

## **International Officer Additional Document**

Today along with the Education Officer, I have met and discussed with the students who organised the open letter about no-detriment policy and will continue to work with them to ensure that there is a no-detriment policy for the cohort this year.

<https://docs.google.com/.../1psY16EzytWqWmXzm.../viewform...>

I have also discussed with Fatimah, the PGT Student Rep of the School of Engineering about the concerns students have regarding the teaching provisions and accommodation fees.

<https://www.facebook.com/1149337954/videos/10222026992721089/>

This week I am focusing on:

- ensuring students are communicated for all the changes with regards to the lockdown restrictions.

- no-detriment policy.

05-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I speak to some of the students whose year abroad has been cancelled or disrupted. Although a few groups of students were still able to travel to their host universities for their exchange study, a lot of students have not been able to travel to study abroad this year- instead, they were allocated a "Virtual Study Abroad" to study online with either a partner university's or our university's languages department. However, from the students' feedback, the teaching and contact hours were significantly reduced and the support was limited for students doing the Virtual Study Abroad with the university in the first semester. Therefore, students are concerned that the Virtual Year Abroad will not be able to equip them with the languages skills that they need to complete their fourth-year assessments. Today I am gathering some feedback from the student reps in order to bring this to the University.

[https://www.redbrick.me/student-conversations-uobs.../...](https://www.redbrick.me/student-conversations-uobs.../)

Students have difficulties, staff have difficulties, the teaching quality is not sufficient for students to succeed- the University needs to act on it.

06-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I talk to some of the first-year and exchange students who are doing a course online from outside the UK.

Speaking to and connecting with other students have been more important than ever this year. However, for students starting their first year online from another country, this can be relatively difficult. "If I were starting University this year, would I know where to ask for the support?" I asked myself. This is why I think no one should be turned away when asking a person for support and we can all try our best to signpost others to the person who can help.

Next week we will have the full officer team back from the leave and the full power for making changes. There will be a full agenda for the officers to discuss, including no-detriment policy and fees reduction etc., and you can always submit an idea that you want the Guild to implement or work on-

<https://www.guildofstudents.com/represent.../submissionform/>

This will be discussed not only by the Guild officers but also the elected student reps and committee members as part of the Guild democratic system. For example, the no-detriment policy will be discussed in the Education committee and the fees reduction campaign will be discussed in the Campaign committee. Do use your voice and provide ideas for the benefits of our study body and you.

08-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today the full-time officers and I have communicated with each other about the major updates from last week, including the joint statement from Russell Group University[1]. We agreed that updating students effectively and encouraging students to get in contact for any concerns will be a main focus for the officers. Tobi, your Guild President has also joined up with Presidents of the Students' Unions in the UK and has written a statement[2] to urge the Russell Group Universities to take immediate action and address the issues faced by the students this year. Compared to the last academic year where an emergency progression framework and a no-detriment policy was introduced[3], students this year have experience further disruption by the constantly changing guidances without policies that can mitigate the disadvantages they face.

Yes, the University has re-designed the learning, teaching and assessments methods this year. However, are the measures sufficient to ensure the learning or teaching are not disrupted by the changing situations to the level of individual circumstances?

Yes, the University has put a range of support services. However, are those vulnerable groups being fully considered in the fast-changing guidances?[4] Ruling out the possibilities of mitigating these impacts to the disadvantaged groups of students have caused further and unnecessary anxiety amongst students while they are preparing for the January exams. The Student Unions understand that "having an individualised, algorithmic method this year is challenging, and unfeasible, due to the lack of data for some students to create these baseline averages." However, the no detriment policies are "a collection of policies that ensure the full magnitude of the pandemic and its effect on education are fully considered. The integrity of all academic standards and outcomes should be upheld. No student should be disadvantaged by the impacts of COVID-19 and no student should be disadvantaged by any mitigating measures introduced." [2]

[1]<https://russellgroup.ac.uk/.../russell-group-statement.../>

[2]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/.../Presidents-Response.pdf>

[3]<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../your-studies.aspx...>

[4]<https://gal-dem.com/britains-lockdown-mess-is-hitting.../>

11-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I review the campaign and petitions about tuition fees refund.

Because the tuition fee is high, it is the best interest of students to obtain the value of their education and it is the best interest of the Guild to support students. Due to the impact of the ongoing pandemic and the industrial action (March 2020) on the higher education, the petitions about the tuition fees refund were called and debated in Westminster Hall on the 16 November 2020[1].

I have received feedback from students on the concerns about tuition fees refund after the All Student Meeting[2]. In the meeting held by the Guild on 02 December 2020, a proposal for the Guild to campaign on tuition fees refund was discussed and open to all students to vote in the following week. A week after, it was voted through that the Guild will campaign on "Students Deserve Better"[3], which includes:

- The Guild believes that students should have a right to a refund or reduction in their fees for this academic year.
- The Guild believes that students should have the right to withdraw or defer their degrees and accommodation without financial detriment.
- The Guild will lobby local MPs and campaign for this to be the case.
- The Guild will highlight the ability of students to go through formal complaints processes with support from its Advice Team.

[1]<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/.../cdp-2020-0132/...>

[2]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/ents/event/5295/>

[3]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/.../Students-Deserve...>  
12-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today along with the College Reps and the Education Officer, I have attended the College of Social Sciences Quality Assurance and Approval Committee (CQAAC)[1].

3 months ago, the college reps were elected in the Autumn Elections[2]. Since then, they have been attending the college committees to represent students and address academic issues. For example, the attainment gaps have been regularly looked at to prevent educational inequality (unequal distribution of academic resources). If 75% of the white students are awarded a first/2:1 class degree while 60% of the black students are awarded the equivalent, a 15% attainment gap is identified for the black students. The Guild and the officer team have recognised this issue and further addressed it in the Black Voices Campaign[3]- with a manifesto of actions in order to close the attainment gaps of the students from ethnic minority and prevent inequality for both the staff and the students at the University[4].

Student reps, school reps, college reps have all played an incredible role in representing students and providing feedback to the academic and teaching staff in order to improve your course and your education. You can find the student reps for your course- <https://www.guildofstudents.com/findmyrep/> and give them some feedback. If there is no student rep for your course, why not consider being one?

<https://www.guildofstudents.com/studentreps/becomearep/>

You can volunteer to be a student rep anytime when you are ready or when your course needs someone to make a change.

[1]<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../qac/index.aspx...>

[2]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/.../autumn-term-elections/>

[3]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/blackvoices/#manifesto>

[4]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/.../Latest-Black-Voices.../>

13-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I review the Academic English support and resources.

If English is not your first language, sometimes you might have difficulties in writing essays or expressing your opinions in the seminars. And even if your English skills are at a native level, the support such as Thesis Writing Workshops might still improve your academic achievements. There are two main places which you can access Academic English support- the Birmingham International Academy (BIA)[1] and the Academic Skills Centre (ASC)[2].

💡 BIA English support is more tailored to international students' needs and is for students with different levels of English proficiency. You can self-enrol onto the canvas page and most of the BIA English support can be accessed via canvas, including ➡ the 1-to-1 English support which you can book a time and speak to an English teacher ➡ the daily "Lunchtime English" for topics such as "Writing Scientific Essays" ➡ the "Workshop English" to improve your English speaking skills ➡ the "Thesis Writing" workshops to familiarise yourself with academic writing as a PGR student ➡

<https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/courses/38107>

💡 You can also join the weekly "Let's Read Together" session with Pause UoB[3] to just have some casual conversations and practice English speaking ➡

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/.../lets-read-together-with...>

💡 The Academic Skills Centre <https://libguides.bham.ac.uk/asg/home> is for any students to improve their academic skills such as ➡ writing techniques (scientific writing and academic writing etc.) ➡ research technics (referencing guide and literature searching etc.) There are also courses that you can take to improve your Academic English Writing:

➡ For STEM scientists- <https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/enroll/T8JRM>

➡ For Social Scientists- <https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/enroll/LTL9E6>

If you or a friend needs Academic English support, this might just help!

[1]<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../academic-english...>

[2]<https://www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../asc/index.aspx>

[3]<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../pause-drop-in...>

14-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I reflect on what has been done this week and plan and prepare for what needs to be done next week.

With all the full-time officers being back on Monday, we communicated on the details of the pressing issues, came up with a list of actions in response, and went away to focus on completing each action. One of the actions was to make clear of what the Guild will do to protect students from the impact of the pandemic, including academic, financial and well-being. I was happy to see that at this difficult time all the officers, staff and students are working together and as a result, a quick turn-around to provide the updates[1]. The next step is to progressively complete each of the actions.

Next week, I will focus on (a.)the list of actions[1] for fair academic assessments (b.)the inclusivity training that is in the progress of developing (c.)Your Guarantor Scheme[2] that help students without a UK-based guarantor to rent accommodation.

I hope you are doing well for your coursework and exam preparation. Good luck with your exams. Take some breaks as well and have a good weekend.

[1]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/coronavirus/updates/>

[2]<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/.../YourGuarantor-Scheme.aspx>

15-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today, the Welfare and Community Officer and I meet with the University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Team[1] to discuss the EDI training course that is developing for students- <https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/courses/40097>

Because it is designed for students, the University should take into account what students need. The University may have a list of policies[2] to outline what equality, diversity and inclusion look like but it is the students and staff that can make a change and make UoB an inclusive community. Therefore, it is important to share and communicate how to do so and the training course is one way. At this stage, the training course has only started developing and any feedback would help to shape the course- including what you would like to see more. You can feedback directly to the University EDI Team[1] or you can let the Guild officers know.

[1]<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../Student-EDI-Teams.aspx>

[2]<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../edi-policies.aspx>

18-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I discuss with the Guild Advice Team about what support is more needed this year. Guild Advice[1] is a team of trained advisors at the Guild who provide free, impartial and confidential advice for students. The team advises students on Academic, Housing, Finance,

Wellbeing, and International Support. For example, how to report harassment, how to utilise the complaint process and how to access well-being services.

As an officer, I can help with some of the issues or questions when students get in contact. Sometimes it is as straightforward as asking for information or signposting to the support. However, sometimes I go to Guild Advice as well when I am not sure how to help with a particular issue and possibly a more difficult problem. For example, how to advise or help students who cannot continue with the study because of the financial detriment this year. COVID-19 really has an impact on the economy, the students and many others. The issues that each of us has can be different but do get in contact when you need help!

I hope by focusing on each of the issues which I can act on, there will be positive impact collectively and make this year a little better. I think we may have stopped thinking about getting back to the normality as we have been in a “dynamic” or “unprecedented” time for a while now. However, I am still very much looking forward to the day when the campus is alive and students can all be back. But before then, I will just continue to do so.

[1]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/.../who-we-are-guild-advice/>  
19-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I work on the Guarantor Scheme for it to be more accessible and affordable for students.

With 38000 students at the University, University-owned student accommodations accommodate about one-fourth of the students. Other students would look into the private sector and it may be more affordable for students to rent accommodation privately[1]. To rent a house from private landlords, each individual would need a UK-based guarantor, which is usually the parents or the sponsor of a student. However, for students who do not have a UK-based guarantor, such as overseas students, renting a private house becomes difficult.

The University has partnered up with YourGuarantor Scheme[2] to provide students with a guarantor for renting private accommodation. Today along with the University Accommodation Team[3], I review and discuss YourGuarantor Scheme with the provider. The aim is to have a guarantor scheme that is both accessible and affordable for students. If you experience problems with renting a private house or have feedback on the guarantor scheme that you use, do get in touch as well!

[1]<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/.../renting.../index.aspx>  
[2]<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/.../YourGuarantor-Scheme.aspx>  
[3]<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/.../accommod.../contact-us.aspx>  
20-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I review some of the progress of 'Protect Students from the Pandemic[1]' and can provide some updates.

Over the past 10 days, Jules (Education Officer), Rebecca (Postgraduate Officer) and I have continued to lobby the University for implementing the policies that can mitigate the pandemic's impact on the assessments. You would have received an email from your school about it (if not, please let us know). The policies for year abroad students have yet been finalised and are still in consultation by the University but I am regularly checking the update on this. We are also communicating with the university about the issues related to the no-detriment policies implemented in the last academic year. For example, some of the overseas University postgraduate entry would require full credits but due to the disruption and policies last year this was not possible for some students. Next week, Rebecca and Jules will be hosting Live Q&A sessions with Director of Education of the five colleges to explain the assessment policies and you can pre-submit questions here-

<https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSfyVjazWB.../viewform...>

The officer team addresses some of the financial issues that students have this year and lobby the University accordingly[1]. Some students cannot afford the accommodation but are still bound to the contract. Charlotte, the Welfare and Community Officer and I are continuing to lobby the University to ensure that students can leave their contracts in university-managed accommodation without penalties. Do get in contact if you are in a similar situation or other financial difficulties that prevent you from continuing the study. If emergency financial aid would help, do apply for the Student Support Fund from the University as well- <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../funding.../ssf.aspx>  
[1]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/coronavirus/updates/>  
21-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I am excited that students find out which country/ university they will go to for studying abroad.

Most of the outgoing year-abroad students find out today from the Study Abroad Office[1] where they will be studying for the next academic year. Although some of the students have yet been confirmed a place at one of the partner universities, there will be a second round of allocations over the next two weeks.

Normally, I would have been very excited at this time because travelling and studying abroad is probably one of the best university experience. However, the current world is not the best place that is in favour of international and exchange students. There will be challenges ahead especially with the ongoing pandemic this year.

Because of the challenges that we face, it requires us to support each other a little bit more! I have created a group where you can find out other students who are going to the same country/ university as you are:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/441331633499683>

I also update relevant information regarding studying abroad in the group.

For any questions or concerns, do get in touch!

[1]<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/.../study-abroad.../index.aspx>

22-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today at the Guild Education Committee[1], the committee members and officers discuss the education-related ideas submitted by students this month[2] and decide on the actions forward.

The concerns about workload and exam timetable have been raised. One of the prime examples is that the coursework deadlines and exam dates cluster all in the same week. This is partially due to the New Academic Teaching Year, where the January exam is introduced. The workload issue appears to be a wider issue across the University based on the wider feedback from the student reps in different schools[3].

This issue has been tackled locally by the student reps this year. However, when students reps feedback to the school in the Student Staff Forum (SSF), little change was made. Moving forward, the Committee agrees that the Guild will raise this issue further to a college level through the college reps and officers at College Education Committee[4]. Also student reps are encouraged to feedback further to school reps, college reps or officers when an issue cannot be properly addressed at a school level.

[1]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/.../committeehub/education/>

[2]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/repres.../submissionform/...>

[3]<https://www.guildofstudents.com/studentreps/>

[4]<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../learning-teaching.aspx>

25-01-2021 Officer Daily Update

Today I attend a working group to review the University hate crime and hate incidents policies[1].

Hate crime is when someone conducts a criminal offence by hurting another person because of prejudice against the person's race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability. This includes physical attack, verbal assault, online harassment (e.g. via text, email or social media) or damage of personal property[2].

If you are subjected to or witness a hate incident or harassment on campus, you can and should contact the Campus Security (24-hours service)[3]. When off-campus, contact the police (999) for immediate help and then contact the University Security. To make a complaint about another student or staff member[4], Guild Advice can also assist you with making a complaint[5].

While the Freedom of Speech is supported[6], student conduct is regulated by the Harassment and Bullying Policy[7] to prevent hate incidents at the University. Because of the University's new campus at Dubai, the University ought to further review the Harassment and Bullying Policy and develop the policies[8] based on the law and regulations in the United Arab Emirates to ensure the safety of all students and staff.

[1] <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../hate-crime/index.aspx>

[2] <https://www.cps.gov.uk/crime-info/hate-crime>

[3] <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../solution.aspx...>

[4] <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../hate-crime/index.aspx>

[5] <https://www.guildofstudents.com/.../who-we-are-guild-advice/>

[6] <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/.../freedom-of.../index.aspx>

[7] <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../edi-policies.aspx>

[8] <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../Policy-Harassment...>

26-01-2020 Officer Daily Update

Today the International Student Team[1], student helpers and I deliver an enrichment session on 'Being a Global Citizen' as part of the UoBe Festival.

We start the session by discussing the global issues that we are aware of, such as poverty, access to education, climate emergency, hunger, and inequality. Then we talk about the goals of the United Nations[2]. Following the discussion, we reflect on what 'Global Citizenship' means to each of us as students. Some suggest it is the awareness of the issues not only in the country but also in other nations. Some respect and value the diversity of societies nowadays. Some think it is to tackle social injustice as well as global issues together with other nations.

As a student at a global University where students and staff come from each corner of the world, it is important to understand how to communicate and work with each other. Through learning from other students or staff that is from different backgrounds, cultures, and ethnic origins, we develop invaluable skills that give us the ability to understand and value different perspectives and generate new ideas. In the session, we discuss the skills that we develop as a student at the University, including research skills, writing skills, presentation skills, specialists skills and inter-personal skills. These skills are interlinked and synergistic with the skills we gain through interacting with the diverse groups of people that we meet at the University.

We end the session by discussing the impact of the global pandemic on each of us, and how it changes the meaning of being a global citizen to us. Some think that we shall not only look at how the pandemic has affected the UK but also be aware of how other countries are coping- are there any good practices that we can learn from? Some suggest that mental health support is a key theme and the University shall invest in the service further, which I

have noted the feedback and will bring forward to the relevant board and committee meetings with the University.

I hope that other students gain from the session today as much as I do.

[1]<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/.../internat.../index.aspx>

[2]<https://www.un.org/.../desa/disabilities/envision2030.html>

27-01-2021 Officer Daily Update