**Michaelmas 2022 SU Scrutiny Report:**

**Overview:**

Overall, the sabbatical team seems to be doing a fairly good job in handling the positions they were elected to. Notably, the VPs for Access and Academic Affairs, and for Charities and Community have done a very good job. The pair of them have already achieved a large amount and are also managing a large degree of other work and plans they intend to put in place over the rest of the academic year. Unfortunately, it is the opinion of the Scrutiny Committee that the VP of Graduates is currently slightly underperforming and could be doing more. Admittedly she did start the year off late due to external factors which will have reduced her capacity to achieve this term. Despite this we hope that she takes this report as an opportunity to make improvements in the following two terms. The interviews and individual reports for the VPs of: Graduates, Charities and Community, and Welfare and Equal Opportunities, were conducted by Umut Kaan Onen on the 7th and 8th of November. The interviews and individual reports for the President and the VPs for: Access and Academic Affairs, and Women, were conducted by Leon Wheeler on the 7th and 8th November 2022. In conducting these interviews our main focus was how the sabbatical officers’ work matched up to their manifesto pledges. However, in addition to this we explored what else they had achieved from a more general perspective as sometimes the issues a sabbatical officer can be unrelated to their manifesto commitments.

**Vice President of Graduates, Shreya Dua:**

General

* Has started working in August (due to academic and mental health circumstances that prevented her from starting sooner) and spent a lot of time getting accustomed to the university committees she is a part of.

From the Manifesto:

* MCE and Hardship Fund
  + She has created a survey relating to the post graduate level hardship fund
  + She has started working with stakeholders to increase transparency in extensions and Mitigating Circumstances Extension but she claims the University will focus on this on January so she plans on fulfilling this part of her manifesto then.
* Modify Academic Representation
  + Has aided in the selection of divisional representatives and plans on working with them in the following terms and developing training for them.
* Establish better links between the MCR s
  + She has spent a significant amount of time trying to contact MCR presidents to increase the communication between them and the SU, and to assess their wants and needs.
* Lobby the University to increase accessibility of resources and welfare for graduate students
  + She is working to increase graduate engagement in Repcoms which are often undergrad focussed.
  + Has been communicating with the university on scholarships they are working on and trying to get rid of the application fees.

**Vice President of Charities and Community, Anna-Tina Jashapara:**

College sustainability

* University wants to have net 0 carbon emissions by 2025 but the colleges are not committed to this, so she is working to get them on board. She is also working to collaborate with the JCR and MCR presidents of the colleges to jointly pressure colleges.
* She has been working with the Oxford Climate Society to try to get colleges to have more sustainability commitments

Investments

* She has been trying to get the central university to have a better investment policy: to divest from fossil fuels and move towards other organizations.
* Has been in contact with the OEM, Investment Ethics Committee about sustainability and looking into other universities and colleges to get ideas on what further can be done in terms of sustainable investment.
* A lot of colleges have their own investments, so she is trying to campaign for better investment policies for colleges as well as the University and has been working with Student Organizing for Sustainability (SOS) to promote student campaigns towards sustainability.

Careers

* She has found out that the head of the careers’ services hasn’t fulfilled their sustainability commitments, and she has been communicating with them about it.
* She is also working in accordance with the national campaign to stop fossil fuel companies from advertising in career services.

Bridging Town and Gown

* She is organizing a social action fair with OxfordHub, where every stand will have some action a student can take in order to benefit the community. She says that this will be beneficial in empowering the students in social action and raising awareness.
* She has been working with the homelessness charities to develop methods through which students can help homeless people, to train them on what to do if they encounter someone struggling with homeless.
* Oxford city council is setting vision for 15 years later. The council wants affordable housing, but the university also wants to build housing for students, and she has been investigating how these projects interact to get the most out of the joint programs.

Empowering Students

* Her main goal in this regard is to make it easier for students to campaign for social reform.
* An event that the beginning of the term for climate activism,
* Sustainability hub to allow students to learn where the university is at in terms of sustainability and how they can get involved.
* Center for teaching and learning has created a racially inclusive teaching toolkit. She is investigating what more can be done and has met with the Cambridge team to discuss their decolonization hub in this regard.

Separate from Manifesto:

* She has been meeting weekly with stakeholders from the university on the topic of cycling safety. The university has set up a “vision 0” group which aims to having no casualties in the road. She has worked to achieve this goal by
  + Giving out free bicycle lights in freshers fair with funding from university (500 sets of lights, lots of safety jackets etc. Has been given out)
  + Organizing an inclusive event where people could get into SUVs to see the driver’s blind spots, where other organizations allowed students to register their bikes with the police against theft and get information about dangerous places to cycle were conveyed as well as to get a 10£ voucher on a helmet purchase.
  + Organizing events where students can get their bikes checked and repaired trice a term.
  + She has been working with the committee that sets graduate rent, trying to limit the increase due to her concerns about affordability while also getting information ready for JCR and MCR presidents so they can effectively represent the students in their discussion with their college on rent as well.

**Vice President of Welfare and Equal Opportunities, Grace Olusola:**

Welfare for suspended students, chronic medical situations, and undiagnosed health

* She has found out that 3 of her manifesto points were very interlinked and often come under the same umbrella term of mental health and workload.
  + She has been involved in the head of counselling election process, which is now almost completed. She wants to organize a support group for chronic illnesses, but this can only happen after the head of counselling is elected.
* She is searching for solutions for the impact undiagnosed health conditions can have for students and their ability to seek help. She is especially concerned about the cycle where workload can lead to mental health issues which can lead to a diminishing ability to deal with workload and an inability to seek help due to the lack of diagnosis.

Welfare training for student societies

* She is working to clarify welfare officer roles in student societies to increase students’ ability to access aid. She is also working to create basic welfare training for welfare officers to increase their ability act. She wants this training to target welfare officers but be open to all students and plans to complete it by Trinity.
  + She has found a 3-year-old program of the SU training and is going to study it in the break for this endeavour.
  + She is also planning to attend welfare training herself to understand the content more.

Separate from Manifesto:

* She thinks the SU racial equality training could be updated to use more content from Oxford. She is looking into what can be added with the advisory board and trying to find a way to enrich the content without leaving the students who faced discrimination in a vulnerable spot.
  + A survey will be sent to students to gather information for this
* SU arts week will take place in Hilary with the expected attendance of more than 100 societies and students. The arts representatives want to use the week to create a university wide artistic network and she is working to use the reach and resources of the SU to benefit this project in its initial stages.
  + She has seen interest from a lot of different parties for this project and its very early plan has been completed.
  + She has advertised the project in freshers fair as well to make sure it is the student body that shapes this network rather than the SU.

She said her manifesto point on racial inequality in postgrad application is on hold due to the extra projects she is involved in at the moment.

**President, Michael-Akolade Ayodeji:**

Combatting SU Apathy:

* Michael noted that Student Council meetings were more engaging when they were held in person and when more students attended – regardless of whether those students could vote. As such pizza has been provided at SC meetings this term. However, it was also noted that in some cases people were unable to make in person meetings. Due to this all of the SC meetings also had an online, virtual link. Due to this all of the SC meetings this term have made quorum. Michael thinks that one way to further drive engagement would be to hold SC meetings in colleges.
* In SU communications emails that are sent out weekly various information about the SU is included, such as what has occurred at SC meetings. Readership of these emails has been reasonably high – averaging 40-60% - with the readership for week 4 being the lowest so far but still being read by 15,485 people (30%).
* Action has been taken to ensure that CRAE (Campaign for Racial Awareness and Equality) begins to successfully function again as an SU related campaign. Michael noted that CRAE had been “currently dying” and had failed to run any events for black history month (October). Measures taken by Michael and others in the SU to tackle this apathy included the appointment of a new co-chair and the reintroduction of CRAE to the university community.
* In his manifesto Michael committed to releasing regular video updates on his achievements in the SU in order to engage students in what the SU was doing. However, Michael has yet to achieve this aim. He allocated this failure to mental health problems that had affected his own confidence and led to self-consciousness issues. Michael also said that he was currently seeing a councillor in association with this and that things were getting better. My personal verdict on this matter is that mental health concerns are a serious problem and those dealing with them should be treated with support. As such although it is a shame that Michael has yet to achieve this manifesto pledge, the reasoning for this means it is not an issue that evokes concern over his performance as President of the SU.
* In the latter half of Michaelmas term Michael was conducting meetings with the various JCR Presidents in order to discuss shared goals and how to achieve them.
* In attempting to communicate with committees Michael said he had to defer to SU VPs, as committees prefer to communicate with a single person and other Sabbatical Officers took precedence over some committees.

Holistic Access:

* Looking to establish a hardship fund via a cost-of-living fund and plan. This would be open for everything, and the needs from it would be assessed via a survey. The aim is to appeal for the money for the fund from January 2023.
* In regard to action on improving conditions for those who are neurodivergent Michael reported that there has been a fair amount of discussion on this, but that not enough action has yet to take place. Currently Michael and others in the SU team are engaged in merging the best practise guidelines for colleges and for departments. Currently these guidelines are fairly good at the college level, but the quality of the department ones vary.
* In order to reform the pastoral care available, Michael has had meetings with the head of DAS (Disability Advisory Service) on how to do this. Apparently so far DAS have already made strides in reforming this independently.
* In terms of acting on Care Leaver Support Michael said that he had personally done little as this actually came under the remit of the VP for Access and Academic Affairs. As such there is a reasonable degree of intersection between commitments the SU President may make in their manifesto and the actual remits of other Sabbatical Officers.

Student Social Aspects:

* Efforts to create a new website in which events and goings on both at the Student Union and in the wider university are advertised are currently ongoing and are definitely going to produce a far more accessible SU website. However, difficulties have arisen due to the fact that the current website is extremely clunky – which makes transferring data difficult. Furthermore, much of what the new website is intended to do (detailing current and upcoming events) is already done by Youni, who have begun to corner the market in this respect.
* An audit of the various night clubs in Oxford has been conducted with the VP for Women. In creating this audit various nightclubs around Oxford were antagonistic and unresponsive. A general conclusion of this audit was that certain clubs across Oxford, such as Freud, may not check bags properly (accentuating risks of spiking). Furthermore, Michael noted that the previous Sabbatical team successfully pushed nightclubs, such as Parkend, to increase the vigilant nature of their security around the spiking epidemic of last academic year. However, this may have had the negative consequence of increasing racial profiling by bouncers in clubs. Efforts by the SU to tackle this and work with nightclub security were made difficult by the fact that nightclubs felt that the increased measures were put in place partly at the SU’s bequest and that now the SU was berating them for doing as they were asked.

General:

* Michael noted that he had significantly less of an understanding of what was involved in being President of the SU when he created his manifesto than he does now that he has been serving in the role for nearing a term. As such, the issues he believed he would have to deal with have not fully stacked up to the ones he has had to deal with.
* Outside of his manifesto pledges, Michael has done significant work to raise the profile of the Oxford SU at both a national and university level. He has done this by significant involvement in the founding of a Russell group SU – providing a mission purpose and goals for this as well as reaching out to different stakeholders.
* Action has also been taken in regard to the cost of living and menta health issues within the university, with Michael attending regular meetings with the university staff, as well as with other national campaigns and committees aimed at targeting these issues.
* Michael believes significant action has been taken within the SU to tackle antisemitism. Measures taken include organising antisemitism training for the SU sabbatical team, sending two SU VPs on an educational trip to Auschwitz, attending Jewish festivals with Oxford University JSOC, maintain a good, working relationship with both the university JSOC and the national version, and being kept in the loop in regard to the recent firing of the NUS President for antisemitism.
* Michael also reported that successfully he alongside the VP for Access and Academic Affairs pushed against the 2% rise in Post Graduate Tuition. Usually this would have been an argument they would have expected to lose. However, by appealing to the reputational damage this would cause to the university they were able to stop this (much of the work in regard to this was done within committees).
* Michael conducted several meetings and liaisons with heads of JCRs, MCRs and students as a whole in regard to the upcoming UCU strikes. Was hoping that the strikes would not go ahead. However, with the successes of recent rail strikes Michael believed it was most likely that they would. Due to this his main focus was on minimising disruptions this would cause to students.

**Vice President of Access and Academic Affairs, Jade Calder:**

Access to Oxford:

* Jade noted that Postgraduate access was an area that was previously unexplored, as most of the energy on access was spent on undergraduate access. Jade’s approach to tackling this is taking a three-tier form made up of short-, medium-, and long-term processes. It is in the short- and medium-term processes that Jade believes she has made the most amount of progress. In this, Jade has taken action to make changes and updates to the information available online and on the university webpages. She has had meetings with the careers office and has reached out to the undergraduate Crankstart scheme in order to discuss with them the steps that can be taken to provide more access and aid to Crankstart scholars who are considering pursuing postgraduate studies at the university. Furthermore, over the summer Jade visited Uniq+, an Oxford University Summer school, in order to gain insight into the ways in which they were succeeding. Work is also being done to create a postgraduate prospectus. In the longer-term Jade is aiming to take steps towards establishing postgraduate open days (these would most likely have to be online due to concerns over attendance issues).
* Improving graduate access is currently difficult due to the cost-of-living crisis. Jade is currently on several boards advocating for the protection of access campaigns and has managed to ring fence the existing funding for current scholarships.
* In terms of further undergraduate access, action has been taken to provide support for estranged students, such as meetings with outreach teams with the focus of embedding access as a concept into current outreach schemes. Jade noted that generally action taken to provide support for estranged students is best done at a college level. However, there is a wide range in how good individual colleges are – University College is particularly good whereas Trinity has been unresponsive to Jade’s inquiries.
* Jade has noted that the university can be reticent to address the issue of class (as opposed to gender or race) when discussing the awards gap at finals between class background and likelihood of getting a first. This in itself provides a further access issue when it comes to students from a working-class background attempting to go on to postgraduate studies.

Access at Oxford:

* Over the summer there was an uplift in funding for Crankstart as well as parity support for postgraduate students. However, although this is good Jade does not view it as a personal achievement of hers as she was not involved in organising it.
* Some postgraduate students fell through the gaps in regard to both government and university support. In order to rectify this Jade is liaising with other Russell group universities to lobby the government for increased support.
* Jade has brought up the creation of a hardship fund with university staff and is hopeful that at some point in may be established. However, she is not hopeful that this would be soon and believes the limits of soft power prevent her from making this more likely sooner.
* Work has also been done to compile a cost-of-living report across colleges with Class Act and JCR Class Officers. This is part of an expression with the SU Sabbatical team as a whole that working with JCRs is an important part of how the SU should conduct its business. The central University organisation is happy for individual colleges to be lobbied in regard to the cost-of-living issues as it means there is less work for them. However, one drawback of this approach is that some colleges do not have the funds spare to provide more support and other richer colleges are reluctant to the idea of pooling resources in order to tackle the issue.
* Jade has done extensive work in expanding the inherited sub fusc scheme that provided free sub fusc for students on bursaries. Lat year only 15 sub fusc sets were provided whereas this year the number has increased to 250 sets. Furthermore, this was done without adequate infrastructure so was a real struggle. Jade was of the opinion that in the future colleges should be taking the lead on this rather than the SU.
* In terms of acquiring and releasing access statistics, work has been impeded by difficulties in sorting and unpicking them as they are overly complicated.
* Jade has also met with someone from the Vice Chancellor’s Office in regard to the UCU strikes in order to make progress in maintaining student access to teaching and resources in the event of a strike.

Improving Academic Experience:

* Jade conducted the recruitment for academic divisional reps. The SU Student Engagement team is meant to do this but have taken a back seat approach and as such the recruitment was not very successful initially. No applications for divisional reps were made over the summer. However, Jade worked to update and improve the application process and material and subsequently 55 people applied to be divisional reps. This is the highest amount of applicants for these roles ‘ever’. Jade conducted the interviews and found there to be suitable candidates for all but the undergraduate humanities rep position. Due to Jade’s work in improving this process it should be much more streamlined and smoother next year.
* From scratch Jade set up and ran the course rep training as the previous training process was not adequate, in doing this she checked this with the Centre for Teaching and Learning. As with the recruitment of divisional and course reps this training should not be the job of the VP for Access and Academic Affairs and has not previously been conducted by the person occupying this role.
* Jade is currently planning an assessment consultation with courses that will be rolled out next term, as well as being part of an online/in person exams working group. She reported that the university has been taking action in updating how exams are done. However, as there has been very little student input and feedback it is possible that a conclusion that students are unhappy with may be reached. It appears that most students would prefer either in person written exams or online, open book exams. However, very few want in person, online, closed book exams – even though this is the system the university courses seem to be leaning towards (a final verdict as to what students would prefer awaits the results of the consultation).
* Jade is working on standardising the method of feedback from JCR Academic reps in order to enable the compilation of a general report. This would be better than the current system of academic reports from colleges which are essentially ‘self-assessed’.
* Jade has also worked to provide remote library access for students not at the university. One way this has been achieved is by advertising the university’s involvement in the SCONUL scheme which enables students to access libraries and books in other universities that are also part of the scheme. This will be useful for access to workspaces over the holiday periods. Furthermore, Jade is currently attempting to organise a second hand academic book swap system going. She expressed the view that this will hopefully be achieved by Trinity.

General:

* Jade has provided biweekly detailed reports to the Student Council on what she has done as she is on a considerable number of committees that take up a large part of her time. It is partly due to this, as well as a combination of her remit being very large and her having to work on projects she should not have to (see earlier notes), that Jade has had to put in extremely late hours in the office in order to stay on top of work. Frequently she has had to stay in the office until 10-12pm. This is made worse by the fact that she feels there is not enough support for her. As such I would suggest additional aid from either (or even both) others in the sabbatical team or the SU staff in order to enable Jade to work in a healthy manner whilst not neglecting any of the projects she has to manage. Jade expressed the view that the planned changes in sabbatical officer roles should reduce this issue for future holders of whichever role is most similar to the VP for Access and Academic Affairs, as much of the job will be split over two positions.
* Work has also been done to increase the number of lecture recordings available to students as currently there is a wide disparity between courses and divisions as to whether lecture recordings are readily available for students. One issue here is that lecturers are reluctant to make recordings available out of concern for what this may do for their job security. Conversations are currently being held with DisCam about this and Jade aims to feed in about this to the renewal of this by the central university in Trinity.
* There has also been a review of policy and guidance on student academic reps that Jade is organising. Part of this is focused on ensuring that the papers on it are up to date.
* Jade believes that the sabbatical team are working well together as they have shared goals.
* In regard to issues of antisemitism, Jade believes that a fair amount of progress has been made by the SU in rebuilding bridges with the Jewish community. As part of this she discussed the antisemitism training she and the other sabbatical officers underwent during the summer and how it was especially helpful.

**Vice President of Women, Ellie Greaves:**

Health:

* This term Ellie ran an STI clinic which focused on destroying the stigma surrounding STIs. In setting this up there were some difficulties surrounding finding a location due to the current closure of the SU building. Despite this the clinic still went well. Going forward the aim is to hold one of these per term.
* She has interacted with the Oxford Period in gathering information from students and colleges in regard to the provision of period products and the need for such provision within Oxford Colleges. However, there have been some ethical concerns with surveys and the extent of data collection available from them whilst keeping them anonymous. Following on from this data collection, Ellie intends to bring a paper derived from this to the Student Wellbeing Subcommittee on period products. One aim in association with this is for all college toilets to be stocked with free period products. This is an aim that seems feasible by next term as it does not cost much to do.
* Ellie has also started to review the shared drive that details how to get motions related to women’s issues passed withing JCRs, along with other such things. In doing so she has been updating various spreadsheets.
* Discussions have been held with various sports organisations about issues surrounding eating disorders.
* Ellie is also planning on running a series of events in the run up to international women’s day on the 8th of March. These include a podcast discussing various issues women face, availability of contraception, and a consent panel.

Organisational:

* In regard to intersectional inclusivity Ellie and the other members of the sabbatical team have undergone training, such as antisemitism training (Ellie herself missed the antisemitism training the other officers did over the summer, to make up with this she was going on an educational trip to Auschwitz). Furthermore, Ellie has liaised with clubs about the safety of trans and nonbinary students in their premises. In addition to this discussion over securing safety for gender non-confirming students Ellie is working with sports organisations at the university to ensure inclusive definitions and regulations relating trans students. Currently high-level sports have un-inclusive definitions. Unfortunately, there appears little to be done about this specifically, as such definitions are monitored at a sports institution level which is outside of the SU’s purview. However, Ellie believes it should be possible to ensure that there are defined places where trans and non-binary students can be safe at an amateur and inter-collegiate level.
* Ellie has also taken over the remit for sports societies at the university due to commitments in her manifesto. In doing this she is currently pushing for a further recognition of the need for a rehab of Iffley Sports Centre as a whole.
* Part of this takes the form of creating a template code of conduct that there would be a mandate for all sports clubs to have (currently only university level teams seem to have satisfactory odes of conduct). This would also include a complaints procedure, the aim for this is to have it in place by the end of the academic year.

Sexual Violence:

* The university as a unit only has remit over student-on-student sexual violence cases if they happen on university property. If such cases happen elsewhere then the remit they tend to get forced onto is that of sports societies for some reason. This is something Ellie is looking to rectify.
* Attempts have been made via Pub Watch to organise boycotts of certain clubs so as to force them to hire better security/improve their standards for safety. Unfortunately, this has been hard to organise due to a perspective that the SU as a whole is irrelevant and does not really interact with the student body, combined with the fact that the SU cannot provide an alternative for students to go to when boycotts on certain clubs are organised.
* Bouncers and security used at nigh clubs and bars across Oxford have been accused of racism and sexism. Unfortunately, there is only one main security company in Oxford that provides almost all of the security used for this. As such it is incredibly hard to persuade night clubs to change who they use – as they cannot find anyone else to do the job.
* The university has limited access to spiking tests and does not effectively advertise what little access it has as there is not a clear setting of what the main use for them by the university should be – for use only in prosecution or to aid with wellbeing. There is also quite a narrow definition of what spiking is that leaves out some important aspects.
* Ellie has been working closely with It Happens Here and Night Life in order to rectify some of the above-mentioned issues as well as just generally making Oxford a safer city for students.
* Ellie conducted consent workshops in which 135 reps were trained. In the future the university is going to be taking this over and will be including a scenario about spiking.
* A bystander training session has been conducted for students at the university.

General:

* Ellie ran a women and non-binary club night at Plush, which she believes went successfully.
* Ellie is of the opinion that Michael is doing a good job in his taking the lead in tackling antisemitism.
* The removal of the role of VP of Women is something that Ellie has considerable concern about. She said she understood why changes were made to the sabbatical roles but was worried that by pushing the role of women’s VP into the other liberation causes it was possible it could be neglected. Especially as designating all equality focused campaigns onto one person would be quite a lot to manage. Additionally, there are some issues surrounding the constitutional nature in which the motion to change the sabbatical officers roles was passed and whether quorum was reached. I personally (Leon Wheeler) am of the opinion that quorum was not reached when these motions were passed last year and so these changes are not in line with the byelaws. However, it must be noted that I was not at the Student Council meetings in which these changes were discussed last year so may be unaware of additional details.
* Was of the view that although the sabbatical team worked well together it was sometimes difficult to act cohesively as their flexible hours and large number of committee commitments and meetings meant they often were not in the same office together. This was partly made harder by the fact that some sabbatical officers kept different working hours to the rest – further distancing them from the rest of the team.
* There was some degree of uncertainty about the sabbatical workload each officer was expected to undertake, as currently some officers have a much larger remit than others.
* Getting started in the job was quite difficult as the handover document was not completed by the previous sabbatical officer until three weeks after Ellie started in the position. As such this meant there were considerable limitations on what she was able to do during her first month in the role.
* Last year the SU was apparently considering buying Fever. Ellie is of the opinion that were the SU to own a property like this, establishing boycotts of certain clubs would be a lot easier as the SU would be able to provide an alternative. This would also help to combat the disconnect that exists between students and the SU.

**Respectfully Submitted by,**

**Leon Wheeler**

**Umut Kaan Onen**