

Reports to Council

1st Week Council Hilary 2016

Sabbatical Officers

Becky Howe – President

Hi everyone,

A belated Happy New Year to you all! As it's the start of a new term, I thought it might make sense to do a review of where I am so far with my pledges, as well as briefly mentioning some of the other stuff I've been doing since we last met.

Progress report: MANIFESTO PLEDGES

1. Student support and welfare systems: the Student Welfare Audit

Pledge: *'Investigate the efficacy of the current welfare systems in colleges, and establish best practices'*

- Last term I mentioned the mega-survey I'd been making with Ali (VP Welfare and Equal Opportunities). This is now ready to go, and we will be launching it in **2nd week – it will be open until the end of 7th. Common room welfare reps and presidents, we'll be sending you a briefing letter this week so look out for it!**
- We'll also be running lots of **focus groups** this term – so look out for info on these.
- Once the data is collected, we will, over the Easter vac:
 1. Produce a **report** on the entire audit – comprising of the results of this survey, and the findings from the focus groups
 2. Create a **Welfare Vision** – outlining our resulting campaigning priorities on student welfare for the next five years
 3. Give **individual reports to common rooms**, with a breakdown of their specific results. For the sake of anonymity and representative sample sizes, we will only be able to do this for common rooms with a **50% response rate or higher**.

2. Rent and accommodation

Pledge: *'I will improve the rent negotiations pack'*

- Pretty much done. Every year, OUSU gives common rooms a booklet full of useful information to help with rent negotiations. Danny (Rent and Accommodation Officer) and I have updated this, and the design is totally changed. We will be getting this out to common rooms in the next couple of weeks.
- We're also working on a new booklet, full of comparative information about rent and accommodation between common rooms. This is taking a little longer but will be done in the first half of this term.

Pledge: *'...run negotiation and strategy workshops'*

- The programme is almost set: Nick (VP Grads) and Emily (VP Charities and Community) will be helping with this. We'll be running two sessions: common room reps will be getting emails soon about this.

3. Oxford Students' Festival

Pledge: *'Introduce a weekend-long Oxford University Festival to showcase all clubs, societies, teams, campaigns, and groups who want to participate'*

- The date is set, and applications to get involved are open! On **27th February**, we'll be in Exam Schools – starting with a Clubs and Societies Showcase and the International Festival from 11am – 5pm, and finishing with the Student Awards in the evening.
- **APPLY TO SHOW OFF YOUR CLUB/SOC/CAMPAIGN AT THE CLUBS AND SOCIETIES SHOWCASE OR THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL! OR NOMINATE SOMEONE FOR A STUDENT AWARD! Check out the Festival on our website - <http://ousu.org/get-involved/oxford-students-festival/>**

4. Common room support

Pledge: *'make training sessions...available for (common room) presidents every term, to account for different handover schedules'*

- The Michaelmas Term training day went really well – **100% of participants said they'd recommend it to their successor.**
- This term's training day will be on **Saturday 6th February** – a lot of presidents have already signed up so it's set to be a good day.

5. Lad Culture

Pledge: *'open up discussion on 'Lad Culture' and the impact it has on our university community'*

- OUSU has been selected to be one of nine pilot SUs on a new NUS Lad Culture Audit. We went to a really great strategy day as part of this, and Lucy (VP Women) and I will be working throughout the year on ways to make a tangible difference. As part of this, I've been continuing some of last year's sabb team's work on OUSU's complaints policy and harassment policy.
- This is the pledge I haven't been able to make much progress on yet – it's honestly been a bit on the back-burner with other stuff taking over.

Report of the last few weeks:

- I've been working lots on the Festival, on rent booklet and training, and the student welfare audit.
- We submitted **our response** to the government's **Green Paper** last Friday (15th January). On the same day, I was a panel debate about the Green Paper, hosted by the Department of Education.
- **Maintenance grants: this is a bit of a whirlwind.** In July's emergency budget, the government announced their proposal to abolish undergraduate maintenance grants. Thanks, Gideon. In September, Cat (VP Access and Academic Affairs) and I lobbied Oxford's two MPs to oppose the abolition, and in November, Cat, Lucy (VP Women) and I went to a national demo in London with 40 students from Oxford Uni. Last Thursday, the government thought it would be mega cool and really good democracy to NOT have a debate, but to sneak the abolition through a committee of 18 MPs. Happily, due to NUS and student unions' pressure on the government, a debate in the House of

Commons has been SECURED – 19th January (so yesterday). By the time you read this we will know the outcome – I'll discuss in my verbal report.

- **Have been meeting with new JCR presidents** to talk through priorities and pledges
- I also sit on 25+ committees. These do take a lot of time but usually have some really important discussions. If you'd like to hear more, please do email me.

With love and best wishes, as always,

Becky x

Cat Jones – VP Access and Academic Affairs

Welcome back, hope you all had a great vac :)

Prelims feedback

The campaign for prelims feedback will come to a head at Education Committee in 2nd week. We will be pushing for all students to receive question-level marks rather than just a mark for the overall paper at prelims. We will also be arguing that students should get written feedback on finals papers/projects submitted before final year where the work is directly related to a later paper/project.

Lecture Recording

Lecture recording will also be discussed at Education Committee as part of the University's Digital Education Strategy. I have produced a summary sheet of all of key arguments and counter arguments which will be shared with course reps and divisional board reps to ensure we are applying concerted pressure across the university.

Alternative Prospectus

I am very excited to announce that we will be launching the Alternative Prospectus website [on February 15th](#). This is a new venture for OUSU and we expect it to reach thousands of potential applicants. To raise awareness of the website we are sending flyers to over 3,000 schools with little history of sending students to Oxford. Thanks to the amazing 130 current students who contributed as we aim to show that there is no one type of Oxford student. I hope anyone reading it can picture themselves fitting in somewhere amongst the many course, colleges and activities in there.

SusCam

Our Suspended Status campaign successfully held their first event on Sunday to welcome back students returning from suspension and to connect students who have previously or currently suspended. Attendance was fantastic with 50 people dropping in for tea and cake over the course of the evening. The first meetings of each of their four working groups took place on Tuesday to set goals for this term. The campaign is already generating awareness - earlier this week I was asked to lunch with the chair of Senior Tutors Committee to discuss the campaign and the key problems around suspension.

Visit of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

Ok so not the most gripping sub title but an important one. During the vac we sent off the Student Written Submission which is a document that reflects on the academic experience of Oxford students. It is the result of over a year of work and to be honest we are rather glad to

see the back of it! However, stage two of the QAA's review involves them visiting Oxford and meeting students towards the end of this term. I will need your help in making sure we can provide a mix of student reps and less involved students for their focus group. Please look out for emails from me!

Nick Cooper – VP Graduates

Evening, Council! Back for another term – hope everyone had a great Christmas break. I couldn't wait to get back to work (this is sort of true), especially so I had plenty to write in this report. I have mostly been up to the following:

- **Student Written Submission** – we submitted this on your behalf before Christmas (after a few last-minute formatting issues...) For those of you who aren't aware, the university gets reviewed by an Government agency ever six years – and we write a submission on behalf of students, detailing the good and bad parts of education here. We now await their visit in 8th week, when they'll meet with the university, students and us.
Although the Submission is finished, we will be working to ensure our recommendations are followed through. More on this later in the term.
- **Government consultations** – we submitted responses to the Government's Green Paper on Higher Education, and a review of the *National Student Survey*. You'll find these in the Council papers.
- **University rents** – I'm currently working with the university to set rents for next year's university graduate accommodation. This may take some time. Becky and I have started work on rent negotiation training for Common Room Presidents, to make sure college-based rents also remain as affordable as possible. In general, I have continued to stress the importance of having more graduate accommodation, especially with a view to accommodating all first-year graduate students in the medium-term. The university seem cautiously keen.
- **International Students** – we have opened up applications for stalls at the International Festival in 6th week, which is very exciting. If you are part of an international society, and haven't heard from me about this, please get in touch! (I've emailed all societies who signed up for Freshers Fair). This promises to be a great event, and I'll be working with the International Students' Campaign to ensure it works as well as possible. I also attended the Hilary Orientation for new international students, and gave my presentation on social life in Oxford (ironic given my lack of one).
- **International Students** – I had a very productive meeting with representatives of various areas of the University (Careers, Graduate Admissions, Alumni Relations, International Strategy etc.) about how to engage international students and to ensure their experience at the University is equivalent to UK students. I'm going to be taking thoughts back to the International Students Campaign, who are in full swing now under the new committee who are awesome. More to follow in Hilary, including our International Festival in 6th week.
- **Committees** – Always plenty of these. Have acquired the new General Oxford Wireless Network Project Board (GOWN PB, for short), discussing how to improve WiFi in Oxford. Any WiFi horror stories, let me know.

We also met the new Vice Chancellor, who seems very keen to improve the student experience – and to work on lobbying the Government to remove some of the restrictions that make coming to the UK to study so difficult. We had a lovely lunch (further details, including of the sandwiches, available upon request).

- **College Advisors** – I've sent out a survey to all graduate students to ask about provisions in college, including College Advisors. Over 500 of you have replied (and >1000 undergraduates), which is GREAT. The more, the better – this allows me to lobby the colleges to improve the system.
- **OUSU internal stuff** – worked on reviewing various parts of what we do, including elections, our Executive, our governing documents and some other stuff. Happy to talk about it if you're interested... which you aren't.
- **Various other things** – including sitting on the Teaching and Learning Panel for a review of the Maths Institute (which is generally in very good condition), and our Christmas party.

Manifesto pledges – it's useful to look back at what I said I would do in the role, and how far these pledges have got. (/what I have left to do...):

- Assess Masters satisfaction with focus groups and a survey – happening later this term! If you're doing a taught Masters course, watch this space.
- Lobby divisions for minimum expectations for supervision – again, this term. I'm also helping the university to review GSS, the Graduate Supervision System – which will hopefully improve monitoring.
- Assess graduate student wellbeing to improve welfare – my review of College Advisors will hopefully highlight problems in the split between colleges and departments with respect to welfare. However, instead of a separate survey, I will be using data from Becky (President) and Ali's (VP Welfare & Equal Opportunities) survey.
- Lobby for low rent and more accommodation – see my earlier point. Doing my best is all I shall say...
- More teaching opportunities for graduate students – I've stressed this at many committees, and in departmental reviews. However, there's always more to do – and I'll be trying to work on this later in the term/into Trinity.

Always very keen to talk to real graduate, international and mature students – please shoot me an email if you want anything doing. I've had some very useful communication recently about graduate suspension of status and continuation charges – both of which have got me working on new things, so your emails do help! Enjoy the start of term!

Nick

Emily Silcock – VP Charities and Community

Hi Council,

I hope you've had a lovely vac. I'm going to start off with my manifesto promises so you can see the progress I've made on those and then I'll tell you about what else I've been up to.

Persuading the uni to employ people who have been homeless.	Several charities are forming a social enterprise recruitment agency – they are waiting on a big grant, so I'm waiting to see how this pans out first.
Careers service	They would not run a third sector careers fair (for good reason). I'm now working with them to teach students skills in campaigning and on getting trustee positions on career connect.
Blood donation	Yoni, my wonderful PTE is doing this
Bike lights and helmets	Lights already done. Uni Security Services are looking into helmets. Looking to set up a cycle club.
Workshops for campaigns	First workshop of Campaigning for Change, my 8-week campaigning training was on Monday. We've had 41 sign ups and workshops by Oxfam, Amnesty and People & Planet.
Double MCR charity reps	Have found out which ones currently have one and now asking ones without if they'd like to set one up.
Support Common Room fundraising	Employed two micro-interns during the vac to produce a guide for Common Room fundraising. They got charity sector experience and the guide is now being formatted by our design team.
Evaluate and restructure Community Wardens	Carried out an evaluation during the summer and restructured, including employing a senior warden. This has led to a big increase in the number of hours they are actually working and the size of the projects they are doing.
Community guide to getting students involved in your cause	This is one of my projects for this term.

Other things that I've been up to since last council:

- Christmas friends - matched 20 students up with local families for Christmas day. They ranked this 9.44/10 on average and 100% of hosts and participants said they would recommend it to a friend.
- Clear Outs – organised for the collection of leftover food and other items to be delivered to the Community Emergency Foodbank and the British Heart Foundation
- E&E Rep Dinner – organised dinner for all the Environment reps on Thursday
- Environment Forum – organised a forum for student environmental campaigners to come together to talk about their projects this term.
- Community Wardens – trained new Community Wardens. They'll be out doorknocking this week.

Ali Lennon – VP Welfare and Equal Opportunities

Dear Council,

Over the vacation I've been working on a number of projects for launch in Hilary and Trinity. I've also decided that this term I will be giving more of my time and efforts to the campaigns. I will be altering my working hours so that I can attend as many of their meetings as possible and provide more hands on support.

A quick list of some of what I've been doing recently can be found below.

- Welfare Officer training – is being ran in 3rd week this term with the University Counselling Service and the Student Advice Service.
- Problem Landlords Guide – I've got permission from Shelter to reproduce some of their material and am looking to have the guide published by Trinity.
- Presidents Training – I've been helping the President with this and will be doing a section on dealing with conflict.
- PTE Training – with the VP Women I've been helping organise and write a PTE training course for our newly elected officers.
- Harm Reduction Advice – I've had the first of several harm reduction advice leaflets created and have sent it off to the charities involved for approval prior to distribution.
- Welfare Survey – the president and I have been working hard on the welfare survey and you'll be seeing it very soon get excited. There will be some fantastic inter-collegiate competitions and the opportunity to win some great prizes and help our lobbying efforts.
- Terrence Higgins Trust – I've been organising a working group to oppose the county council cuts to vital HIV prevention and support services.
- Writing a submission for the review of the Proctors and Assessors Office
- Reading through two years worth of Office of the Independent Adjudicator case files to see how the University of Oxford handles complaints and difficult situations.
- My usual university committee work.
- Odd jobs for PTE, CR Presidents, the Student Advice Service and others.

I also wanted to use this as an opportunity for council to recognise the recent great work of Marco, co-chair of Mind Your Head.

Any questions feel free to drop by or drop me an email.

Best Wishes,

Ali

Lucy Delaney – VP Women

Hello everyone,

- I have put together motions to be sent to the NUS Women's Conference in April covering issues affecting women students in Oxford and in wider society and am in the process of arranging the selection of delegates.

- I have organised more First Responder Training sessions for Women's Officers and Welfare Officers or any elected officer with a welfare remit
- I am looking into working with the LGBTQ Campaign on developing Queer Consent Workshops
- I have been working with the VP for Welfare and Equal Opportunities on training for PTE on lobbying, and transferable and skills-based training on liberation issues.
- WomCam have arranged a fantastic series of events on state violence against women this term and It Happens Here have also got a great series of events lined up.

Part-Time Executive Officers

Tom Wadsworth – Academic Affairs Campaign Officer

First council as AcAff PTE YAY! So far I have been waiting for the handover document and meeting Cat to decide what I should focus on this term and goal that are feasible to achieve. I have also been to the divisional board reps meeting at OUSU where a number of topics were talked about and action plans chosen. As for what I have decided to focus, helping out with SusCam and pushing further to get lectures recorded will probably be my main topics in this position. I will also continue to work closely with OSDC, MYH, and the other groups I am involved in to take into account any academic related questions and concerns they have.

Catherine Kelly – LGBTQ Officer

This week I've mainly been organising events for Hilary and for LGBTQ History Month in February. I got in contact with Queer Strike about an event for third week around LGBTQ asylum seekers in the UK. The LGBTQ Campaign is also putting together a zine to mark History month which is currently looking for submissions, and we have some other events planned that I'm optimistic about. The first LGBTQ Campaign meeting of term is a friendly badges and banner-making event this week, and next week we'll be having an open meeting and electing some new committee positions.

I've also been working on a template for an LGBTQ 101 workshop, and I'll continue with that and hopefully get a lot of different perspectives on it over this term.

The last thing I've been up to this week is organising meet-ups for college reps. I'm planning to hold two meet-ups this term, one in second week and one in seventh week.

Gabe Rusk – Graduate International Students' Officer

Hi Council,

I am delighted to take on the position of Graduate International Students Officer. In my first report I would like to highlight a few brief short term and long term goals I hope to explore in my tenure with OUSU. This week I met with the VP of Graduates Nick Cooper as well as the former Graduate International Students Officer Lauren McKarus. I am in their debt for their

advice, support, and for Lauren's fantastic initiative in her previous role with OUSU. I hope to continue with those efforts and execute said programs already in progress.

Short Term:

- I am delighted to confirm that the **International Drinks Event** remains on the books for the evening of February 4th. More details will come this week but reserve the slot in your diaries and many thanks to Green Templeton College for their support and co-sponsorship of this event.
- As a former president of my debate union in undergrad I strongly believe in open communication between representatives and students. In light of this I created an **office hours** policy where any student can meet with me in person regardless if they coordinated before hand. Office Hours will be from 2:00-4:00pm every Thursday in the Weston Library Café. This being said, any student can coordinate with me independently as well.
- I hope to work on creating some **diagnostic survey** to identify what graduate international students need in terms of change, assistance, and resources. From this I hope to triage these concerns and make tangible steps to resolve them where able.

Long Term:

- My long-term goals for my tenure will focus on **international student representation in college and PPH MCR's**. Only a handful of graduate international student officers exist within the university. First, I hope to survey interest amongst colleges and PPH's in creating these respective positions. Second, where interest is lacking I will explore advocacy and lobbying efforts to generate interest. Third, most importantly I will explore steps to coordinating current and new graduate international student reps. Given the size of the graduate international student pool there are a myriad of persuasive reasons to why more localized representation can be incredibly necessary, effective, and resourceful.

Gabe Rusk

Hilal Yazan – BME Students Officer

This week, I met with Ali to discuss Prevent and we're working to gather more information on how exactly it will impact on students. I also attended the first WEO officer meeting, which went well. Finally, I met with Farheen, CRAE Co-Chair to discuss many issues regarding race, such as organising a BME students meetup and campaigning for more Tutors for Race as well as compiling a guide on cultural appropriation.

Rebecca Kuperberg – Graduate Welfare Officer

Hi OUSU Council!

I have spent the last week getting my bearings for the upcoming term. I plan to continue the work that Rita has done for the last three terms, including holding a Grad WelfareCom this term. In addition, I would like to work on the promotion of trainings and workshops for MCR Welfare Officers. I have a few other ideas that will hopefully be implemented this term and next. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with any questions or ideas of your own (email:

gradwelfare@ousu.ox.ac.uk)!

All the best,
Rebecca

Adam Kellett – Access and Admissions Officer

Firstly, I'd like to thank Henna for talking to me about her role before my election, and for the help she's given me in working out what's going on. I've met with ACS to discuss the logistics of a BME-specific shadowing day this term and, based on a discussion with CRAE last term, gave an open invitation for a member of ACS to appear at Target Schools workshops (the committee is, as it happens, mainly white and so this felt like a good way to include a different, beneficial perspective in workshops). I'll have met with the new Target Schools Committee by the time of OUSU Council: while Henna would have chaired Steering Groups as an independent observer of Target Schools, my joint role means that Cat Jones has offered to chair these meetings when available. If not, Eden Bailey (next year's AcAff) has agreed to chair.

Luke Cave – Common Room Support Officer

Hi council, I'm Luke, the new CRSO for this year. My plans for the beginning of term are to set up fortnightly meetings with the OUSU reps, and to begin putting together a junior common rooms survey after second week presidents committee, based on what the common room presidents will find useful (a grad common rooms survey took place last term). If you want to talk about how OUSU can help your common room in the meantime, please get in touch.

Yoni Stone – Community Outreach and Charities Officer

Hi council, over the vac I have recruited a more expansive team of reps, in the hope that we can reach out to more MCRs/JCRs with Pint for a Pint. I continue my battle with Barclays.

Meera Sachdeva – International Students' Officer

My goals, as International Students' Officer, for the next few weeks are split into three main initiatives.

- 1. Developing a relationship with individual colleges' international reps**
 - a. Set up a meeting with the international reps of each college to introduce myself, discuss my agenda for this year and how they can help (as well as if they want to add to it), and answer any questions/deal with any issues they have.
 - b. Improve the international students' rep database set up by the previous ISO to include more colleges and ensure reps can update it themselves.
 - c. Ensure we have the email addresses of as many international students as possible by advertising signing up for the mailing list

- 2. Assisting the International Students Campaign and OUSU with the International Festival**

- a. Ensure we have enough signups by cultural societies and inform them of the next steps
- b. Discuss how we can help publicize the festival and ensure it runs smoothly
- c. Discuss the possibility of holding an event for international students after the international festival (on the same day)

3. Start planning the initiative to hold international freshers' events prior to fresher's week

Katy Haigh – Health and Welfare Officer

Hi Council,

Ali arranged a great meeting in 0th week with all of his PTE's in order that we could get to know each other and discuss our plans for Hilary Term. In this meeting I decided my primary aim for this term will be to update the Time For Representation handbook, then have it printed and distributed to all common rooms in order to encourage members to lobby and run for liberation and welfare positions.

I have also met with two students who are currently setting up a website which will include a variety of information about sex and relationships at University. I have offered to liaise with them on this project and provide them with any support and information available from OUSU. This will be an ongoing project I will be involved with throughout the term.

I also helped out with the SusCam welcome event by booking a room in St John's and helping with set up: I'm really keen to get more involved with SusCam's work and it was great to speak to their committee at this event to find out how I can help support their campaign in my role at OUSU.

Fairlie Kirkpatrick Baird – Environment and Ethics Officer

Hi Council!

Over the vac, I worked on a report on VeggiePledge, reflecting on what happened, what was successful, what was less successful, and the feedback I got from several surveys I sent out at the end of the month. This allowed me to think more broadly about the campaign and how I can improve it next November, as well as what people in Oxford got out of it and how to expand that positive impact to more people. It will also hopefully be helpful for me (or whoever is E&E officer in November) when running the next VeggiePledge, and any others in future years. I have also begun planning a Guide to Being a Sustainable Student, which I hope to do as a collaboration with the Oxford Hub. I generated a basic outline of some ideas for content and how to go about creating a committee to work on it, as well as a timeline of hopeful deadlines. This term my goal is to begin creating this guide, as well as working with a variety of groups to continue campaigning on improved vegetarian and vegan meals in hall.