



Ideas to improve your Union, University and City

Better University Agenda 21/05/24, 5:30pm-7:30pm, Nathan Boddington Council Chambers, Level 1 Parkinson Building

1. The discussion of each Idea in turn:
 - a. The Student who submitted the Idea (or a nominated spokesperson) to explain the current problem, what they want and why.
 - b. Clarifications, questions, comments and change proposals from Forum attendees
 - c. Secret ballot of the Student Panel
 2. An Accountability session from at least two Student Executive Officers detailing progress with regard to implementation of Policy, questions on their current projects and questions from Forum attendees and UoL members.
 3. Announcement of Student Panel Verdict(s).
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Name: Ella Williams and Bethan Corner

Your idea: Should the University of Leeds formally recognise extra and co-curricular activities?

What is the current problem, and how does it affect students?

Currently there is no formal recognition for students who engage in extracurricular activities during their time at Leeds. This suggests that the university does not prioritise or understand the value in these activities as much as they do academic success. However, students are continuously told that they need to engage in activities that will build skills outside their academics in order to boost their CV.

What is your proposed change? How will it benefit students?

The idea of this project stems from a national campaign (HEAR) in which school representatives would be recognised for their time with an additional piece of paper that clearly set out what they achieved. It both encouraged students to get involved whilst also provided key development opportunities for students. The scheme shows that students are more than their academic achievements. For one reason or another, amongst COVID, Leeds is no longer part of this national campaign. HEAR also previously only recognised academic representatives.

This project is hugely important to recognise the importance of what our students engage in outside the classroom whilst studying at Leeds. The proposal is that students who have given their time to our student voice and leadership opportunities will receive another certificate and/or piece of paper when they graduate to acknowledge all their work. I feel this scheme would really show that Leeds University creates all rounded students. Even if



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students aren't the best academics in their degree they may have created and run a brand-new society which improved hundreds of student's time at Leeds. This scheme shows exactly how much we help students to love their time at Leeds.

We know that the university and LUU hugely value the work done by all our reps. It would be valuable to have this project as a collaborative one to show the partnership in action whilst also showing that their time was appreciated by all around.

The objective of this scheme is to enable students to have physical proof that they have engaged and developed varied skills. They will be written with key guidance of which transferable skills they have gained and recognised from the experience. It will show students exactly what to include in their job applications, showing them how to talk about their experiences away from academics.

Positions to be recognised: Exec committee members (President, Treasurer and Secretary), school representatives, faculty officers, sustainability representatives, welfare representatives, activities executive, liberation and international student network (LISN) and incoming Student Executive.

Awards to be recognised: Partnership awards, Halls awards, Colours, The Riley Awards and Volunteering awards, and Better forum idea holders

This is a project I am hugely passionate about and strongly believe needs to continue once I leave my role. The university is open to this as a project but needs an exec member to push it forward.

Name: Lizzie Sneller

Your Idea: Should the University of Leeds offer more practical discovery modules?

What is the current problem, and how does it affect students?

Something which really drew me to the University of Leeds was the opportunity to take discovery modules at any point in my education here. I thought this was such a great idea to give students the chance to expand their skills and take a module in something completely unrelated to their course. I was then disappointed in my first year to see that there were no practical discovery modules offered to the expanded student body and that they were all theoretical modules, which I knew wouldn't benefit me.

From my year in Industry, I have learnt that employers want to hire people who have a wide breadth of skills to which they can contribute. There have been several occasions where I have unexpectedly used my Photoshop skills within my admin-dominant role. This has helped my team and made me a valuable asset. Employers want students to be



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well-rounded employees who step beyond their course and learn skills out of curiosity so that they can step in and help beyond their job description.

Only offering your students theoretical subjects as discovery modules and does not offer practical options, which stops students such as myself from learning about other practical skills, such as Graphic or Product design. This impacts students wanting to go into creative roles and subjects such as STEM, where these skills would greatly benefit. Therefore, these practical skills should be available to everyone. I know you can attain these skills outside of your course and choose modules, but I believe this should be offered for Credits and embedded into the University system to encourage it further. I want to broaden my skills within the university, and I think many others will, too.

What is your proposed change? How will it benefit students?

To add modules to the Discovery catalogue to allow students to learn about Film Photography, filmmaking, Graphic Design, Art & Design, Screen Printing, Product Design etc, outside of their chosen subject. We can facilitate this through the new Helix Centre, which should be a part of the curriculum redefined initiative.

Have you considered the impact of the proposed change for [traditionally underrepresented student groups](#)?

As I propose that this idea be available to all students, I don't see how anyone would be excluded from these opportunities. All should have this opportunity to study practical skills, and we should look at how all disabilities can access this teaching. These skills are useful in all areas of adult life and employability making it important to embed this into the Curriculum for the whole University.

Name: Hannah Catterall

Your idea: Should the UoL's Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service work in partnership with students to improve the quality, capacity, and communications of their service?

What is the current problem, and how does it affect students?

The University's Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service (SCWS) supports hundreds of Leeds students every term. The term is very well-valued by staff and students alike, but it has consistent shortcomings which creates barriers to some students accessing support.



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To gain insight on students' experiences with the service, I released a short survey asking students to share their experiences of accessing the Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service. The main issues that came to the forefront of the responses was often inadequate quality, capacity, and communications to advertise the service to students.

Quality:

One student commented on the quality of the service, and how they think students would benefit from their counsellor taking a more varied approach:

'I feel like it would be useful for counsellors to try and work out the learning/emotional style of students through just chatting to them first in a constructive way...some students appreciate the educational tool/learning, some students need to understand their emotions or situations on a more practical note, and some students just need a chat and to feel heard'

The same student stated:

'I don't think it was her fault but we brought up some trauma & then I was given zero coping skills/techniques to deal with that, and kind of left alone. I quit the next day because it left me worse than when I started...I haven't had therapy since'

Capacity:

Students are not aware that they can ask for additional support if they need it.

One student expressed how the service was inflexible to their university schedule, and how booking their initial appointment was stressful for them.

'...I found booking a session stressful because I had to fit it round my lectures and they said I should stop booking sessions then and that I should be alright. They were nice about it but I felt like I was put aside and that there wasn't anything they could do for me. I generally struggle to ask for help so it was hard for me to book a session and explain what I was going through and to be turned away didn't help that.'

Students also expressed that the initial referral form was emotionally difficult for them to complete:

'I found the initial referral form very daunting and a bit unnerving to share my personal issues that I struggle to talk about. Once they checked the form I received an invite to book a session. This was easy to do, but there was not a lot of immediate availability (2 weeks plus). I understand that the service has lots of pressure on it, but when you have put yourself out there (to say you need help) it's quite difficult and anxious to have to wait another 2 weeks.'

Students also expressed that whilst they benefited from the



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'...i was later denied sessions because i maxxed out. later in the year i took a module that had some distressing content and i wasn't able to access any counselling'

Communications:

- students often report that they need more than 4/5 appointments, and more in depth ongoing support from the service
- the university should work to increase the visibility of the service in their central comms and social media platforms
- the service should incorporate student feedback into the changes they introduce, and work to co-create with students

What is your proposed change? How will it benefit students?

My suggestion is that the service prioritise incorporating student feedback into their reform, and work collaboratively with students to create change. Ultimately, the service is very well-used and an invaluable resource to students, but more can be done to ensure it can support even more students effectively.

If passed, I want this policy to set a precedent for other Student Support services across the country.