



# Union Forum

18:30 – 20:00, Monday 9 March, Microsoft Teams

## Membership

Role	Name	Initials
Union Chair	Sal Fox (Chair)	SF
Union President	Matt Aikin	MA
VP Voice	Luana Vasconcelos	LV
VP Activity	Kade De Gannes	KDG
VP Support	Sam Buss	SB
VP Community	Amber Dobrzanski	AD
Voice Zone Officers (PTOs)	Alfred Lovesey Heer Patel Jenny Jackson Matt Jarvis Mohammad Faiz Siddiqui	AL HP JJ MJ MF
Support Zone Officers (PTOs)	Lexi Antoniou Zara Shanavaz Julia Sienko Chris Papafiggos Jenny Tan	LA ZS JS CP JT
Community Zone Officers (PTOs)	Baris Aydin Jaden Ogunlade Vihanya Ratnayake Kethan Kotian Hashir Ahmed	BA JO VR KK HA
Activity Zone Officers (PTOs)	Mimi Gunawardena Guatam Kalra Sahil Korabandi Neha Desai Anvita Kadam	MG GK SK ND AK

### **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL**

#### **Union Priorities | Matt Aikin**

Priorities For 2025-2026

- *Academic Influence and Engagement*
- *High Quality Campus Experience*
- *Student-led Sense of Belonging and Wellbeing*

- *Impactful Representation and Advocacy*

MA confirmed there no updates for this Union Forum, and that both the Union and the University were working towards these priorities.

### **Surrey Decides | Luana Vasconcelos**

- The Officer team structure was revised to include paid part-time positions, more targeted roles and a pay increase for all Sabbatical Officer (SABB) positions
- An in-house voting system was trialled successfully
- Changes were made to Question Time, including the format of questions and the continuation of separate nights for part-time and SABB roles
- The results announcement was moved to Manor Park Social, which was considered a more suitable venue
- Received over 5,000 recommendations, 133 nominations and 3,500 votes
- The newly elected Sabbatical Officers are: Nicoelle – President, Mimi – VP Activity, Amber – VP Community, Jenny – VP Support and Waleed – VP Voice

### **Officer Updates (President) | Matt Aikin**

Key Activities and Progress:

- Increased his social media presence to increase student engagement
- Supported the delivery of a successful Refresher's Fair, with over 3,000 students in attendance
- Delivered a speech at the Vice-Chancellors Installation event
- Participated in Surrey Decides, including hosting Pundit's Corner, opening and closing the event, undertaking outreach activities and announcing the results alongside LV
- Organised a trip to Portsmouth PlayZone, which sold out and was well received by students
- Attended key governance meetings, including the University Council, EDI Board and Board of Trustees
- Hosted quizzes at Manor Park Social and Hari's Bar
- Ongoing work is being undertaken to explore the return of FreeFest this summer
- Will contribute to the recruitment for a new Chief Student Officer and Provost on the University's Executive Board
- Preparing for the planning and delivery of the Union Ball, Colours Ball and Grad Ball

### **Voice Zone Updates | Luana Vasconcelos**

Highlights & Achievements:

- Hosted a successful Surrey Decides

- Organised multiple Course Rep social events, including Valentine's and Afternoon Tea networking sessions
- Engaged with senior University Leadership alongside Head Reps to discuss student concerns, including challenges with the exam season and the implementation of the new AI framework
- Contributed to meetings on assessment design and review
- Collaborated with Course Reps to present at the Student Experience Subcommittee, advocating for student voice
- Held weekly EDI meetings, representing diverse student communities, with initiatives such as a postcard event, International Meet & Greet and LGBTQ+ History Month events in conjunction with the LGBTQ+ society

#### Upcoming Work & Plans:

- Speak Week commencing 27<sup>th</sup> April
- Final Student Voice Forum of the academic year 30<sup>th</sup> April
- Course Rep Awards taking place on 13<sup>th</sup> May
- Continuation of Course Rep Wins in March
- Upcoming Course Rep Elections in April
- Planned Head Rep updates meeting with the senior University leadership to discuss priorities and developments
- Ongoing EDI initiatives, including One World Week, Neurodiversity Week and Women's History Month
- Delivery of employability and mental health awareness sessions to support student wellbeing and career development

#### Part-Time Officer Highlights:

Heer: Strengthened communication channels by reaching out to Head Reps and established opportunities to gather feedback from first year students. Focusing on creating more culture-focused events.

Jenny: Contributed to Surrey Decides outreach and Re-freshers Fair. Promoted student engagement with volunteering hours.

Matt: Led personal campaigning efforts for Surrey Decides. Engaged with Library Staff to explore the development of a commuter's lounge and enhanced his visibility as a course rep.

Faiz: Plans to support Speak Week, including promoting & distributing surveys for feedback collection. Intends to share the constructive feedback with students via the Union website or Instagram pages to increase student engagement. Discussed the development of a monthly email update, highlighting student feedback and showcasing the work of the Union.

#### **Support Zone Updates | Sam Buss**

#### Highlights & Achievements:

- Launched the Manor Park Social Support Hub collaboration, providing in-person advice sessions for students based at Manor Park
- Introduced the Destination Success careers programme, which is being piloted this year and offers free workshops focused on career development and employability skills
- Continued to support the work and success of the Advice Team
- Delivered the Don't Worry Surrey campaign in January, providing wellbeing activities, support and advice for students around the exam period
- Provided support for International students during the Spring reassessment period
- Contributed to discussions around Forever Surrey, including the development of a mental-health related grant
- Supported Drug and Alcohol Awareness Week in collaboration with the Centre for Wellbeing
- Sat on OSCAR panels and oversaw student disciplinary cases
- Supported outreach activities for Surrey Decides

#### Upcoming Work & Plans:

- Planning the Don't Worry Surrey campaign for May
- Coordinating with AD on initiatives focused on gender empowerment and women's safety, including the delivery of domestic abuse awareness training
- Working with the Voice Zone to integrate Wellbeing Champions into the Student Equality Network
- Collaborating with LV on awareness campaigns, including Women's History Month and Neurodiversity Week

#### Part-Time Officer Highlights:

Julia: Organised the Access to Success Careers Panel event, featuring guest speakers and an opportunity for student questions.

Jenny: Launched Surrey Weekends in collaboration with various clubs and societies, such as MadSoc, Water polo and Dodgeball.

#### **Activity Zone Updates | Kade De Gannes**

Update provided by SF

#### Highlights & Achievements:

- Continued involvement with the Black Sports Collective

#### Upcoming Work & Plans:

- Varsity event 25<sup>th</sup> March
- Ongoing planning of the Union Ball and Colours Ball
- Developing more Activity Zone trips for students

#### Part-Time Officer Highlights:

Mimi: Successfully completed her This Girl Can campaign, with 6 participating clubs/societies. Received positive feedback for the recent Airhop Team Surrey event.

Sahil: Delivered Surrey Decides coverage on Stag Radio, interviewing candidates to increase visibility and student engagement. Created a monthly podcast to provide updates on Union campaigns. Assisted newly established societies to address issues. Supported efforts to increase the visibility of Team Surrey clubs. Initiated collaboration with Nightline to develop a joint fundraiser with participating societies.

### **Community Zone Updates | Amber Dobrzanski**

#### Highlights & Achievements:

- Installation of speed bumps along Daphne Jackson Road on Manor Park
- Organised the One World Week campaign, commencing 16 March
- Began development of the 'Safe Sanctuary' initiative in conjunction with the University
- Progressed work on the Campus Path safe route, which is nearing completion and will soon be implemented on Stag Hill
- Introduced new daily deals at Manor Park Social
- Re-elected as Vice President Community
- Hosted housing events alongside VP Support to assist students in finding housemates

#### Upcoming Work & Plans:

- Increasing volunteering opportunities, including low-commitment activities such as litter picking
- Introducing Belonging Breakfasts to support students
- Planning the establishment of a student pantry to support those struggling with the cost of living
- Expanding Belonging events to reach a wider student community, including students based at the other campus, such as the Vet School and Medical Sciences

#### Part-Time Officer Highlights:

Vihanya: Discussed expanding the theme of One World Week with VP Community and VP Voice to introduce a proposed event called 'Fashion of Culture', encouraging students to represent their cultures through traditional dress. Planning an event for Women's History Month focused

on Women In Engineering. Gathered feedback at Manor Park Social on belonging events through informal conversations with students and a rapid feedback form.

Hashir: Engaged with students to collect feedback, with a particular focus on commuter and international students and issues relating to library facilities. Worked with VP Community to develop plans for an International Café. Continuing to advocate for a Commuter Lounge for commuter students and an increase in the number of bookable library study rooms

### **Topic of Discussion: Accommodation | Sal Fox**

The Union Forum discussed ongoing concerns regarding student accommodation, focusing on affordability, availability and quality. It was highlighted that current accommodation provision does not meet growing student demand, particularly considering the University's Vision 2041 strategy to significantly increase student numbers.

Students have also expressed concern that the accommodation options do not represent good value for money, with lower band rooms considered too expensive. The removal of Band D budget rooms at Hazel Farm was noted as a key issue, and it was mentioned that the University should prioritise refurbishing and reopening Guildford Court over more expensive ensuite accommodation.

Students raised a range of concerns regarding the accommodation experience, including:

- Maintenance issues within lower band accommodation, particularly shared kitchens and bathrooms
- Challenges associated with communal living environments
- Poor quality of mattresses
- Reports of rodent presence on campus, with a need for further input from the Estates Team and pest control

It was also highlighted that upcoming legislation through the Renters' Rights Bill will impact students living in private rented accommodation. The Bill aims to prevent discrimination against tenants receiving benefits or with children, and limits landlord's ability to refuse pets without valid reason.

The changes will also allow tenants to provide two months' notice to leave a tenancy, with responsibility for securing a replacement tenant shifting to the landlord rather than the student. MA clarified that these changes will not apply to purpose-built student accommodation.

LV invited officers to share suggestions of key topics to be raised at the forthcoming Student Voice Forum.

Suggestions Raised by the Forum:

- Increased transparency around accredited modules, including clearer information on how accreditation supports professional body examinations and future career progression

- Improved access to academic journals, following concerns that University subscription changes have limited resources available for research
- Greater consistency across SurreyLearn module pages, ensuring a standardised and user-friendly approach from every lecturer
- Further action on accessibility of assessments, particularly in relation to neurodivergent students, building on concerns raised in previous forums

### **CLOSING ITEMS**

#### **Any Other Business:**

LV reminded officers to contact her with any additional questions to be raised in the Student Voice Forum.

The Chair thanked all attendees for their contributions and confirmed the next Union Forum meeting will take place on the **23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026**.