

William Sarenden

Welfare Student Leader



About William's Role:

William is a **Welfare Student Leader**. The Welfare Student Leader is responsible for campaigning on issues that affect student welfare including housing, mental health and financial hardship. 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 to University committees and leadership.

His main responsibilities include:

- Represent the views of students at Birkbeck and campaign for student welfare.
 - As a representative of Birkbeck students, be the face of the Students' Union.
 - Campaign for Student Welfare.
 - 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 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.

Manifesto:

“I have five main areas that I wish to focus on during my time as the welfare lead. I believe in protecting students’ Mental health and creating opportunities for all students to thrive. As you can see from my goals below, my beliefs are clear and set out to improve the Birkbeck experiences.

1. To be the voice for all, especially those that feel they don't have one, those that have been overlooked and those that need it the most.

Birkbeck University has been the key for many people’s development over the past 200 years. Its rich history comes down to its students; those from the past, present, and future. The role of the welfare leader is to look after and be the voice for all those that make up its history, and I intend to achieve as much as possible throughout the year.

2. To make Birkbeck spaces more wellbeing friendly.

The Environment here at Birkbeck needs to become a space that students want to spend time in, rather than a place just for lectures. Study spaces, outside spaces and classrooms are in need of a friendly and welcoming redesign to allows students to feel comfortable while on campus.

3. To successfully create events to promote Mental Health Awareness.

Hosting events around key dates throughout the year will allow for students to take breaks from the busy student life and focus on well-being. This will also help spread Awareness and allow for extra publicity for services that are already on offer. I intend to host at least two events this year.

4. To create a Wellbeing Tab on the new Student Union Website.

Creating a new tab on the SU website will allow for a focused on the well-being of Student and act as a place they can find key information about study tips, safety in and around Campus, cost of living and the best locations to relax after a busy day at University. This will all help to improve the student experience.

5. Student Outreach.

Currently there are many different issues surrounding the student experience. With an upwards increase in the cost of living, housing problems and Union strikes, there is a need for more direct student feedback. This will then allow for more focused action from officers and the SU”

William's Additional Postings:

In addition to his role as welfare student leader, William 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. He 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.



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: 4/4

Term 2: 2/2

Recommendations from Scrutiny Term 1:

Commendation, no recommendations.

Term 2 Report

Manifesto Related Projects Update:

Campus Lighting: The lighting around Birkbeck has been a major safety problem for all students who have classes during hours with no sunlight. The Back of BCB had broken lights, areas with no lights, and simply many spaces that have become unsafe and 'Hangout spots' for criminal activity. I met with the director of estates raising these concerns, including concerns that the University of London had also not been replacing broken lights. Recently all problems have been fixed, a set of 5 new lights have been installed, University of London have replaced their lights, and the lighting under the underpass between the Main building and BCB has been drastically improved.

Library Spaces: The library being the main study location for Birkbeck students lacks a comfortable and inviting environment. To counter act this, I met with the library and have agreed they will update the silent study area, by removing a row of lights and creating additions by adding in focus walls and adding plants where needed. Secondly, students raised many concerns about the harsh lighting at the front of the library due to the light from the window, overhead spotlights, and bookcase lighting. They have agreed it's possible to remove the overhead lighting and replace with individual lamps to allow for students to create the environment they feel comfortable in.

G07: After a lengthy meeting with estates, and later following up with the Pro-Vice Chancellor for education, the College agreed to give us the space opposite our office for our use until the new academic year. This room could be used to facilitate homes for our networks and allow our union to run better due to the allocation of new space. This room has also since been decorated by me and fellow officers creating a warm inviting environment for us to host events and networks.

These three points all link directly to my manifesto, to create a more welcoming and wellbeing friendly environment for Birkbeck students & being the voice for all by creating change that has been asked for directly from students.

Other Projects:

Food Pantry: The Food Pantry was a top priority for me this term, due to my successful running of food pantry before Christmas (64 students used it, the highest it has ever been), I came back to the college and expressed the need for the food pantry to be open for at least the next 3 months. The college agreed to fund the food pantry and I'm happy to say that the last 2 occasions ran smoothly, with help from both SU staff and officers in both the promoting and organising of the food pantry. I organised, set up, staffed, promoted and achieved funding for this project.

Loneliness Campaign: This campaign was the longest and most time-consuming part of this term. It was also the most important. Recent reports highlight that students feel Lonely most or all of the time whilst at university. Last term one of the results of the BIG 5 survey, suggested that Birkbeck's student feel lonely at least half of the time. This Campaign set out to counter act this.

We had 8 main events under the Loneliness campaign:

- Coffee and study Morning 1
- Food Pantry
- Bar quiz
- International Network Mixer
- Film Night
- Coffee and Study Morning 2
- BAME Mixer
- International Woman's Day

Term 2 Report

I organised 6 out of the 8 events, attended and help set up all events. Working directly with our coms team, I created all advertising for the Campaign, including banners, website event pages, social media posts and student newsletter updates. I also created campaign lanyards, to spread the word about the fight against student Loneliness. As part of the campaign, I worked with student's services by creating mental health awareness posts for our Instagram. They focus on making a hard topic light and fun, while pointing students in the right direction if they need extra support. The Websites page for this Campaign has a list of resources and reasons for the campaign, as well as all updates about what events have been on offer. I can provide a breakdown of the Campaign after it has ended. I will say events have been well received and the Campaign has definitely fostered a better sense of community at Birkbeck, with many staff and Student engaging in discussing this topic.

AI policy: I have been leading on behalf of students and the SU in regular meetings with the PVC for education and the heads of faculties, actively played a part in this discussion by bringing the student voice forward, suggesting structure changes, changing in wording & layout as well as Including a lot more clarity for students. Now the policy has changed, I have it on the agenda for review within the next student Parliament. After lots of emails and discussion with the college, I'm very happy to say that the policy is in a much better place than this time last year.

Book Swap: I met with estates regarding setting up a book swap in the coffee shop of BCB. The Bookcases are now active allowing for Students to share and exchange books and proactively engage in sustainable practices. The woman's officer & I have spoken with Waterstones, and they are enthusiastic about donating and sponsoring the project. As an action for next term, I will be promoting this through staff and student newsletters.

Achievements:

- I was lucky enough to be invited to the 200th anniversary dinner, in which I was asked to meet Her Royal Highness, the princess royal. I spoke at length about the different culture Birkbeck has compared to other UOL University's and about how our SU gets student involved on the day to day. I also was asked to sit on her table for dinner, alongside the president of Birkbeck.
- As chair, a lot of my time is taken up with Chairing our different committees, meeting with Trustees, and this term changing the structure of board papers. This was on request of the Trustees and now the new papers have much more clarity with better structure allowing for our board to run more affectively. I also line manage the CEO and have been preparing for review.
- This Term, I took part in a meeting with UCU. The focus of this was talking about the aftermath of the college restructuring and the marking boycotts. We also made the commitment to a joint approach to the VC, to ensure better results going forward.
- I have been an active part in many ongoing conversations and meetings with many people from the college, including: The cost of living working group, Course rep coffee morning, Meetings with Trustees, SU Funding opportunities, University Policy makers, Monthly meetings with the College and much more.
- I organised our Student Union induction Meeting with the Vice Chancellor, in which we spoke directly about student concern: Spaces for students, commitments to give Students better communication and developing our union.
- A major part of the annual survey showed that students had a lack of understanding about who officers are or what they do. To counteract this, I have played an active part in participating and creating content including: Loneliness campaign videos, Food pantry video, culture shock video, 4 Loneliness Campaign video and more.

Term 2 Report

Note To Panel:

- Firstly, I wanted to thank the BAME officer for all the help she has been through this term.
- I also wanted to note my disappointment that some officers have lacked engagement. I Organised a first introduction meeting with the New Vice-Chancellor, and only 2 other officers attended. I understand Officers have their own priorities including education (which always has to come first) but not sending apologies to the VC is very embarrassing and does not send a good message. I also took the initiative to set up an officer Strategy Day in which some officers refused to take part.

International Role:

The First action for this term was to stop the harassment of the networks WhatsApp chats. The network was infiltrated by many 'assignments helpers' (scams) and this needed to stop. By changing and restricting who and how people join the chat allowed for a more focused community building and safety within the network. I run the international network social media and regularly promote events and services including an international housing service in response to recurring housing issues within the chat. The Instagram has some new content including a collaboration with the BAME Network all about culture shock. As part of the student Loneliness campaign, I organised a Bar quiz and International Student Network mixer, to allow our network to grow and for many who may feel isolated to feel like they can reach out and come along to a wonderful activity. Finally, I have spoken with the PVC for Internationals and spoke about the need for expanding our network and about the large portion of students using the food pantry being International students.

Photos

