



<b>7.3</b>	<b>Report of ARCC - RESERVED</b> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <i>All other items on UCA</i>	<i>KCC-21-07-14-07.3</i>	Chair ARCC
<b>7.4</b>	<b>Report of the Academic Board</b> (i) Online Professional Education (to note) (ii) Community Charter (to note) (iii) Cultural Competency (to note) <i>All other items on UCA</i>	<i>KCC-21-07-14-07.4</i> <i>Annex 1</i> <i>Annex 2</i> <i>Annex 3</i>	Chair AB
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Report of the Remuneration Committee - RESERVED</b> <i>All on the UCA (to note)</i>	<i>KCC-21-07-14-07.5</i>	Chair RemCom
<b>8</b>	<b>Report of the KCLSU</b> Report of KCLSU President (to discuss)	<i>KCC-21-07-14-08</i>	KCLSU President
<b>9</b>	<b>Any other business</b>		

Irene Birrell  
College Secretary  
July 2021

## Unanimous Consent Agenda

A consent agenda is a tool often used by organizations to deal expeditiously with routine matters and reports, leaving more time for more strategic discussions. The items on a consent agenda are expected to be non-controversial and unlikely to engender questions. The items on the consent agenda, whether for approval or information, are dealt with by a single motion to accept/receive for information all items contained in the consent agenda. Before taking the vote, however, the Chair will ask whether any member wishes to have any item removed from consent in order to ask a question or make a comment about it. In such a case, the item is automatically removed from the consent agenda and will be dealt with at the end of the meeting or within the report of the Committee under which it sits. The remaining items are then unanimously approved/received for information en bloc without discussion.

While approval of an omnibus motion saves time at meetings, members will want to review the consent agenda materials carefully in order that they properly discharge their responsibilities. Members may ask to have an item removed from the consent agenda by so informing the Secretary or Chair at any time up until the motion is put.

**Recommended:** That the Council approve or note for information the items contained in the Unanimous Agenda, listed below.

Item	Title	Paper	Action
3.2	Minutes of 26 May Council meeting 2021	KCC-21-07-14-03.2	Approve
3.3	Actions Log	KCC-21-07-14-03.3	Note
7.1	Report of the Governance & Nominations Committee	KCC-21-07-14-07.1	
	(iv) Meeting Cycle 2022-2023	Annex 3	Approve
	(v) Amendments to Terms of Reference	Annex 4	Approve
	(vi) Appointments		Approve
	(vii) Annual Council Review Process		Note
	(viii) September Away Day Outline		Note
7.2	Report of the Finance Committee	KCC-21-07-14-07.2	All to note
	(iv) Health Budget Progress		
	(v) Financial Statement Accounting Issues 2020-2021		
	(vi) Quad Engineering Update		
	(vii) Debt Repayment Fund Proposal		
	(viii) SAUL Pension Valuation		
	(ix) Pensions Consultation Update		
	(x) Stamford Street Settlement of Lloyd's Lease update		
	(xi) Debt Issue Update		
	(xii) Ethical Investment Policy		
	(xiii) Member Appointments		
7.3	Report of the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee	KCC-21-07-14-07.3	All to note
	(iv) External Audit Strategy		
	(v) Internal Audit Update		
	(vi) Risk presentations and discussions	Annex 3 & 4	
7.4	Report of the Academic Board	KCC-21-07-14-07.4	All to note
	(iv) Academic Board Terms of Reference and Composition		

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- (v) Responding to issues raised at KCSLU Town Halls – update
  - (vi) Student Terms & Conditions 2002-2023
  - (vii) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
  - (viii) Academic Board elections results
  - (ix) Academic Board sub-Committee reports
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See published minutes from the previous meeting [here](#)

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## Actions Log

### Action required

- ☐ For approval
- ☐ For discussion
- ☒ To note

### Executive summary

Council is asked to note the action taken following discussions at previous meetings.

## Actions Log

Meeting	Minute	Topic	Decision for Action	Notes	Owner	Original deadline	Progress
<i>May 2021 Council Meeting</i>							
26/05/21	10	AOB: Climate Risk	Future in-depth discussion of ESC/Climate Change/Climate Risk (noting the importance of the issue next time there was a Council membership vacancy to fill, and noting that the Russell group have a sustainability group working collaboratively in the sector)	Possibly for September Away Day	College Secretary		In progress
<i>March 2021 Council Meeting</i>							
31/03/21	4	Strategic Planning & Priorities	Council members to receive a briefing on the various ranking systems	Briefing held on 6 May	College Secretary		Complete
31/03/21	4	Strategic Planning & Priorities	Series of Council breakfast briefings to be scheduled. Potential topics: climate change and planetary health, climate justice, emerging and disruptive technologies, data science, mental health and economic inequality.	In progress	College Secretary	By July meeting	In progress
31/03/21	6.2	Balanced scorecard update	Chair of ARCC and Interim Principal to decide if the Council's version of the Principal's report should also include an annex on risk and risk management (as the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee did)	In progress	Chair, ARCC & Interim Principal	May meeting	In progress
31/03/21	8.1	KCLSU President report	KCLSU termly Town Hall dates to be forwarded to Council Members for information	Dates to be finalised in July with the new	KCLSU President		In progress

				KCLSU sabbatical officers			
31/03/21	7.1 (ii)	Debt-raising	A more detailed paper including repayment options would be considered by the Finance Committee and reported back to Council.		VP Finance/Chair FC		In progress
31/03/21	7.1 (iii)	Financial Outlook and Risks	The Finance Committee to receive a report on the Research Deficit Plan, which it would then report to Council		VP Finance/Chair FC		In progress
31/03/21							
November 2020 Council Meeting							
21/01/21	6.5	Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement 2019-2020	The Vice President (Education) volunteered to investigate what could be done to strengthen the statement and would review what the suppliers/consortia do in terms of training and due diligence. It was noted that Council's Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee reviewed a report on procurement on an annual basis and would seek this assurance as part of that discussion.	TBC For ARCC when it views the annual procurement report	VP (Education)		In progress
21/01/21							



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<i>July 2020 Council Meeting</i>							
15.07.20	6.1	Principal's report	NSS – Noted that there would be a further fundraising report on NSS areas	Updated NSS report (and an updated Fundraising report on NSS areas)	Fundraising	2021	In progress
<i>January 2020 Council Meeting</i>							
30.01.20	06.1	Champion Hill	Detailed investigation to be overseen by the Chairs of ARCC and ESC	ARCC and ESC Chairs to monitor the investigative process	College Secretary	Ongoing	In progress
30.01.20	06.3	OfS – Access & Participation	Briefing on the nature of the requirements for reporting purposes to be scheduled for Council members	Schedule a briefing	College Secretary	January 2021	In progress – OfS is amending its timelines and requirements
<i>September 2019 Council Meeting</i>							
25.09.19	5.2	Update on College Statutes	Proposed Statute amendment as approved by Council to be submitted to the Privy Council for final approval	Waiting for approval from the DfE	College Secretary	Ongoing	In progress – waiting for DfE approval to move forward – update in GNC report
25.09.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>████</li> <li>████</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>██████</li> <li>██████</li> <li>██████</li> <li>██████</li> <li>██████</li> <li>██████</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>██</li> <li>██</li> <li>██</li> <li>██</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>██████████</li> <li>██████████</li> <li>██████████</li> <li>██████████</li> <li>████</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>██████████</li> <li>██████████</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>██████████</li> </ul>

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**King's College Council**

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**Meeting date** 14 July 2021

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**Paper reference** KCC-21-07-14-05

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**Status** Final

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## Report on Chair's Action – Pension Consultation

### *Action required*

- ☐ For approval  
☐ For discussion  
☒ To note

### Executive Summary

The Chair of Council was asked to approve King's submission to a UUK "mini-consultation" under Chair's Action. With a tight deadline for submission, it was not possible to call either a special meeting of Council or a meeting of the Chairs' Committee. The proposed submission was also discussed with Chair of the Finance Committee. Please see **Annex 1** for a summary of the approved request.

# USSEmployers

## RESPONSE FORM

### THE USS 2020 VALUATION

A short consultation by Universities UK on potential modifications to the indicative outcome to the 2020 valuation

**Closing date: 5 July 2021**

## MAKING YOUR RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

Responses should be provided on behalf of the employer, and the involvement of governing body and/or leadership body is encouraged.

**Please send the response from your institution to [pensions@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:pensions@universitiesuk.ac.uk) by Monday 5 July 2021**

Of the two options below (Option A or Option B), which would be your preference? Please mark 'X' in the relevant box.

☒

**OPTION A PREFERENCE**

Accept the USS Trustee's counter proposal and provide backing for the modified outcome (including the 10% threshold for pari-passu security, and no gap between the ending of the current short-term moratorium and the commencement of the rolling 20-year moratorium) and continue discussions with the USS Trustee to find a way that the 0.5% difference can be bridged in a way which might be acceptable.

Over the weeks ahead we would engage further with the USS Trustee, employers and UCU on the options to address the additional 0.5% in contributions. This could for example involve further adjustments to the USS Trustee's assumptions, adjustments to the proposed benefits package, accept higher contributions or changes to the plan for implementation. Given the need for further exploration, it is too early to specify the particular approach at this stage.

**OPTION B PREFERENCE**

☐

Oppose the counter proposal from the USS Trustee as the covenant support package proposed (see letter from USS Trustee dated 3 June 2021) is not acceptable, and prepare alternative approaches.

If option B is your preference, this will involve consideration of the options set out in section 3(B) above, or paying the required additional contributions of c4% (split 65% employer and 35% employee).

We would be grateful if you would set out your preferred feasible alternative that could commend majority employer support and acceptance by the USS Trustee. Please do this in box 1 below:

1. If option B is preferred, please set out any feasible alternative that could commend majority employer support and acceptance by the USS Trustee.

2. Please write any other comments in the box below.

We could accept the threshold for pari-passu security at 10% but this would have some implications for asset backed finance which would limit our future operations. We are willing to accept this constraint in the interest of finding a compromise that delivers an affordable pension for our staff

**PLEASE CONFIRM IF YOUR ORGANISATION'S GOVERNING BODY HAS BEEN CONSULTED:**

Yes

Discussion with Finance Committee 23 June 2021. Endorsement by Council via Chair's Action, 5 July 2021

**RESPONSE SUBMITTED BY:**

**NAME:**

Annie Kent

**POSITION:**

VP Finance  
and CFO

**ON BEHALF OF:**

**INSTITUTION:** King's College London

**Chair:** The Rt Hon the Lord Geidt

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**Please send your completed form to: [pensions@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:pensions@universitiesuk.ac.uk) by Monday 5 July 2021**

**Thank you for taking the time to respond to this consultation.**

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# USSEmployers

Website: [www.ussemployers.org.uk](http://www.ussemployers.org.uk)

Email: [pensions@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:pensions@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

Twitter: [@USSEmployers](https://twitter.com/USSEmployers)

## USS Pensions update

### Update on valuation 2020

This report updates on the latest developments around the USS Pension Valuation, March 2020. There have been a number of consultations this year related to this valuation which we have considered with Council: methodology, covenant support, pari-passu and debt monitoring, and technical provisions which suggested some high indicative pricing.

Following the final pricing from USS in May 2021, UUK engaged in a broad consultation around

- a) pricing and appetite for pricing,
- b) covenant measures and longer-term commitment,
- c) interest in further review of scheme accessibility, affordability and flexibility and
- d) UUK's alternative proposal to maintain pensions costs at the current level (30.7%) for staff and employers.

The USS final pricing for current benefits reflected costs at 42%-56% with significant increases for staff and employers, the range reflecting the different scenarios of covenant support. Details are attached at Appendix A. Even with the strongest of covenant support measures, those requested by USS, the increase to 42.1% would mean pension increases to staff of 3.9% and for employers of 7.5%. For Kings the annual cost impact was assessed as £20m-£30m, lower values assuming some costs would be recovered through research grants.

In our response we were clear these costs were not affordable, but we would give covenant measures recognising the constraints on operations and our issues with two metrics (C and D) that were surplus dependent - as our cash from operations surplus is not at the £80m needed annually to meet these metrics. We also responded that we wanted to see accessibility/affordability provisions to reduce opt out and we would want to see an extensive governance review of USS. We also indicated we would be willing to explore conditional indexation as a future option. In developing our response, we consulted with staff, with a 7% response rate (416), and worked with the Russell Group to develop some agreed principles to secure a greater consensus. We also made clear our disappointment that USS had not been able to move closer to the sector despite investment and effort in the form of the Joint Expert Panel, however, the Regulator has assessed that the valuation represents the limits of prudence acceptable.

UUK received a strong response to their consultation with majority – 95% active employers in the scheme with majority consensus for the UUK Alternative Proposal for benefit reform within current pricing (30.7%). With this they believe they have a mandate to progress further work on the alternative proposal. USS has priced the UUK alternative proposal at 31.2%, 0.5% higher than UUK but with two issues of counter-offer: adjustments to principles we have already agreed, which is now subject to further short consultation, deadline 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021. They want:

- a) the de minimis on pari-passu to be 10% as originally requested and not 15% as suggested in the UUK consultation; and
- b) no gap between the current short-term moratorium on exit without permission and the 20-year rolling commitment on which UUK consulted.

Whilst King's tends to raise its funds through bond markets there may be some current asset related projects that could be caught in pari-passu by this threshold in the future. This might include using an existing accommodation asset for investment/income strip, activities dealing with some of our derelict estate, Surrey Street, Newcomen Street etc. Our assessment is that we have headroom of



about £140m (metric E) but would argue case by case that these improve our asset base, growth in income and returns towards surplus measures and strengthening covenant. **We are recommending that we confirm the counter proposal by Chair's action; the deadline for which is 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021.**

### UUK Alternative proposal

The current scheme has been a hybrid scheme since 2016. The UUK alternative proposal reduces some of these benefits whilst maintaining a strong DB element:

- a) the threshold for DB reducing from c £60,000 to £40,000;
- b) the accrual rate reducing from 1/75<sup>th</sup> to 1/85<sup>th</sup> of salary (continuing with 3x lump sum)
- c) indexation reducing from CPI or 5% to CPI or 2.5% (statutory norm); and
- d) DC above the threshold to remain at 20% salary.

UUK has estimated the cost at 30.7%; USS has priced this at 31.2%, 0.5% above UUK's estimates.

The JNC has started its deliberations. UUK spoke to BUFDG (British Universities Finance Directors Group) on 30<sup>th</sup> June and noted the importance of keeping employers together. We have a small window of opportunity and any movement away from consensus at this time could delay the process considerably, put us in flux and potentially split employers at a critical time when direction is needed. This includes consensus around the mini consultation. This could impact the potential to limit the October increase, which is going to be difficult anyway, and could very likely lead us to substantial increases in line with USS pricing for current benefits of 42-56% previously noted, given timing constraints and USS statutory timescales for completion of the valuation. The end of August is a critical date for the JNC to confirm the position and all believe this will need to be decided by the JNC chair's casting vote.

### USS Counter proposal

The counter proposal requires us to meet the USS determined covenant measures (the mini consultation takes us there if we can all agree their counter proposal). The alternative would be the mid-range cost at 49.6% with the UUK proposed covenant measures, and 56.2% if we further fall back to the current nil covenant position. The position is precarious to say the least. To facilitate this, we have recommended we agree the amendments and we note above the constraints.

USS has written to UUK to explain that the 0.5% increase is the limit of what they can do and they note that the proposal provides a strong basis for future viability. We know the Regulator is on the cusp of calling this in and it is worth acknowledging the views of the Pensions Regulator, and that in paragraph 11 of its 11 June 2021 [letter](#) the Regulator says: *This means that, although we would not be comfortable with total contributions of 31.2% of salaries (calculated using UUK's proposals for valuation assumptions and recovery plan structure), we would probably see this as a marginal situation which would not trigger further action on our part.*

We are not being consulted on how the 0.5% cost would be borne and we need to consider this along with other employers. The options would be – a) wholly by employers, b) shared in current proportions by staff and employers, or c) be resolved through additional benefit reform.

SLT would recommend b) as this reflects the current rules.

Annie Kent  
CFO, 2 July 2021

Appendix A: USS pricing

**The USS scheme faces two challenges: increase in cost of future service, and deficit recovery**

	2018 valuation conclusion		USS pricing March 2021		
	Current	October 2021	Scenario 1 No improved measures	Scenario 2 UUK covenant measures 6 year rolling commitment	Scenario 3 USS covenant measures 12 year rolling commitment
Deficit	£3.6bn	£3.6bn	£17.9bn	£16.1bn	£14.9bn
Covenant	Strong	Strong	Tending to Strong	Tending to Strong	Strong
Employer contribution	<b>21.1%</b>	<b>23.7%</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>	<b>28.6%</b>
Increase on current		2.6%	16.9%	12.5%	7.5%
Member contribution	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>16.0%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>
Increase on current		1.4%	8.6%	6.4%	3.9%
<b>Total contribution</b>	<b>30.7%</b>	<b>34.7%</b>	<b>56.2%</b>	<b>49.6%</b>	<b>42.1%</b>
Future service	28.7%	28.7%	37.0%	34.7%	33.6%
Deficit recovery	2.0%	6.0%	19.2%	14.9%	<b>8.5%</b>
Deficit recovery period	12 years	12 years	10years	10years	<b>15 years</b>

*Employer/Employee split based on current 2/3:1/3 applied to increase and treat as estimates at this stage*

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## Report of the President & Principal

### Action required

- ☐ For approval  
☐ For discussion  
☒ To note

### Executive summary

#### My first few months

During June and July, I have been meeting with over 60 groups in a mix of induction briefings from professional service directorates and listening meetings with staff and students. The induction briefings have allowed me to meet management staff from each function and understand their structure and business plans. The aim of the listening meetings is to hear from a wide and diverse mix of people to see King's through their eyes and to ask people what works and what could be improved from their perspectives.

The listening exercise sessions involve mixed groups of staff (both academic and professional services) from across the College and involve students where possible. It is covering equality, diversity and inclusion from many viewpoints, exploring teaching and learning, entrepreneurship, research and innovation. I have been hearing from staff networks, practitioners, front line staff, committees and working groups on particular topics, plus groups involved in Service, London and International activities. As well as these mixed groups, each Faculty is showcasing its strengths and what makes it distinctive and how it is focusing on improving student success, plus three workshops are scheduled to engage with the 118 Heads of Department to hear views and ideas from a group that plays a critical role in the day-to-day running of education and research at King's.

Following my day of immersion being a student and a half day being a lecturer, I have held focus groups with both undergraduate and postgraduate taught students and post graduate researchers, and groups of teaching staff. Students spoke about how Covid-19 has disrupted their studies and research projects and affected their mental health. Both students and teaching staff have talked about how the pandemic has driven innovation that we can apply going forward and raised both issues with, and opportunities to improve the student and staff experience.

Listening exercise meetings are typically 12-15 people and the workshops 25-40, so after two months I will have had the opportunity to engage with around 1000 staff and students and many more are tuning in to my weekly videos to hear about what I have been hearing and the key messages coming through.

Alongside the inductions and listening exercises, I have held a number of retreats with the senior leadership - SLT, Executive Deans, Professional Services Directorates and Faculty Operating Officers - facilitated by Korn Ferry consultants. I am in the process of feeding back to the key groups on the findings and developing my thoughts around leadership and decision-making structures.

# Report of the President & Principal

## Coronavirus update

The university continues to manage the risks and impact of coronavirus.

- Ongoing focus on support for our students and staff during the latest national lockdown.
- The Government announcement regarding step 4 on the roadmap did not make a material difference to the university's activities. All buildings have been open since 17 May and all students are allowed back on campus within Government guidelines. We have told staff that they can, where appropriate, continue to work from home until 1 September.
- We have launched King's Edge, a new programme of extracurricular initiatives and events available to all students including internships and volunteering opportunities, language courses and community organising to support their mental health and wellbeing and provide social interaction opportunities.
- Testing
  - We have performed over 27,500 PCR tests (KCL TEST) with a positive rate of 0.28% and 13,500 lateral flow tests with a positive rate of 0.31%
  - Staff and students coming on to campus are expected to take a test twice a week
  - We are going to continue with our PCR testing for the time being at the university's expense given its greater sensitivity and accuracy and ability to identify variants but will keep an eye on the Government approach to testing going forward given the increasing concerns about the use of lateral flow.
- 2021-22
  - Academic strategy for 2021-22 will continue with a blended approach, undertaking as much on-campus activity as can be provided within Government guidelines
  - The safety measures are being reviewed in tandem with the education approach to ensure ongoing safety of staff and students

[REDACTED]

## Pensions

USS has priced current benefits at 42-56%, against a current price of 30.7%, and UUK has consulted with the employers on how to deal with the proposed increases. This consultation also includes an alternative option including pension reform which UUK believe can be priced at the current rate of 30.7%. UUK reflect the impact on pension as about 12%, or staff needing to work a further four years to make up the difference, and this is concerning for staff. We have surveyed eligible staff; 416 responded and it's understandable that most do not want to see costs increase but equally don't feel that benefits should be reduced and their views were included in our response. With the Russell Group we confirmed a number of principles and acceptance of the alternative proposal as a means to deliver a good pension, with significant defined benefit protected at the current cost. We now have the initial results of the consultation from UUK. There was good sector wide support for the UUK proposed alternative as a way to maintain costs, and strong agreement that

we are at the limits of affordability and that current costs should be sufficient to deliver a good pension for staff. USS has costed the alternative proposal at 31.2%, 0.5% above the current cost – this now brings closer alignment between UUK and USS on costing methodology which is good to see. There is a further mini consultation as USS would like to keep their preferred 10% threshold on security, pari-passu, as part of the covenant strengthening in addition to having no gap between the current moratorium on exit and the implementation of the rolling 20-year commitment. We are comfortable with both these. The joint negotiating committee has started its deliberations, and this is going to be a difficult time as there remains clear disagreement between USS and UCU on the valuation. However, USS is backed by the Regulator. USS has the authority to impose an unaffordable price and we are already delayed from June to August given the complexity of the consultation. We continue to hold engagement sessions in town hall, faculty and departmental briefings with our most recent and third town hall on 23 June and another due on 15 July. In addition, we are setting up some more independent webinars to further help clarity and understanding. If there is a consensus at the end of August, and this may be a longshot, then there is a small possibility that the October 21 increase (related to the 2018 valuation) might be held off.

Shitij Kapur  
President & Principal  
June 2021

These pages have been redacted

## King's College Council

**Meeting date** 14 July 2021

**Paper reference** KCC-21-07-14-07.1

**Status** Final

# Report of the Governance and Nominations Committee

Contents	Meeting at which considered	Consent agenda	Council action
1. Selection Process for Second Student Council Member [Annex 1]	17 June 2021	No	Approve
2. Petition re Council Membership – Response [Annex 2]	17 June 2021	No	Approve
3. Meeting cycle, 2022/23 [Annex 3]	17 June 2021	Yes	Approve
4. Amendments to Terms of Reference (a) Estates Strategy Committee (b) Academic Board [Annex 4]	17 June 2021	Yes	Approve
5. Appointments (a) New Chair of GNC (b) Finance Committee - Reappointment	17 June 2021	Yes	Approve
6. Search for New Members	17 June 2021	No	Discuss
7. Annual Council Review Process	17 June 2021	Yes	Note
8. September Away Day Outline	17 June 2021	Yes	Note

## For Approval

### 1. Process for Selecting Second Student Member of Council

#### Motion:

- (i) That the second student seat on Council proposed in the revisions to the King's College Council Statutes currently being considered for approval by the DfE should be filled by the KCLSU Vice-President (Postgraduates), making it an ex-officio position by agreement of Council, until 2023 when the arrangement should be reviewed as part of the next five-yearly review of the effectiveness of Council. This approval is subject to the President of the KCLSU, who is also an ex officio member of Council, being an undergraduate student representative. In the event that is not the case, the Governance and Nominations Committee will recommend an appointment to Council.
- (ii) That the Vice-President (Postgraduates) be invited to attend Council meetings as an observer until such time as a decision to approve (or not approve) the Statute amendment is received from the Privy Council.

#### Background:

The 2018 governance review working group had expressed preference for the proposed second student member of Council not to be a second ex officio seat for the KCLSU and had stated that it would be most desirable to have the seat filled by a post graduate student who, especially if it were a PGR student, might be able to serve more than one year. It had been noted that this had worked effectively in the

Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee. There was no final determination at the time as to whether the second seat would be filled through appointment or election. It had been agreed that the Governance & Nominations Committee should deal with the matter in future.

The Committee has discussed the issue over its last two meetings and considered the pros and cons of a range of options including:

- Option 1 – A PGR student appointed via a nomination process
- Option 2 – A KCLSU Sabbatical Officer selected by the KCLSU elected student officers
- Option 3 – The elected KCLSU VP Postgraduates as an ex officio member
- Option 4 – An election by and from among the student members of the Academic Board
- Option 5 – Direct election from the full student body

The Committee considered the balance of skill and expertise required from members and the strengths of election and links to the student body, length of term and breadth of student view, conflicts of interest, and having current student membership rather than sabbatical membership.

On balance, the Committee has agreed to recommend Option 3 to Council for approval, see the motion above for final wording. Please see **Annex 1** for the paper presented to the Committee.

The Committee noted that the next five-yearly full review of the effectiveness of Council would be held in 2023 and would present an ideal opportunity to review the effectiveness of this arrangement.

## **2. Petition re Council Membership**

**Motion:** That Council approve the attached paper in **Annex 2** as its response to the petition with respect to Council membership.

### Background:

As reported at the November 2020 and March 2021 meetings of Council, the Committee has been giving consideration to a petition received last autumn by the Chairman and the Principal concerning Council membership that, in summary, proposed that King's College Council should be comprised of a majority of staff and student members and that all members, including independent members, should be directly elected. At the March meeting of Council, the Committee noted that it was not of a mind to support the proposals and promised a fuller paper in response for this meeting. Please see **Annex 2**. Council is asked to endorse the paper as its response to the petition.

## **3. Meeting Cycle 2022/23 [Consent Agenda]**

**Motion:** That the proposed meeting schedule for 2022/2023 for Council and its standing committees be approved.

### Background:

Council members have asked that they received notice of planned meetings as much as possible two years in advance in order to assist with diary planning. The proposed schedule for 2022/23 is attached in **Annex 3**. The schedule follows the standard pattern for meetings and, as always, there may need to be some tweaking from time to time to reflect non-King's commitments of committee chairs that may arise.



#### **4. Amendments to Terms of Reference [Consent Agenda]**

##### **4.1 Estates Strategy Committee**

Motion: That the Terms of Reference of the Estates Strategy Committee be amended to add a student member.

Background:

The Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee, the Finance Committee, the Investment Subcommittee and the Governance & Nominations Committee all provide for student membership. The Chair of the Estates Strategy Committee believes that it would be of value to have a student voice at that committee as well.

##### **4.2 Academic Board**

Motion: That the Terms of Reference of the Academic Board be amended as noted in **Annex 4**.

Background:

Some members of the Board believe that the current terms do not sufficiently express the powers (in addition to the responsibilities) of the Board and asked for revisions. The Academic Board Operations Committee conducted a review of terms of similar bodies at a range of higher education institutions across the UK and internationally and noted that the terms of King's Academic Board were largely in alignment with others. However, ABOC agreed that some editorial amendments could be made without any change to the authorities delegated by Council to the Board. Council is asked to approve these minor amendments. In addition, some members asked for clarification of decision-making authority within the Board and its committee structure. An index has been prepared in response by the College Secretariat and that is also attached in **Annex 4** for information.

In addition, the proposals include a recommendation that the Executive Director of the newly formed King's Education be included as an ex-officio member of the Academic Board. This does not affect the principle that the majority of the members of the Academic Board be elected academic staff and has the support of the Board.

#### **5. Appointments [Consent Agenda]**

##### **5.1 Chair, Governance and Nominations Committee**

Motion: That Clare Sumner be appointed Chair of the Governance & Nominations Committee effective 1 August 2021.

Background:

The Chair of Council has been acting as chair of the Governance & Nominations Committee in the interim since Sir Nigel Sheinwald's term ended in July 2020.

##### **5.2 Finance Committee – Co-opted Member Reappointment**

Motion: That Andrew Scott be reappointed as a co-opted independent member for an additional year to 31 July 2022.

Background:

Mr. Scott will have served six years on the Finance Committee effective 31 July 2021. He has agreed to serve for an additional year to help smooth out the turnover cycle for the Committee and provide greater continuity of membership.

### 5.3 King's Maths School – Board of Governors

Motion: That the following be reappointed to the King's Maths School Board of Governors as College Governors for a further four-year term, effective 1 August 2021:

Margaret Peacock  
Professor Emeritus Alison Rogers  
Professor Alison Wolf

Background:

The Board of Governors of King's Maths School includes five members appointed by King's College London. The Board of Governors is supportive of these reappointments.

## For Discussion

### 6. Search for New Members

Odgers Berndtson has been engaged to assist with filling vacancies coming up in the next two years on Council and standing committees. The Committee considered the skills/attributes that should be sought in candidates and identified the following as key areas to explore:

- climate change
- communications
- organisation development and structure
- Vice-Chair and succession planning
- IT/technology infrastructure, digital innovation
- HR/people management strategies
- Entrepreneurial or commercial background to capture a different way of thinking.
- Pensions expertise
- Increased emphasis on student experience and education
- Gender and other forms of diversity, including disability
- Student involvement in the selection process
- Significant time commitment.

Members of Council are encouraged to provide their input to the list.

## For Note

### 7. Annual Council Review Process [Consent Agenda]

The Committee discussed and approved a questionnaire to be circulated to members in summer for submission to the College Secretary in September. The review will be conducted by the College Secretary in collaboration with Clare Sumner.

### 8. September Away Day [Consent Agenda]

The Committee discussed a framework for the September Away Day that will be focused on the President & Principal's proposed plan of action, along with a session devoted to consideration of climate change and sustainability issues, reflecting the interest expressed at the May meeting of Council. A detailed agenda will be developed in consultation with the Chair of Council, the Chair of GNC and the President & Principal.

## Process for Selection of Second Student Member of Council

Currently, there is only one student member of Council, the *ex officio* seat that belongs to the President of King's College London Students' Union (KCLSU). In 2018, the KCLSU President's request to include a review of postgraduate inclusion on the Council was granted within the Nous governance review, led by Tim Orton and Simon Lancaster.

Following the review, Council agreed to create a second student seat, reducing the number of staff seats by one. This followed a trend within other Russell Group universities. Council's focus was on expanding the student voice within its membership to include a representative of post-graduate students and a particular preference was expressed that a PGR student serve based on a very positive experience with such student membership in the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee.

As of January 2021, Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) made up 8.27%, Postgraduate Taught Students (PGTs) 43.56% and Undergraduates (UGs) 48.16% of the student population respectively. Although the KCLSU President does represent the views of all students, if they are not a postgraduate student, they may lack a deep understanding of issues these students face. Therefore, it is important to gain postgraduate representation on Council.

However, the method of selection was undetermined and assumed to be the appointment of a postgraduate research student to serve a minimum of a two-year term on Council.

A paper was presented to the Governance and Nominations Subcommittee in March 2021, members requested further exploration of the options which is presented in **Annex 1**. **Annex 2** contains the original March 2021 paper, with the research undertaken.

KCLSU has undertaken a sector wide analysis of current student, particularly postgraduate, representation on university governing bodies as outlined in **Annex 2**. This outlines the various provisions at different universities alongside the composition of postgraduates at these institutions. We see five options for the selection of a second student for Council. **Table 1** below briefly lists the advantages and disadvantages of each option but **Annex 2** provides full details on each option

*Table 1: Brief summary of relative advantages and disadvantages of each option for the second student member of Council*

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 1: An appointed PGR student	<p>Allows for continuity over a period of at least two years</p> <p>Represents the Postgraduate Research Community, an underrepresented community</p> <p>Perhaps have expertise after being in industry</p>	<p>Undemocratic</p> <p>No precedent within other Russell Group institutions for this</p> <p>Does not have connections to student voice pathways to represent views of whole community, as KCLSU does</p> <p>At times there has been low interest in PGRs applying to be appointed members of subcommittees.</p>

Option 2: A sabbatical officer, selected internally by the team of elected student officers	<p>KCLSU Sabbatical officers have an understanding of the governance of the university as they are full time employees</p> <p>They are full time employees so incentivised to engage with Council fully</p> <p>Has understanding of KCL and Higher Education Context</p>	This does not solve the issue of postgraduate representation
Option 3: The elected KCLSU VP Postgraduates assumes the second student seat of Council as an <i>ex officio member</i>	<p>Democratically elected representative of Postgraduate community</p> <p>Has an understanding of the issues postgraduates face</p> <p>Understands university governance</p> <p>Extensive training as a trustee so will be able to engage with Council</p> <p>Connected to existing student voice structures so can represent views fully</p>	Likely to change annually; the Education Act of 1994 means that sabbatical officers are not permitted to serve terms of more than two years within the United Kingdom
Option 4: An election between all student members of the Academic Board	<p>Democratically elected to represent students</p> <p>Mirrors staff election to Council from Academic Board</p>	<p>Does not solve issue of postgraduate representation as no guarantee that a postgraduate will be elected</p> <p>To date, these members have had little to no engagement including sporadic attendance</p> <p>No precedent within other Russell Group institutions for this</p> <p>Does not have connections to student voice pathways to represent views of whole community</p>
Option 5: A separate election is run, either through KCL or KCLSU, where any student can run for a position on Council	<p>Democratically elected to represent students</p> <p>Allows student to gain employability skills</p>	<p>This does not solve the issue of postgraduate representation</p> <p>No precedent within other Russell Group institutions for this</p> <p>Does not have connections to student voice pathways to represent views of whole community</p> <p>Unlikely to understand the KCL and Higher Education context</p> <p>Unlikely to engage fully with Council, as seen in other institutions</p>

The relative advantages and disadvantages of each option are listed more extensively in Annex 1 and 2 however, on balance, we believe Option 3 to be the best option for both students and Council.

The Committee needs to consider the relative importance of each principle outlined in Annex 2, to come to a decision of the second student member of Council selection process.

The Governance and Nominations Committee is asked to:

Approve the VP Postgraduates to be the second student seat on Council, in line with the following guidance on term of office:

The report of the Governance and Nominations Committee to Council on 27 November 2018, suggested an amendment to the Statue which was passed that: *'Other than the Principal and President and the President of the Students' Union who shall serve for the period of their perspective offices, members shall be appointed for a period of three years and shall be eligible for re-appointment to a maximum normally of three terms of three years or nine years in any one capacity.'*

Therefore, the Governance and Nominations Subcommittee is asked to approve that the VP Postgraduate would serve for the period of office.

Until this change is approved by the Privy Council and the Office for Students, the Governance and Nominations is asked to approve the proposal for the VP Postgraduate to be an observer on Council.

Author's Name : Salma Hussain

Author's Title: KCLSU President, 2020/21

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021

Annex 1: Principles of Selection of Student Member of Council

Annex 2 – Increasing Student Voice on King's College London Council

## Annex 1: Principles of Selection Second Member of Council

Council approved the increase in student representation of Council in 2018 from one member to two. Currently, there is one student representative, an *ex officio* seat granted to the President of King's College London Students' Union (KCLSU). The second seat was designed to be given to a postgraduate student, in light of KCL's commitment to increase postgraduate student numbers, so they could represent the needs of this historically underrepresented community. Currently, the student community is made up of: Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) 8.27%; Postgraduate Taught Students (PGTs) 43.56%; and Undergraduates (UGs) 48.16%. KCLSU has similar concerns about engaging with this under represented student population, which led to the creation of the position of VP Postgraduates, which was first elected in 2017. The VP Postgraduates can only be elected from the KCL postgraduate population, either undergraduate or postgraduate. During the 2021 elections and 2020 by-elections, it was the position with the greatest number of candidates.

The 20-21 President of KCLSU presented a paper to the Governance and Nominations committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (**Annex 2**) outlining examples of current higher education sector of best practice in student representation on governing bodies, but also reflecting on the challenges specific to King's. The outcome of the discussion was that there needs to be greater thought into the principles on the method of selection second student member of Council to reflect the needs of both the student body but also Council.

This paper will outline the principles which need to be considered by the committee, in order to understand which method of selection is the most effective for Council and the student population, as the largest stakeholders of KCL. These principles include: multiyear terms, sustained excellent quality, and understanding of the strategic direction of the university but also many other factors which were explored briefly in the March 2021 Governance and Nominations Subcommittee meeting.

Throughout this paper, there will be an exploration of the different methods of selection and how each principle is satisfied differently. This paper will not explore the option of selecting an undergraduate student, as the postgraduate student voice has been historically under represented and therefore should be heard. Furthermore, this option does not have any inherent positives and will not be explored as an option. The following options are considered throughout this paper:

**Option 1a:** Appointing a Postgraduate Research Student, through an interview process.

**Option 1b:** Appointing a Postgraduate Student (including PGT)

**Option 2:** Internal election within the KCLSU sabbatical officers

**Option 3:** *ex officio* seat given to the KCLSU VP Postgraduates

**Option 4:** An election between all student members of Academic Board – the 13 members are 4 sabbatical officers and a student elected through KCLSU to represent each of the nine faculties<sup>1</sup>

**Option 5:** A separate election is run, either through KCL or KCLSU, where any student can run for a position on Council

Table 2, below, summarizes the principles, solutions which satisfy the principles behind selection and the relative importance of the principle to Council. The relative importance was estimated based upon discussion in March Governance and Nominations meeting and evaluation of the risks associated.

<sup>1</sup> Note: Sabbatical officers would be likely to vote in a block therefore this is a redundant option however has been included due to discussions in the March 2021 Governance and Nominations Subcommittee

Principle	Which option satisfies	Relative Importance of Principle To Council
Multiyear term	Option 1a Option 5	Medium
Quality of Candidates	Option 1a Option 1b Option 2 Option 3	High
Representation of Postgraduate Students	Option 1a Option 1b Option 3 Option 5	High
Understanding KCL and the Wider Higher Education Context	Option 2 Option 3	High
Diversity of Voices	Option 1a Option 1b Option 2 Option 3 Option 4 Option 5	Medium
Feedback and Feed-down mechanisms	Option 2 Option 3	Medium
Improving Employability	Option 1a Option 1b Option 5	Low
Democratic Nature of Appointment	Option 2 Option 3 Option 4 Option 5	Medium

Conflict of Interest and Appearance of Independence	Option 1a	Low – this is a perceived risk but has been evaluated to not be a risk
	Option 1b	
	Option 4	
	Option 5	



## Principles

### Multi-year Terms

Currently, the President of KCLSU, and therefore the student member of Council, renews on an annual basis. However, the President can be re-elected to serve a maximum of two years, as set out by the 1994 Education Act. This provides a challenge in terms of consistency and understanding of historical issues however the annual turnover allows innovation and a fresh perspective.

KCLSU currently runs two sets of elections: Autumn elections for Student Trustees and Student Representative and Spring Elections for Association Committee Positions, National Union of Students Conference Delegates and Student Officers. KCL could run a set of elections independent of KCLSU, however this will lead to staffing implications, particularly around running a free election due to the historic issues around harassment that KCL students face. If elections were run in October, the candidate would take position as early as November but may have to leave in July as their time as a student ends, particularly if they are a postgraduate taught student therefore not even facilitating a full year term.

Option 4 of an election between student members of the Academic Board is inappropriate as students are only a member for a year.

To facilitate multiyear terms, the following options could be considered:

- **Option 1:** Appointing a Postgraduate Research student, through an interview process.
- **Option 5:** A separate election is run, either through KCL or KCLSU, where any student can run for a position on Council\*

\*Note: there is no guarantee this student would want to serve multiple years, it is also unlikely that a first year student will put themselves forward therefore the likely maximum term served would be two years.

Furthermore, this fails to accommodate for postgraduate taught students, a population which is much larger than postgraduate research students (43.56% of the student population), who are ordinarily present for a single year. Historically, we have postgraduate students who will put themselves forward for elected positions in KCLSU however there is a challenge in becoming elected as undergraduates tend to have greater engagement with the community.

We have had internal discussions around Autumn elections and there are many challenges around postgraduate engagement at this time of year due to enrolment and becoming overwhelmed so a number of students are not aware of the opportunities available. Therefore, a separate election is unlikely to be successfully in engaging postgraduates.

### Quality of Candidates

Democratic elections to select student representatives means that the quality of candidates cannot be guaranteed, unlike the current method of selection of student members of Council Subcommittees. Currently, the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee and the Investment Subcommittee appoint a postgraduate research student through an interview process, this approach consistently produces students who are engaged and contribute to discussion positively. The frequency of meetings is worth noting, subcommittees meet less frequently than Council itself where engagement may drop off due to the increased commitment. The question would need to be posed whether this student provides a 'student perspective' in terms of what is important to our student body, as they have no mechanism to gather feedback, or they use their own limited social experiences to provide a view from the student body or they are mimicking the function of an independent member of Council by providing scrutiny in a very different manner.

There could be questions around the ability of a student who is not fully trained to contribute to discussions to provide the student perspective. Robust training and understanding is needed so a member of Council can understand the gravity of issues such as the concerns around National Student Survey or the responsibility of being a member of Council. KCLSU sabbatical officers have a robust training induction month, which includes outlining their responsibilities as trustees of KCLSU, and therefore have a greater understanding of governance

compared to untrained students. Furthermore, due to engagement with wider King's governance structures, sabbatical officers will have a greater understanding of ongoing streams of work such as curriculum commission or the harassment issues particularly around postgraduate students. Therefore this wider exposure provides better understanding to contribute to Council discussions, particularly to provide insight into upcoming issues from the student perspective.

Student members of Academic Board experience training facilitated jointly by the College Secretariat and KCLSU Academic Representation team. Additionally, they are directly supported by the sabbatical officers by going through the papers to clarify any discrepancies but also provide suggestions on where student suggestions would be valuable. Historically, there is very low contribution by these student members of Academic Board and therefore it is likely that quality of contribution to Council will also be low.

To facilitate high quality contributions, the following options could be considered:

**Option 1a:** Appointing a Postgraduate Research Student, through an interview process.

**Option 1b:** Appointing a Postgraduate Student (including PGT)

**Option 2:** Internal election within the KCLSU sabbatical officers

**Option 3:** *ex officio* seat given to the KCLSU VP Postgraduates

#### **Representation of the Postgraduate Voice**

The original sentiment surrounding increasing student voice was to increase the postgraduate voice on Council. Although the KCLSU President could be a postgraduate student, historically this has not been the case but it is crucial to represent the needs of these students at all levels of decision making. Postgraduate students represent 51.83% of the total student population currently. A postgraduate student will, generally, have experience as an undergraduate, perhaps not at KCL, which is applicable to discussions that Council may have.

To facilitate representation of the postgraduate voice, the following options could be considered:

**Option 1a:** Appointing a Postgraduate Research Student, through an interview process.

**Option 1b:** Appointing a Postgraduate Student (including PGT)

**Option 3:** *ex officio* seat given to the KCLSU VP Postgraduates

**Option 5:** A separate election is run, either through KCL or KCLSU, where any student can run for a position on Council BUT only postgraduates are eligible.

Note: The KCLSU VP Postgraduate can only be elected from the postgraduate student population – either research or taught

#### **Understanding the KCL and wider Higher Education Context**

Council has excellent independent members, who provide external scrutiny using the experience they have gained from their careers. They are able to provide a fresh perspective using their experiences to critically appraise decision making and propel King's forward in achieving *Vision 2029*. Students, sadly, have no concept of *Vision 2029* and how it affects them. Therefore, I suspect it will be difficult to engage students in long term strategy, as KCL has found in the past with student representatives.

Student Officers are engaged with KCL policy creation and various committees, which provides a more holistic insight into decision making which is of benefit to Council. Rather than attempting to replicate the function of independent Council members to provide scrutiny, Council needs a broad student perspective that knows the issues that students are currently facing whether that be inconsistency in faculty policy adherence or issues surrounding meeting Professional Statutory Regulatory Body Accreditation requirements in a Covid-19 year. Every student will say this year mental health and tuition fee refunds are a prominent issues, however very few will be able to provide greater granularity or understand the context of decision making. Therefore, the most beneficial perspective will come from a student officer, who has been involved and engaged with these decisions from the

beginning so will be able to understand the strides KCL has made, for example through the use of pro-counselling or national tuition fee refund campaigns due to the precarious nature of Higher Education sector funding.

To facilitate membership of Council which understands KCL and the wider Higher Education context the following options could be considered:

**Option 2:** Internal election within the KCLSU sabbatical officers

**Option 3:** *ex officio* seat given to the KCLSU VP Postgraduates

### **Diversity of Voices**

There was concern raised by Council members in the March Governance and Nominations Subcommittee Meeting, that there is similarity in views held by KCLSU sabbatical officers and that an appointment process might lead to a diversity in student voice. As many KCL staff members can attest to, every officer provides a differing perspective on each issue raised.

KCLSU Officers are not pro-KCLSU, in fact many candidates run on an anti-KCLSU platform, the only bias we should have is to provide the best possible student experience, critical as students are the largest stakeholder group of King's. KCLSU sabbatical officers will often run and be elected on very different manifestos from different community groups and therefore inherently provide different voices. The advantage to selecting two sabbatical officers as members of Council, is their participation in various College committees therefore have a greater awareness of the issues that King's is facing but also the wider Higher Education sector. A separately elected student would provide a different view, this is indisputable, as every student provides a separate opinion on every matter. However, a KCLSU officer is more likely to provide a more balanced view, in light of being involved in other discussions across the university.

To facilitate a diversity of voices, the following options can be considered:

**Option 1a:** Appointing a Postgraduate Research Student, through an interview process.

**Option 1b:** Appointing a Postgraduate Student (including PGT)

**Option 2:** Internal election within the KCLSU sabbatical officers

**Option 3:** *ex officio* seat given to the KCLSU VP Postgraduates

**Option 4:** An election between all student members of Academic Board – the 13 members are 4 sabbatical officers and a student elected through KCLSU to represent each of the nine faculty

**Option 5:** A separate election is run, either through KCL or KCLSU, where any student can run for a position on Council

### **Feedback and Feed-down mechanisms**

The Tavistock Institute have been engaged by KCL and KCLSU to embark on community healing, in light of the Bush House incident after the Queen's visit in 2019. One of the recommendations in the current working note is to increase student representation on Council, which was agreed previously however it is critical to ensure it is the right type of representation. Without feedback mechanisms from Council to students, there is no transparency of decision making, which has led to heightened tensions from students in fears surrounding securitisation of KCL. Therefore, KCLSU has been working to improve feedback mechanisms to increase transparency of both Academic Board and Council and has discussed this with the College Secretary.

KCLSU has formal mechanisms to collect feedback, and we are constantly innovating, such as the Town Halls, looking how we can gather a diversity of views from students. These feedback mechanisms help us to understand the importance of critical issues for students, for example, prior to my role, I did not know what decolonization of the curriculum meant or the importance placed upon it by students nor the issues around appeals.

Therefore, the second student member of Council will be unable to accurately represent the issues which are most important to the constituents they represent, due to no fault of their own.

**Option 2:** Internal election within the KCLSU sabbatical officers

**Option 3:** *ex officio* seat given to the KCLSU VP Postgraduates

### **Improving Employability**

By allowing a student to become a member of Council, there is the prospect of improving employability for this student. However, this is **not** a valid reason to include in the decision making of the second student member as it neither benefits Council nor the wider student body. This would solely benefit one student and has been highlighted as a risk in the past. The SUMS report, jointly commissioned by KCL and KCLSU, to examine student voice throughout the institution saw that often student representatives are disengaged as they are solely approaching this role from the point of view of bolstering their CV which is not best for students nor Council.

The Governance and Nominations Subcommittee could take a view that this is an important factor to consider in finding a student member of Council. In this case, the following options could be considered:

**Option 1a:** Appointing a Postgraduate Research Student, through an interview process.

**Option 1b:** Appointing a Postgraduate Student (including PGT)

**Option 5:** A separate election is run, either through KCL or KCLSU, where any student can run for a position on Council

### **Democratic Nature of Appointment**

In the March Governance and Nominations Meeting, there were concerns around the democratic nature of KCLSU elections due to low turnout. This was addressed in detail by the KCLSU CEO in the March Council Meeting when presenting the Deputy Returning Officer Report of our elections. Briefly, there was nationally low elections engagement due to digital fatigue but lack of ability to interact on campus in traditional manners has also affected this. Furthermore, there has been an elections culture issue, particularly with harassment, which KCLSU has been tackling but this has led to decreased number of voters. The first year of effectively tackling this, using recommendations from an external review, did lead to decreased voter turnout (2020) however it also did lead to the election of the 5<sup>th</sup> female President of KCLSU in history, a majority female identifying sabbatical officer team in 2020, and subsequently the sixth female President of KCLSU being elected in 2021 and a 50/50 gender split in the 21-22 Sabbatical Officer Team.

An appointment process, similar to the current process of selecting student members for subcommittees, is not democratic. The position that the KCLSU President currently occupies is to tell Council what they need to hear, not what KCL wants to hear. There have been occasions, where KCLSU takes a very different stance to the university and that is important for Council members to hear rather than be in an echo chamber. An appointment process also could produce a sense of obligation and therefore the student representative would feel unable to voice disapproval at certain decisions. Furthermore, as shown in **Annex 2**, an appointment process is out of line of best practice with the Russell Group, this is critical as recommendation 5 of the Nous Review was 'Compare King's against competitors and 'best in class''. Therefore, it is illogical to put in place non-standard governance practices of appointment of student members of Council.

Furthermore, the current optics of putting in place an appointment process to increase student representation is likely to cause significant backlash from the student population after the impacted student experience in light of Covid-19. This will further be viewed badly in light of imminent UCU strikes in autumn.

To tackle concerns around democracy, the following options could be considered:

**Option 2:** Internal election within the KCLSU sabbatical officers

**Option 3:** *ex officio* seat given to the KCLSU VP Postgraduates

**Option 4:** An election between all student members of Academic Board – the 13 members are 4 sabbatical officers and a student elected through KCLSU to represent each of the nine faculties

**Option 5:** A separate election is run, either through KCL or KCLSU, where any student can run for a position on Council

### **Conflict of Interest and Appearance of Independence**

KCLSU is independent organization of KCL. A member of the Governance and Nominations Subcommittee raised concerns around whether having two representatives from KCLSU would provide a conflict of interest. Having contacted other Student Unions with multiple student members on the governing bodies, this has not been a visible problem. The risk register of KCLSU does not currently consider conflation as a risk. Furthermore, this has not been a problem with staff members on Council who have been present in contentious issues which directly affect them, such as around USS Pensions.

It is critical to reiterate that the *ex officio* seat of Council granted to the President of the Students' Union is not a seat to represent KCLSU, but to act to provide the best possible student experience as they should be able to understand the issues that students face the most, which is in the best interests of King's College London. The President makes decision as a Council member and publically declares interests, as other Council members do.

In order to mitigate against this perceived issue, the following options could be considered:

**Option 1a:** Appointing a Postgraduate Research Student, through an interview process.

**Option 1b:** Appointing a Postgraduate Student (including PGT)

**Option 4:** An election between all student members of Academic Board – the 13 members are 4 sabbatical officers and a student elected through KCLSU to represent each of the nine faculty

**Option 5:** A separate election is run, either through KCL or KCLSU, where any student can run for a position on Council

### **National Student Survey and Question 26**

Members of the Governance and Nominations Subcommittee questioned the ability of KCLSU to fully represent the needs of the student population due to the score in response to Question 26 of the National Student Survey – 'The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests'. This is an area of strategic importance of KCLSU to improve and the joint vision for representation, presented by KCLSU in light of the SUMS report, was endorsed by KCL at College Education Committee in January 2021.

There may still be concerns around KCLSU's ability to represent students which could suggest other options would be preferable, particularly the appointment of a postgraduate research student. However, there is no review or measure of effectiveness of this position by students. Or even awareness that these positions exist. Therefore, no option is preferable to provide measurable satisfaction of students in confidence of academic representation.

The recommendation put to the Governance and Nominations Committee, is to approve the second student member of Council to be the KCLSU Vice President (Postgraduates) on the balance of all these principles and their relative weighted importance. Council is due for another governance review in 2023. Therefore, any process could be trialed and then reviewed when this governance review is undertaken.

Author: Salma Hussain (KCLSU President 20-21)

Date: 18/01/2021

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1. Background and Methods
2. Sector wide analysis
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4. Recommendations
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## 1. Background and Methods:

This report was commissioned by the KCLSU President, Salma Hussain, in order to develop an understanding of the current sector practices regarding College Council (or other equivalents) with regards to their involvement of students, assessing their inclusivity and effectiveness and thereby provide recommendations based upon this. The King's College London Act of 1997, Section 15 stipulates that the Council should include "three persons elected from among their number by the students of the College." Currently, there is only one student member of council, the *ex officio* position that belongs to the President of King's College London Students' Union (KCLSU). In June 2017, the then KCLSU President's request to include a review of postgraduate inclusion on the council was granted within the Nous governance review, led by Tim Orton and Simon Lancaster. This report produced a number of crucial recommendations to improve the governance of King's College London.

One of the recommendations from the Nous review, recommendation 13, was to give non-executive directors a closer sense of day-to-day activities of the universities through closer interaction with students. Although this does not tackle the inherent issue in lack of student interaction, a second student member of council could bring student opinion closer to the independent members.

Recommendation 5 of the Nous Review stated that 'Compare King's against competitors and 'best in class'' Therefore I tasked the KCLSU Research Bureau with investigating the student membership of comparable university governing bodies, primarily Russell Group institutions in order to produce a report on the current status of student membership of competitors.

Methods comprised the thorough researching of all Russell Group universities to allow for more valid comparisons, all 24 universities are included within this report. An analysis of their student numbers, percentage of postgraduates as well as which, and how many, student representatives sit on their respective equivalents of College Councils. The opinions of key student representatives were sought regarding their respective experiences and how effective for students their Council membership structure is. Lastly, reflections from three KCLSU Presidents giving their assessment of the current proposal to attempt to include increased postgraduate representation within College Council.

At time of writing, Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) make up 8.27%, Postgraduate Taught Students (PGTs) 43.56% and Undergraduates (UGs) 48.16% of the student population respectively. Although the KCLSU President does represent the views of all students, if they are not a postgraduate student, they may lack a deep understanding of issues these students face. Therefore, it is important to gain postgraduate representation on Council, particularly from an elected representative.

## 2. Sector-wide Analysis

Table 1 below illustrates all Russell Group universities, the number of students that sit on their respective governing body equivalents to Council, and a description of which student officer role specifically is represented. In addition, we have included more general figures on the total number of students and postgraduate students within each institution. The table below ranks universities based on the proportion of postgraduate students that make up their student communities, with LSE being the highest and Exeter the lowest.

There is no correlation between the proportion of postgraduate students and which students make up the membership of College Councils. This is the case across Russell Group institutions demonstrated by LSE and UCL, both of which are comparable neighbouring institutions that also incidentally have the highest proportion of postgraduates. They have no specific postgraduate seat on their College Councils, instead reserving these seats for elected student union representatives.

There is also no precedent for the nomination of an unelected postgraduate student to the membership of College Councils amongst any other Russell Group universities, let alone nomination of any student with the exception of Bristol's second student member. All Russell Group institutions apportion their student membership on College Council to elected student union representatives.

Only 3 out of the 24 Russell Groups apportion a seat to an elected student member that is not a full-time sabbatical officer and only a further 4 of the 24 have a protected seat within College Council for the Postgraduate Student Officer; all of which are additional to having the President of the Students' Union as Ex Officio, unless the Students' Union has a flat committee structure with no President role in which case another sabbatical officer is a member. KCL increasing postgraduate student engagement through representation on College Council is crucial considering the large proportion of the student body that they represent. King's would be pioneering within the London Russell Groups to apportion a seat on College Council to the democratically elected Postgraduate Student Officer.

Name	How many Sabbatical Officer/Student Reps?	Which Sabbatical Officer/Student Reps?	Additional Information	Total Number of Students (UG + PG)	Number of PG Students	% PG Students
LSE	1	Gen Sec		11960	6870	57%
UCL	2	Education & Democracy	UCL has a flat committee structure	39,743	21,162	53%



Oxford	0 (3 observers)	President, PG & Access/Academic affairs officer		24515	12010	49%
Imperial	1	President		19934	9477	48%
Cambridge	3 students	Undergrad and Postgrad presidents of the SU and one other student elected through the SU	Third student is elected by the student body. Done alongside the election for the President of the SU	24450	11600	47%
Edinburgh	2	President & another sabbatical officer	Decided amongst the sabbatical officer team who the 2 <sup>nd</sup> member should be.	44510	17725	40%
Warwick	2	President and another sabbatical officer		27278	9799	36%
Birmingham	2	President and Postgraduates Officer		35445	12505	35%
Sheffield	2	President & Development officer		30195	10585	35%
Glasgow	2	President & elected student rep		29837	10325	35%

Manchester	2	Gen Sec & another sabbatical officer	Elected within the sabbatical officer team.	40250	13395	33%
Southampton	1	President		22715	6925	30%
QM	2	President and a Deputy (elected amongst sabbatical officers)		27077	7877	29%
Cardiff	2	President & VP Education		33190	9230	28%
York	2	President of SU & President of Graduate Students' Association	This provides postgraduate representation.	18930	5240	28%
Nottingham	2	UD and Education	Nottingham has a flat committee structure	34670	9411	27%
Leeds	2	President and Education Officer		38000	10000	26%
Bristol	2	Sabbatical officer (flat structure) and another student, could be an officer	The student representative goes through a SU shortlisting process and then interviewed by the university's Board of Trustees.	27513	7202	26%

QU Belfast	2	President and member of SU council		24695	5965	24%
Liverpool	1	President		29695	6960	23%
Newcastle	2	President and Education Officer		29872	6999	23%
Durham	1 (1)	President & another sabbatical officer as an observer	Observer chosen within students' union officer team	19367	4509	23%
Exeter	2	2 Presidents	Exeter has 2 SU's. One for Falmouth students and one for Exeter students. One President for each.	25263	5499	22%

Table 3– Russell Group universities College Council student membership

**Statements from Student Leaders within other Universities:**

Presidents from other SU's responded to our research within this area and shared the realities of student engagement with university governing bodies. Lancaster University's previous structure was an Ex Officio seat for the SU President and a second seat for an additional student member. This non-officer elected student had historically, little interest and engagement was demonstrated for this position. Previous students who held the role were quoted as '*struggling to understand and lacking sufficient context to key issues discussed on College Council in order to have a meaningful contribution*'. Consequently, this structure was reverted to being a second student sabbatical officer which is selected every year within the sabbatical officer team.

This is corroborated by statements from other Students' Union Presidents, including Surrey and London Southbank, they cite that *'as good as the students may be, they struggle to be effective and I don't think it's fair on them... our university is complex with a lot going on all the time'* and *'they do try, but being a student and not understanding the depth of the issues and having access to knowledge like a sabbatical officer does means that they essentially just say ditto to whatever we say anyway'*. This establishes that lay students display little engagement and when they do, Council matters are too intricate for a student that does not engage regularly with the College like a sabbatical officer does.

### 3. **Ex-KCLSU Presidents:**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two ex-KCLSU Presidents by Salma Hussain, the current President. Topics interrogated include reasoning behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> seat being an *ex officio* KCLSU seat; reasoning behind postgraduate representation on council; how did contribution to Council evolve over the course of the year and more. I then sought to consolidate past experiences with a written reflection on my current experiences as the sole student member of Council.

#### **Ahad Mahmood (President, August 2018 – July 2019)**

Ahad reflected that his experience of Council evolved as time progressed. At the beginning, he felt that he had a lack of understanding of university governance however had a deep understanding of his own Faculty (Dickson Poon School of Law). Council does pay for external training but the comprehensive induction and training programme provided to KCLSU officers during induction is not comparable. A non-remunerated position does not provide an incentive to undergo training to the same extent as a full time student officer would. PGs would not have the same experience despite having industry experience prior to pursuing a postgraduate qualification.

Furthermore, as full time remunerated employees, KCLSU officers regularly engage with the communities they represent and are tasked to gather feedback. There are formal mechanisms in place for this to occur and therefore the most effective representation and engagement of the postgraduate community would come through the KCLSU officers.

Ahad concluded that he feels strongly that the second student representative on Council should be the elected VP Postgraduates.

#### **Shaswat Jain (President, August 2019 – July 2020)**

Shaswat reflected that his contribution changed as he became confident, assertive and engaged in the discussions and understood the state of affairs of university better. Being involved in wider discussions within the day to day running of the university, as a full time employee of KCLSU, facilitated greater understanding of issues which are brought to council. Shaswat also highlighted that this position is a representative of the student body and therefore should be democratically chosen by students to represent them in elections. There will be students who are dissatisfied by the result of an election due to their preferred candidate not being chosen however this is the very heart of democracy and winning the popular vote is a sign of support from the student population.

Furthermore, this student member should be able to represent the needs of the postgraduate community effectively due to the large proportion of postgraduates within King's and as these students historically feel neglected. Combining democracy with postgraduate representation through the selection of the KCLSU VP Postgraduates provides a clear path to better engagement with this group of students.

Shaswat concluded that he felt that the second student representative on Council should be the elected VP Postgraduates.

#### **Salma Hussain (President, August 2020-Present) Reflections**

At my first Council meeting, as an observer on July 15<sup>th</sup> 2020, I was very confused. I was at the beginning of the thorough induction that KCLSU provides so I was gradually gaining an understanding of governance structures but I did not feel fully equipped nor confident to fully participate in discussions. I vividly remember a discussion on the National Student Survey

results being a hot topic at this Council meeting, the importance of the NSS was mentioned within my induction but I had yet to fathom its importance fully.

As the month went on, I gained greater confidence and knowledge so that when attending my first Trustee Board as an observer, just a week later on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July, I was able to passionately put across my points and convince the voting members to consider my arguments. The induction provided empowered us as Trustees to understand and navigate these difficult conversations. I was then promptly ready to begin my term as Chair of the Board from the 1<sup>st</sup> August. Furthermore, full time employment and engagement with the university meant that I understood the context of many decisions going to Council in my next meeting. After seeing the NSS engagement plan in various groups such as Senior Management Team and Academic Board when this was reviewed at the November Council meeting, my role as a democratically elected representative meant I could fully engage with the conversations surrounding this difficult topic.

As President, I represent all students. However, I have noticed that postgraduate students can often be forgotten in decision making, a key example of this being a lack of a postgraduate taught 'safety net' in the academic year 19-20. Involving postgraduate representatives at all stages of decision making is key to ensure that this community of students are not forgotten. As an undergraduate, it is often easier to remember the issues that I experienced therefore it is important to include a representative who has the experience at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. The training which KCLSU provides to officers means that they are best placed to become effective members of Council, and the VP Postgraduates is a democratically elected leader who would be able to best represent this community at Council.

I believe that the second student seat on Council should be an *ex officio* seat for the KCLSU VP Postgraduates.

#### **4. Recommendations:**

##### *Option 1: The student is an appointed Postgraduate Research Student*

This option would mirror the current arrangement of the Audit, Risk and Compliance and Investment Council subcommittees, where postgraduate research students are able to be selected to serve a renewable term of two years, conditional on remaining registered as a student of King's. The appointment is made to Council on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee after an interview process.

The advantages of this option include continuity over a two year period, whereas there is changeover nearly every year of the KCLSU officer team. However, these subcommittees only meet three times a year whereas Council meets more frequently therefore continuity is less of an issue. Furthermore, the unremunerated nature of this position means that engagement can be an issue, whereas KCLSU officers are full time employees so have a greater incentive to attend. Recently, the student member of the Audit, Risk and Compliance Sub-committee was appointed but there were only four applicants showing historic low interest in such positions. This suggests a lack of postgraduate engagement for this important opportunity, whereas in the by-election for the position of VP Postgraduates, there was a total of 13 candidates.

All candidates attends a day of training, recently organized by Paul Mould (Deputy College Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer) provided a day of training for the co-opted, staff and student members of the Council sub-committees. Whereas, KCLSU officers receive a full month long induction process, including an in depth training process for their role as trustees, as well as continued development. This may suggest a skills gap in the ability to fully engage with Council meetings whereas KCLSU officers are trustees of KCLSU so are perhaps better equipped to engage with Council.

The second student seat on the Council would be a representative of the postgraduate student population, it is undemocratic and unjust for Council to appoint this member as opposed to a democratically elected student. The experiences given by student leaders of other universities when a student who is not a full time employee of the Union sits on Council, shows that the contribution of this student can be less meaningful.

##### *Option 2: The seat is given to KCLSU officers who internally decide who will sit on Council each year*

This option is the most popular amongst other Russell Group but also non-Russell Group universities where two student officers sit on the university's governing body. This option does provide a student member who could fully participate with Council however does not provide the postgraduate representation that the student body needs.

##### *Option 3: The seat becomes an ex officio seat for the VP Postgraduates*

**This option is the recommendation we put to the Governance and Nominations committee.**

KCL is a research intensive university with a high proportion of postgraduate students who traditionally are underrepresented. In 2017, KCLSU moved to having a full time VP Postgraduates to represent the needs of PG students specifically and having this representation on council is key. Our rapidly growing postgraduate community need a voice of their elected representative on Council to ensure that the needs of this community are considered in all levels of decision making.

The disadvantage of this option would be that the person in post is likely to change every year with elections, however this means a fresh perspective is brought annually to Council.

## 5. Conclusion

The needs of postgraduate students are often unseen and unconsidered. In line with the other Russell Group, therefore KCLSU strongly suggests the inclusion of the VP Postgraduates as the second *ex officio* student seat of Council and strongly recommends option 3, as a midpoint between option 1 and 2.

Salma Hussain, KCLSU President 2020/21

18th January 2021

## Introduction

In autumn 2020 and in subsequent correspondence in winter 2021, the Chairman and the President & Principal received a petition that staff and student members of the Council of King's College London be elected. The Governance & Nominations Committee has given careful consideration to this request over several meetings and the Chairman and then President & Principal Byrne met with one of the proponents of the change, Dr Ewan McGaughey. The Committee committed to providing a full response for Council's consideration at its July meeting and this report is that response.

Council is established by our Charter and Statutes as an independent-minded body, ultimately responsible for the long-term viability and well-being of King's. It is accountable to the public and to the government with respect to the use of public funds while at the same time is responsible for defending the autonomy of the institution and its right to determine what is taught and researched. While the Charter says that Council is the 'supreme governing body' of King's, in practice, the Council is part of the effective governance arrangements in place to run a university of King's scale and ambition with much of its authority delegated to committees. This includes the Academic Board, a statutory body whose membership is representative of the entire College community, with a majority of elected academic staff. In addition to the Academic Board, the Council also works through the Finance Committee, the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee, the Remuneration Committee, the Estates Strategy Committee, the Investment Subcommittee and the Fellowships and Honorary Degrees Committee which are staffed by Council members with special expertise in these matters and other external experts – thereby bringing special expertise and deep links to the community and public at large.

## Historical Summary

As early as 1997, through the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, government was taking a view as to how universities in the UK are governed. The Committee's report (the Dearing Report), called for the establishment of a code that would provide guidance with respect to principles and best practices in university governance to assist institutions with 'their decision-making requirement and their consultative obligation', including advice with respect to appropriate membership and size of the governing body.

Dearing said further that:

- Legitimate institutional governance requires that members of the governing body are appointed on the basis of merit, taking account of any necessary balance of expertise and interests and the institution's requirements
- The findings of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) with respect to appointments to governing bodies being on the basis of merit should be endorsed
- Effective governing bodies would have a majority of lay members appointed through a nominations committee or an equivalent mechanism
- Effective governing bodies would also, to have legitimacy, include as full members some who are drawn from the students and staff of the institution
- The optimal size of a governing body should be no more than 25 (echoing the prescription in the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act that the size of governing bodies should be set between 12 and 25)

In 1997, King's Council membership was approximately 39 (the number varying with the number of Vice-Principals that might be in place at any given time). The constituency breakdown was as follows:

Ex Officio	6
Appointed	20
Elected:	
Academic Staff	8
Students	3
Professional Staff	2

With a few variations in the ex officio seats in any given year, this remained the essential structure of Council until 2009.

In 2003-2004, yet another government report, the Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration, called out the need for universities to have more effective governing structures and align with the advice of the Committee of University Chairs (CUC). Lambert noted that "Very few pre-1992 universities have managed to meet Dearing's recommendation that governing bodies should have a maximum of 25 members, despite widespread agreement that larger bodies are less effective" and King's was definitely not one of the 'very few'.

One of the recommendations of the Dearing inquiry, and taken up again by Lambert, was the creation of a formal code for university governance. This was eventually produced in 2004 by the CUC and the most current version can be found [here](#).

In 2006, in response to the CUC and government advice, and in anticipation of a new Chairman's arrival in late 2007, Council embarked on a programme of governance review and reform. Council had 41 members that year. Academic Board and the larger university community were consulted as part of the review process. That review led to the following membership, with all except the ex officio members being appointed through a nominations process:

Independent:	12
Staff	8 (including the Principal, ex officio)
Students	1 (the President of the KCLSU, ex officio)

The next full governance review, conducted in 2018-19, determined that the size of Council should remain at 21, but provided for the following structure:

Independent	12
Staff	7 (including the Principal, ex officio)
Students	2 (including the President of the KCLSU, ex officio)

The review further determined that the staff seats should be split so that three of the staff members would be elected. This was to provide a balance between the need to have executive membership on the Council and the desirability of having staff voices outside the executive as part of Council's structure. It was decided that the mechanism for the election of the three staff members would be through the Academic Board with candidates being drawn from the elected staff members of the



Board. This served two imperatives: having some of the staff seats on Council filled by election and having closer connection between Council and Academic Board (a key deficiency identified by the review). That change has been implemented. Because of delays beyond King's control in getting approval of the amendments required to Statute to create the second student seat, we have not yet been able to implement that provision and are currently holding a seat vacant in anticipation of that change.

## **The Petition**

The petition (Appendix 1) sought a return to the 1997 structure with full and free elections for all staff and student positions on Council.

A subsequent set of proposals (Appendix 2) from Dr Ewan McGaughey on behalf of the other petitioners set out a range of four options that would maintain the current size of the Council. Each of them stipulates that the majority of Council be elected staff and student representatives and a subsequent recommendation emphasises the group's belief that independent members should also be elected by staff or alumni.

## **Response**

The Committee does not agree that Council membership should be changed as proposed by the petitioners. Universities are not 'owned' by their staff and students but rather are creations of the state or benevolent founders to provide a public good and require independent accountability for use of public funds. The Council's responsibilities go far beyond the needs and desires of current students and members of staff. To insist that the majority of members be current students and staff and that those constituencies make the ultimate decision as to who sits on Council disregards Council's broad accountability to society at large and its responsibility for stewarding of the future of the College.

We would further note the following:

1. King's adheres to the CUC *Higher Education Code of Governance* which states the following:
  - The majority of the members of the governing body must be independent and external.
  - The governing body must establish a Nominations Committee (or similar) to advise it on the appointment of new members and the terms of existing members as well as the perceived skills balance required on the governing body.
  - There is an expectation that governing bodies will contain staff and student members and encourage their full and active participation.
2. King's is a large, complex institution with an annual turnover approaching £1b. The decisions taken by Council require significant business and professional expertise and with just 12 independent members, seats need to be filled with due consideration for the skills needed at any given time. Further, five of the independent members chair standing committees which require particular knowledge, experience and skills. The appointment process provides for a bespoke role description for each vacancy. In addition to their formal responsibilities, independent members provide vital advice and support that relies upon their professional knowledge and expertise. The value they have brought to the College on a range of critical matters, and all on a volunteer basis, is incalculable.

3. The current configuration of the staff seats, established in 2018, provides an appropriate balance between executive expertise and other staff voice. The three elected staff members on Council are elected by their peers: first through their election to the Academic Board, which is an election at-large within faculty and staff constituencies, and second by election from within the Academic Board itself.
4. Direct representation from the Academic Board has the advantage of creating closer links and better understanding between the senior academic decision-making body of the College and the Council. The structure we have created ensures that academic decisions are made by the body that has the true expertise while also recognising that Council carries the legal and regulatory responsibility - and liability - for decisions taken by the Academic Board. Regulators are now explicitly stating that Council is the body to be held accountable for decisions taken at the institution, making independent scrutiny more important than ever.

The petitioners provided examples of how some other successful institutions have structured their governance, particularly Harvard, Toronto and Oxford. However, there are many eminent higher education institutions whose governing structures are more similar to King's. There is no evidence to show that the success of three examples cited results from their governing structure nor that they are somehow better governed by their particular structures. Further, there are nuances with respect to those structures that King's might not view as desirable (at the University of Toronto, for example, 16 of their 24 external members are appointed by the provincial government and their total Council size is 50 members).

King's carried out a comprehensive review of its governing structure and processes in 2018-19 that resulted in significant changes to how the university is governed, including the addition of elected staff members to Council, creation of a second student seat on Council, and significant changes to the size and composition of the Academic Board to ensure that elected academic staff would be in the majority and that a wider range of community voices were heard at that table. Two years in is not the time yet again to look to make significant change. The next full-scale review is due in 2023-24 and these issues can be reviewed again at that time.

Governance & Nominations Committee  
June 2021

Appendix 1 – original petition  
Appendix 2 – subsequent submissions

28 September 2020

Council of King's College, London  
Strand, London  
WC2R 2LS



Dear Council of King's College, London,

We want King's to become democratic in 2020, and to participate in choosing our next Principal. The KCL Council – our 'supreme governing body' – makes choices about covid-19, pay freezes, pension cuts, or tuition fee rises. It is almost entirely unelected. We would like to change that.

The [King's College London Act 1997](#) required that our KCL Council had elected representatives. There were 8 elected staff members, 3 elected student members, and 2 elected professional service staff members. But in 2009, elected members were abolished without reason. Now the [Statutes](#) say there are to be 8 members of staff, and 1 student, but no elections, save 3 members appointed via the Academic Board. In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 'a cardinal tenet of democracy is that people must be free to choose freely whom they want to support.' We therefore call on the KCL Council to arrange for full and free elections.

Better universities are more representative. To give three examples, [Cambridge University](#) has 16 representatives elected by staff, and 3 by students, on its 23 person Council. The [Higher Education Governance \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) requires a minimum of 2 elected staff members, 2 trade union representatives, and 2 student representatives. [Oxford University's](#) 25 person Council has 11 members elected by staff, and 4 approved by staff, plus 3 student attendees.

There are many benefits of elected staff and student representation. Elections help resolve conflict [by democratic means](#), avoiding shutdowns and protests. Empirical evidence shows that with greater voice, there is less [strike action](#), [more productivity](#), and a [greater sense of community](#). This is important in times of crisis. But it is fundamentally a moral issue. Staff and students are the university. We are not human 'resources'. We have rights, and our voices should elect our governing body. We look forward to a positive answer from you as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely,

KCL is Democratic

[www.KCLisDemocratic.net](http://www.KCLisDemocratic.net)

*Draft timetable for KCL 2020 elections*

1. First month: Council of King's College, London gives a written commitment to hold elections for at least 8 academic staff, 3 students, and 2 professional service staff members.
2. First month: any necessary negotiations are held on the timing, and voting regulations for new elections.
3. Second month: Statutes of King's College, London are amended through a resolution of the Council to reflect the new settlement. Arrangements are made for electronic voting.
4. Third month: elections by staff are held for new members of King's College, London.
5. Third month: in consultation with the KCL Student Union, arrangements are made for student representation, acknowledging (1) that student union elections usually take place each February, (2) that it may be desirable to align these dates, and (3) to pay regard to degree structures of Masters and PhD programmes, as well as undergraduates.

## Options for democratic reform of the KCL Council

9 March 2021<sup>1</sup>

This note sets out options for the KCL Council, our ‘supreme governing body’, to become democratically accountable. It summarises how the most successful universities are the most democratic, the general benefits of democratic governance, the drawbacks of large numbers of self-perpetuating members, and the legal text for amendments to the KCL Charter and Statutes.

### 1. Democratic universities are successful

The world’s universities with the greatest long-term success are the most democratic. For example,

- Oxford has a 25 person Council, with 11 elected by staff, 4 external members approved by staff, and 3 non-voting students,<sup>2</sup>
- Cambridge has a 25 person Council, with 16 elected by staff, 2 by students,<sup>3</sup>
- Harvard has 13 members among the ‘President and Fellows of the College’, and these can be vetoed by the ‘Board of Overseers’ whose 30 members are elected by alumni,<sup>4</sup>
- Toronto has a 50 member Governing Council with 14 elected by staff, 8 by alumni, 8 by students, 16 appointed by the lieutenant governor, plus the chancellor, president, and 2 of the president’s appointees.<sup>5</sup>

There are many governance models and no single ‘right’ option. However, a basic idea is reflected in these four examples: majority accountability through the vote, to staff and students or alumni.

### 2. The benefits of democratic governance

King’s College, London has a variety of options. There are significant benefits, short and long-term, from a majority-elected membership of the KCL Council. With more staff elected members, there will be gains in trust and confidence, and the pre-emption of conflicts. Long-standing evidence shows that when people participate in the governance of their workplaces, they are more productive, happy and innovative.<sup>6</sup> With more student representation there may be similar benefits, although student voice usually tends to be more limited. Students are not just ‘consumers’, they are members of a community. Harvard and Toronto’s examples of alumni voice provide longer-lasting student engagement: ex-students engage, with career expertise, and feel part of a long-term community. From a financial perspective, it may be that donation levels are raised when people have real voice. It would also appear that people genuinely do care about the success of their current or former institution.

*Options for KCL*

<sup>1</sup> Prepared for Lord Geidt, Chair of the Council of King’s College London.

<sup>2</sup> University of Oxford, Statute VI [arts 4 and 13](#). Oxford University Act 1854 [ss 5, 16 and 21](#)

<sup>3</sup> University of Cambridge, Statute [A.IV.1](#). Cambridge University Act 1856 [ss 5 and 12](#)

<sup>4</sup> See further at [www.harvard.edu/about-harvard/leadership-and-governance/](http://www.harvard.edu/about-harvard/leadership-and-governance/)

<sup>5</sup> University of Toronto Act 1971 [s 2](#)

<sup>6</sup> e.g. P Blumberg, *Industrial Democracy: the Sociology of Participation* (1974) chs 1 and 2, VV Acharya, RP Baghai and KV Subramanian, ‘Labor laws and innovation’ (2013) [56\(4\) Journal of Law and Economics](#) 997, and Z Adams, L Bishop, S Deakin, C Fenwick, S Martinsson and G Rusconi, ‘The economic significance of laws relating to employment protection and different forms of employment: Analysis of a panel of 117 countries, 1990–2013’ (2019) [158\(1\) International Labour Review](#) 1

KCL should ideally combine the best models, and acknowledge that best corporate governance practice means smaller boards. Without increasing the KCL Council size from its current 19 members, four examples could be:

- (1) 8 members elected by academic staff, 2 by non-academic staff, 3 by students and 6 members *ex-officio* or co-opted (this is the KCL Act 1997 model, except the Council size remains at 19, not 35),
- (2) 8 members elected by all staff (academic or not) on a one person, one vote basis, 5 members elected by students and alumni, and the remaining 5 members *ex-officio* or co-opted (this is similar to Toronto),
- (3) 12 elected by staff, with some weighting according to seniority, 2 appointees from the KCLSU, and the remaining 5 *ex-officio* or co-opted (these are similar proportions to Cambridge or Oxford)
- (4) 5 members elected directly by staff, 3 appointed by the respective trade unions, 2 elected by students, and the remainder appointed *ex-officio* or co-opted. (The addition of union representatives mirrors Scottish universities.<sup>7</sup>)

### 3. Self-appointed and independent members

As a matter of principle, it is very difficult to justify members of a governing body appointing their successors without any accountability through the vote. Sometimes the interests of staff, students and the broader public may have to be balanced, but few people (if any) would accept that management itself should be its own interest group, let alone one that should monopolise governance. Management represents. At a university it should act in the public interest. The best guarantee for acting in the public interest is representation of staff, students and alumni, coupled with independent and lay members. Independent members can also be elected by staff (as in the case of Oxford's external members) or alumni (as in Harvard). Where there are independent or lay members, the best practice suggests they should mostly be elected.

### 4. Legal text for amendments

The options outlined above could be written into the existing Charter and Statutes of King's College, London with minimal disturbance to the existing framework.<sup>8</sup> In the current Statutes, article 1 currently reads:

1. The Council shall consist of the following persons:

- (i) those appointed by the Council, on the recommendation of the Council's Nominations Committee, in accordance with the Ordinances, who shall number up to 20 members of whom 12 shall be lay members and 8 shall be members of the staff of the College to include the Principal and President.
- (ii) the President of the King's College London Students' Union ("the Students' Union").

This is unsatisfactory, because it lets existing Council members appoint themselves in perpetuity, excepting the KCLSU president. It falls far behind the King's College, London Act 1997. It fails to state that 'staff' members should be elected by staff. So, for example, to implement option (1) article 1 could be changed as follows:

1. The Council shall consist of the following persons in accordance with the Ordinances:

<sup>7</sup> Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 requires at least 2 academic staff, 2 trade union appointees, 2 student appointees, 1 elected by all constituents. Conflicts of interest, such as a union executive also being on Council, may be undesirable.

<sup>8</sup> King's College London Charter and Statutes [art 1](#), and Ordinances, [B.4](#). King's College London Act 1997 [s 15](#).

- (i) the chair, the principal, and 4 other members, appointed on the recommendation of the Council's Nominations Committee,
- (ii) 8 persons elected by academic staff and 2 persons elected by non-academic staff,
- (iii) the president and 2 vice-presidents of the King's College, London Students' Union.

To implement this, or option (2) without distinction among academic or non-academic staff members and adding alumni, or option (3) with some seniority weighting, changes to the Statute should be accompanied by changes to the Ordinances. For example, for option (2), insert the following in Ordinance B4.1 Membership:

1. The Governance & Nominations Committee of the Council shall be responsible for putting before the Council recommendations for the Council's membership, having due regard to the provisions of Statute 1 which prescribes the composition of the Council's membership. **For elected members, the Committee shall organise elections in March each year. Elections shall be conducted by electronic means that ensure voting is secret, that all staff, students and alumni who are entitled to vote are informed, and that each person has one vote.** In bringing forward nominations for **appointed** membership of the Council the Governance & Nominations Committee shall also have due regard to the background, expertise and experience required within the membership of the Council and shall take into account any matters arising from relevant legislation as from time to time in force.

Similar changes could be made to implement option (4). In each of these cases, further considerations include:

- which software is most appropriate: KCL has already used adequate programmes for Academic Board and KCLSU elections,
- whether staff elections should be direct, or it is desirable to build upon indirect elections of staff through the Academic Board. The advantage of this may be simplicity: elections via Academic Board avoid a KCL-wide voting operation. The disadvantage is that staff may feel their Council connection is more remote. It also tends to confuse the role of an Academic Board (which, following its name, should have binding decision-power over academic affairs) with the governance function of the Council,
- whether weighted representation of faculties is desirable on the Council, or whether the Academic Board is the proper forum for this. The advantage of constituency-based representation is that all issues may be presented affecting all groups of staff. The disadvantage is that faculties differ widely in size, and the current 9 faculties may not match the desired number of members of Council.

In general, it would appear that for the Council, direct voting is the most workable, and is the model followed in Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard or Toronto.

## Proposed Council and Committee Dates 2022/23

The following proposed dates for 2022-23 follow the recently approved revisions to the meeting cycle pattern for 2021-22:

BODY	2021-22 APPROVED SCHEDULE	BODY	PROPOSED 2022-23 SCHEDULE
ESC	Thurs 9 Sept 2021 (also holding date Joint ESC/FC)	ESC	Thurs 8 Sept 2022 (also holding date Joint ESC/FC)
Council Away Day	Wed 22 September 2021 (Strategic Focus – no cttee items)	Council Away Day	Wed 21 September 2022 (Strategic Focus – no cttee items)
GNC	Thurs 30 September 2021	GNC	Weds 28 September 2022
Academic Board	Wed 3 Nov 21	Academic Board	Wed 2 Nov 2022
ESC	Mon 8 November 2021	ESC	Mon 7 November 2022
ARCC	Tues 9 November 2021	ARCC	Tues 8 November 2022
FHDC	Thurs 11 November 2021	FHDC	Thurs 10 November 2022
Finance	Mon 15 November 2021	Finance	Mon 14 November 2022
Council	Tues 23 November 2021	Council	Tues 22 November 2022
Academic Board	Wed 8 December 2021 (Strategic Focus – no cttee items)	Academic Board	Wed 7 December 2022 (Strategic Focus – no cttee items)
Joint ESC/Finance	Tuesday 18 January 2022 (holding – cancel if no business)	Joint ESC/Finance	Tuesday 17 January 2023 (holding – cancel if no business)
Council (Strategic)	Thurs 20 January 2022 (Strategic focus – no cttee items)	Council (Strategic)	Thurs 19 January 2023 (Strategic focus – no cttee items)
GNC	Thurs 3 February 2022	GNC	Thurs 2 February 2023
ARCC	Wed 9 February 2022	ARCC	Wed 8 February 2023
ESC	Tues 1 March 2022	ESC	Tues 28 February 2023
Academic Board	Wed 9 March 2022	Academic Board	Wed 8 March 2023
Finance	Thurs 10 March 2022	Finance	Thurs 9 March 2023
Council	Thurs 31 March 22	Council	Thurs 30 March 2023
Academic Board	<b>STRATEGIC – NO CTTEE ITEMS</b> Wed 20 April 22	Academic Board	<b>STRATEGIC – NO CTTEE ITEMS</b> Wed 19 April 2023
Joint ESC/Finance	Thurs 5 May 2022 (holding – cancel if no business)	Joint ESC/Finance	Thurs 4 May 2023 (holding – cancel if no business)
Council	Thurs, 12 May 2022	Council	Thurs, 11 May 2023
GNC	Wed 18 May 2022	GNC	Wed 17 May 2023
ARCC	Tues 7 June 2022	ARCC	Tues 6 June 2023
ESC	Thurs 16 June 2022	ESC	Thurs 15 June 2023
Finance	Wed 22 June 2022	Finance	Wed 21 June 2023
Academic Board	Wed 29 June 22	Academic Board	Wed 28 June 2023
Council	Wed 13 July 22	Council	Wed 12 July 2023



## Proposed Ordinance Change

Amendments shown in track change below

### Academic Board

(Ordinance Appendix B, 1 August 2020)



#### Terms of Reference

##### 1. Authority

Under delegated authority from Council, and in accordance with the College Charter, the Academic Board is the body with primary responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the academic quality of the College's academic provision and the academic standards for awards. Reports from the Academic Board provide Council with the assurances of academic quality it needs to ensure that the objects of the College, as described in the Charter and the College's strategic plans, are fulfilled. This assurance also enables Council to meet its obligations in reporting to the Regulator on academic standards and quality.

Further, Academic Board advises Council and the Executive on academic matters of strategic importance to the welfare and long-term sustainability of the institution, the quality of the student and staff experience, the quality of research, and the experience of researchers. In so doing, it conveys the academic experience, knowledge and views of the staff and students to Council on matters impacting on academic development and education and research quality.

##### 2. Powers & Duties

The powers and duties of the Academic Board include the following:

- 2.1 Assuring Council of the academic quality of the College's academic provision and the academic standards for all of its awards.
- 2.2 Conveying advice to Council and the Executive drawing on the academic experience, knowledge and views of staff and students on matters which have an impact on academic development, education and research quality and are of strategic importance to the welfare and long-term sustainability of the institution, student and staff experience, both on proposals submitted to it by the Executive, and on academic issues that the Academic Board itself has determined to be critical to the university.
- 2.3 Awarding degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic distinctions in accordance with the prescriptions of the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations.
- 2.4 Approving award titles, programmes of study, and research programmes leading to an award.
- 2.5 Promoting research and innovation within the College and monitoring the effective operation of key policies concerning research.
- 2.6 Establishing committees and subcommittees as appropriate for the expedient execution of business, clearly stating limits of delegated authority, responsibility and reporting arrangements in each case and to monitor the work of these committees and subcommittees.

Deleted: specific

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Deleted: to monitor

2.7 ~~Approving regulations for~~ academic misconduct and student discipline ~~and receiving annual reports on misconduct.~~

Deleted: Regulating

2.8 ~~Approving~~, amending and revoking regulations concerning the academic work of the College in teaching and examining and in research.

Deleted: Adding

2.9 ~~Annex 1 provides an index of issues dealt with by the Academic Board and indicates whether individual items are recommended to Council for approval, approved by the Board, or are approved by a Committee of the Board through delegation from the Board.~~

### 3. Composition

#### *Chair*

3.1 The President and Principal shall chair the Academic Board.

3.2 The Chair shall appoint a Deputy Chair to act in ~~their~~ absence from amongst the members of the Board.

Deleted: his/her

#### *Ex-officio members*

3.3 The Senior Vice Presidents for Arts & Sciences and Health, Vice Presidents, Executive Deans, President and Education Vice Presidents of the King's College London Students' Union, ~~the Executive Director of King's Education~~ and the Dean for Doctoral Studies shall be ex-officio members of the Academic Board.

#### *Elected Staff Members*

Throughout this document the term "faculty" is as defined in the King's College London Ordinance B3.

3.4 Three academic staff members on contracts which include teaching from each faculty (and four in the case of larger faculties) will be elected by and from the academic staff members on contracts which include teaching in that faculty. One Head of Department or equivalent will be elected from each faculty by the whole staff of the faculty. Each faculty will determine its own head of department equivalent list of eligible nominees and the seat may only be filled by an eligible candidate from that list.

3.5 Three members of professional staff, one each from education support, research support and service support will be elected by and from the professional staff.

3.6 One member of the academic staff on research-only contracts will be elected by and from the academic staff on research-only contracts of the health faculties and one of the academic staff on research only contracts will be elected by and from the academic staff on research-only contracts of the arts & sciences faculties.

#### *Elected Student members*

3.7 One student shall be elected by and from the students registered within each Faculty, the nine positions to be split equally between undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students.

#### **4. Frequency of Meetings**

The Academic Board will normally meet at least five times a year and as necessary to consider the matters within the scope of its terms of reference.

#### **5. Meeting Content and Style**

- 5.1 The meeting style will be facilitative and discussion focused. The Academic Board will use a range of engagement processes such as workshops and other types of interactive methods to gather the views of the university community.
- 5.2 The agenda shall be set by the Chair and supported by the College Secretary. Members of the Academic Board will be able to suggest issues for the agenda.
- 5.3 Papers will be succinct and items presented in a style that provides maximum time for debate and input from members.

#### **6. Reporting Procedures**

- 6.1 Academic Board meeting papers will be made available to the College community prior to each meeting, excepting those items that may need to be dealt with in confidential session.
- 6.2 A report of each meeting of the Academic Board will be presented to the College Council.

#### **7. Terms of Membership**

- 7.1 Elected Staff Members of Academic Board shall serve a three-year term, with the possibility of re-election/appointment for a further single three-year term.
- 7.2 Elected Student Members of Academic Board are eligible to be re-elected for a maximum of three consecutive one-year terms.

#### **8. Attendance**

- 8.1 Only members of the Academic Board have the right to attend Board meetings. However, other individuals and external advisers may be invited to attend for all or part of any meeting, as and when appropriate.
- 8.2 Members who fail to attend three consecutive meetings will be required to demonstrate good cause for an absence; members who fail to attend meetings for six consecutive calendar months without good cause found acceptable by the Chair of the Board will be deemed to have resigned.

#### **9. Subcommittees of Academic Board**

The Terms of Reference and composition of the subcommittees of the Academic Board are provided in these Ordinances.

- (i) Academic Board Operations Committee
- (ii) College Education Committee
- (iii) College Research Committee
- (iv) College International Committee
- (v) College London Committee
- (vi) College Service Committee

## Annex to the Proposed New Ordinance - no approval required

### Academic Decision Authority Index

All authority set out below, other than that listed for Council, has been delegated to Academic Board and remains a power of the Board. This index shows the current operational delegation agreed by the Board for the time being.



#### Academic Board Power and Duty 1 – Academic quality and standards of awards

Issue	Recommend	Recommend	Approve
Academic policy	-	CEC	Academic Board
Annual Quality Assurance and other reports to the Regulator	CEC or other standing committee as relevant	Academic Board	Council
Credit Framework	-	CEC	Academic Board
Assessment process, external examiner appointment	ASSC	CEC	Academic Board
Cross-university education operational actions	ASSC	CEC	Academic Board
External Peer appointment	-	-	CEC
International Partnership agreements – including risk management & due diligence	-	-	CIC
Local education operational actions			Faculty

#### Academic Board Power and Duty 2 – Academic advice to Council and the executive

Issue	Recommend	Recommend	Approve
University overarching strategy	Principal	Academic Board	Council
Constitute or dissolve faculties	Principal	Academic Board	Council
Composition of faculties	-	Faculty	Principal
Education strategy implementation, policy	-	CEC	Academic Board
Research strategy implementation, policy	-	CRC	Academic Board
International strategy implementation, policy	-	CIC	Academic Board
London strategy implementation, policy	-	CLC	Academic Board
Service strategy implementation, policy	-	CSC	Academic Board
KCL/KCLSU Relationship Agreement	-	CEC	Academic Board
Academic Year dates	-	CEC	Academic Board

#### Academic Board Power and Duty 3 – Awarding degrees, diplomas and certificates

Issue	Recommend	Recommend	Approve
Individual student awards	-		Assess. Boards
Elect AKCs	-	The Dean	Academic Board

**Academic Board Power and Duty 4 – Approving award titles and programmes**

Issue	Recommend	Recommend	Approve
New programmes & major programme amendments	PDASC	CEC	Academic Board
Validation of programmes delivered elsewhere	-	CEC	Academic Board
Minor Modifications to Programmes and Modules	-	PDASC	CEC

**Academic Board Power and Duty 5 – Promoting research and innovation**

Issue	Recommend	Recommend	Approve
Research quality assurance processes and regulations	-	CRC	Academic Board
Research governance, ethics and integrity processes	-	CRC	Academic Board
REF submission	-	-	CRC

**Academic Board Power and Duty 6 – Establishing committees and delegation limits**

Issue	Recommend	Recommend	Approve
Academic Board terms of reference & composition	ABOC	Academic Board	Council
Council Membership election process	ABOC	Academic Board	Council
AB Committee terms of reference	ABOC	Academic Board	Council
Academic Board election & appointment process	ABOC	Academic Board	Council
AB Committee election/appointment process	-	ABOC	Academic Board
Delegations of Academic Board's authority	-	ABOC	Academic Board
Academic Board functioning policies and procedures	-	ABOC	Academic Board
Annual Schedule of Academic Board business	-	ABOC	Academic Board
Academic Board effectiveness review processes	-	ABOC	Academic Board

**Academic Board Power and Duty 7 – Regulating academic misconduct and student discipline**

Issue	Recommend	Recommend	Approve
Academic misconduct and student discipline regulations	ASSC	CEC	Academic Board

**Academic Board Power and Duty 8 – Approving, amending and revoking academic regulations**

Issue	Recommend	Recommend	Approve
Approve academic & library regulations	ASSC	CEC	Academic Board
Research Regulations	ASSC	CRC	Academic Board

<b>King's College Council</b>	
<b>Meeting date</b>	14 July 2021
<b>Paper reference</b>	KCC-21-07-14-07.2
<b>Status</b>	Final
<b>Access</b>	Members and senior executives

## Report of the Finance Committee

Contents	Meeting at which considered	Consent agenda	Council action
1. Financial Plan 2021/2022 [REDACTED]	23 June 2021	No	Approve
2. [REDACTED]	23 June 2021	No	Approve
3. Research Overheads	23 June 2021	No	Note
4. Health Budget Progress	23 June 2021	Yes	Note
5. Financial Statement Accounting Issues 2020/2021	23 June 2021	Yes	Note
6. Quad Engineering Update	23 June 2021	Yes	Note
7. Debt Repayment Fund Proposal	23 June 2021	Yes	Note
8. SAUL Pension Valuation	23 June 2021	Yes	Note
9. Pensions Consultation Update	23 June 2021	Yes	Note
10. Stamford Street Settlement of Lloyd's Lease Update	23 June 2021	Yes	Note
11. Debt Issue Update	23 June 2021	Yes	Note
12. Ethical Investment Policy	23 June 2021	Yes	Note
13. Member Appointments	23 June 2021	Yes	Note

### For Approval

#### 1. Financial Plan 2021/2022

**Motion:** That the operating budget of £27.5m and £72.3m capital plan for 2021/2022 (**at Annex 1**) be approved.

#### Summary

The 2021/2022 budget has been prepared by the Executive based on a recognition that the university is beginning to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact this has had on the overall university including its immediate and perspective finances. Essentially, this budget has been a bottom-up process with some judgement overlay covering a number of issues including risk provisions and a recognition that the incoming President & Principal will need to address the fundamental below-target accretion of margin which has characterised the university's finances for a number of years while investment in several strategic initiatives was being undertaken by management consistent with the Council approved strategy.

[REDACTED]

The Executive believes this a realistic budget for 2021, coming out of Covid with some residual costs and provision for losses, particularly in trading areas. It does not yet have the level recognised as necessary over the cycle by the new Principal. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Finance Committee has reviewed the budget and balanced the stretch needed to meet higher targets earlier against the need for realism to achieve a stronger financial position. The Committee noted the activity planned for efficiency plans to be developed through the year, coupled with expectations to release inherent financial gain from provisions currently held. These will be taken forward by the Principal and further discussed at Finance Committee.

The Chief Financial Officer will present details of the budget and the key drivers at Council.

2. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
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[REDACTED]

**For Note**

**3. Research Overheads**

The Committee considered a report from the VP (Research) summarising the changes that are being implemented to address the growing levels of financial subsidy for research.

[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

The level of confidence in identifying financial opportunity per scheme has increased [REDACTED] possible by the Research Management and Innovation Directorate (RMID) Improving Recovery ‘one team’ research management transformation programme supported by the new systems (worktribe) implementation. A further 20 schemes are being developed. Incremental improvements reflect the lag from grant submissions under new controls to awards over a three-to-four-year cycle.

Finance Committee noted that this plan still felt aspirational, leaving the Committee rather skeptical that the level of change would indeed be achieved given the sustainable deterioration in recovery rates in the last few years (absolute and relative to peer group). The Committee noted also that further work was required, or needed to be reported to Committee, to explain how this was to be achieved together with a full plan and associated lead responsibilities. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Chair of the Finance Committee, Principal and VP (Research) would discuss mechanisms to achieve this.



#### **4. Health Budget Progress [Consent Agenda]**

Finance Committee noted a report of the positive movement in contribution from the Health Schools [REDACTED] in 2021/22. Within this, a significant proportion comes from the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience to deliver both the incremental contribution increase requested to underpin the IoPPN's investment in CYP, and in addition, along with other faculties, careful restraint in academic recruitment and a focus on the performance of academic staff within the university.

The VP (Finance) would circulate a breakdown of income and expenditure and further detail taken from the Financial Accounts papers giving clarity on the levers that would be pulled on specific streams that were accountable for specific improvement to get to the betterment level.

#### **5. Financial Statement Accounting Issues 2020/2021 [Consent Agenda]**

Finance Committee considered key accounting issues and policy changes affecting the preparation of the 2020/21 group financial statements and approved the adoption of an increased threshold for the capitalisation of fixed assets from 2021/22 onwards, at £50K. It noted considerations of going concern risk, loan covenant position and updated responses to recommendations from KPMG. The preparation of the Annual Accounts was expected to be similar to last year, but with heightened stress-testing.

The accounting issues that would materially impact on the 2021 Financial Statements would be pension provision, the increased accrual for remedial works required on Champion Hill student accommodation (£5-7m), and research income double counting of some assets purchased prior to 31 July 2018 (£7.8m). The university was continuing to pursue subcontractors for Champion Hill, the main contractor having been declared bankrupt, but was not expecting success. The new finance system has removed the reliance on individual records which had caused the inconsistent research income accounting and Members asked whether it was possible to check that there weren't any other unknowns in the light of this discovery.

#### **6. Quad Engineering Update [Consent Agenda]**

Finance Committee endorsed Council's approval of the revisions to the Quad development project budget in light of the impact of the Covid pandemic: to open for use in September 2022 rather than 2021 as originally planned; and to increase the capital costs from £50m (consisting of £47m programme budget + an unallocated reserve of £3m) to £54.1m (comprising £50.5m project budget plus an additional £3.6m) to be held by the CFO for the following risks:

- (i) £2 million to mitigate against the risk of Covid and Brexit inflating material and labour prices for work packages 3 and 4 above our cost consultants (Turner & Townsend's) pre-tender estimate. This contingency will require discretionary approval to spend by the CFO, with the balance returned to central funds in July 2021 once tenders are received.
- (ii) £1.6 million to mitigate against a further significant and unprecedented impact of Covid on both the construction project but also the delivery of Engineering teaching and research, in the event that this unlikely impact delays the delivery of the Quad beyond September 2022.

## **7. Debt Repayment Fund Proposal [Consent Agenda]**

Finance Committee approved the creation and additional seed funding of £10m in 2020-21 of a 'Debt Repayment Fund' together with underlying guiding principles to allow King's to settle bullet repayment debts when they fall due.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Fund will be overseen by the Executive in line with the Treasury Management Policy and will rely on low-risk investment. The Committee recognised that this was different to the income generating investment activity considered by the Investment Subcommittee, but recommended that advice be sought from the experts on that subcommittee and on the Finance Committee.

## **8. SAUL Pension Valuation [Consent Agenda]**

Finance Committee approved the following proposals set out by the SAUL Negotiating Committee:

- (i) The introduction of a three-year DC Feeder Scheme from Q1 2023, with a strong preference for this to be set up inside the SAUL Trust.
- (ii) Employer contributions for Members accruing DB CARE benefits to be increased by 5% of salaries in two steps. The first increase from 16% to 19% of salaries will take place from 1 April 2022 and then to 21% of salaries from 1 January 2023.
- (iii) A Memorandum of Understanding ("MoU") between the Union side and the Employer side of the SNC in relation to safeguarding assurances in respect of SAUL's CARE benefit structure; the MoU will also recognise the impact of the 0-3 year service Members on the current Contribution Strain.

The scheme is in reasonable health and in surplus taking account of post Covid review. Further work is needed to agree the fine details.

## **9. Pensions Consultation Update [Consent Agenda]**

Finance Committee noted King's 24 May 2021 submission to the UUK consultation on the USS Pension Scheme, approved by Chairs' Committee meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> May. It also noted the encouraging UUK summary statement made on 14th June 2021 presenting the views of 95% of employers with a majority of employers expressing a similar view to King's that current costs are at the limits of affordability, accepting change as inevitable with a significant

majority wanting to maintain a strong DB hybrid and showing strong support for greater flexibility in the scheme. There was also majority support for the UUK proposal of pension reforms with further interest in exploring conditional indexation.

USS had costed the UUK alternative proposal at 31.2% of salary (current 30.7%), within scope of current pricing and with some movement from the Trustee towards UUK's advisors views on longer term recovery. For this there are covenant and debt monitoring measures that USS are asking for with more work needed to refine the detail and the Committee noted the impact on King's. An indicative response had been received by the time of the Finance Committee meeting which showed that the UUK and USS positions were starting to come together. UUK has stressed the importance of maintaining the sector together and that there is a small window of opportunity at this point to deliver pension benefit change in line with meeting the constraints of current costs for staff and employers. USS will be statutorily bound to implement the October increase to 34.7% and thereafter increases in line with pricing provided for current benefits. The JNC continue to discuss and the deadline for their conclusion is the end of August 2021.

Finance Committee noted that this matter brought together strategic and management matters around the submission already approved by Council and noted the report.

[Post-Meeting Note: Since the Committee meeting a further mini consultation has been launched to secure covenant measures USS feels is necessary to drive pricing to 31.5%. This is a critical time for the sector to remain together. These requests include amendments to principles already agreed for pari-passu (security) and longer-term commitment. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
This was confirmed by Chair's Action given the short turnaround.]

**10. Stamford Street Settlement of Lloyd's Lease Update [Consent Agenda]**

Finance Committee noted that the Chair of the Estates Strategy Committee had indicated his support for its recommendation that Council approve the settlement of the Lloyds lease on Stamford Street residence, actioning the option to collapse the lease arrangement and take freehold ownership of the building. Council had approved the recommendation subject to the support of the Chair of ESC.

**11. Debt Issue Update [Consent Agenda]**

The debt offering had been successfully made and subscribed for in March 2021, with £125m of loan notes agreed to be issued in tranches set out for the Committee alongside the specific counterparties. The first drawdowns commenced in June 2021 with £105m drawn down, the remaining £20m to be drawn down in March 2022.

**12. Ethical Investment Policy [Consent Agenda]**

The VP (Finance) and SVP (Operations) intended to review the Investment Policy and would return to Finance Committee with a draft in due course after consideration by the Investments Subcommittee.

**13. Member Appointments [Consent Agenda]**

Finance Committee approved the reappointment of Investment Subcommittee members

Simon Pryke and Rob Gambi for a further term of three years to commence on 1 August 2021.

The Committee also noted that Governance and Nominations Committee would recommend Council approval of the reappointment of Andrew Scott to Finance Committee for a further year.

#### **14. Thanks**

The Committee expressed its deep gratitude to Angela Dean and Peter Clarke for their outstanding service to the Committee on the occasion of their last meeting.

Michael D'Souza  
Chair of Finance Committee  
June 2021

These pages have been redacted

## Report of the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee

Contents	Meeting at which considered	Consent agenda	Council action
1. Fundraising Operations Annual Report ( <b>Annex 1</b> ) <i>RESERVED</i>	08 June 2021	No	Approve
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
4. External Audit Strategy	08 June 2021	Yes	Note
5. Internal Audit Update	08 June 2021	Yes	Note
6. Risk presentations and discussions:	08 June 2021	Yes	Note
a. Financial Recovery & Sustainability (FRS) Project ( <b>Annex 3</b> )			
b. Professional Service Ways of Working ( <b>Annex 4</b> )			

### For approval

#### 1. Fundraising Operations Annual Report [*RESERVED*]

Motion: That the Fundraising Operations Annual Report be approved

Background:

The Associate Director of Fundraising Operations presented a report to the Committee and noted that the pandemic had presented significant challenges to compliance. A significant proportion of fundraising operations are office-based and involve the handling of donations. Therefore, given the recent environmental context, this has not operated in accordance with the business-as-usual process design and temporary arrangements have had to be made. However, appropriate interim arrangements had been established to mitigate the risk and the situation is now improving as staff begin to return to campus.

It was also noted that a data breach had occurred within the last year at a vendor company (Blackbaud), which had resulted in a large number of contact details for alumni donors and NHS Trust donors being exfiltrated by hackers. This issue had affected many other institutions in the sector. A report had been filed with the Information Commissioner's Office, who were satisfied that the College had mounted an appropriate response. The Data Protection Officer and College Legal Counsel had been involved throughout, as well as external counsel. A new database solution will come into service from May 2022. It was reported that, for the most part, alumni have a great deal of confidence in the handling of their data by the College.

**The ARCC recommended the Fundraising Operations Annual Report to College Council for approval.**

[REDACTED]

#### 2.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

#### For note

■ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

#### 4. External Audit Strategy

The external auditors laid out their strategy for the audit of the 2020-21 accounts. The landscape of significant audit risks was summarised and generally it was assessed as being in a stable state compared to the previous year. The exception was in relation to the risk around *going concern*, which has been assessed as reduced from last year. It was noted that the revaluation of land last year would add to the complexity of the audit. As usual, there would be a focus on the risks from management override of

control, although this is a standard risk in any external audit and is not especially heightened for the College. With regards to revenue recognition, KPMG would apply their standard procedures and tests, which would differ depending on the type of income under consideration. The overall levels and percentages of materiality used for the previous audit have not changed, and these were all set out in the strategy paper distributed to the members prior to the meeting. The engagement partner confirmed the independence of KPMG in carrying out this work for the College.

The ARCC approved the external audit strategy for the 2020-21 accounts.

## **5. Internal Audit update**

Six Internal audit reports were presented to this meeting of the ARCC, as well as a proposed framework for tracking outstanding recommendations for past audit reviews. The members' attention was drawn to two reviews in particular, where the auditors considered significant improvement was required. These were the reviews of Student Conduct and Appeals casework and the management of international educational partnerships.

With regard to the review of Student Conduct and Appeals, it was noted that a majority of cases progress through a process which is broadly effective. However, the review found that there was room for improvement in the management of cases which are sensitive and complex or brought as a group or at scale. Management agrees with this view and have started to prepare a remediation plan based on the recommendations of the review.

The review of the development and management of international educational partnerships had demonstrated that processes in this area are inconsistent. This is indicative of insufficient coordination arising from projects being initiated in different management work streams. There is no unified process by which they are managed. It was noted that the Vice-Principal (International) was working through the management line to propose a way forward. The findings of the report have been broadly accepted. The Director of International Strategy presented a follow-up report to a previous ARCC presentation and noted that the findings and recommendations of the Internal Audit review would be included in the ongoing improvement process for the management of international risk. The Committee noted that the Director of International Strategy's analysis was excellent, and the resulting plan is sensible. ARCC will keep this area in its view and there will be a further update at an ARCC meeting in 2022.

The ARCC approved the Internal Audit activity report.

The Internal Audit Plan for the 2021-22 year was also approved by the ARCC. The Committee is particularly supportive of the addition of a review of the management processes around freedom of speech for the coming year.

## **6. Risk presentations and discussion**

The ARCC members received presentations on two risk topics at this meeting. A discussion on the risks relating to the financial strategy and, in particular, how the Financial Recovery & Sustainability project was contributing to the achievement of a viable surplus in the coming years. Members also received an update on the progress of the Professional Service Ways of Working project, which is starting to form in earnest as the university prepares to reoccupy the campuses following the pandemic lockdowns.

The ARCC noted that both presentations demonstrated excellent analysis and that the resulting plans seemed very sensible. The ARCC will come back to receive assurances on the progress of the projects and that the objectives were being met, particularly in relation to productivity improvements.



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## Minute of the Risk Topic: Financial Recovery & Sustainability (FRS) Project

### 14 Strategic Risk Management: Financial Recovery & Sustainability (FRS) Project

The Director of Fundraising and Supporter Development Strategy and Operations, who manages the FRS project, reported that this programme of work is intended to develop capability to support the university in achieving financial sustainability. He noted that this was currently being run as a project, but the principles of the project should be subsumed into Business as Usual so that they become normal practice. The delivery of the programme has been considered along with its efficiency targets, and in its nascent state it is currently narrow in scope. In total ninety-six efficiency schemes of differing scales have been identified so far. At the maximum efficiency level, it is expected that savings and efficiencies totalling £56m should be achievable over a six-year period. The programme is currently concerned primarily with identifying efficiencies in Professional Services and Research. Communication and engagement will be vital as the best ideas come from within organisations, so encouraging people on the ground to contribute ideas for efficiencies is key to the success of the programme. It was noted, though, that cultural attitudes towards efficiency may need to change and that the process needs to be embraced. A number of schemes are only monitored annually. Therefore, it may be necessary to implement short-term measures to determine whether sufficient progress is being made. The value of a system such as Worktribe, which has recently been implemented into the Research Management area, to support the monitoring of efficiency measures is evident.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer commented that the programme has started to create impetus for improved performance and the inclusion of financial metrics thus improving the quality of information available. Discussions with Deans and Academic Heads of Department about savings had progressed and changing perceptions within faculties will be key to the success of an ongoing efficiency process. This programme is likely to be more successful than previous attempts because of a strong focus and better engagement. Key staff are starting to understand that improved efficiency can generate much-needed surpluses. It was also noted that consideration of issues such as the use of space, capital projects and end-to-end operations provide valuable insights into the plan for recovery and sustainability.

The Chair commended the work which had been done so far and the aspiration and requested an update on progress against the projections contained in this report in nine months' time.

## Minute of the Risk Topic: Professional Services Ways of Working

### 15 Strategic Risk Management: Professional Service Ways of Working

The Senior Vice-President (Operations) provided an update on the new ways of operating model for Professional Services, including a review of the changes to the leadership of the area. It was noted that the College's decisions around its Professional Service reform had initially been data driven, making use of Cubane benchmarking (a methodology bought in from a third party). This had the effect of improving resilience and good progress had been made on professional strengthening. However, the attempt to align the Professional Services functionally through the institution had proved to be less successful, meeting resistance from faculties who perceived it to be a move towards centralisation.

However, the investment in professional strengthening has proved beneficial in the context of the pandemic. The crisis has had a unifying effect, leading to a sense of shared priorities and improving collaborative working between the centre and the faculties, and between professional services and academic staff. The more agile, inclusive decision-making is popular with Professional Services staff. A study, conducted by the Director of Corporate Strategy, which surveyed staff across the College to explore new ways of working revealed that they value sustainability, engagement with leadership and being trusted to discharge their duties without monitoring. This should yield benefits after the pandemic, which is what the Ways of Working project will be focusing on.

As a result, flexible working is envisaged, subject to the needs of jobs roles and the university, and a hybrid of working from home and on campus is likely to be developed. Three pilots have been conducted to establish the benefits of flexibility through use of space and a portfolio director has been appointed to increase clarity and transparency of decision-making. The survey suggests that staff want to be more engaged and involved, and that they understand that this will make them more accountable. The One Team principle is to be developed to enhance the benefits of collaborative working across traditional institutional boundaries. This will integrate all professional services staff under a single leadership structure. Staff are supportive of resources being deployed according to investment needs. Nevertheless, significant progress has yet to be made given the need to return to campus.

The Senior Vice President (Operations) commented that success will be measured through engagement with staff about flexibility and data about hybrid roles. The return of the whole College community to campus by the end of the calendar year will, of itself, be an indicator of success.

## Report of the Academic Board

Contents	Meeting at which considered	Consent agenda	Council action
1. Online Professional Education ( <b>Annex 1</b> )	16 June 2021	No	Note
2. Community Charter ( <b>Annex 2</b> )	16 June 2021	No	Note
3. Cultural Competency ( <b>Annex 3</b> )	16 June 2021	No	Note
4. Academic Board Terms of Reference and Composition	16 June 2021	Yes	Note
5. Responding to issues raised at KCLSU Town Halls - update	16 June 2021	Yes	Note
6. Student Terms & Conditions 2022-2023	16 June 2021	Yes	Note
7. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	16 June 2021	Yes	Note
8. Academic Board elections results	16 June 2021	Yes	Note
9. Academic Board Committee reports	16 June 2021	Yes	Note
10. Other items approved or noted	16 June 2021	Yes	Note

### For note

#### 1. Online Professional Education (**Annex 1**)

The report on online professional education set out thoughts on the expansion of online Continuing Professional Development (CPD) at King's following extensive collaboration across the university. It was a preparatory piece of work which would need to be aligned with the business planning round. The expansion would require central coordination and would bring online academic award and recognition into the mainstream business with faculty-level flexibility. The academic framework was a core part of the proposition which set out to develop a series of academic awards to encourage stacking of microcredentials that individuals can acquire at their own pace and to develop a non-credit bearing professional certificate so that participants could be regulated and rewarded.

Academic Board members endorsed the core principles of the project and provided the Co-Chair of the Online Professional Education project and the Head of Portfolio & Instructional Design with suggestions and feedback. A further report would be submitted to the Board at a later stage.

#### 2. Community Charter (**Annex 2**)

The Board endorsed the approach and timescale proposed for the development of a Community Charter as the successor to the existing Student Charter. The Community Charter would build on the content of the Student Charter alongside other strands of work, including the Race Equality Chartermark (RECM) application, and would positively frame expectations for a respectful and inclusive culture. The development would be overseen by a Community Charter Working Group which was comprised of wide representation from staff and students.

The Community Charter would now be developed and presented to Academic Board for recommendation to Council in the Autumn Term. In future years there would be an annual review of the Charter in time for approval before the summer recess.

### 3. Cultural Competency (Annex 3)

The Director of International Strategy & Planning shared slides which introduced cultural competency at King's as a key component of delivering on King's commitment to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI). Delivering cultural competency at King's was a shared aim of the Education and International Strategies and was a value at the heart of Vision 2029. Cultural competency was a fundamental step toward rethinking the curriculum, transforming the student and staff experience, responding to demands for decolonising, and delivering on King's commitment to EDI. It was also a significant differentiator for King's graduates, and the university overall.

This major strategic initiative aimed to reach all students and staff at their point of entry to King's, with an ambition to have reached all existing staff and students within three years, and to have embedded and integrated opportunities to develop cultural competency within all induction and professional development programmes and training, as well as offering optional modules and a portfolio of learning resources for the whole university. A student induction experience and online 'kickstarter' was being developed for a September 2021 launch. The cultural competency journey would be developed throughout a student's time at King's and would equip them for their future careers.

Academic Board members endorsed the programme and committed to promoting these types of modules. It was noted that boundaries between the intention to understand difference and the absolute requirements for respect needed to be clear. It was clarified that this initiative was not replacing vitally important frameworks already in existence but was intended to open up conversations. The incoming KCLSU President recommended the active allyship training as a helpful tool for responding to inappropriate remarks.

It was noted that decolonisation and cultural competency were related but not necessarily the same. Decolonising the curriculum involved thinking about how we move from a Euro-centric perspective to a more global mind set. The cultural competency initiative was about building confidence about how we talk about race and difference.

### 4. Academic Board Terms of Reference and Composition

The Board recommended that Council approve revisions to the Academic Board Terms of Reference and its composition as set in the report from the Governance & Nominations Committee at item 8.1.

### 5. Responding to issues raised at KCLSU Town Halls - Update

Professor Al-Hashimi reported that an Academic Strategy sub-Group meeting had considered recommendations arising out of the KCLSU Town Halls, and that a report was being developed to be brought forward the next meeting of the Academic Board.

### 6. Student Terms & Conditions 2022-2023

Academic Board **approved** the Student Terms and Conditions 2022-2023.

### 7. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Board received two presentations from the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion team: one on disability inclusion and one on LGBTQ+ inclusion.

### 8. Academic Board elections results

The Board noted the results of the recent Academic Board elections.

<b>Electorate:</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Successful Candidates</b>
<i>Faculty of Arts &amp; Humanities</i>	<i>0 nominations received (for one vacancy)</i>	<i>Election to be held in the new academic year</i>
King's Business School	2 (for two vacancies) (no election held)  <i>0 nominations received for the Head of Department Vacancy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Dr Jack Fosten</u></b></li><li>• <b><u>Dr Juan Baeza</u></b></li></ul> <i>Election to be held in the new academic year</i>
Faculty of Life Sciences & Medicine	9 (for one vacancy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>Dr Manasi Nandi</u></b></li></ul>

Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Palliative Care	2 (for one vacancy)	• <b><u>Dr Jonathan Koffman</u></b>
Faculty of Social Sciences and Public Policy	4 (for two vacancies)	• <b><u>Dr Sunil Mitra Kumar</u></b> • <b><u>Dr Hillary Briffa</u></b>
	3 (for one Head of Department Vacancy)	• <b><u>Professor Alfredo Saad-Filho</u></b>
Academic staff on research-only contract (Arts & Sciences Faculties)	8 (for one vacancy)	• <b><u>Dr Harriet Boulding</u></b>

## 9. Academic Board sub-Committee reports

Reports approved and noted as part of the Unanimous Consent Agenda:

College International Committee:

- (i) Climate Action and Internationalisation
- (ii) Arts & Sciences Faculties Priorities
- (iii) Global Business Development

Academic Board Operations Committee:

- (i) Business Schedule

College Education Committee:

- (i) Fitness to Practise Policy & Procedure (**approved**)
- (ii) Proposal for a New Type of King's Award: Executive Master of Public Administration (**approved**)
- (iii) PSRB Update: FoLSM
- (iv) External Examiner Working Group Update
- (v) PGR Student Involvement in Teaching & Learning at King's – Update
- (vi) Late Submission of Coursework: Change to T43 Mitigating Circumstances
- (vii) Student Attainment Steering Committee Report
- (viii) Arriving at Thriving Audit – May 2021
- (ix) Race Equality & Inclusive Education Fund Update
- (x) Student Handbooks Update
- (xi) Programme Enhancement Process 2021/22
- (xii) Programme Enhancement Plans – Overview Report
- (xiii) Periodic Programme Review: Proposed Working Group
- (xiv) Core Code of Practice for PGT Research Governance & Dissertation Framework
- (xv) Proposal for the Fast-Track Appeals Process
- (xvi) Regulations & Policies 2022/23
- (xvii) Formation of King's Education

Academic Standards Sub-Committee:

- (i) King's 2021/2022 Academic Regulations (**approved**)
- (ii) Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) Regulations (**approved**)
- (iii) Inns of Court College of Advocacy (ICCA) Academic Regulations (**approved**)

College Research Committee

- (i) Overseas Development Aid
- (i) Research Culture
- (iii) E-Research

College Service Committee

- (i) Chair and Director's Report

College London Committee

- (i) Chair's report
- (ii) SC1: London's Health Science District
- (iii) Widening Participation & London

- (iv) Faculty annual London Reports
- (v) King's London Highlights

**10. Other items approved or noted**

- (i) Principal's report on key current matters
- (ii) KCLSU President Report
- (iii) Portfolio Simplification
- (iv) The Dean's report
- (v) Election of Associates of King's College (AKC) (approved)
- (vi) Report from Council

# Online Professional Education

## Executive summary

A sequenced academic development and implementation plan (**Annex 4**), for the expansion of online Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Executive Education at King's, was formally approved by the College Education Committee in January 2021. The paper followed eight months of lively and productive discussion between members of an Academic Working Group, made up of senior colleagues from all nine faculties and leading representatives of Quality, Standards & Enhancement, King's Academy, King's Professional & Executive Development (KPED), and King's Online. All nine faculties are committed to enhancing and enlarging their online professional education portfolios, decisively shifting the lifelong learning agenda from fringe activity to the mainstream.

This paper seeks to publish the current thinking of the Academic Working Group, specifically with regards to enabling the expansion of flexible online CPD at King's.

Academic Board is invited to discuss the paper, provide feedback, and endorse the following next steps:

1. The Academic Working Group to discuss and approve detailed proposals for flexible CPD.
2. The proposals to be discussed and approved by the College Education Committee (6 October 2021).
3. The proposals to be finalised, discussed, and approved by Academic Board (3 November 2021).
4. Matters arising from the proposals, including any modifications to the Academic Regulations, are progressed through established governance pathways, with the endorsement of Academic Board.
5. In parallel, operational resilience is sought through Business Process Redesign and through the KPED professional education hub and spoke model sitting within *King's Education* (working title).

The group aims for King's to emerge as a leader in affirming the credibility of quality micro-credentialing and stackable awards as part of our Online Professional Education portfolio. Our approach will support public and private sector partners in developing pathways with the agility and flexibility to respond to the needs of individuals, employers and societies, both in the UK and around the world. Equally, our framework will take care to ensure academic rigour, faculty engagement, and a common language as we accept the task of framing flexible lifelong learning for the post-pandemic landscape. We plan to develop awards that are not confined by disciplinary or national boundaries, enabling us to mobilise the best of King's to respond to current and new global challenges. In doing so, the portfolio will support King's enduring legacy of bringing together the study of mind, body and society.



# Online Professional Education: A framework to facilitate flexible lifelong learning at King's

Our aim is to launch our first interdisciplinary, stackable postgraduate awards in 2022-23 to meet the needs of businesses, organisations and individuals (figure 1). Building on King's grand heritage of educational innovation, such as the Associateship qualification dating back to 1829, we aim to enable employers and participants to create their personalised programme of study across a range of academic disciplines. The awards will be underpinned by defined pedagogic boundaries achieving the principles of higher learning, while individual networking will be at the heart of the support system, enabling the different modules to be brought together as a cohesive package.

Policy makers	Participants	Universities	Employers
<p>Increased need for upskilling and reskilling to support economic growth</p> <p>Support social mobility and the fight to overcome intersectional social inequalities</p>	<p>An entry mechanism to a PGT award</p> <p>Acquire interdisciplinary knowledge</p> <p>A way to flexibly plan their studies around work/ life</p>	<p>Increase responsiveness to students and labour market</p> <p>Experiment with new pedagogy and partnerships</p> <p>Enhance reputation</p>	<p>Package module diet to meet their specific requirements</p> <p>Aligned to on-the-job training</p> <p>Cost effective commitment to staff development</p>

Figure 1: The case for stackable awards by stakeholder group

The stackable awards will enable participants to accumulate credit bearing micro-credentials that are achieved over time. We define a micro-credential as a level 7 certification of assessed learning (5-15 credits) that is additional, alternate, complementary to, or a component part of a formal qualification. We see micro-credentials as a system of interoperable building blocks, whereby participants are able to move seamlessly from credit bearing CPD to postgraduate awards. In doing so, we achieve genuinely 'continuing' professional education and serve our citizens of lifelong learning.

We have developed three types of 'stacking' that will be enabled, encouraged and accredited through this framework (figure 2):

Independent stacking	Potential stacking	Planned stacking
<p>Earns two or more micro-credentials independent from one another</p> <p>Largely not intended but a consequence of participant or client selections</p>	<p>Participants who earn only one micro-credential but have the potential to stack</p> <p>Completed the first stepping stone, then stopped for a period before completing a second</p>	<p>Participants who enrol on a flexible masters degree from the outset, selecting all their modules in advance</p>

Figure 2: Potential progression routes within a stackable framework

We plan to propose the following awards to underpin the stackable framework:

- MA/ MSc/ MRes Professional Development (180 credits)
- PgDip Professional Development (120 credits)
- PgCert Professional Development (60 credits)
- Professional Certificate (non-credit bearing)

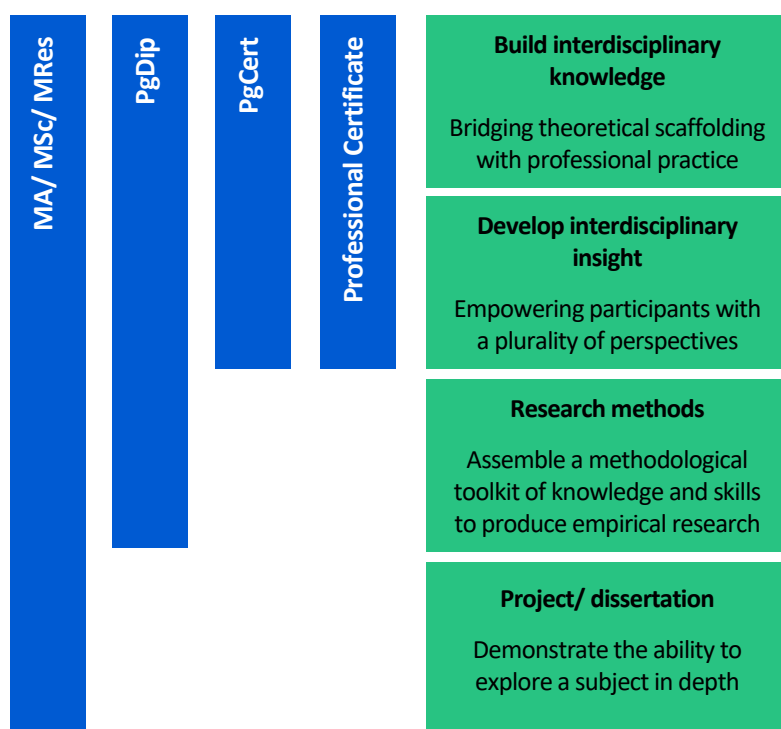


Figure 3: Proposed stackable framework

The Master of Arts or Sciences decision would be based on the weighting of the module diet and project/ dissertation. The new non-credit bearing Professional Certificate will be equivalent to 30 credits in learning hours, enabling the participant to combine accredited micro-credentials with non-accredited short courses, masterclasses and bootcamps. The certificates will be non-assessed and awarded locally by faculties.

Participants will be supported through recommended module selections in order to build flexible, interdisciplinary postgraduate awards with a coherent and self-conscious design. In addition, progression maps will indicate the sequence of micro-credentials that we recommend a participant should take to successfully complete the award. Equally, however, available modules will be offered without prerequisites. Where modules are specialised and non-transferrable, we determine that the solution is a new masters degree or standalone CPD rather than being part of the stackable framework. Critical to success will be the agility to the module diet, replacing and adding new micro-credentials, to maintain pace with research output and global events, and minimising the lag time between participant demand and module approval.

Mike Bennett  
Head of Portfolio & Instructional Design  
16 June 2021

Annex 1 – The case for flexibility  
Annex 2 – Module selection and prioritisation  
Annex 3 – Regulatory and operational considerations  
Annex 4 – Strategic context: Online Professional Education project

Annexes available upon request, or view them [here](#)

# Community Charter – current position and future plans

## Background

The attached paper was considered by the Academic Standards Sub-Committee in January 2021. The paper set out a proposal to establish a working group to take forward work on a Community Charter, as the successor to the Student Charter.

As outlined in more detail in the appended paper, this approach enables us to build on the content of the Student Charter, alongside:

- The successful King's [Race Equality Chartermark \(RECM\) application](#);
- The Community Building steering group, set up following the [Review of Bush House opening](#);
- Our [Covid-related community commitment](#);
- The [KCLSU/KCL relationship agreement](#); and
- The Quality Assurance Agency's [Academic Integrity Charter](#)

We also note the links with work that KCLSU are doing on developing a student Code of Conduct

## Community Charter Working Group

The working group comprise of staff and students from Student Conduct and Appeals, Quality Assurance, Diversity and Inclusion, Student Support and Wellbeing, KCLSU, and faculties.

The purpose of the Community Charter Working Group is:

“To develop a new charter that speaks to the King's community, with a particular focus on the student experience, that brings together a range of initiatives and aligned guidance documents. There are a number of complexities within this area of work, the group will work to bring these together sensitively ensuring that the whole King's Community is reflected in the final version. The charter will be a positive statement of expectations that will also act as part of our compulsory student terms and conditions. In the case that the charter is not adhered to this may result in disciplinary action being taken.

The group will also be responsible for reviewing and updating the charter on an annual basis and for communicating the final version to students and staff in a way that is easy to understand and engaging.”

## Next steps

- 1) In the past, the Student Charter was formally approved by both College Education Committee (CEC) and then Academic Board. Given the tight timescale for developing the Community Charter this year, we are bringing this paper first to Academic Board and then to the July meeting of CEC. Following the development of the Community Charter during the summer, we will bring it to CEC and the Senior Management Team in September for endorsement, before going to Academic Board for final approval.
- 2) In Summer 2020, we updated the enrolment and reenrollment task for students, who were consequently each required to indicate that “I have read and accept the guidance about [staying safe on campus](#) and [staying safe online](#)”.

Alongside a communications campaign about the Community Charter, we would ideally like to include a similar reference to it in the enrolment and reenrollment tasks, both to raise students' level of awareness,

and to signal – at an early stage – our expectation of a commitment to inclusive and respectful behaviours. This could be framed in such a way as to raise awareness of the charter, whilst not necessarily including the final text, i.e. students could – as in 2020 – commit to staying up to date with such guidance.

## Recommendation

Academic Board is asked to note and comment on this paper (and the ASSC paper appended), and specifically to review the timescale for finalising the Community Charter.

In future years, any updates will be made ahead of the summer months, enabling timely approval through the normal committee routes.

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## For information – schedule of business for the Community Charter Working Group

Meeting date	Theme	Areas/documents to cover
19 May	Academic standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Academic integrity charter</li> <li>- Engaging in studies</li> <li>- Academic standards/plagiarism</li> <li>- Conduct and consequences of misconduct</li> </ul>
16 June	Our campus, local and global community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Service to society</li> <li>- Local communities/being 'neighbourly'</li> <li>- <a href="https://www.kcl.ac.uk/london#civic_charter">https://www.kcl.ac.uk/london#civic_charter</a></li> <li>- International community</li> <li>- Sustainability</li> <li>- <a href="#">Freedom of expression</a></li> </ul>
21 July	Active inclusive culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusive, accessible, safe environment</li> <li>- Inclusive culture</li> <li>- Mutual respect</li> <li>- Follow up from Bush House opening</li> </ul>
18 August	Keeping ourselves and each other safe and well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wellbeing &amp; student support</li> <li>- Safety on campus/active bystander/support/etc</li> <li>- Staying safe online</li> <li>- Keeping King's safe together (COVID)</li> </ul>
8 September	Wrap up	Comms to students, staff, how to gather feedback, confirm review points

**Academic Standards Sub-Committee****Meeting date** 13 January 2021**Paper reference** ASSC: 20/21:**Status** Final**Access** Internal**FOI release** After one year**FOI exemption** None**Title** Community Charter: current position and future plans**Action required** To discuss**Why is this paper coming to ASSC?** For review and consideration**If there is a decision for ASSC to take, what is it?** No decision required at this stage**What should happen to the paper after it has been to ASSC?** A working group will be established further to scope this work**Name and job title of the person submitting the paper** Joy Whyte, Strategic Director, Education & Students**Context/background to the paper**

In previous years, King's has had a Student Charter, which has summarised "the way King's will work in partnership with our student community to develop independent, skilled and employable graduates with an awareness of their place in, and contribution to, the local, national and international community".

At the start of the 2019/2020, we indicated that the student charter would be reviewed and – at the time – the Students and Education Executive Director suggested that the [Principles in Action](#) might replace the Student Charter. The Principles in Action "provide us with a framework to consider, talk about and develop how every member of the King's community can give our best to, and get the most out of, our work and interactions with others".

In practice, the Principles in Action have a predominantly staff-oriented focus. This short paper therefore sets out how we might proceed with developing a charter that speaks to the King's community, with a particular focus on students, and in the context of a range of initiatives and aligned guidance documents.

**Further context**

1. In our successful [Race Equality Chartermark \(RECM\) application](#), King's outlined a timescale for developing a community charter, as follows:

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD	START	END	MEASURES	PROGRESS
We want to ensure clarity of rights and responsibilities across the King's community – this will set and clarify expectations and	Create community charter, setting out the mutual expectations,	SED Strategic Director	Sept 2021	Sept 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charter established and communicated</li> <li>• Qualitative feedback on culture and responsiveness of King's</li> </ul>	A new stream of work to be established

provide a framework to address microaggressions	values and principles of our staff and student community				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive feedback from KCLSU and staff networks</li> </ul>	
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2. Sarah Guerra, Director of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, has recently reinvigorated the Community Building steering group. This was set up following the [Review of Bush House opening](#) and will meet again early in 2021. Amongst other priorities, the steering group will be concerned with “assessing our policies relating to misconduct to ensure clear guidance outlining our behavioural expectations of our community is available for everyone”.
3. In 2020/2021, we established these clear behavioural expectations of our community with respect to Covid-related health and safety. These expectations are framed positively in our [Covid-related community commitment](#), which speaks to the values King’s places on student and staff health and wellbeing. Those expectations are also framed in the context of the non-academic misconduct guidelines, which outline problematic behaviour and the sanctions that might be enforced.
4. Another relevant framework document is the [KCLSU/KCL relationship agreement](#), which was last updated in December 2019, and is due for review early in 2021. The 2019 iteration outlines the ways in which the Students’ Union and the university will work together, emphasising principles of respect & understanding; trust and openness; accountability; and collaboration & independence.
5. Finally, the Quality Assurance Agency has asked King’s to sign up to its [Academic Integrity Charter](#). This “represents the collective commitment of the UK higher education sector to promote academic integrity and take action against academic misconduct”.

QAA’s work may also provide a helpful framework for developing the broader-based community charter promised in the RECM action plan. The seven principles outlined in the QAA Academic Integrity Charter are as follows:

- Principle 1: Everyone is responsible as part of a ‘whole community’ approach
- Principle 2: A ‘whole community’ approach
- Principle 3: Working together as a sector
- Principle 4: Engage with and empower students
- Principle 5: Empower and engage with staff
- Principle 6: Consistent and effective institutional policies and practices
- Principle 7: Institutional autonomy

## Proposal

In order to ensure alignment between the different areas that might be covered by a broad-based community charter, it is proposed that:

- A working group be established by March 2021 to take forward our work on the community charter. This is six months ahead of our published timescale, and will allow for more extensive consultation.
- That the working group comprise of staff and students from Student Conduct and Appeals, Quality Assurance, Diversity and Inclusion, Student Support and Wellbeing, KCLSU, and faculties; and that it report in both to ASSC (and ultimately to College Education Committee) and to the Community Building steering group. Other suggestions for membership are welcome.
- That discussions about participation in the QAA Academic Integrity Charter progress immediately, in a way that allows for future alignment with the governance of the community charter.

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## Delivering Cultural Competency at King's

This paper summarises plans for the development of a College-wide cultural competency programme for all staff and students, and notes a forthcoming proposal for a central investment commitment over three years to ensure delivery of this significant long-term differentiator for King's. The vision, aims and benefits of a joined-up approach are summarised here, along with principles for the delivery of a sustainable programme.

This ambitious programme aims to reach all students and staff at their point of entry to King's and all existing staff through sustained engagement and interventions. It is a key part of King's response to student and staff demand for decolonising the curriculum and a fundamental step towards rethinking the curriculum, transforming the student experience and delivering on King's commitment to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. It depends on contributions from all disciplines and commitment from every Faculty.

The programme seeks to make it a priority from September 2021 to introduce students to the concept of cultural competency, and to promote it as an essential part of a King's experience – something all students are expected to engage with. Simultaneously, it sets out to engage and support all staff in every part of King's by embedding cultural competency in all induction and professional development programmes and training.

Members are asked to endorse plans to create the shared resource outlined here, and to act as champions by promoting cultural competency among staff and students as an essential King's value.

Sponsor: Professor 'Funmi Olonisakin

Authors: [Dr Ben Schofield](#)

[Dr Shuangyu Li](#)

[Dr Sarah Bowden](#)

Jen Angel

## **Vision & aims**

At King's we define cultural competency as *the ability to see the world through the lens of the other*. It is at the heart of *Internationalisation* and *Vision 2029* and provides the foundation for delivery of an inclusive education and student experience. It is not simply about our students and staff discovering other cultures or integrating students who come into our campuses into the UK culture. Cultural competency, defined in this way, helps each student – home and international – to expand both their worldview and their perspectives on problem solving. However, cultural competency does not apply only to students. It must also apply to our staff – academic and professional services. Embedding these values in systems and relationships across our institution enables a process of culture change.

How we communicate with each other and how we learn to understand differences is relevant to all disciplines. It has a bearing, for example, on public health, clinician-patient relationships, political communication, and international relations. Cultural competency is a graduate outcome most highly valued by all employers and required by the General Medical Council.

King's is not new to this debate<sup>1</sup>, and there is exceptional work being done in individual faculties, but it is crucial that anything we do must resonate across all faculties and draw on the existing expertise of staff in a wide range of disciplines. There is a pressing need for a formal programme of joined-up activity which should:

- Draw on expertise and research of colleagues across the College, as well as foreground work on Cultural Competency that is often implicitly part of various degree programmes; it should also draw on the lived experience of King's people.
- Enable students to develop (inter)cultural competences which will be highly beneficial to them in their lives and careers
- Be accessible to all students, regardless of background and nationality
- Be underpinned by a broad, diverse understanding of culture and the intercultural, and lead to membership of a vibrant community of practice in cultural competency
- Be accompanied by an emphasis on developing the cultural competency of staff
- Reflect our partnerships at home and overseas, and our global problem-solving approaches in practice
- Draw on our relationships with local communities in London, and the ways in which we can learn from these communities

## **Creating a hub for cultural competency at King's**

Since early 2020, in collaboration with the VP International's office, colleagues from Arts & Humanities have led a cross-College Steering and Working Group to bring together expertise and the many and diverse projects, courses and modules related to cultural competency from across the College, and to develop a roadmap for new projects that result from cross-faculty interdisciplinary discussions<sup>2</sup>. As an epicentre for research-informed knowledge and understanding in this area, Arts & Humanities provides a natural home for these cross-College developments and the Faculty has committed to act as host for their co-ordination and management. Within the next few years, the aim is for King's to have a financially sustainable academic centre serving the whole College with a co-developed suite of resources, modules and micro-modules, interventions, events, and expertise supporting an ongoing programme of cultural competency development for King's students and staff.

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<sup>1</sup> cf. George, Thornicroft & Dogra (2015). [Exploration of cultural competency training in UK healthcare settings: A critical interpretive review of the literature](#) in *Diversity & Equality in Health and Care* which concluded that the desire for cultural competency training will increase with ever changing demographics.

<sup>2</sup> Steering and Working Group members are listed in [Annex B](#).



## **Principles & phasing**

A first step in realising our commitment to embedding cultural competency in everything we do will be the development of a cross-College module. This will be based on five principles:

1	<b>College-wide</b>	It serves the whole college; is accessible to all King's students and all King's staff and helps King's students & staff translate cultural competency in the King's way
2	<b>Adaptive</b>	It is sufficiently adaptive that participants' voices and perspectives are clearly present. This applies to disciplinary perspectives and geographies, and a variety of identity configurations (how people express themselves through race, language, gender, religion, e.g.)
3	<b>Transformative</b>	It allows for reflexivity – however that is expressed, either in individual or group work – and the transformation of world views
4	<b>Integrated</b>	New students & staff join at their point of entry (eg. King's First Year, new staff induction, first term PGT); staff and students already at King's will engage with the programme in their faculties and directorates, through personal and professional development programmes
5	<b>Blended</b>	It has online & real world / face-to-face components

### *Staff & student roadmaps*

The roadmap for engaging staff with cultural competency is designed to achieve four objectives<sup>1</sup>:

1. To empower staff to build and participate in a diverse, inclusive, and fair King's Community
2. To co-construct the definition of cultural competency for King's staff
3. To support colleagues to make the curriculum more inclusive and to manage the classroom with students from a wide range of backgrounds (including students from different socio economic, cultural, religious backgrounds)
4. To be culturally competent in service delivery and pastoral care, including dealing with complaints against discrimination, harassment, bullying, and having conversations about sensitive issues

Adopting a phased and modular approach to content development will enable us to reach all new students at induction in September 2021 and begin the process of raising awareness and embedding cultural competency development in staff programmes without delay.

King's Online is leading the instructional design for a short interactive introduction to cultural competency that will feature as an essential part of welcome and induction for all new students from September 2021. Module co-development workshops are underway with over 100 students from across our disciplines with the aim of every undergraduate having the opportunity to develop and apply cultural competency as part of their King's First Year experience within the next few years. Postgraduate taught students and postgraduate researchers will also encounter cultural competency at induction and beyond, at the appropriate level, and through the most effective channels.

## **Resources & planning**

The model proposed is for two part-time Academic co-Directors seconded from Health and Arts & Sciences to lead an interdisciplinary team of researchers, AEPs and Professional Services colleagues to develop and deliver these resources for King's over an initial period of three years. The ambition is to reach all staff, and all undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research students within this time, while also establishing a sustainable programme for future cohorts and new joiners.

<sup>1</sup> From *Outline for College wide cultural competence for staff* by Drs Shuangyu Li & Heidi Lempp, 121020.

## Appendix A: What we have achieved so far

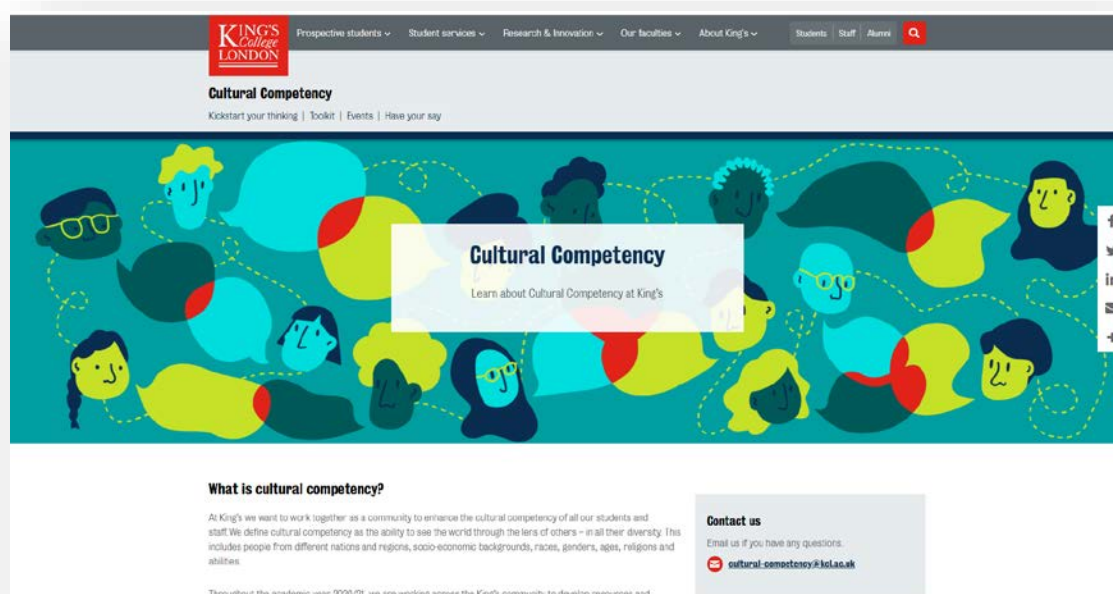
Collaboration across the College has been underway since early 2020 with the following aims:

- 1 Promote awareness & engagement with cultural competency across King's students and staff
- 2 Increase sense of belonging at King's as part of a diverse welcoming institution
- 3 Help King's community to know self and others, enabling critical engagement with their own positionality and awareness of intersectionality
- 4 Develop cultural competency content/modules/interventions for students and staff

This work has been led jointly by the VP International's Office and the Faculty of Arts & Humanities, and has relied on the good will, expertise, and time of dozens of colleagues from across all the Health and Arts & Sciences Faculties, and many PS Directorates.

Achievements to date include:

- ✓ Launch of [website](#) with videos and resources hub
- ✓ "Standing room only" Welcome Week events with staff, students, and alumni panels
- ✓ Launch of awareness campaign across social media, Intranet, and newsletters
- ✓ Establishment of Steering and Working Groups for programme development
- ✓ Planning & delivery of Feb/Mar 21 co-development workshops with >100 students
- ✓ Planning for pilot staff workshops with Staff Internationalisation Network (Apr / May 21)
- ✓ Draft resourcing model and roadmap



## **Appendix B: Cultural competency programme leadership and governance (2020-21)**

### *Steering Group*

- Prof Funmi Olonisakin (Chair), Vice President & Vice Principal International
- Prof Marion Thain (Sponsor), Executive Dean for the Faculty of Arts & Humanities
- Dr Ben Schofield, Co-Director of the Centre for Modern Literature and Culture (A&H)
- Dr Shuangyu Li, Senior Lecturer in Clinical Communication & Cultural Competence (FoLSM)
- Dr Sarah Bowden, Senior Lecturer in German; Head of Department (A&H)
- Dr Kyle Dyer, Academic Lead for Online Education (IOPPN)
- Dr Flora Smyth Zahra, Clinical Senior Lecturer in Interdisciplinarity & Innovation Dental Education (FODOCs)
- Dr Ana Maria de Medeiros, Pro-Vice-Dean (Academic Portfolio) (A&H)
- Dr Lucia Pradella, Senior Lecturer in International Political Economy (SSPP)
- Donata Puntill, Programme Director, Senior Fellow HEA (A&H)
- Dr Kyriaki Koukouraki, EAP tutor (King's Foundations)
- Prof Shaun Ewen, Pro Vice Chancellor (Indigenous), Melbourne, Visiting Professor (SSPP)
- Dr Nelly Mars, Deputy Director Modern Language Centre (A&H)
- Prof Paul Readman, Vice-Dean (People and Planning) for Languages & Literatures (A&H)
- Prof Graeme Earl, Professor of Digital Humanities & Vice Dean - External Relations (A&H)
- Aless Gibson, Vice-Principal Education, Health (KCLSU)
- Tasnia Yasmin, Vice-Principal Welfare & Community (KCLSU)
- Lorraine Kelly, Director of Organisational Development
- Helena Mattingley, Head of Diversity & Inclusion
- Lauren Cracknell, Associate Director, King's Academy
- Jen Angel, Director of International Strategy & Planning

### *Extended Steering Group membership (consulted but not required at meetings)*

- All Vice-Deans Education and all Vice-Deans International
- Prof Beatrice Szczepek Reed, Head of the School of Education, Communication and Society
- Dr Heidi Lempp, Reader in Medical Sociology

### *Staff & Student Working Group members (in addition to those also on Steering Group)*

- Dr Nicola Palmer, Senior Lecturer in Criminal Law (Law)
- Heena Ramchandani, VP Postgraduate, KCLSU
- Vitoria Russo Gaino, International Development (Student)
- Dr Liat Levanon, Lecturer in Criminal Law (Law)
- Dr Ekaette Ikpe, Senior Lecturer in Development Economics in Africa (SSPP)
- Dr Sean Cross, Consultant at SLAM and Clinical Director of KHP's Mind & Body Programme
- Dr Wale Ismail, Lecturer in Leadership, Peace & Development Education (SSPP)
- Momin Saqib, Engagement Officer for Vision 2029, former KCLSU President
- Dr Abdoolkarim Vakil, Lecturer in History, D&I Lead for Modern Languages (A&H)
- Dr Nithya Natarajan, Lecturer in International Development (SSPP)
- Angad Khanna, co-founder of King's Student Internationalisation Society (Student)
- Dr Ed Stevens, AHRI Manager (A&H)
- Prof Kerry Brown, Professor of Chinese Studies and Director of the Lau China Institute (SSPP)
- Gayatri Menon, Instructional Designer (King's Online)
- Dr Marina Yasvoina, E-learning Lead (IOPPN)
- Dr Victor Fan, Senior Lecturer in Film Studies (A&H)
- Dr Nicole Mennell, Communications & Engagement Manager (Service & International)
- Kirti Swift, Staff Engagement Manager (OD)
- Dr Brenda Williams, Reader in Neuroscience Education (IOPPN)
- Catherine Thristan, Acting Director (OPEE)

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## KCLSU President's Update

### Action required

- ☐ For approval  
☒ For discussion  
☐ To note

### Executive summary

The King's College London Students' Union (KCLSU) sabbatical officers are students who have the opportunity and platform to enact changes which they felt were needed after their own experiences as students. They sit on various high level KCL committees to provide a student voice and perspective on a number of critical issues which will affect the wider student body, but also are trustees of KCLSU. We set our objectives based upon manifestos we are elected upon, however there have been a number of urgent projects set in motion as a result of the pandemic. We have been more reactive to these problems to ensure the student experience is optimal by working collaboratively with King's on issues such as student participation in testing to increasing provision of informal learning spaces to social events to improve wellbeing.

**Annex 1** displays the Officer Impact Report outlining some of the achievements over the past year.

We have had to understand the needs of our students when we were unable to rely on traditional methods of communication so have looked at developing methods of digital engagement and new formats of feedback such as Town Halls which we hope to continue in the future.

I would like to again thank the Council members who attended our final Town Hall meeting of the 2020-2021 Academic Year, centred around assessment and feedback. We did not manage to schedule in a breakfast briefing, as suggested previously, so I have included the Town Hall report in **Annex 2**.

The 20-21 Officer Team:

President – Salma Hussain (SHH)

VP Activities and Development: Niall Berry (NB)

VP Education (Arts and Sciences) – Vatsav Soni (VS)

VP Education (Health) – Aless Gibson (AG)

VP Postgraduate – Heena Ramchandani (HR)

VP Community and Welfare – Tasnia Yasmin (TY)

'Education Officers' refers to the sabbatical officers whose remit is education based and includes both VP Education (Arts and Sciences); VP Education (Health) and VP Postgraduate



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## KCLSU President's Update

I would also like to welcome the incoming officer team:

Zahra Syed (President)

Arslan Zafar (Vice President Activities and Development)

Hamza Lone (Vice President Education Arts and Sciences)

Fatimah Patel (Vice President Education Health)

Rebecca Seling (Vice President Postgraduates)

Daniyal Ubaidullah (Vice President Welfare and Community)

I look forward to the continuation of a productive relationship between KCL and KCLSU and seeing the immense achievements that the incoming team have planned over the course of the next academic year. Future Council reports will include the objectives that this team plans to work on over the course of next year.

A COVID-19 year has been difficult for a number of reasons and I am proud of all that my team has achieved, despite never meeting in person as a team. I would like to take a moment to thank my team for all their hard work on behalf of students. In spite of the challenges we have encountered, we have succeeded in many areas and we should be proud of all these accomplishments.

Author's Name: Miss Salma Hussain, Mr Niall Berry, Mr Vatsav Soni, Miss Aless Gibson, Miss Heena Ramchandani, Miss Tasnia Yasmin

**Annex 1: Officer Impact Report:** A summary of the various projects that the 20-21 Officer Team worked on

**Annex 2: Town Hall Summary:** A summary of the Town Hall student feedback exercise around student experience around assessment and feedback – a topic which Council has traditionally shown great interest in.

# KCLSU Officers' Report for KCL College Council 2020/21

Annex 1





## Executive Summary

At their first college council meeting, the KCLSU sabbatical officers presented their priorities to the members of the college council. This document provides an update on these priorities, so that college council is aware of the progress that has been made this year.

## Officer Updates

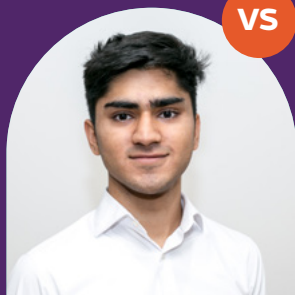
This update is provided in two key sections, to demonstrate the state of each project and actions being currently taken, and to highlight the work done by the officers in light of the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

1. **Officer Projects:** Projects each officer undertook as part of their objectives and manifesto
2. **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response:** Projects and actions led by the officers with support from SMT and KCLSU due and as a response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Written by



**Salma Hussain**  
—  
President



**Vatsav Soni**  
—  
Vice President  
Education  
(Arts & Sciences)



**Ali Gibson**  
—  
Vice President  
Education  
(Health)



**Heena Ramchandani**  
—  
Vice President  
Education  
Postgraduate



**Niall Berry**  
—  
Vice President  
Activities and  
Development



**Tasnia Yasmin**  
—  
Vice President  
Welfare and  
Community

# KCLSU in 2020/21

Over the past twelve months, KCLSU has continued to help students thrive, despite the challenges they have faced. With remote learning, lockdowns and a lack of face-to-face interaction for the majority of students, it was important that the Union played a key role in making sure they still felt a sense of belonging and that they had a community of support to turn to.

- Our Research Bureau provided important insight and analysis of how our students felt and what they wanted to see from KCLSU by engaging with over **10k** students and completing **15** research projects.
- We provided key support to students in uncertain & difficult times through our academic Advice service, supporting students in over **700** cases throughout the year.
- **2,321** students voted in our Autumn elections in 20/21 which had **234** roles and **355** candidates
- Project X was a key digital platform for students to engage with each other through creative and entrepreneurial ideas and competitions - **400** students on average participated in events each month (Sept-March)
- We digitally transformed our annual President & Treasurer training in June and trained **899** student leaders in a new online programme
- We collaborated with students to host **52** Liberation History Month events, including **15** Black History Month events
- **11,000** students downloaded our Welcome Fair app, and attended our **150+** live sessions held by groups, societies, and KCLSU
- Our Student facing Hubs desks are a lifeline to students on campus and working remotely, and they helped students with over **15k** enquiries this academic year
- We launched our Wellbeing Hub with over **16,8k** page views from students
- We had over **3k** nominations for our KCLSU Awards ceremony, which was held digitally and viewed by almost **5k** students
- We continued to support students who are looking to volunteer in their communities or digitally, signing up over **170** students through our Connecting with Charities project

My first year of uni was hell because I felt like I did not belong and didn't feel involved in anything. Luckily, I joined a society in my second year & I feel so much more included. I genuinely feel like I belong at uni & I've met people I have so much in common with

# Salma Hussain, President

A student trustee recently told me that I introduced myself to her at our elections candidate briefing by saying 'I am running for president but was not going to get it'. As a student, I had very little interaction with KCLSU but had participated in a number of low level, impactful schemes across King's and wanted to implement these centrally across the university to maximise impact. I ran because I was fed up with complaining. I wanted change.

Change did come. Covid-19 did change everything, not in the way I wanted but it was definitely a change. I had to do a massive overhaul of what I could and wanted to achieve this year, in line what is best for and needed by students. I had to put a number of my manifesto points on hold and reprioritise. I also had to deal with personal challenges such as imposter syndrome; being a Woman of Colour in a senior position at such an early age comes with its own set of barriers. I went from being too afraid of speaking up to regularly raising my opinions of what is not in the best interests of students. I went from Googling what Chair of the Board of Trustees meant on my first day, being told and feeling like I had no idea what I was doing, to leading this organisation in one of the toughest times ever. I went from having a lack of faith in my leadership skills to bringing a team together, who still at time of writing, have yet to all meet face to face. This year has been interesting, but I will never forget all I have learnt, despite the hardships.

This was not the year I expected; I hoped that we would manage to be back to some semblance of normality by Christmas, but this has not been the case. But that is ok. One of my greatest weaknesses has always been my struggle with uncertainty and if this year has taught me one thing, it is how to deal with uncertainty and change effectively. It was a year that has led to great change, in the university and for me personally. I want to take these lessons learnt and apply them outside of King's to make a real change to the community and the world. I will never forget this difficult yet incredibly rewarding experience and would recommend it to anyone even considering it.



# Officer projects: Salma Hussain, President

Objective	Project	Impact
Combatting the mice problem at King's	I set up a group to monitor King's response to the mouse problem and how I could use my platform to raise awareness of what is being done. I created MouseWatch, a monthly update featured on the Officers' Update, outlining progress made on the mice issue	I have raised awareness of this issue both with staff and students, not only in KCL. Student Unions across the country are now aware of the work we are doing to tackle this crucial problem This was received very well by students, including one who said: "Finally, the real issues are being tackled."
Student Representation on Council	Having a second student member of Council was agreed to in 2015, however, it was not enacted upon. I have presented a paper to the Governance and Nominations Subcommittee and hopefully by the end of my term we will have a second student on Council	There will be increased student representation on Council, the highest governing body of the university, which will allow increased focus on the student experience
Increasing Financial Literacy	I used different media to promote financial literacy to students, from hosting events in Welcome Week to speaking in a Times Higher Education panel on funding. I worked with student money mentors to promote their fantastic work across the student community	I helped 100s of students both within KCL and across the world improve their financial awareness through engaging them in different ways to talk about this often-difficult topic
Increased Financial Support	I have advocated for financial support in different ways this year, which was critical in light of COVID. I have managed to secure student representation on a group which is reviewing the KCL bursary provision and another which is looking at reviewing the King's Living Bursary	There will be a change in funding allocation to ensure it is reaching those who need it most, keeping the needs of students at the forefront
Increase Inclusivity	I have fought to ensure all students, regardless of background, thrive. This is done through different ways from working with those with lived experience (our network chairs), to creating inclusive, alcohol free events	I have managed to increase inclusivity in decision-making of King's by suggesting different marginalised groups who are affected by decisions and putting them at the forefront

# Vatsav Soni, VP Education (Arts & Sciences)

As a student, I had noticed quite a few gaps in the assessment structures at college. Simultaneously, the previous VPEAS happened to be my flatmate. Discussing these gaps with him and the potential to bring about a change inspired me to run for the position.

After the election win, I had not imagined my officer term to go about the way it has (referring to COVID and never having met any of my team members in person here!). That said, all of us have made the most of the circumstances. We have continually represented students concerns and issues to the university and have simultaneously made advancements to better the academic experience for all students at King's.

As I interrupted my studies to take on the officer role, I will be returning to Law school to complete my studies at King's.



# Officer Projects: Vatsav Soni, VP Education (Arts & Sciences)

Objective	Project	Impact
In my manifesto, I outlined that I would prioritize working on assessments and feedback.	Throughout the year, I undertook the “Scrap the Cap” campaign and collaborated closely with college to amend the existing Late Submission Policy to one that was more equitable to all students	During the year, we conducted a survey to analyse student interest in amending the policy. Roughly, 75% of the student body expressed interest in amending the policy. Now that the policy has been amended, it is naturally expected that student satisfaction in this area will see a considerable increase
Informal Learning Spaces. Students had shown a keen interest in spending time on campus. Understandably students weren't having as many on campus class as they would have liked and as there were reduced capacities at libraries it was important to collaborate with students to improve the students experience in this regard.	We worked closely with college by forming an Informal Learning Spaces working group to address students concerns. Through the working group, we were able to open up quite a few ILS across all buildings in accordance with space demands	From the high occupancy rates of the ILS it can be drawn that students generally benefited from having a space to work form on campus and that this contributed to an increased student experience

# Ali Gibson, VP Education (Health)

Before starting my role as VP Education (Health) I was a medical student, campaigner and advocate for a charity, a rep in first year and society president in second. I've always been passionate about the student voice, student representation as we are the major stakeholders in both university and our own education! I wanted to bring what I know into the Students' Union space and raise the voices of others, as well as impactfully challenging the university.

Whilst I didn't get in initially on votes, I was given the chance due to my incumbent stepping down. This has been the biggest privilege I have had the fortune to experience. I have made connections within the staff and student body that I hope will last, and worked within and with the support of teams across KCLSU (including the Officers of course!) to bring about change through new representative structures and strengthening the call for student voice to not just be consulted but meaningfully brought in throughout every aspect of education and designing our future.

I hope those connections I've made will last for the rest of my time at King's; I have three more years through which to continue the change I have started! I hope to find ways to continue to be able to contribute to the SU, through being Student staff, supporting campaigns, and maybe even becoming a rep or two... watch this space 😊



# Officer projects: Ali Gibson, VP Education (Health)

Objective	Project	Impact
Improve representation and student voice across King's	Created a brand new student experience committee in the health faculties	Starting up in June, this committee will bring health student reps and student experience teams from across all four health faculties, to discuss cross-faculty projects that will improve the experience of being a healthcare student at King's!
Improve representation and student voice across King's	Improving voices of students through central committees – now write a paper for every College Education Committee meeting detailing the student sentiment and problems faced by students	More channels to bring in student voice into the decision-making that happens at King's. Greater strength when we challenge the university and face resistance
Improve representation and student voice across King's	Student Voice Project – joining in, championing the work, taking it to College Education Committee	For the first time, King's formally endorsed a Shared Approach to Student Voice between both King's and KCLSU. This will allow both KCL and KCLSU to collaborate on ways to improve representative structures at King's, as well as how to centre the student voice in everything that happens across the university



# Heena Ramchandani, VP Postgraduate

I ran for this position as I felt unsatisfied with the provision of the Postgrad experience at King's. I really wanted to make change within the Union to ensure Postgraduates felt included and involved in all the activities provided. Postgrads are usually stigmatised and don't really integrate within the student life as much as Undergrads do, and I really wanted to change that. With COVID, it became hard to work on engaging students, especially Postgrads, virtually. I focused my work into ensuring PGs were benefiting from improved services, activities and academic quality. It was an interesting time to be working as an officer as there were constant changes and as a team, we had to keep adapting accordingly.

My journey of being an officer was nothing short of a rollercoaster! It had great highs and steep lows. Being in the middle of a pandemic, trying to navigate my new role virtually (and in a different time zone), understanding student sentiment and all while trying to finish my Master's dissertation was not the easiest of tasks. However, I was and am super grateful to my officer team and the extremely supportive staff at KCLSU that made my job easier and worthwhile. It was hard to follow a strict structure in terms of getting work done as so many things were changing constantly; we had to be extremely flexible. As a team, we dedicated a lot of time to attend to urgent COVID-related issues rather than fixating on our personal objectives. My journey wouldn't have been the same without the officer team who made the whole experience so fulfilling and exciting at the same time!

I really enjoyed my time as a KCLSU Officer, which is why I am staying for another year and will hopefully get to finish the remaining of my objectives and some in-person experience!



# Heena Ramchandani, VP Postgraduate

Objective	Project	Impact
Improve Careers & Employability services for Postgraduate Taught Students	Worked closely with the King's Careers team and developed a close partnership to improve career support and opportunities to PGT students. Designed a survey in which students' responses helped in gaining insightful feedback that was then conveyed to the career department. We had around 500 responses, which helped the Careers department to implement tailor-made resources for our PGT students	<p>The Careers department at King's welcomed all of the feedback the survey provided and promised to include more PGT-intensive resource comprising of a Keats' page, a dedicated PGT week "Focus on Masters" in the Careers fairs, with faculty focused drop-ins and more use of blogs/social media to direct and address PGT students specifically</p> <p>We also worked to increase engagement of students with the careers team by jointly running blogs to increase awareness of all services available to students</p>
PG student engagement in a virtual learning environment	Hosted various online meet and greet/chat and chill/speed meet events for Postgraduates to connect with each other outside of a strictly academic setting	Received a great deal of positive feedback from students who appreciated the online social events and an informal way to meet fellow PG students virtually
Tackling Harassment at King's/KCLSU	Launched a harassment campaign called NoMoreKnowMore to signpost help and raise awareness to students struggling and facing harassment	Working with various staff members across King's and KCLSU to ensure equal collaboration in implementing changes within policies and services towards a safer university and union for students and staff
Financial Feasibility for students at King's	The large financial investment of a university education is a burden on many students. In order to improve accessibility, I worked on establishing a third instalment of tuition fees for self-funded students (whether they were UK, EU or International). This was aimed at improving financial viability of paying tuition fees and was particularly impactful for those of disadvantaged socio-economic background.	Students will be able to pay in 3 instalments, which levies some financial burden of paying in 2 instalments only. Student wellbeing improved as a result of this change, due to increased flexibility in paying tuition fees and less financial stress on themselves and their families

# Niall Berry, VP Activities and Development

I was really involved in sports and activity groups throughout my time at KCL, including being president of KCL Muay Thai for two years. I decided to run as an officer because I found that being part of the community at King's gave me the support I needed to adjust to being at university, manage my mental health and really engage with my degree. I decided to run for the officer role because I wanted to do what I could to ensure future students would be able to feel that same support that I enjoyed during my time and King's.

My year as an officer is entirely not what I'd expected due to the impact of COVID. I came into the year thinking I'd be able to engage with students and activity groups in person and push to make the changes they wanted to see within KCLSU, but instead I've been miles from campus in front of a laptop. However, as I'm sure everyone says in this part of their report, I've learned so much this year – about myself, this role and the wider running of a huge organisation like KCLSU – and it's all been incredibly rewarding. This has been my first 'office' job, and obviously it's been in a senior position of a big charity during one of the most challenging times. The learning curve has been huge but having gone through it, I feel so much more confident in my leadership, organisational and communication skills. I also know that, through working on my manifesto priorities and tackling other issues that have emerged, I will have achieved my goal of establishing changes that will have an impact well after I've moved on – such as the work on the accessibility fund, which will improve student experience and engagement with the SU for the foreseeable future.

After finishing my role as VPAD, I'm hoping to move on to working as a junior physio in the NHS, and have a couple of interviews coming up. I'm confident that the skills I've developed over this past year will serve me well moving into that role and into the future I progress through my Physiotherapy career.



# Officer projects: Niall Berry, VP Activities and Development

Objective	Project	Impact
Improve wellbeing support within student activity groups	As a result, I worked with our Wellbeing team to discover why some groups hadn't elected wellbeing leads and how we could change that, and worked to get clubs and societies written into the SU bye-laws, with wellbeing officers as a recommended role for committees	The number of Wellbeing leads within our activity groups has continued to increase and future members of those clubs and societies have increased wellbeing support from their peers.
Establishing an accessibility fund for groups to improve their accessibility – i.e. funding BSL interpreters or the purchase of specialised sporting equipment	I continued work that had already been started by some of the SU team to consult with students about the barriers they've faced to engaging with the SU and how we could overcome them. This was then presenting to budget holders and an initial amount of money was approved that will be available from September.	Improved accessibility for students to engage with the SU and our activity groups, making KCLSU more inclusive as a whole  New Fund available from September
Create a Sponsorship webpage for all of our activity groups to increase their reach and revenue	This has involved engaging with the marketing and activity group co-ordinators to work out what the page would look like, and then working with the web team to create the page	From September this page should be live, and it will give activity groups a single page to easily and efficiently access all the sponsorship opportunities that get offered to our groups. It also should allow the marketing team to approach potential sponsors with stats about how successful previous companies have been filling their opportunities.
King's Edge is another additional project I picked up and have co-chaired with Jim Collins from KCL	King's Edge has aimed to bring all extra-curricular activities (mainly academic focused) under one banner and make them easy for students to find. This has involved working across a large number of King's departments and the SU to identify opportunities and get them live during the King's Edge timeframe	Students should have easier access and increased awareness of extra-curricular opportunities across this year. Additionally, while King's Edge is only planned to be run this year there's a possibility that it'll become an ongoing platform

# Tasnia Yasmin, VP Welfare and Community

I started enjoying my university experience more once I had joined societies, got involved in committees and met people through KCLSU. I ran to be an officer because during my time as a student trustee and working with the officers and staff, I thought it was somewhere where I could make a difference. Before starting my role, and in the early days, there were no expectations of what the job would be like or what the year would include. We all started online hoping that we would eventually meet each other on campus very soon and conduct day to day life like normal (how wrong were we!). It was an exciting time to be involved in changing and shaping plans for the year and allowed me to truly understand the student experience.

My time as an officer was a rollercoaster filled with highs and lows! The beginning was demanding, trying to navigate a new role in an online environment whilst trying to understand the student sentiment (one that I was no longer part of) was difficult. We were slowly expecting things to get back to normal where we could see students on campus and have more than five people in the office at once, but we soon came to realise that it wouldn't happen now and had to adapt. Unlike a normal year, there were many ad-hoc pieces of work that had to be picked up by the team due to circumstances, which meant we had to be very flexible in our approaches. The entire time here was full of fun and laughter, especially with such an amazing officer team who I could rely on and who had each other's backs through the thick of it all.

This was an amazing year, which taught me a lot, and I thoroughly enjoyed all of it. 10/10 would recommend.



# Officer projects: Tasnia Yasmin, VP Welfare and Community

Objective	Project	Impact
Student welfare on a smaller scale	Looking at how students can have access points of low-level support in a more centralised system, which is easier for them to access. I was able to be part of the process from early on as well as of hiring and recruiting the incoming Faculty Welfare and Wellbeing Advisers	Students who are unaware of centralised systems within King's will be able to have a point of contact within their faculty, which can make process less daunting and easier to access. As it is a new post, there is ample opportunity for student feedback and shaping the role to what is best suited within each faculty
Bush House incident/ Tavistock report	Moving on from the Queen's visit, I have been part of a working group that is looking at how to increase community engagement following relationship breakdowns of multiple stakeholders (students, security, academics). This has involved being in focus groups, drafts of the Tavistock report as well as understanding what needs to be done to ensure that students or staff feel safe on campus	Improving the relationship between not only KCLSU and KCL but also looking at how we can work more closely with our systems in place i.e. how freedom of speech is viewed/accessed/applied at King's
Equality, diversity and inclusion	I was able to take part in many different projects related to EDI, including the consultation on the statues on Guy's Campus, as well as improving diversity within the Council Room and the student submission for the OFS bursary report	EDI is something that is continuing to be pulled forward on the agenda and as a result has allowed for more students to feel like King's has a more inclusive environment, whether that is feeding back what networks have said or ensuring that diversity is at the heart of every decision made
Sustainability in the curriculum	Worked alongside the King's Climate Action Network Students & Education subgroup to push for including sustainability on the longer term college curriculum agenda	This will allow Sustainability to sit across different disciplines and allow for a wider variety of module choices for students in different programmes
Decolonising the curriculum	The age-old manifesto point on many officers agendas that will be continuously and tirelessly worked on by many. The Student Attainment steering group, Inclusive Education working group and the Cultural Competency working group have all been projects that I have been involved in throughout the year	Increased student conversation and involvement to ensure an inclusive environment for all students, and set up a structure which can be used by future Officers to continue working on this aim

# Joint Officer team projects:

Objective	Officers	Project	Impact
Improve representation and student voice across King's	All Officers, primarily Ali, Salma & Heena	Town Halls + Q&As, and the detailed reports with students' feedback which were presented to College Council and to the wider student body	In reacting to the context of lockdowns, changes to the educational experience and recognising the difficulties of reaching students in the remote learning world, started up our own way of gathering student insight. Over 800 students attended and we received incredible feedback, such as: "The officer team were really receptive to feedback and ideas... the meeting was run really well and I'm excited to see the progress that the officers make throughout a challenging year!"
Improve Awareness of KCLSU	Ali, Heena & All Officers	Officers Instagram	Founded the Officers page so you could see more of what it means to be an Officer! Created social media graphics, content, videos to support campaigns e.g. SUAF Gained over 400 followers (and counting) in less than a year!
Rent Strikes	Tasnia & Niall	Mediated between King's management and the student group who had organised a rent strike in halls (KCL Cut the Rent), working to resolve the 7 demands the students had	We reached resolutions to all seven of the students demands, including further communications of the no-fee contract breaks KCLSU had already worked to put in place and securing £50,000 to be paid to students in the most financial hardship We're continuing to work with the students and management to ensure better communications and conditions going forwards We also campaigned for residence support for self-isolating students and managed to secure free menstrual products in all King's Residences for self-isolating students During this time, we have ensured that the wellbeing of students has been prioritised and extra support is available
Student harassment	Salma, Heena and Tasnia	A group of students approached us about harassment on campus and what was being done about it	Allowing for a safer campus for all members of KCL. We are active members of a KCLSU-wide staff working group to improve knowledge and action against harassment in our spaces A working group was created at KCLSU involving multiple departments to look at how we can address and prevent harassment on and off campus, linking up with the work that is being done at King's and ensuring that students feel safe and comfortable in our spaces Heena developed the Know More, No More campaign because of these conversations with these students, and is part of conversations with King's, KCLSU and students about harassment and improving student safety on campus
Circle U	Vatsav/ Heena	Represent King's College London in Circle-U. Establishing principles, terms of reference and schedule of business for a Europe-Wide Inter-university students' union	Co-created a Students' union in partnership with student representatives of university members of the European Alliance and built strong relations across borders in an uncertain time, adopted best practice and enhanced our own global mobility, gathered a rich pool of resources to delve into for global problem solving and worked collaboratively to find solutions faced by students across Europe, accounting for regional implications
NSS & Academic Quality	Salma, Vatsav, Ali & Heena	The move to blended learning is a huge upheaval to modern university education and therefore is a threat to the academic experience, a large part of the overall student experience. This transition will have successes and pitfalls which requires monitoring of constant feedback to ensure the high standards of academic quality that King's provides is achieved	Increased student satisfaction as students will see their immediate feedback is acted upon Maintenance of academic quality in a blended learning environment through continual use of student feedback in a way that is equitable to both staff and students Ensure student voices are heard when evaluating the successes and failures in the transition to online learning so improvements can be made to teaching

# Joint Officer team projects:

Objective	Officers	Project	Impact
Wednesday Afternoons	All, led by Niall	Reinstate Wednesday afternoons in Semester 2	We managed to reinstate Wednesday afternoons as free time for students to explore extracurricular activities after releasing two surveys, a campaign and collecting statements from students
Working on tackling Prevent	Salma and Tasnia	Work with the university to examine the inherently islamophobia Prevent duty	We had discussion with the university on the training provided to staff to ensure that students are kept safe but not discriminated against through platforms like Prevent
PerSISStence	Salma (Lead), Tasnia and Ali	To empower our female and non-binary students to have the confidence to be who they really are and achieve their goals	We had a wide range of students attend the events hosted by us centrally and the student groups we collaborated with; every person who attended said they found it useful
Religion and Covid-19	Salma and Tasnia	Worked on a number of projects to help students of faith to be supported in COVID. These included religious celebrations in self-isolation, and facilitating a dialogue between students and the university on access to prayer spaces	Due to these conversations with the university, students were finally able to use crucial prayer spaces they are normally able to access but had issues due to social distancing  Students were able to celebrate, despite the circumstances, and use the spaces created for them within the University and Union to practise their religion
Student Survey	Vatsav (Lead) and Salma	Commissioned a joint survey with KCL to understand the student experience in 2020/21	We managed to collate this feedback and provide a number of recommendations to the university to improve  The first to be implemented is the 40% cap on late submission of coursework
Value for money	Salma, Tasnia, Vatsav and Heena	Covid-19 has had a dramatic impact on the finances of all students. There are four key areas that require consideration: bursaries, third instalment, Alumni discount and financial transparency	We have worked with the university on use of OfS hardship funding and continued advocating for alumni discount

“The officers have helped to us to voice our opinions through Town Hall meetings and with student led focus groups”

“Increasing study spaces/slots was a massive help”



# COVID-19 work:

COVID-related issue	Action	Impact
University not hearing the needs and concerns of students	Started organising Town Halls so that students can have their voices heard	In reacting to the context of lockdowns, changes to the educational experience and recognising the difficulties of reaching students in the remote learning world, started up our own way of gathering student insight. Over 800 students attended and we received incredible feedback, such as:  “Most of the questions I had were answered. I enjoyed how honest those who conducted the town hall were about certain topics and if they were unable to answer they would signpost us to the right person.”
Students need confidential spaces on campus to take appointments with Student Services such as Counselling	Coordinated KCLSU Operations and Counselling staff to give over our currently unused Advice rooms over to students	Students can book to use Advice rooms to take confidential appointments until staff head back to the Office
The previous officer team had agreed with King's that timetabling could take place on Wednesday afternoons (usually protected free time) through term one. King's had decided that they would need to extend this into semester two, which we felt was unacceptable and so launched a campaign to stop	We gathered student testimonials about why they valued Wednesday afternoons and collected signatures from activity group Presidents and community leaders showing their support for the campaign  We took the evidence of student sentiment to senior King's groups and presented it to show the case for reinstating protection and ultimately got the protected time reinstated from second semester onwards	Ensuring students have set time during the week with no lectures/classes that they can use to complete assignments, socialise, play sport or partake in activities and generally look after their wellbeing  All of this was especially important during a pandemic when everyone was feeling the strain of the restrictions
PGT Fair Assessment Policy	Ensured King's reinstated their 2% policy from the previous year	PGT students would be upgraded by 2% grade if on the grade boundaries (58% would be 60% and 68% would be 70%)
International students having to pay for fit to fly and test to release tests to get in and out of the UK so they could visit their home countries over the Christmas Break	We convinced King's to subsidise the cost of these tests to alleviate pressure on students and allow them to visit their families during the holidays	A student said: “KCL subsidising my fit to fly test meant that I was able to spend Christmas with my family and this massively improved my mental wellbeing”
Lack of provision for menstruating self-isolating students in King's owned accommodation	We convinced King's Residences to provide menstrual products in packages provided to self-isolating students in	This allowed students not to worry about a very normal part of life in a highly stressful time
New lockdown = new problems for students	We participated in a number of ad-hoc and emergency meetings in light of government announcements	We were able to influence key decisions around communications, opening of library spaces, testing and more Students were able to understand the situation better, access critical study spaces and be safe on campus

# COVID-19 work:

COVID-related issue	Action	Impact
Obtain an extension on deadlines in light of the student travel window	We convinced KCL to provide a deadline extension in December so no student would have to juggle uncertain travel and deadlines	Students were able to feel less stressed about their deadlines  They were filled with gratitude as it was a highly stressful time and this allowed them to gain back some breathing room
Keeping the whole community safe through disciplinary actions	Influenced the non-academic misconduct policy, which was updated to deal with unsafe COVID behaviours.	Highlighted the anxieties faced around securitisation, in light of Bush House incident, and managed to get a fair policy to ensure all students are safe
Looked at new ways to engage students	Created new methods to engage our students from Town Halls to Teams Representative Fora	Allowed students to have their voices heard and raise issues affecting them in a difficult year so we can actively tackle problems before they boil up
Brought together the Presidents of every Russell Group Students' Union	Recreated the Aldwych Group so we could work together towards collective action, such as publication of a joint response on the lack of safety net and on Freedom of Expression	Elucidated a response from the Russell Group on the lack of safety net this year, which led to individual providers issuing their own versions of a safety net policy which would have affected 1000s of students across the country
Raise many student online exams assessment issues	Online exams created their own set of issues Efficiently and effectively raised these issues to the relevant staff in KCL Worked on collecting information on the lack of communication around exam format from student	Mitigated a number of issues, such as Keats outages and then informed a paper to create a set of principles for future online exam periods  Students in February still were unaware of exam structure, and we raised this with the relevant teams which allowed students to get the information they needed to prepare for exams
One Last Roar	Salma created a vision for a series of in person events, 21st-25th Jun, which will allow students to celebrate in spite of the horrible experience this year	We have granted over £10,000 to student groups to put on their own activities and will be hosting our own central KCLSU events We have had inclusivity at the forefront (including having one non-alcoholic and one alcoholic session) and included different students in the decision making around this to ensure it is truly student-led

"I'm really looking forward to the 'One Last Roar' event, which Salma organised and creatively planned! Salma has shown time and time again her initiative and consideration for all students. I especially admire the inclusivity of her running non-alcoholic student union events, so that the whole King's community can feel welcome and enjoy the end of year festivities, in what was a difficult year for many."

# Accountability Panel:

The Officer Accountability Panel successfully launched this academic year and has been a really **positive and collaborative** space for the Officer Team and members of the student body to come together and discuss the Officers' priorities and work throughout the year.

The panel consists of seven members who meet at least 4-5 times in the academic year to work with the Officers on the four areas of accountability:

- Impacting students' experience
- Working with students
- Representing students
- Engaging and informing students

For this academic year of 20/21 our panel members were Areej Panju, Ayesha Khan, Emma Bohea, Fabian Siau, Liam Jones, Sanya Salman, and Usama Karatella.

The Officer Accountability Panel aims to have an **open and structured working relationship** between students and the elected Officers/Representatives at KCLSU. It is also a space for students to hold their elected leaders to account. The Panel **facilitates dialogue** between the Officers/Representatives and the wider student community and allows for **transparency**.



# Academic Association Leads

Our Academic Associations act as a representative body and advocate for the needs of their peers, campaign for change, and engage and build a community and a sense of belonging amongst their specific group within KCLSU, King's or their faculty/department. This year, they worked on a range of projects and initiatives to support other students, including:

- Carrying on the association during the pandemic in some form of capacity to keep students together ([Denmark Hill PGR Students' Association](#))
- Maintaining student engagement through online events during this year ([Bioscience Students' Association](#))
- Introducing PAL lectures and academically supporting students by raising concerns with faculty to make policies more accessible to students
- Held a lockdown pub quiz night which was great and let everyone know that we are still looking out for each other and having fun, even though we couldn't physically meet ([Denmark Hill PGR Students' Association](#))
- Starting up the KBSSA and creating a community at KBS. One of the key aspects of this is our Instagram page, handled by a FABULOUS team member. Students started to really notice our presence and follow us for study ideas and wellness tips. The few events we threw to encourage social activity also contributed to this. ([KBS Students' Association, Kavya Sivakumar – 2020-21 President](#))
- Relaying student feedback on their experience during COVID-19 so that changes could be implemented quickly and efficiently. Also maintaining student support through the Parents Scheme online. Diversifying the BSA committee to better represent all courses within the School of Bioscience Education ([Bioscience Students' Association](#))
- Successfully managing to increase student interaction with our social media accounts ([King's Doctoral Students' Association](#))
- Implementing a DDI policy for all following KDSA events ([King's Doctoral Students' Association](#))

# Moving Forward:

The next academic year will present some exciting and challenging times as we continue to support our students throughout the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and begin to return to campus, while ensuring that we are still providing the same level of representation, support and high quality of services we always aim to give our students, whether from home or office.

In July 2021, we will welcome our newly elected KCLSU Officers, who are:

You can find out more about their manifestos and read them here [kclsu.org/elections/results](https://kclsu.org/elections/results)



**Zahra Syed**

President



**Hamza Lone**

Vice President  
Education  
(Arts & Sciences)



**Fatimah Patel**

Vice President  
Education  
(Health)



**Heena Ramchandani**

Vice President  
Postgraduate



**Arslan Zafar**

Vice President  
Activities and  
Development



**Daniyal Ubaidullah**

Vice President  
Welfare and  
Community



# KCLSU Town Hall Student Feedback Report

## Introduction

This report details the KCLSU Student Town Hall held on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 11:00am-12:30pm, facilitated by the KCLSU Officers and Community Development Team. The focus of this Town Hall, recognising interest from College Council around improving the student experience in the context of poorer than ideal NSS scores, was to explore Assessment and Feedback at King's; what was understood by students as constituting Assessment & Feedback, what and where was there good practice and items that warranted further attention and improvement.

Given the timing of this meeting in the Academic Year, we were anticipating a significantly lower number of students than for previous Town Halls. Additionally, the topic we explored was likely less attractive than the subjects of previous Town Halls (e.g. tuition fees), which bears thinking about in terms of maintaining high levels of student engagement as we wrap up and reflect on this year's Town Halls, and plan for this as a long-term model of student insight. In total there were 40 students were in attendance across the go-minute Town Hall, and also in attendance were a number of senior KCL Management, Student Experience staff and Vice Deans Education as well as College Council members who observed the discussion held.

## Executive Summary

From the students in the session, we believe some guiding questions or principles can be teased out for the future of Assessment and Feedback at King's College London. It is also of note that experiences represented by the students present varied greatly, some reporting very supportive and helpful assessment and feedback processes or examples, whilst others reported difficulty in receiving or engaging with feedback.

In writing this report, we have grouped student comments into themes:

- COVID considerations
- Preparedness for Assessments
- Feedback response times
- Differences between Assessments year on year
- The problem with MCQs
- Mark schemes
- Timings of exams and coursework
- What does good feedback look like?

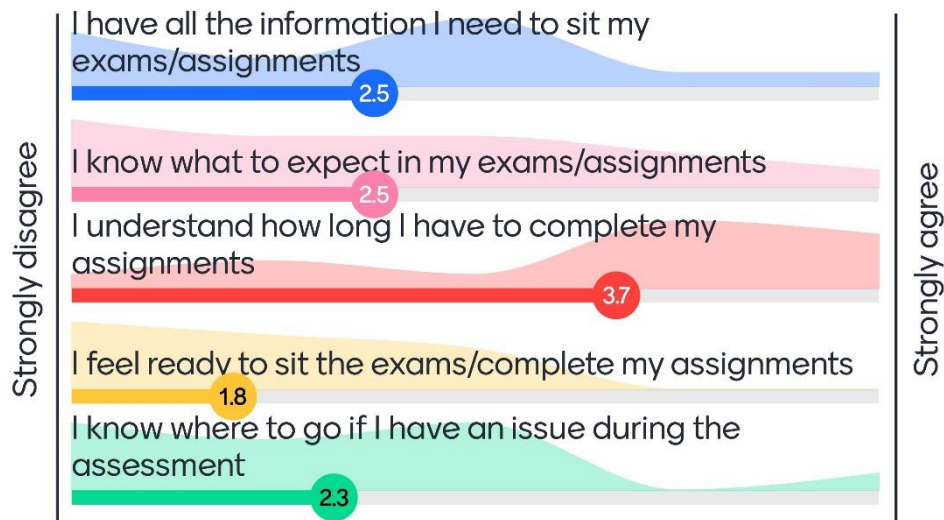
We have then made a number of asks and recommendations, which appear at the end of the relevant section. Overall, there is a lot of appetite amongst students as well as staff to improve Assessment & Feedback processes and experience, as well as self-evident need through the concerns of students and metrics such as NSS. Students want to be able to engage in a meaningful process that helps them achieve their academic and educational goals, to build skills for learning and life and identify areas of strength, weakness and progress.

Our recommendations are outlined collectively in the conclusion, and follow five themes:

- A need to improve consistency and coordination across and within faculties, departments and courses to make assessment a smooth and accessible process which at the very least meets student expectations.
- An ask, as the College begins work on re-evaluating, re-defining and diversifying assessment, that the voices of students are actively sought, encouraged and incorporated in building a shared knowledge, definition and understanding of how and why we assess at King's, co-creating the ways students and staff test, reflect and learn.
- There are pockets of great practice to celebrate, and to consider how they can be best shared or promoted to students.
- Common, persistent, recurrent issues continue to affect the experience of assessment and feedback at King's. An approach to tackle assessment will need to consider the ground-level causes of these problems, as well as outlining aspirational targets and pressuring staff/departments to meet them.
- Students and staff are both committed to building this vision for Assessment and Feedback, making it a no-brainer for improving the student experience at King's and an opportunity to promote what students come to King's to learn about and experience.

## Assessment & Feedback for the remainder of 2020/21

Recognising the timing of this convening of the Town Hall, it felt pertinent to first confirm students' readiness for the imminent exam period. As such, we opened the session by asking students to rank their agreement with a number of statements around the upcoming assessment period. The results are indicated below:



Generally it seems the message around the arrangements for 24-hour submission windows and what happens when there are exam clashes has been well distributed and understood by students, which we are very happy to see and demonstrates good work by the exam scheduling team and communications as many students were uncertain about that when the timetable was initially published.

However, what is concerning is that the lowest ranking score around feeling ready to take exams. It could be the case that this was a consequence of students still being in the crux of the revision period, and were we to re-survey these students in the beginning of May there would be a shift in position; it is still concerning to see from the distribution of the responses that there were no students ranking higher than a 3. Additionally, given the remote and online nature of the online assessments and assignments, we would hope that students have been or are due to be informed about where they can go to seek help. This could constitute further clarity around how to report an issue with the systems, platforms and computer programs on which they are completing their assessments, where and how the Mitigating Circumstances procedure becomes applicable such as in the newly introduced 'IT and/or computer failure' circumstance, or how to report illness or other inability to sit the assessment/assignment.

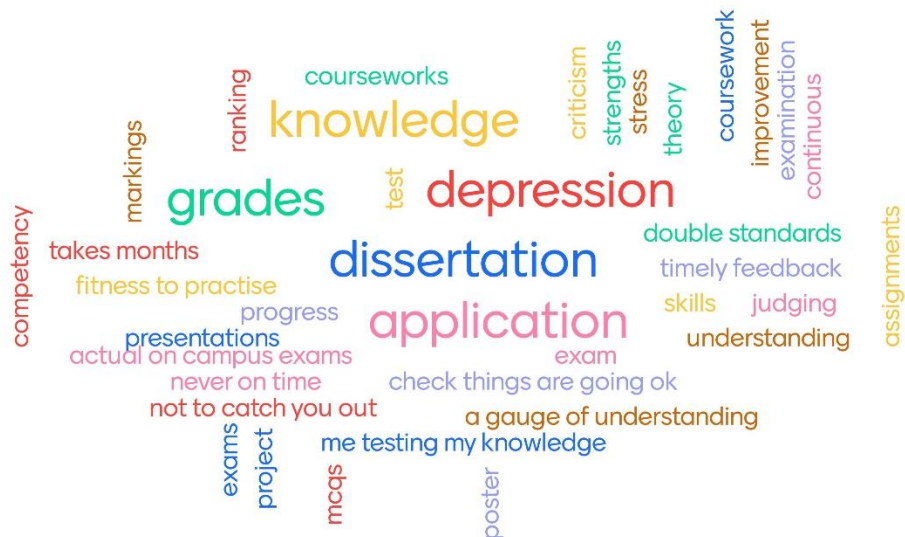
**Ask - We ask for faculties and central KCL teams if exam information has not been already communicated: to ensure those communications are easily understandable; contain straight-forward links and directions to access pre-assignment, on-the-day, and post-assignment examinations support; and remind students of the support services that are available to them, from Personal Tutors to Mental Health & Wellbeing support.**

## What is Assessment & Feedback?

Next, we moved into open questions to get the attendees thinking about what is meant by assessment & feedback. Our intent was to appreciate where the alignment was between the College's understanding of what is meant by assessment & feedback and what students see it as, as well as the purpose and to begin to tease out examples of good and bad practice.

The word clouds below show the responses of the 40 students in attendance, and some comments for each in turn:

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000; 283: 2689-2695.



- Firstly, looking at the 'Assessment' word cloud, there are numerous examples of assessment which we would expect to see and that aligns with the College's approach to assessment (especially during COVID times and the alterations that have been made to some forms of assessment); 'coursework', 'exams', 'project', 'mcqs', 'poster', 'presentations', 'dissertation' all indicate the joint recognition that there are multiple ways students engage with assessing at King's and that it rightly goes far beyond traditional in-person examinations.
- Multiple comments also indicate the identified purpose of assessment; 'check things are going okay', 'a gauge of understanding', 'me testing my knowledge', 'not to catch you out', 'timely feedback'; these hint at an approach or welcoming of assessment methods which do not merely serve to allow progression on to the next stage of the course, but form part of the learning experience. We know as KCLSU Officers that there has been an 'Assessment for Learning' stream of work underway for a significant period of time, and that the comments made here may form a basis for future work in this area.
- There are also a couple of comments which look to improvements; 'stress' and 'depression' which could be seen as two consequences of assessment; 'never on time' and 'takes months' which begin to identify where some tensions are in the student experience of assessment and assignment, which will be discussed further below.

## What is Feedback?



- Moving on to the 'Feedback' word cloud, there are a lot more comments here which highlight difficulties students have faced in their experiences. 'Never on time', 'not helpful', 'no feedback on one exam', 'takes months', 'not enough to improve', 'weak feedback', 'delayed' all indicate significant issues across the represented faculties and courses, one around quality and depth of feedback and another around time for completing and returning feedback to students. Again, the KCLSU Officers have been privy to conversations with senior KCL Management who have been formulating a plan for introducing standardised feedback response times for all assessments, which will be tiered based on formative versus summative, and length of the assessment piece. It appears that an approach to standardise would be



gratefully received given the variety of experience; recognising that this does seem to be a recurring problem and as such some exploration of why this continues to be the case as well as enforcing from the top may be necessary. Furthermore, some specific examples and references were made to certain faculties; 'takes 5 weeks for KBS', 'one word feedback – KBS', '3 months nms'.

- Once more, there are also examples of what the purpose of feedback can be for students; 'constructive', 'errors and improvements', 'potential for growth', 'preparedness', 'help to get to next level', 'more than grammar check', 'support', 'foundation of learning' – these all highlight how feedback could and should play a part in students educational experience, for which some examples were also teased out later on. This also feeds back into the 'Assessment for Learning' piece mentioned previously, and ensuring the methods with which students can interact with assessment and feedback can make them better and more competent learners.
- 4 responses made mention of 'double standards', making it the central response on the map. We attempted to drill down into what the meaning of what this was, and it seemed to represent the perception that students submitting assignments to a particular deadline were being held to a different standard than that of markers and those responsible for releasing marks as they were 'never on time'.

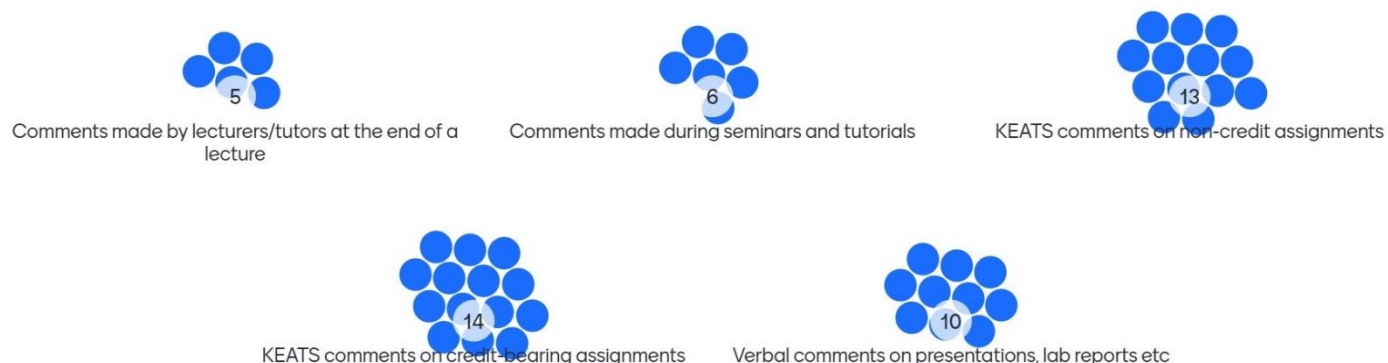
**Recommendation: Student contributions around the purpose of assessment to feed directly into the upcoming Assessment & Feedback workstream subgroups, and committing to meaningfully co-create what Assessment & Feedback is at King's with students, academics and PS staff.**

**Ask: Exams and assessments to be a clear risk to student mental health as identified in the Student Mental Health Strategy, and clear actions to be identified to address this risk.**

**Ask: In the incoming plan to tackle inconsistency in and lack of oversight around feedback response times, a method of tracking where there are issues and being agile in response will need to be considered.**

Which of these do you consider to be feedback?

We asked this question to understand whether students had similar perceptions to staff on what methods of student-tutor institution constitutes feedback:



There was a clear preference to formal comments and interaction through platforms such as KEATS, and where there was a particular defined piece of work to respond to such as a lab report or presentation.

That said, only two audience members identified all mechanisms mentioned as methods of feedback, and one student who chose no options that referred to KEATS commentary, indicating that there is a variety of ways students engage with feedback and a broad base that covers all of the above options (and more!) with care and diligence will give maximal opportunities for students to 'get to next level' and build a 'foundation of learning'.

What is assessment & feedback like on your course?

This produced numerous responses which we wanted to elicit due to the complexity of KCL and the incredibly varied ways different faculties and even different schools/departments organise and deliver assessment & feedback.

There is a lot to draw out and we include both sides of student comments for this section, as well as some commentary on the subsequent discussion.

Usually very limited - KBS	Assessment is always credit-bearing and feedback is useful but depends on lecturer how much you get - Theology UG	UG Biomedical Engineering - Feedback is usually too short, about a line, only a few modules that provide good feedback. Always given to us too late
Mixed bag - majority good but the challenge is with consistency	FOLSM UG courses provide inconsistent timely feedback and amount of detail varies on the academic. Like the change to 1 big 40% piece of coursework	Does vary between modules but overall, very brief and doesn't give useful suggestions on how to improve (sometimes leave just an ?) - UG pharmacology
Treats our essays more like journal submissions than learning opportunities - PGR	banking and finance: two markers provide specific feedback for each question, and one course has overall feedback for the whole test, another course does not have feedback for many student	I think the feedback is generally really good and on time with a lot of constructive points to learn from. I do feel sometimes assessments can be a bit unclear in the beginning and we can be better prepared for them with clearer guidance
Good for essays but nonexistent for exams, giving no room for improvement. Also, can't discuss your results so very limited - Political Economy UG	Psychology & Neuroscience of Mental Health: feedback from teaching fellow from submitted essay plans, however more feedback from student fellows, resulting from peer-to-peer interaction - as important as feedback from professors. A lack of the latter	Can be detailed and constructive but highly dependent on prof - History UG
Assessments are structured well but the feedback is inconsistent. Sometimes academics give feedback during a tutorial which is personalized and helpful sometimes its just generic line or two.	UG History - Excellent, they really work hard to support you.	YouTube videos helping me with physics
FNMP-Post GradUsually fair Assessment and feedback, but would be good to receive accreditation for the assignments done. At the moment the assessments taken are added on as post grad training skills.		

#### Commentary:

- A number of comments here refer to inconsistency, between professors and modules as well as between faculties as demonstrated. Across Theology, History, Biomed Eng, Pharmacology and Banking & Finance, students report that feedback can vary greatly between one or two lines or good, useful feedback. Generally brevity of feedback is considered unhelpful; a Pharmacology respondent here responds that sometimes they received a mere question mark in response, although later went on to describe a good example of a module where they were given personalised feedback which made use of the Microsoft Word comments functionality, and worked through model answers.
- There are clear examples of good practice going on, which came through both the student responses to questions as well as the subsequent discussion. Comments which refer to good feedback refer to supporting students (UG History) and including 'constructive points to learn from'.

**Recommendation: More standardised approaches to Assessment & Feedback, across faculties and courses appears long overdue and the inconsistency likely contributes to poorer than ideal NSS scores. Making the experience as straightforward as possible, meeting communicated deadlines and where that isn't possible, further transparent communications will help improve the experience.**

**Recommendation: Student insights about good practice in Feedback may be welcome starting points for the new 'Feedback' sub-group of the Assessment & Feedback strand of Curriculum 2029.**

## Discussion

The session was then opened up to a discussion for students to contribute beyond the scope of the above questions. We have grouped the subsequent conversation around the themes which arose.

### COVID considerations

A number of students had either questions of immediate concern or impacts of COVID-19 on their Assessment experiences. Most of these have been passed onto SED for resolution before the publishing of this report so that students can have their answers or needs can be put into place for Assessment Period 2 & 3 2020/21.

One student asked whether given the continuing uncertainty of the COVID pandemic and having applied for a COVID-related Mitigating Circumstances Form, whether there was opportunity to apply for a second on top of this, and this came with consequences such as a cap on grading. We suggested that the student in their specific circumstance should speak with KCLSU Advice about their circumstance, but it does also raise questions about how the Mitigating Circumstances process will operate in the future. We have heard from our KCLSU Advice caseworkers that they have struggled navigating the implementation of the Mit Circs policy, especially the relaxations that have been introduced this year due to COVID, due to inconsistencies in policy application (for example, where evidence is needed or not needed).

Another student raised an issue where their friend received module results for a practical module which involved 3D printing; this module had been amended due to COVID to not include physical prints in the final submission. Yet when this student received the results feedback had not been changed and referred to marks being deducted due to the lack of 3D prints in the submission. We circulated this immediately to SED to follow up.

An additional COVID mitigation we were aware of was the alteration of coursework submission dates in September to give time for students to travel home during the travel window. However this appeared to have the knock-on effect of eating up time for revision in the December holiday period, which we know is often an intense revision period due to the January exams which follow. In the future, should similar requirements be necessary, a consideration of how coursework could be scheduled or adapted in these acute situations could be welcome, and bringing students and academics together to these conversations to understand how they perceive their workload would be appreciated.

One student raised in the chat a point we didn't highlight in the Town Hall, asking how King's "finds and deals with people cooperating during online exams"; with a move towards online or non-paper assessment methods the university has thought extensively about how to uphold academic standards. Some students will have been involved in pilots to test proctoring software, and out of that pilot King's is looking to choose to improve the strength of assessments rather than look to proctoring software. This work will be done by a group which the KCLSU Officers will ask to sit on and to consider how we can bring the voices of the wider student population into any recommendations that arise from it.

Students had further concerns about employability in the COVID age, with students having had little to no experience of on-campus interaction and sitting assessments/completing assignments and thereby being seen as less employable or otherwise under-skilled compared to those who graduated prior to the pandemic. Another student within this meeting had been able to add to this, recognising that the employment market was difficult and it was hard to prepare for employment in person, but they were advised to get in contact with employers and organisations who have adapted to online recruitment and outreach so may be more willing to support with a digital internship or careers talk. Access to virtual fairs across the UK and the world has been brought about by the COVID pandemic, and King's own programme of employability and extra/co-curricular support has very recently launched to give students that King's Edge in your futures – [access all of the opportunities here](#).

Lastly, a point around the current prolonged and stressful COVID pandemic was raised for the continuing mental health consequences and difficulties maintaining motivation during this time. As we head into Assessment Periods 2 & 3, we have a responsibility to ensure all students who are suffering the long-lasting effects of this pandemic do not have this impact on their academic ability or final grade, and as comprehensive as this consideration can be, the better. The student rightly identified that many students will not have access to services, or support in the form of family and social support either due to COVID or lack this support structure to start with. On top of this, one of the students in the PG Breakout Room also reported feeling demotivated, not enjoying their studies, and was wasting money studying from home the entire year around; a brilliant university experience had been replaced with just completing the work in order to achieve the qualification, which is, as often and rightly reinforced, not the aim at the sum of the university's parts. KCL has relaxed its Mitigating Circumstances Policy (although, as demonstrated above, it may still being implemented in a patchy way), but considering what other ways COVID can be recognised as having likely impacted on a students' grade, as well as continuing to invest in and promote ways of students accessing support where needed would be well received. On this point, one student did add to this that fellow students have had to wait six months to see a counsellor at King's, which despite potentially being faster than local health-provided mental health services, is in the scope of the Academic Year a significant amount of time. Given we have all likely at some point felt the impact of extended social distancing and the uncertainty and threat of COVID-19, and the priority King's places on student mental health, a continuing investment into mental health counsellor provision would always be welcome. It's also of note that as of Academic Year 2021/22 the new Faculty Welfare & Wellbeing Leads, which serve as an in-faculty support for students will have begun their role, providing another string to the approach to supporting student mental health at King's.

**Ask: A full review of Mitigating Circumstances policy operation over the COVID-19 pandemic, including KCLSU Advice caseworkers who have been supporting students in their applications, will help inform future policy and management of these across the College.**

**Ask: Student representation, both of the elected representative KCLSU Student Officers and reaching into the student body through our Community Development Team and Academic & Liberation Reps will be essential in each of the sub-groups around Assessment & Feedback, including around the 'Diversification of Assessment'.**

### Preparedness for Assessments

Students expressed a concern for future assessments, as we move away from a model of online assessments to one that was expected to contain at least some in-person assessment. Next year's third year students will have potentially had a maximum of one in-person Assessment Period at the start of their first year, and so support systems to minimise the disruption or anxiety of this process for students who may not have taken an exam in an external venue before would be appreciated.

One student went as far as to suggest that pre-examination preparation could include visiting the location before the event to get a familiarity with the logistics of travelling to the examination venue, the procedure for entering the building and getting ready to sit the exam. Recognising that the external venues KCL uses are often conference centres and bookable venues such as Olympia London, perhaps booking the space for a slightly extended time to allow students to visit the site and have any questions they have about the operations of external venue assessment answered could aid in student preparedness and reducing anxiety on the day of assessment.

**Recommendation: As we return to in-person exams, consider what opportunities could be given to students to familiarise them with the processes of sitting an exam at an external venue, reducing student anxiety.**

### Feedback response times

Following on from comments made in the opening questions about feedback being 'never on time', a number of students spoke about their expectations and experiences of feedback response times.

Once more there were a variety of responses that were based from students' experiences within their own departments and courses, but a common number that arose was two to three weeks for a standard assignment (1500 word essay). This did not necessarily match with student experiences – one student in Biomed Eng reported that it usually took much longer and this year received almost half their courseworks back after the January exams, which was unhelpful as they are considered the major vehicle for practice prior to those exams. It was also noted that they did receive an apology for this instance in one module, although the student reported that it was a problem across modules. This experience was also met by a Banking & Finance student who reported that comments on mid-term assessments were not reaching students prior to their final exams, and as such is of little use in improving students' ability during the academic year.

We also asked students what had been meant by 'double standards' as on the feedback word cloud, and this seemed to relate to feedback response times being monitored or followed less rigidly than that of students submitting their work. One student made the observation that if students are meant to submit multiple courseworks in one week, and this creates issues for being able to mark and recirculate back to students in the time advertised, then perhaps revisiting the manner in which assessments are scheduled across modules could improve the situation for both students and staff.

There are pockets of success in practice, such as where students have incredibly short pieces of work and turnaround as standard, as in Mathematics. Problem sheets here can be turned around within the week, and that is how a number of modules run for students to be able to engage with learning the scientific methodologies and have issues corrected. The student who spoke on this also reported that this mechanism carried little issue with students, as planning alternative coursework was difficult to envisage; they then later went on to describe however how due to staff cutbacks the number of work pieces they received tutor feedback on across the semester went from every week to just three of the ten pieces submitted in the next semester (mentioned more below under the 'Good Feedback' section).

The KCLSU Officers are aware that following poorer than ideal scores around Assessment & Feedback on the NSS, central KCL Management are intending to produce a standardised feedback response time policy that will apply to all students across all faculties, making it easier to identify and provide support where feedback response times are not being met. Overall students would support this, although recognising that if faculties are currently facing issues in meeting their current feedback timelines then both a top-down approach to manage deadlines and a 'ground-up' consideration of the obstacles and difficulties academic and professional services staff are facing in order to meet these deadlines.

**Recommendation: Any future imposition of standardisation of feedback response times, which would be well received by the student body, needs to consider how this is tracked and what support is offered to tackle the root causes once identified.**

### Differences between Assessment year on year

Students also noted changes in assessment practices year on year which appeared to be making exams sequentially harder, without the requisite scaling. One student reported that exam timings had changed, which was likely a COVID mitigation from managing assessments last year by using a 24-hour exam policy across the board, but also remarked that last year modules had not used negative marking and now did for Mathematics.

Additionally, a FoLSM student remarked that for their first-year mid-sessionals it was known that the previous year had a high average in their end of year exams, so the assessment was modified to bring this average back down. It was understood that this was done due to requiring a good distribution of students marks and to challenge students to maximise their ability, but it needs to be operationalised and implemented in a fair manner.

### The problem with MCQs

Multiple students noted that where MCQs (multiple choice questions) were used in assessment, there were often little opportunities to practice this method of assessment as questions are reused and students are informed there is not an exhaustive bank of questions to pull from. One student noted that this did seem to go against helping students know how to improve and where they went wrong. If the question is a broad one, required further reading or encouraged independent research, then having no feedback on whether their information was false could be detrimental for both students and staff. This student went on to say that they did receive feedback for their formative but not their summative assessments, leaving them unsure of whether it was their mathematical reasoning, theoretical that needed improvement. It is recognised that some courses and assessments must be done by MCQs, for example medicine, but delivering these in a way that allows granular feedback into a students' areas of success and weakness, as well as assisting students in adapting to this way of receiving feedback as the vast majority of students will have never received feedback exclusively in this manner.

**Ask: Through the 'Diversification of Assessment' sub-group, considering the students comments around what purpose assessment serves, and working within the restrictions imposed by PSRB regulations (perhaps even challenging those regulations), reconsider the value and place of MCQs. Where needed, more extensive mechanisms for support and through which students have the ability to engage with feedback and learning will be welcome.**

### Mark schemes

Students also raised that a helpful resource to have in preparing for and learning from assessments are the mark schemes, or marking rubrics, employed in differentiating ability. One student reported that their department was not following the set mark schemes and asked students to reach out to the specific tutor over the phone regarding any queries. This feeds into work which the Officers have been working on this year, in terms of making marking schemes more accessible and straightforward in order for it to be clearer how students can progress and improve upon previous results. In fact, one of the examples of good practice elicited in this session was the example of a Personal Tutor using their time with a student to tackle some of the academic language in feedback to assist the student in improving their writing style and boosting their grade (more detail in the 'Good Feedback' segment below).

**Ask: Mark schemes and rubrics need to ideally be co-developed with students in language that is accessible for students of all backgrounds and expertise, and clearly map onto the learning objectives or purpose of that assessment piece.**

### Timing of exams & courseworks

One often problematic issue around assessments, assignments and coursework is around timing and scheduling, and the Town Hall brought a number of these queries up. One student reported that for their clinical assessments in Clinical Dermatology that the date had not been finalised and circulated to them, despite the exam period being on the horizon; whilst this seemed to be well communicated to students in terms of the reasons why this had not yet happened, the student asked if there was a deadline for releasing the exam dates. Whilst the last 18 months (as it will be by Sept 2021) have been extraordinary times, we think this speaks to students want for information and at the very least transparency to set expectations on when they can



hear. Taking this example, one presumes that there is a group of individuals in discussion of this. If they have a meeting, can students be informed of a date no more than a week after this they could expect to have a response by?

Another student similarly reported where their cohort gratefully received a blanket dissertation extension for their final year history, but this extension didn't reflect on the exam timetable where the dissertation deadline and exam deadline were subsequently scheduled into the same week. We recognise this is due to differences between scheduling with faculties providing information to central oversight teams about exam scheduling and then independently planning coursework and assignment submission deadlines. From experiences collated across Period 1 which identified further problems with assessment scheduling being managed by multiple teams inside and outside of faculties, it would be apparent the whole College's approach to scheduling assessments could be more managed more consistently and considering all pieces of assessment in tandem.

Students furthermore raised that back-to-back exams were seen despite the exam period lasting five weeks and that this was difficult for them to negotiate; we are aware that this is a problem that appears year on year and it remains something that is troublesome for the student body. Having this central oversight of all assessments at King's and putting forward an assessment design that is inclusive, considering that students will likely be able to maximise their academic potential if given time to cognitive shift between different topics. It also is arguably more reflective of the external employment situation as it is unlikely an individual's projects will all be up for assessment within a week of each other! Overall, it allows students to adapt their approach and focus to the task at hand and this will support students in their experience of assessments and thereby their satisfaction (for example, in the case of the student above whose dissertation deadline and exam date were in the same week).

**Ask: as part of re-thinking assessment, one strand of thinking should consider the student experience around assessment scheduling, as we know year on year it adds to student anxiety; it also likely adds to inequalities in achievement between groups of students, for those who are more easily able to manage back-to-back assessments versus those who are not such as (for example) our neurodiverse student population.**

### Credit-bearing versus not

One small but not insignificant point raised by a FNFMPC PGR student in the PG breakout room related to specific compulsory modules that do not carry credit or recognition for students who complete the optional assessment at the end. It was recognised in the session that this might be a faculty-specific or module-specific consideration, but does relate to the increasing wealth of co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities provided by King's; as has been raised across initiatives from effective representation to new cross-curricular modules, giving students recognition for their work in any way possible is generally well received. In the example given, could completing the assignment be considered a CPD activity, or could there be a way to support the student to publish their work? At the least, would it be possible to make it easier to add contributions to the HEAR (UG & PGT) or Award letter (PGR) for students, which could also include other contributions to the university community such as society leadership and KCLSU opportunities.

### What does good feedback look like?

Students had a number of examples of what good feedback had looked like for them, building on the comments of appreciating 'constructive' feedback which identifies 'potential for growth and learning'.

Generally feedback that goes into detail, analysing what the student has done well and areas for improvement, is much more appreciated than brief comments or just grades that some students have received for results. Students referred to needing this feedback to ensure that the methods and way they approach questions is correct, not just the answer they arrive at. One student reports that throughout their course having feedback on their methodologies is essential to acquire knowledge and develop skills which are relevant to their course, such as critical thinking. A student in Mathematics described how the drop in feedback from all of their weekly problem sheets to just three in this semester had affected their ability to prepare for written answers, as the methodology for reaching the correct answer wasn't being verified on the majority of the pieces that Semester.

Below are some specific examples of good practice that were teased out:

- PG International Political Economy - one professor broke the work down paragraph by paragraph and gave time to go through each section in turn, identifying weaknesses or areas that are consistently good. This was contrasted against another example where there was good feedback on a formative assessment, but the final grade dropped with no

indication other than the comment that their 'analysis wasn't clear', with no constructive suggestions for improvement.

- One student reported that they really welcomed the Student Success Advisers, having come from a university that didn't have such a structure. Interacting with the Adviser had helped support them by exchanging information and ideas with them, as well as in this year being an important point of human contact that they missed.
- A tutor who gave good formative feedback by taking a students' piece of work that was of a very high mark and highlighting the right thing to do, identifying specific examples of what worked well and how to phrase work correctly. Particularly feedback on framing and picking out what works is good.
- Cardiovascular Pharmacology as a good module example – use of model answers, and additionally the use of Microsoft Word comments meant that tutors could easily add detail into highlighting the good and the bad, as well as potential improvements. Being able to see the overall feedback opinion of the first marker and the approval of the second marker was also handy to see.
- One student reported their Personal Tutor had been especially helpful in assisting them with understanding what mistakes were being made in essays. Lots of their feedback related not to the content but the writing, and meeting with the Personal Tutor gave an opportunity to look through marked essays and deconstruct feedback. This student felt they were better able to understand what the feedback actually meant, tackling the difficult academic language they were unaccustomed to.
- The King's Academic Skills for Learning area, particularly the appointments you can book with PhD Study Skills Leaders, was well received by one student who used the session to explore the mark scheme in order to better be able to meet what was expected of them. There was also then subsequent student interest in this, suggesting it's a welcome opportunity for students to engage in.


**Recommendation: Lots of good practice to take forward into assessment in the future!**

## Conclusion

Overall, there are lots of brilliant examples and themes present in the Town Hall session to take forward into future conversations around assessment and feedback. We hope that this Town Hall serves as one piece of the puzzle to set the agenda for future work and collaboration into Assessment and Feedback at King's, which could and should be a truly co-created experience at King's provided that KCL is willing to put in the commitment to empowering students to contribute to the conversation, meaning we can create a vision understood and respected by students, academics and professional services staff alike which outlines what students' grades really represent.

In summary, our asks and recommendations:

- To improve the student experience of assessment and feedback, a level of coordination between and within faculties will need to be present. Currently students are experiencing inconsistencies both between modules and across faculties, and whilst every course has different learning objectives which may require different methods in order to properly assess students and assist them in their learning, there is currently no oversight and/or perceived management of how all assessments are scheduled and when feedback response times are not met.
- As the university looks to redefine and 'diversify' assessment, students voices and experiences need to be placed at the centre of this, both out of principle and if King's is due to commit to point five in the Education Strategy 2017-22 around co-creation. Through representation directly on the sub-groups which will likely be through the KCLSU Officer team, to reaching into the student body and understanding why we as a community need to conduct assessment, the purpose it serves, we can build a vision where students and staff together actively create assessment together for the benefit of both parties.
- There are lots of good pockets of practice, academics who are going beyond to put the effort in and student support services which are brilliant at assisting students; but a community where students feel they possess the appropriate knowledge, support and networks to be able to confidently complete assessment should be what we are striving toward as a baseline.
- Common, persistent, recurrent issues continue to affect the experience of assessment and feedback at King's. From mixed-models of exam scheduling with incomplete central oversight; marking schemes and rubrics that are inaccessible, either literally or in their language, terminology and relevance to students; policies introduced which for one reason or another are being implemented differentially with different student groups, as seen by our KCLSU Advice caseworkers with the current adaptations to the Mitigating Circumstances policy. A long-term strategy to assessment & feedback will need to tackle all of these issues.
- The interest is there from students and staff alike to engage in assessment in feedback, and see it as an opportunity for more than just validating students' time at King's. This engagement should be seen to begin with a student's first



tutorial and end when they receive their final summative results, which students do appreciate; valuing feedback in any and all avenues in which it comes (although different students identify with different feedbacks so maximising all opportunities, from seminars and tutorials to presentations, lab reports, creative portfolio submissions and formative and summative exams will give students the chance to react and learn in different, equally valid ways).

## Acknowledgements

Once more, the KCLSU Officers would give thanks to the tireless work of members of the KCLSU Community Development Team and Marketing & Digital Teams who help us design and organise these meetings, as well as to our Hubbies and support staff who help with the logistics: Clair, Sofia, Amy, Roisin, Asif and Lisa.

As the writer of this report, I'm also going to take the opportunity to thank and congratulate the Officers themselves who've been leading on this – we've all made it a thing, which we didn't know would happen, but to Salma & Heena as co-chairs and Vatsav as a loyal contributor this is a great thing we have done!

Finally, we do really appreciate every person who has made the effort to engage with our Town Halls in person by giving your time, observing or adding your voice and rich experience to improving the student experience at King's, for persisting down to the last line of these reports (yes, even you), and we will continue to champion the student voice... forever!

Ali Gibson (she/they), VP Education (Health)