

Sabbatical Officer Name and Role:

Amina Awal, Co-Vice President (Self-Identifying Female)

Date of Report: February 2024

Video Link –

Updates

Manifesto

Title Update: **Fostering Inclusivity: Uniting Diverse Student Communities with Different Creative Initiatives.**

Update Category: **Insight**

Following up on the last report in November, this update covers the period from December 2023 to February 2024, detailing ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing the social and academic experiences of students at the University. Aligned with the objectives outlined in my manifesto, the primary goal of these projects is to establish a platform that fosters interaction within our diverse student community, thereby enriching their university journey. The initiatives include the just-concluded Refreshers Fair for new students in January, during which we welcomed and engaged incoming students. Additionally, the Buddying Scheme training kicked off, further supporting student integration and peer support. Continuing efforts include the Lunchtime Socials, which have transitioned from a newly launched initiative to a regular part of our student engagement strategy. Through Lunchtime Socials, I visit outlying UoB campuses with curated meals, providing students from various levels with the opportunity to engage socially. These campaigns, in which I am actively involved, are designed to offer peer support, address mental health issues, and provide guidance to all students. You can find more information about my campaigns below.

Campaigns

Title Update: **Buddying Program, Mental Health Awareness, Lunchtime Social, Refreshers Fair**

Update Category: **Insight/Action**

Exciting progress continues in our efforts to enhance student experiences at UoB. The Buddying Scheme is well underway, with training sessions in progress, while we continue recruiting to expand our mentorship network. Additionally, with the help of some SU staff, I have successfully completed the paper that addresses strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in mental health support—a crucial step forward in our commitment to student well-being (more under 'Policy Work').

Furthermore, our Lunchtime Socials, is now a staple of our engagement strategy, persist in fostering community and connection across campuses. Additionally, I'm delighted to share the launch of an Event Committee on our Bedford Campus, aimed at curating engaging experiences for our students. Lastly, I'm thrilled to report the successful conclusion of the Refreshers Fair in January, where we warmly welcomed and engaged incoming students, setting the tone for a fulfilling university journey (more under 'Other').

Update Category: **Action**

Exciting progress continues in our efforts to enhance student experiences at UoB. The Buddying Scheme is making significant strides, with the trial stage now underway and ongoing training sessions.

I have completed the training draft for the Buddying program, following the successful matching of students with potential buddies. Invitations for our initial set of buddies to attend training have been sent out, and the trial stage has commenced. This phase is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of our mentorship program and ensuring that buddies (mentors) are equipped with the necessary skills to support their mentees effectively.

Additionally, we are actively recruiting to expand our mentorship network, aiming to provide broader support for students across our University community. This initiative plays a vital role in creating a more inclusive and supportive environment, fostering meaningful connections among students.

Faculty – HSS

Title Update: **Health and Social Sciences (HSS)**

Update Category: **Insight/Action**

Following up on my last update from November, I have an update on my faculty work: I've been working closely with the Student Voice Team, along with tutors and staff. Good news – all roles for course reps across all HSS schools have been filled! Additionally, student-staff meetings have kicked off. This will be your chance as a student from the HSS faculty to share your thoughts, ask questions, and be heard by the staff. To be a part of this, simply ask your course rep for the next meeting schedule.

Policy Work

Title Update: **Students' Mental Health**

Update Category: **Insight**

Following up on my previous update regarding raising awareness around student mental health, I've made significant progress in collaboration with the University's Mental Health Charter to promote mental health support for all students and reduce stigma. With the support of Beds SU staff, I've completed the paper submission, which involved thorough research and insightful conversations with students willing to share their perspectives on the support they hope to receive from the university.

The paper highlights the strengths and weaknesses of UoB's Mental Health Charter, identifies areas for improvement, and outlines recommendations to enhance student support within the framework of the Uni's Live, Learn, Work, and Support themes. I'm pleased to announce that I will be meeting with university leads to finalize the submission to the Mental Health Charter, marking a significant step forward in our commitment to student well-being.

Other

Title Update: **Lunchtime Social and Refreshers Fair**

Update Category: **Insight/Impact/Action**

The Lunchtime Socials, born out of student feedback, have now become a regular fixture in our student engagement strategy. Building on this success, we are excited to continue the Lunchtime Socials and expand them to other campuses in the upcoming weeks. Additionally, we've just concluded a successful Refreshers Fair, where we warmly welcomed and engaged new students, setting the tone for their university journey. Furthermore, I'm delighted to announce the launch of an Event Committee in Bedford, aimed at curating engaging experiences tailored to our students' interests and preferences.

Overall Review

I'm actively working to recruit more students for the Buddying program and deeply engaged in collaboration with HSS to ensure student success while prioritising mental health. I welcome your suggestions on how the university can better support students, any changes you'd like to see, and ways we can make Beds SU and the entire University a more welcoming space for all students! Feel free to email me at Amina.Awal@beds.ac.uk.