

Student Council #5 – 2025/2026

Wednesday 15th April 2026 – Summary

Agenda:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Annual Members SU Update from the CEO
- Idea for Change #1 – Amendment of Society By-Laws
- Idea for Change #2 – Pay the Placement Pledge
- Elections Feedback Q&A
- Elected Officers Q&A
- Student Council Feedback

Welcome and Introductions

- **Welcome given by the Deputy Chair, Aryan**, to all students in attendance in-person and online.

Please be aware that for all of the discussion sections in this meeting, it is not a verbatim transcript and is a summary of what was discussed. We can confirm that no changes have been made to the substance of the questions and answers.

Annual Members SU Update from the CEO

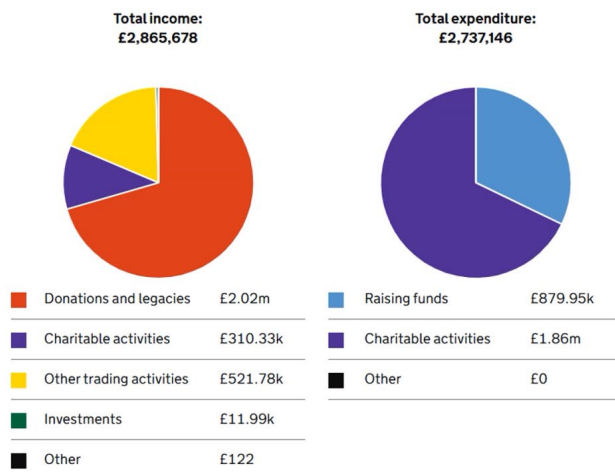
- In this session, **Herts SU CEO Rebecca Hobbs** had a few things to share with students.
- Firstly, she wished students well with exams and everything else they may be working on, as it is a very busy period. She encouraged students to check out the offering of events if they feel like they need a break!
- Secondly, as a registered charity, the SU has an obligation to share how we raise and spend money. **This is to be shared in full in a separate, publicly available accounts document**, which is shared online with something around 40 pages.

- This summary slide was shared:

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - BREAKDOWN OF HERTS SU FINANCES

Income and expenditure

Data for financial year ending 31 July 2025



Rebecca Gendreau Hobbs

Income definitions	
Donations and legacies	Block grant from the University of Hertfordshire
Charitable activities	Societies, events and grants
Other trading activities	Forum income
Investments	Bank interest
Other	Miscellaneous sales

Expenditure definitions	
Raising funds	Portion of staff allocated to generating income (ie, Forum staff, events staff)
Charitable activities	All other non-income generating activity

- From this, Rebecca highlighted that the university provides the biggest block of funds, in about £2 million, through “donations and legacies”. Much of this is given straight back through rent, and the rest is spent on “charitable activities”, for example expenses for activities such as hosting council.
- While the SU is a charity, so not for profit, it does raise money. Some of this comes from the Forum, and there is now a new source in the form of the Elehouse, for example through ticket and drink sales.
- Q:** Do wages of staff come under “charitable activities” or something else?
A: It varies, for example the CEO does not, as she supports different areas. However, someone like the Academic Experience team manager solely supports charitable activities, so her salary would. A member of student staff behind a bar would not.

Idea for Change #1 – Pay the Placement Pledge

From the slides presented, the details of the Idea for Change were as follows:

- What is the issue?**
 - Students throughout the university undertake placements, some are optional, but the majority of placements, particularly for HML students, are mandatory parts of their studies.
 - The University of Essex Students’ Union have launched a campaign to tackle un-paid placements, with a particular focus on nursing.
- Why is this of interest to students?**

HERTS SU

- Many placements take over students' lives, leading students unable to take on paid work, or get involved in the things that make university more than just study.
- The University of Essex's Students' Union's campaign found that 70% of nursing students have considered quitting due to financial pressures, compared to 26-41% of undergraduates overall.
- **What would you like Herts SU to do moving forward?**
 - Herts SU should join the campaign, with other students' unions to push for paid placements.
 - The campaign should be broadened to cover all placement opportunities, not just nursing students.

Full details of the proposal can be found here: [Student Council](#).

- HML elected officer Mariangel re-presented this idea.
- She clarified that the uni in Essex started it, and Herts is in a preliminary onboarding phase. Other examples mentioned were Oxford and Plymouth.
- She updated students that they were already raising awareness on the UH elected officers Instagram account by sharing figures.
- She emphasises that students commit many hours with commuting, for instance, for placements – so it is a lot for these students.
- The idea involves Herts committing to pursuing the campaign on a national level, with the petition that requires certain numbers of signatures for government response and a parliamentary debate. She wanted to make clear that it does not guarantee pay for placements, simply by being passed as an idea for change.

Idea For Change #2 – Amendment of Society By-Laws

From the slides presented, the details of the Idea for Change were as follows:

- **What is the idea for change?**
 - If a society committee member is not active for one month, they should be removed from the committee, and a new committee member put in place via an election.
- **Why is this of interest to students?**
 - Lack of engagement from a committee has a negative impact on the programmes, university, and students' union.
 - Students should get value for their money spent joining these societies.
 - For academic societies, they should get the full programme experience that can be offered.
- **What would you like Herts SU to do moving forward?**
 - Lobby for a stricter By-Law regarding societies and non-engagement. If there are no events or contact from a committee for a month, meetings should be conducted to discuss role removal.

- SU should make clear within training that any disciplinary misconducts, and inactivity will directly lead to removal from the role without any warnings.

Full details of the proposal can be found here: [Student Council](#).

- Amber, who re-presented the idea, also clarified that there would be options for exceptional circumstances (ECs) for placements, medical conditions etc.
- She made the point that if you are a student in a society, then you would want to see the best outcome, and it is only possible if the committee are engaged.
- **Q:** How is non-engagement going to be defined?
A: If events are not held for an amount of time, or if students are reporting receiving no communication, then the SU will engage with them to investigate, but not replying to this engagement would be what triggers them being removed.
- **Q:** EC considerations are good, but if you are on placement, for example, then perhaps should you not take on a committee role in the first place?
A: This point could be considered.

Idea for Change Voting Results

- Both Ideas for Change were open for voting, but the results were not valid due to fewer than 20 students voting and therefore were not quorate.

Elections Feedback Q&A

- This session was held by and introduced by **Phill, the SU Director of Advocacy and Opportunities**.
- He gave background overview that the Education Act 1994 dictates some of how the SU must run things.
- He was open to feedback and questions about the full elections process, which includes nominations, training & development, campaigning, voting, and results.
- **Q:** Why were voting and campaigning at the same time?
A: Previously, voting was three days, and feedback both in and out of council led to this being extended. This was to two weeks, with one week on each campus. Timetabling informed the SU about which weeks would be the busiest for attendance on each campus.
This was aligned to give candidate checks the longest period possible. This process checks things like student status, academic standing and other non-academic status, which can all be found in the online information in greater detail.
The overall aim was to be able to extend the voting period, while protecting these checks.

- **Q:** Can elections be timed to the start of the academic year?
A: An organisational calendar exists to map out the entire academic year, to avoid overlaps, for instance campaigns such as the SU awards start later than the elections, to avoid clashing messages.
Officers' public activity is limited during elections, to avoid any influence over election messaging. Their activity at the start of term is key, but this suggestion is something that can be looked at.
- **Q:** Can there be more promotion for elections such as with billboards?
A: Yes, perhaps more things that are seen on a day-to-day basis on campus.
- **Q:** People didn't have time to vote, and what happened with the changes as to whether online voting was happening?
A: On day six of voting, it was opened to online voting also, but it was made clear to candidates that this decision was taken on the basis that conduct so far had been good (whereas in the year before, it had not been so).
Unfortunately, within 30 minutes, a student, independent of the candidates, posted material online that had potential to inappropriately influence the election, i.e. breaching the code of conduct, involving the offer of financial incentives to vote. Therefore, the online option was revoked.
A: Students requiring reasonable adjustments, or with placements etc, had six weeks to request online votes. One student did but was not actually on a placement, so this request was not approved.
- **Q:** Why was there not both online and in-person voting [for the elected officer roles]?
A: Previously, the culture and conduct did not meet the standards that students expected to see. If situations could be removed where that bad culture occurred, satisfaction could improve. This year, as a result, complaint numbers dropped significantly and candidate satisfaction was also higher.
- **Q:** Student reps could pass information about elections to their cohorts to raise awareness, as they are not checking emails or seeking out what happens on campus.
Q: Can you run two weeks on two campuses simultaneously?
A: This feedback will be taken on board. Is there something that can be provided by the SU to reps, to make those comms easier?
Q: Info can be sent to reps and ask them to share it.
- **Q:** Can campaigning be before voting? Some students didn't feel that they knew who the candidates were.
A: It comes back to the organisational calendar, as it would have then pushed awards into Easter, which could be detrimental to that activity. However, it can be a reflection for planning of future processes.

Elected Officer Q&A

- **Q:** Were current elected officers involved in the planning of elections?
A: Jubair and the other elected officers provided feedback before changes were made this year.
A: Mariangel clarified that they had no direct involvement in the planning of the elections. They have a two-week period where they are instructed to have no activity, to avoid interference with the election period.
- **Q:** What progress is there with the free bus service to Hatfield railway station?
A: Jubair shared that he had conversation with the university – the finance director – but they have recently spent money on expensive electric buses. However, students were not consulted about whether or not their fees would be spent on this investment.
He had been working on the cost for the railway station being covered for accommodation students, which in itself would be a big achievement. However, he is concerned that they do not seem willing to spend the thousands required for this, despite spending millions on the new buses. Additionally, there may be perhaps more spent, such as on infrastructure like EV charging, but nothing directly for the students at this time.

Student Council Feedback

- Students were asked to record what went well, and what could be better from council this year, on Mentimeter.
- There was also an opportunity to share comments directly with the SU Academic Experience Manager Rhiannon.

This was the last Student Council of the 2025–26 academic year. A huge thank you to David and Aryan our Chair and Deputy Chair, to our Elected Officer Team and to all of the Student Leaders that have participated this year.

The new calendar of Student Council Dates for the 2026–27 academic year will be published in September and made available to our new student leaders.