



STUDENT
COUNCIL

BI-YEARLY REFLECTION REPORT

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1st Report



20

Fall 21

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAO	Academic Affairs Officer
BoS	Board of Studies
CAR	Campus Affairs Representatives
FLISS	First Generation Low Income and Scholarship Students
MT	Management Team
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
UCSA	University College Student Association
UCSRN	University College Student Representatives of the Netherlands
UCUC	University College Utrecht Council

INTRODUCTION

This report was written by the UC Student Council of 2021-2022. This board constitutes the student side of co-governance at UCU: individual members sit on the various governing bodies of our college and are involved in the making and checking of academic and non-academic policy. Our main role is to represent the student voice in these processes, which means we are always looking for student input on matters at hand. This year's members are:



Emma van der Tak (She/Her)
Chair, Vice-chair UCUC



Minu Peters (She/Her)
AAO, Student Rep. UCUC



Kimberley Snijders (She/Her)
Student Assessor, student member MT, visiting member BoS



Nursu Gür (She/Her)
AAO, Student Rep. UCUC, UCSRN Academic Rep.



Sam Hofman (He/Him)
Secretary, Student Rep. UCUC



Indigo Tjan (He/Him)
AAO, Student Rep. BoS

Our work is in part determined by the themes and activities of the respective bodies in which we hold positions, and in part by the day-to-day work that comes with running our own board. On top of that, each UC Student Council board determines a few goals and projects to specifically focus on in their board year.

In this report we discuss our progress so far – relating to the goals that we set for the year, but also to any other relevant achievements. After presenting our goals to the student body at the beginning of the year, the current report is meant as an update on what we have done so far and what further we plan to do in the coming semester. With this we aim to increase the transparency and visibility of our work, and provide students with a means of keeping us accountable for our activities. Besides this it benefits our work internally as well, as composing this report halfway through the year provided all members with a full overview of how we are doing and – more importantly – invited to self-reflect before the start of the new semester. Moreover, the reports we publish will provide our successors with a coherent overview of the work we did in our board year. We therefore strongly recommend future boards to make writing and publishing these bi-yearly reflection reports a standard practice.

THE GOALS OF 2021-2022



Innovation

We believe some things can be rethought to serve their purpose better. Of course we will not attempt to innovate the entire college by ourselves, but we are open to change if it is for the better, which is why innovation is one of our main values this year.



Cooperation

We are aware that our knowledge and influence are limited. We do believe that we can achieve a lot by working together with the people or bodies that have the knowledge or influence that we lack. Therefore, our focus will be on cooperation.



Safety

The coming year we will be focusing on making campus a place where everyone feels safe and welcome. The theme of social and physical safety is something that is frequently brought to us and we will therefore actively address.



Inclusivity

Everyone on campus should be able to enjoy our education without feeling excluded, discriminated against or otherwise disadvantaged. We plan to work together with different bodies on campus in order to increase inclusivity and to address those aspects that are currently underrepresented in the discussion of diversity on campus.



Presence

Our work relies on knowing students' opinions. We will continue to work on the UC Student Council's presence on campus, so that everyone knows that we are here to help, and when or how they can approach us with any issues they face.

LOOKING BACK

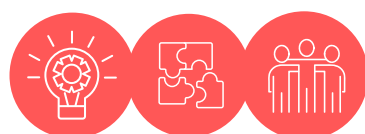
PROJECTS

Track Representatives



Because of the highly individualised character of UCU's education, the Student Council has to represent a group of students with highly varying educational experiences. Therefore, the AAO's manage a network of Track Representatives who are our eyes and ears; they know what is going on in their respective tracks and courses. However, the previous Track Representative structure produced structural issues of unclarity to both teachers and the Track Representatives themselves, failing to allow this system to fulfil its full potential. Therefore, Indigo has taken the initiative to transform the somewhat chaotic organisation of the Track Representatives into a more institutionalised system. This system includes stronger guidance for the Track Representatives, in the form of a handbook, info sessions and increased lines of communication with the AAO's. Moreover, it is now a standard practice for the AAO, Track Representative and Track Fellow to meet once a semester to discuss developments in the track. To make sure that the Track Representatives are visible to students and staff alike, we have created posters, a one pager and we encouraged the Track Representatives to be active on Facebook. We are still in the process of evaluating the new system, but it so far seems to be successful. The results of a survey conducted on the current track reps show very successful developments in the guidance of track reps.

Decolonization



The past semester we have worked on creating a plan to catalyse a discussion of decolonization in the classroom. We have met with several professors to discuss decolonization and ways to decolonize academia. These meetings have materialized into a plan for the spring semester which outlines some of these ideas. See the section on decolonization under [Looking Ahead](#).

Communication Handbook



At the beginning of the year, we composed a handbook with guidelines on the communication style of the Student Council. This handbook serves as a means to be more efficient and consistent in the creation of our external communication. It includes suggestions for the styles of public posts, usage of logos and pictures, fonts and colours, as well as general agreements on use of language. Apart from making our own work easier, we hope the document will be adopted by future boards as well to foster a continuity in style over the years, making Student Council communication easily recognizable to all students.

LOOKING BACK

PROJECTS

Diversity Platform



There are many different groups on campus that want to contribute to a safe and diverse community. In contact with many of these groups, we noticed that some had started to overlap, and were missing a platform to discuss their activities and learn from each other. The Student Council has taken the initiative to bring these groups together by founding a Diversity Platform, similar to the already existing Wellbeing Platform. This group includes student members from the Diversity Committee, the People of Colour group, students with disabilities group, neurodivergent students group, FLISS, PrideCo, FemCo, the Wellbeing Team and the UCSA. Chaired by Kimberley, the Platform meets approximately once a month. It discusses how various groups of students on campus can collaborate in their initiatives to enhance diversity on campus, by keeping each other updated, brainstorming about pressing issues and potentially organise joint events or initiatives.



Pronouns Team



As part of the Pronouns Team, further consisting of Max Witt and Martha Sanchez from PrideCo, Sam worked on various initiatives to raise awareness on the use of pronouns on campus, striving towards creating a gender-inclusive environment. The Pronouns Team met with the UCSA, the Admissions Office, our Dean Susan te Pas, Director of Education Christel Lutz, Head Tutor Annemieke Meijer, and various tutors and instructors to convey the importance of the usage of pronouns in different areas (e.g., introweek, admissions process, classroom). They hosted a workshop for staff during Safety Week to present some of the findings of the Pronouns survey and have a space for an open discussion. Finally, they created an infographic that was shared among the faculty and staff with various resources regarding pronouns (the list included books, podcasts, videos, etc.,).



Student Wellbeing



We have been working together with the Student Life Office to rethink ways of improving wellbeing on campus. We have advocated for an accessible overview of all the available resources and support systems for UCU students, which will be shared with students soon. Moreover, in consultation with the Student Life Office we have taken the initiative to release a survey in the coming semester to establish the root causes of work pressure and social distress among students. We hope this will provide more concrete input on possible solutions.

LOOKING BACK

PROJECTS

First generation students



First generation students are not well represented at UCU, and often lack guidance throughout their studies. The newly founded UCU FLISS (First generation Low Income and Scholarship Students) group aims to raise awareness and support for these students, as well as advocate for official measures or changes that take into account their position. We are in contact with FLISS and aim to support them where possible, by communicating with parties in College Hall and by working on an info-sheet with best practices for instructors and teachers.



Disabilities



Kimberley has been working together with the chair of the Wellbeing Team, Channelijne Hulshof, to find concrete ways in which the college can improve the experience of students with disabilities on campus. Based on a report which was written by the Student Council and Wellbeing Team last year, they established a number of action points. They met with the UCU Communications Office to update the information available on the website, and agreed that the possibilities for students with disabilities will be more clearly communicated on UCU open days. Furthermore, they were in close contact with the Student Life Office about new Learning Agreements procedures which were installed at the beginning of the year, and they are creating a best practices document for teachers.



Gathering input on our curriculum



Responding to ongoing conversations in the college about the core values and future developments of our education, we planned to organize a large scale input gathering project to establish a student perspective on these discussions. This project is scheduled to take place in the coming semester, but we have already conducted a few lines of preparatory work in fall. Among other things, we hosted focus groups to discuss science education at UCU and to make a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of our curriculum as a whole. Moreover, we had various conversations with our Director of Education Christel Lutz to brainstorm about ways to approach this project in spring.

LOOKING BACK

PROJECTS

Sexual Misconduct



Nursu has been in close contact with Leonie from the UCSA and Annemieke Meijer about possible ways to prevent sexual misconduct and to improve the support systems available at UCU for students who have experienced sexual misconduct. They are in the process of establishing a student task force in order to centralize discussions and input from various student. This task force has met a few times the previous semester and is planning on continuing to meet on a monthly basis



Green Team



During the semester Kimberley worked closely together with Laura Mathieu, the UU Green Office, and CAR on setting up the UCU Green Team. The Green Team functions as an independent body investigating and advising other bodies (such as the Management Team, CAR, UC Student Council, etc.,) on the sustainability of campus. Its members are Dione Zijp (chair), Elizabete Fedčenko (secretary), Maria Rebecchini (PR manager), Suvu McMenamin (events manager), Karolien van Pul (Housing and Campus Advisor), and Sam Hofman (Education and Governance Policy Advisor).



The first meetings of the new Green Team occurred in the first weeks of the Spring semester. During the meeting some plans for the semester were discussed, [check out the looking ahead section.](#)

Bi-yearly reflection report



The current report is a project on itself, initiated and written by Emma and Sam. It is the first of two reports to be written this year, in which we reflect on our progress and achievements. With this we aim to increase the transparency and visibility of our work, as well as provide our successors with a coherent overview of the events and goals in our board year. We hope future boards will make these reports a standard practice.

LOOKING BACK

EVENTS

Afternoon at the Bar



This semester we brought back the monthly Afternoon at the Bar, after having been gone for a while due to corona measures. The first edition in fall semester led to a great, according to UCU veteran Bas Defize even the highest ever, turnout of both students and staff. We really enjoyed bringing together people with a large variety of roles within our community. Unfortunately, corona regulations returned to haunt our Afternoon at the Bar and the first edition was also the only one of the semester. We hope to be able to organize more afternoons in spring semester.

Student-Staff Coffee Roulette



The Student-Staff Coffee Roulette was another event that aims to strengthen the bridge between students, staff and faculty. This event was organized by Sam and connected students and staff together to have a coffee or tea outside of the academic setting. We received feedback from the participants that they appreciated the event.

Track Market



Sam and Indigo organized the Track Market in November. This is an event where the Track Fellows and Representatives gather to provide more information about their tracks to attending students. The yearly track market previously took place in the first weeks of the semester. We decided to organize it later in the year to cater to all students in the process of choosing courses to enroll in for the spring semester. We also invited the Alumni Internship Program, UCU Futures Centre and the Honours Director, and asked the Track Fellows to be prepared to discuss master opportunities to make the event useful also to 2nd and 3rd year students orienting themselves for the future. We were happy with the turnout, which was high. We have evaluated the event and are creating an overview of best practices for future boards to ensure that the track market can keep reaching its full potential in helping students.

LOOKING BACK

EVENTS

Management Team Town Halls



At the beginning of the semester, Kimberley and Nursu organized a Town Hall where students got the chance to meet the Management Team and ask them any questions, with a focus on the place and consequences of COVID measures at our college at the time. It was a fruitful gathering which inspired the MT to further clarify some of the discussed issues to the community as a whole in an email addressing the main outcomes of the Town Hall. A second Town Hall took place in Safety Week in the form of a community session open to both students and staff, which centred around the theme of physical and social safety within our community. Some very relevant conversations were started in this meeting, even though there was not enough time to get to the bottom of all issues that were raised. We hope that the community continues these conversations, and strive to keep facilitating and contributing to them. We plan to organize more Town Halls in the spring semester, allowing us to further develop the format of the event to achieve higher turnouts and make sure that the conversations can be satisfying to everyone.



Curriculum Ownership Workshop



As part of introweek, the Student Council organizes a Curriculum Ownership Workshop for incoming degree students in spring and fall. This year, Emma and Indigo revisited the content of the workshop to solidify its aim of introducing new students to the very basics of UCU's curriculum and providing them with a sense of confidence to start the semester. We received a lot of good questions during the workshops, and enjoyed meeting to the new students.

Classroom impressions



During fall Introweek Indigo organized the Classroom Impressions, an event for incoming students to experience the classroom setting at UCU in their chosen set of mini-lectures. 12 UCU teachers introduced the students to their field of study, allowing them to get a glimpse of the tracks offered at UCU and get inspired for the semester. We did not organize the event in spring, due to the shortened and partly online format of introweek. We advise future boards to rethink the timing (and potentially the format) of the event, as attending a lecture the morning after formal dinner is probably not ideal to most students.

LOOKING BACK

EVENTS

Safety Theme Week



In response to the increase of discussions around social and physical safety in the UCU community, one of our goals this year was to organize a theme week to further facilitate or start conversations and provide information on various matters of safety within the community. As the theme of safety reaches into all aspects of life on campus, we decided to collaborate with the UCSA and CAR in organizing this week. The Student Council events in this week were the previously mentioned community session on social safety, a workshop on contextualizing decolonization, a workshop for staff on gender inclusivity and a collaboration with PoliticsCo on approaching potentially sensitive discussions in the classroom. Even though one week is too short to produce any structural changes, we are happy with the conversations that this week has started, and we have brainstormed about concrete ways to follow up on some of the matters that were raised. A comprehensive evaluation of the contents and the organisation of the week took place, of which the main organisational takeaways for the Student Council were (1) that collaborating with other groups or committees can result in very fruitful and well attended events and (2) that we should find new ways to reach out to staff, as the staff attendance in the week was relatively low (with the exception of the community session).

UCU Next



UCU Next is an event that invites alumni to discuss their careers after UCU, inspiring students to think about their own future. It is organized by Kimberley Snijders representing the Student Council, Nursu Gür as chair of the Acquisition committee, and Emma Ravenhorst from the Alumni Internship Program. Even though the event was fully organized and scheduled to take place in fall semester, it was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions. It will happen in the spring semester on April 19th.

Dog-petting event



The Dog-Petting event was organized during finals week as a collaboration between the Student Council and the UCSA. This event saw a good turnout and created a chill atmosphere to release some finals stress. Due to unclarity of the Covid measures at the time, we started planning for the event relatively late. In the finals season of the spring semester, we will hopefully not have this issue again. We hope to repeat the event with more dogs, more snacks and attendance of both staff and students.

LOOKING BACK

OTHER ROLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Apart from striving to realise the goals we established as the UC Student Council, a major part of our work consists of structural responsibilities or derives from our other positions in the organisational bodies of UCU. In this section we outline some of the main projects or achievements that took up our time this semester. As our positions within and outside of the Student Council differ, you might notice that some members have fewer external responsibilities and could therefore dedicate more time to working on this year's goals, whereas other members spend a larger portion of their time on external or position-specific responsibilities and less on the extra projects we have taken on as the Student Council.

Chair

This semester, Emma was in charge of monitoring and checking whether the spending of the Quality Agreement funds was in line with the agreements made with the ASC board of 2019-2020. After a few conversations between the UCUC and the MT and a separate meeting of Emma and Christel, the UCUC approved the spending of the funds. As a member of the UCUC, Emma has been involved in the process of the evaluation of the Reorganisation which took place in 2020. Moreover, as vice-chair of the UCUC she took over the chairing role for some time during the temporary absence of the chair. Furthermore, she worked on the Ambition Document for the relocation process, and hosted a focus group to gather student input on this document along with UCSA and CAR. As a member of the Financial Advisory Group, she was responsible for the compiling and final editing of the body's draft advice to the MT. Within the Student Council, she worked together with Sam to upgrade our internal organisation and oversight.



Student Assessor

In her role as Student Assessor, Kimberley executed the triennial Toetsing of the student organisations at UCU. She was involved in brainstorms about a big UU-wide event related to the innovation of education, the Onderwijsparade, which will take place in March. As a member of the MT, she was involved in discussions about social safety at UCU and in the writing of a Social Safety Plan, a policy document touching upon many different aspects of social safety in our community. In the Board of Studies, she and Indigo participated in discussions on new courses and the renewal of existing courses. Furthermore, she liaised with different parties such as the UCSA and the Coordination Team to discuss and clarify the new Covid-19 regulations as they arose. Lastly, she took initiative to discuss the UU Strategic Plan with the rest of the board, and write a student perspective on UCU's section in the strategic plan, which the Student Council discussed with the MT in a meeting.



LOOKING BACK

OTHER ROLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Secretary

As member of the UCU Council, which reads and monitors the course evaluations twice a year, Sam was responsible for compiling the overall course evaluations plan and report together with Diana Odier-Contreras. As Secretary of the Student Council, he ensured that several administrative tasks were completed and, together with Emma, updated our internal organisation and to-do system. This allows for a better overview of our activities, and facilitates board reflection. Finally, under the portfolio of communication Sam has created the updated format of the monthly updates to make sure these are easier to understand. Additionally, he created several PSAs, was in charge of Student Council merchandise, and he started working with the UCSA communication platform.



Academic Affairs Officers

This semester Minu planned and carried out focus groups for the philosophy track and the spring intake. These focus groups are aimed at gathering student input on topics and gathering feedback. Furthermore, Minu handled several issues and complaints in specific courses and made sure that the concerns were heard. Complaints in courses are taken up together with the track representative.



Nursu, this semester, is the Academic Representative to the University College Student Representatives of the Netherlands. The UCSRN is an organisation that connects the different University Colleges in the Netherlands. She attends regular meetings where they discuss matters ranging from corona regulations to student wellbeing. She is in contact with different UCs through these meetings.



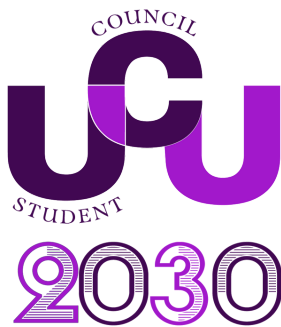
In his role as Academic Affairs Officer, Indigo has taken up the task of AAO Chair. This (informal) position ensures that there is an extra eye on the continuity of all the AAO tasks. Additionally, the AAO chair is involved in setting the agenda and chairing the AAO meetings.



LOOKING AHEAD



UCU 2030



At the beginning of the year, we established our aim of conducting a large-scale project to gather student input on the future of our curriculum. This idea of a project has evolved into the UCU 2030 campaign, which will be launched by the end of February. Managed by Indigo and Minu but carried out by the whole board, this campaign will consist of a series of initiatives, events and inquiries meant to inspire students to reflect on their education and to gather their input on what UCU should be in 2030. More information soon to come!



Social Honour Code

In the coming months, Kimberly and Emma will – in liaison with the UCSA and CAR and commissioned by the MT – gather student input and rewrite the Social Honour Code. This code is one of the articles in the campus life rules and guidelines, aiming to make some of the implicit rules of social life and interaction explicit and serving as a tool to hold onto in case something happens that crosses these boundaries. The current social honour code is rather brief and was written several years ago, which is why – especially in light of recent discussions on (social) safety in our community – it is due to be rewritten. As this document is to play a leading role in determining our social values as a community for the years to come, it is essential that it accurately represents the student voice. We will be hosting a series of focus groups to gather a first impression on what issues the social honour code should address, and use the outcomes to create a survey to be distributed among all students. The new social honour code will then be written based on the results of this survey and in consultation with various groups in our community, such as the Diversity Committee and the Green Team. The final version will be ready by the end of spring semester.

LOOKING AHEAD



Work Pressure

Surveys in the past have indicated that UCU students experience work pressure and social distress. Our conversations with the Student Life Office have pointed out that it was hard to undertake any concrete actions in reaction to these surveys, as they did not address potential root causes of stress among students. Therefore, we will be creating and sending out a survey exploring what the factors are that contribute to stress among UCU students, so that more concrete solutions can be thought of. We will discuss the findings of this survey with relevant parties in the college, and make sure that they are taken into consideration in parallel discussions on work pressure among staff.



Conversations for Change

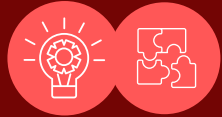
Conversations for Change is an initiative that came from the Diversity Platform. Together with the Diversity Platform, and other interested parties, we are working on a booklet to highlight stories of diversity. This booklet is composed of student and faculty submissions, and aims to celebrate diversity and different ways of being and identities in UCU. There will also be a launch event to celebrate the booklet release. More information will follow soon. Feel free to email ucuconversationsforchange@gmail.com if you want to know more.



Decolonization

The spring semester action plan for the decolonization portfolio includes a symposium or event with speakers on the topic of decolonization, which will most likely occur as part of the UCU 2030 campaign. We aim to create an overview of best practices for an inclusive and safe classroom environment (which we hope to create together with staff and faculty), and to elaborately document and evaluate our activities regarding this theme, so that our successors can build further upon our endeavours.

LOOKING AHEAD



Green Team

This spring semester the Green Team will focus on establishing itself and become more visible in the UCU community. By becoming established, the Green Team will be able to advise other bodies on matters of sustainability. Therefore, we will work on creating an action plan and strategy. Furthermore, there will be a Green Team Summit where there is room for discussion and input on the topic of sustainability. Finally, we hope to establish lines of communication with other green teams around the Netherlands.



UCU Next

As mentioned under Events, this year's edition of UCU Next was fully organized and postponed due to Covid-19. It will now take place on April 19th!

Elections and Transition

As always, the spring semester is also the semester in which we host elections to find our successors. After elections we have our transition period where we prepare the successors to become the next Student Council board.

CONCLUSION

Looking back at the fall semester, there are a few concrete projects which were part of our goals to execute in this semester and which we completed fully. Among these are the institutionalisation of the Track Representatives structure, the establishment of a Diversity Platform, the revamping of the Track Market and the organisation of a Safety Theme Week. Other projects, especially those in which we cooperate with other parties, have been set in motion and are ongoing. Examples are our current collaborations with the Pronouns Team, UCU FLISS, the Wellbeing Team and the Sexual Misconduct Task Force. Yet some other goals were set in motion this semester, but will be considerably more central to our work in the coming semester. This applies to the student wellbeing portfolio, our goal to organize a large-scale input-gathering campaign on the future of UCU's curriculum, and the theme of decolonization. Lastly, a few new projects arose that we had not foreseen at the beginning of the year but that we consider very important. Among these are the establishment of UCU's Green Team, the Diversity Platform's initiative to create a booklet and host an event in the spring semester, and the currently starting project to rewrite the Social Honour Code. All in all, we feel like we have granted ourselves enough flexibility at the beginning of the year to adjust our goals and take on new projects, while at the same time executing our initial plans. We are content about our progress so far and on track with our goals.

Our plans for the coming semester are ambitious, and will certainly take up a lot of time. The fact that we have grown accustomed to working together by now and got to know the organisation well will certainly be an advantage. We have divided responsibilities in a way that everyone will have a few big projects to focus on, which should help in realising our ambitions for the spring semester. We hope and expect to be able to look back satisfied in our second reflection report at the end of the year!

- Your UC Student Council 2021-2022

ANY QUESTIONS?

Feel free to contact us through

our Email

ucu.studentcouncil@uu.nl

or visit our Office Hours

Monday 12:45-13:45

Wednesday 12:45-13:45

Friday 12:45-13:45

Our office is located in Dining Hall
(on the right side when coming in)
(we have complimentary coffee, tea and snacks!)

or send us a message on Facebook/Instagram



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