes at The George and mingled with international and non-international students.

Notes to Panel:

- Recommendation- “More students aware of the academic webpage”. I have managed this by working with coms and updating my education page.
- Recommendation- “Not changing a manifesto but you can expand beyond by one point”. My fourth manifesto point has not been actioned because there have not been any lecturer strikes (last term or this term); however, should there be any industrial action, I will focus on all the students. In previous years, where I made changes only for the law school it was because I was studying law and I was not an elected member of the Student Union yet. My additional manifesto for the Exam Stress Campaign covers this.
- My office hours for last term and this terms are Thursdays 2pm to 5pm however, during both terms I have consistently been at university for at least 2 days a week, some weeks even every day, albeit not all day, I do go to university whenever there is a face to face meeting or for events planned by the Student Union such as the Clued-up Stall.

Photos



International Day of Education –
Speed Friending. Organised by
myself.



Book display I put together in the library.



Barkbeck, I secured funding for it and
attended.