

Candidate Question Time - President

Kate Roberts 05:26

Hello, everyone, and welcome to our fifth and final night of candidate question time. My name is Kate Roberts, your current president, my pronouns are she her, and I'll be your host. Tonight, I'm joined by Phil Dowler, our Democracy Coordinator who will be supporting me with the tech tonight. We're currently live on Zoom and Facebook, and we'll be recording this evening to be uploaded to YouTube.

Kate Roberts 05:47

Last night, we got to hear from candidates running for the position of Vice President Education. Tonight, however, we'll be focusing on candidates for the role of President. We will take just a moment to run through how the evening will work.

Kate Roberts 05:58

In each segment, candidates will take it in turns to start off with an opening statement. Once each has made their statement. We will then move on to questions. Questions were pre submitted by students over the last few weeks. And each question will be asked to all candidates, of that role and a set period of time will be given to respond. Time will start once candidates begin speaking. And if candidates continue to speak beyond reason, after the indicator has gone red, the candidate will be muted. Now with that I would like to welcome candidates for the role of President. This evening, we are joined by Luke Barrowman, Alissa Chohan, Remi Gruszka, and Henn Warwick.

Kate Roberts 06:39

Thank you so much, everyone for joining us. We're going to move right into opening statements in alphabetical order by surname. You'll have three minutes to make your opening statement and time will begin once you start. This means we'll be starting with Luke.

Kate Roberts 06:59

Whenever you're ready.

Luke Barrowman 07:00

The difference between the Students Union and a filet-o-fish burger from McDonald's. Sorry, can you hear me?

Kate Roberts 07:07

Yeah, we can hear you. I think there's a bit of a lag between hearing

Luke Barrowman 07:09

Okay. Okay, sorry I just thought I'd made sure, sorry. What's the difference between the Students' Union and a filet-o-fish burger from McDonald's. The burger doesn't leave a bitter taste in your mouth. The Students' Union is meant to be a safe place. That support students and protects them from internal

and external problems. Or so that was what I was led to believe when I first joined Royal Holloway in September 2018. At the moment, it has more in common with Marmite. You either love it or hate it, except everybody hates it.

Luke Barrowman 07:40

Myself, like so many of these universities, amazing students. Now want change. This year has challenged me mentally, brought upon several unexpected difficulties and made me hugely angry. I decided that instead of dwelling, I needed to channel all of this. And that is why I'm sat before you here today, bidding to become your President.

Luke Barrowman 08:01

I can continue my speech by going into specific detail about my manifesto and explore why every individual point will benefit you more than the other candidates must, manifestos combined. However, you already know that, you've watched my videos, read my manifesto. You know what I'm telling you I can do. I'm making this speech as a promise that I will deliver on setting the foundations in place to just to stop discrimination, that will deliver on bringing forth a greater focus on mental health, which has been rather absent in the past year. And I will deliver on telling the university that a greater connection with the students is what is required and that they can't get away with just doing the bare minimum.

Luke Barrowman 08:42

The Students' Union needs a rebranding, an inexpensive one with very little monetary cost. It needs to become more approachable so that students feel that they can raise their issues and be supported. Rather than be faced with a cold block of concrete, which facilitates a hounous bar and nothing more. This proposal, like my manifesto is a reflection of my personality. I'm someone you can talk to, who will support you no matter what, but also someone who will get things done.

Luke Barrowman 09:10

I want the Students' Union to run on efficiency and security. If elected, my union will always be there to listen to students and act upon what they say and suggest quickly. In December an awful case of discrimination arose. A mass call from students pleaded for the university to review the case and to do something about it. Eventually, an email reply came. However, this took too long and I'm yet to see a response from the SU, issuing what they can do about it or even rebuking what happened. This needs to change. I will make the Students' Union stronger and more active than ever.

Luke Barrowman 09:49

This speech is also a statement of intent to prove my willingness to work with the Vice President to get their excellent manifesto points achieved. My message to you is that I will work hard to make sure your proposals happen, as if they were my own. There are no negatives and voting for me. Only positives. With each and every one of your very important votes comes a promise from me that I will stand up for you and support you and make the Students' Union and university a more approachable, secure and successful place than it ever has been before. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 10:22

Thank you, Luke. We're now going to hear from our next candidate, Alissa.

Alissa Chohan 10:29

Hi everyone. From working non stop this year as VP Education and Deputy President, I've gained a wealth of experience in all areas of being a sabb officer. I have extremely strong relationships with the university. Therefore I have a solid platform to effectively lobby for change through being in rapid response meetings with senior management discussing major issues affecting students, through playing a key role in a range of key high level college committees. I've worked closely with the school reps, academic reps, and members of the Collectives to truly understand how students are feeling.

Alissa Chohan 11:00

Through my time as a student I've also create, created strong connections with student groups, being a captain and charity sec of women's football and a peer guide leader. I'm driven by inclusivity, accessibility and fairness for students. I've held weekly Q&A sessions for students to directly ask senior management anything they like, launched a joint honour student insight report, and am, and, and am involved in and creating a new and improved extensions policy. But there's still more to be done.

Alissa Chohan 11:28

So what can I, what can I do want to achieve as President? The three key values for me as President, will be transparency, consistency and student driven change. My first point is a mental health initiative, we need to reduce workloads have more mental health support embedded into university life through the personal tutor system, and more professional help and wellbeing services, as opposed to referrals. Further objectives also include pet regular pet therapy and funded PT sessions for students.

Alissa Chohan 11:58

My second point is around tackling harassment. I successfully presented an anti racism presentation to senior management with the other officers and have begun work with them laying the roadmap to increase diversity and ensure safety. A trusted and effective report and support system is essential. I've also been in conversations with local MPs to reinstate the late night streetlights, and would like more measures to be put in place during nights out including having the back gate open after SU nights and providing a sustainable lids on cups at the SU to prevent spiking.

Alissa Chohan 12:29

My third point is a new effective and easy accessible attendance monitoring system. And as President can make sure that the IT systems are right, and a new system is implemented for the new year.

Alissa Chohan 12:39

Next is personal tutor and when it works well, it really works well. So the aim here will be consistency. Building that strong relationship with academics will be really beneficial not only for your degree, but the future when obtaining references for, for your future degrees or job applications.

Alissa Chohan 12:55

And then lastly, a PGT experience report to improve study, space work experience and finding available. So as I've expressed, I have all the tools needed to become a stronger successful president for students. Transparency, consistency, consistency and student driven change a key. Not only am I

experienced and well prepared to be President, but I'm committed to make a student life better. So please vote Chohan for change, and I can deliver on my promises.

Kate Roberts 13:23

Thank you, Alssa. We're now going to hear from our next candidate Remi.

Remi Gruszka 13:30

Hi, everyone. I think a lot of students forget that they have a voice. And at the core of things, that's what the Students' Union is about. Ultimately, the Students' Union is a hub for voice and it's a union and students forget that they have that behind them. Ultimately, the issue hasn't brought that to everyone's attention. They haven't come together as one. And although our current sabbs are doing great things in the background, a lot of students aren't feeling the tangible effects. The campaigns they're running are great, but they're not bringing day to day changes.

Remi Gruszka 14:04

First of all, we need that change, we need the SU to restructure. We need the issue to be there for the students and we need the issue to be reachable by everybody. Ultimately, students voices have been brushed under the carpet for far too long. And the covid 19 pandemic has kind of brought all of that up and has unpacked this can of worms that everybody knew was there. But nobody expected to be so big.

Remi Gruszka 14:31

With the lack of mental health support, the lack from government, the lack from any other charity to help students out. Students have really been left to just simmer on their own until they break. I myself have felt that throughout this entire year. As a student I feel let down by not only my government, my university and my Students' Union. Ultimately 86% of students believe that the SU haven't given them anything apart from a night out and frankly, not only is that sad, it's, it's, it's worrying because students should be able to go to their SU, as the first port of call not the last one things are absolutely, absolutely falling apart.

Remi Gruszka 15:11

Therefore, as SU President, the first thing that I will do is increase that student voice by reaching out to every single student, making sure that the campaigns we run, have real tangible changes, and have real tangible effects, as well as making sure that there is transparency in the SU. So we know exactly what the issues doing, why it's doing it, and what are the end goals going to be?

Remi Gruszka 15:34

Lastly, I think the diversity strategy that the SU currently have, is compromised of about one and a half of paragraph on their website, that needs a big overhaul with students putting their voices in, with other experts from the field putting their voices in, and the university working with us to make that change real. I think our students union is in the top 10% of charities by size, we are a massive organisation and we forget about that, we forget that we have this tool that can basically propel our voices out there and make sure that every student's voice is heard, because, quite frankly, students, as I've already said, I've been brushed under the carpet and that that simply can't go on. And a lot of students forget that the

presidency isn't important. It's not the President that sits there and it's not the sabbs that there is the issue as an organisation. It's making sure that that organisation pushes students voices, and not people that are ramming opinions down people's throats. That's why ultimately, as I have said multiple times before, I do not know what's best for every single one of you, because I'm not one of you, you know what's best. So let me propel that voice.

Kate Roberts 16:46

Thanks Remi. We're now going to move on to our next candidate which is Hann.

Henn Warwick 16:55

Good evening, everyone. My name is Henn Warwick and I am the current Vice President of Wellbeing and Diversity. During what has potentially been one of the most challenging years to be a sabbatical officer. I have stayed incredibly dedicated with my team to achieve my manifesto aims. Notably, I have successfully lobbied for a sexual health appointments service at the Health Centre, meaning that Royal Holloway students now have access to contraception and STI testing on campus.

Henn Warwick 17:21

Today I am asking you, the student body, to once again, hand it to Henn, but this time to be your su president. A lot has changed over the past academic year, and the student community has suffered immensely. I recognise how difficult this year has been. And I want to strive to rebuild our community and lead the SU out of this pandemic.

Henn Warwick 17:40

So on to my manifesto which is broken into four key areas COVID-19 recovery. World, the worldwide we have spent a long time fighting down this biting down and crashing down on the virus. But it's now time to move our thinking forward into a non lockdown world. Our COVID-19 recovery needs to be safe, informed and student focused. I aim to sustain inclusive education and offer a choice to continue online or face to face learning and virtual or in person services once the restrictions have relaxed.

Henn Warwick 18:11

Decolonize Royal Holloway recommendations six of the BAME report published in 2020 states diversify the curriculum. In the interest of the student body. I want to take this recommendation further as diversity can still exist within the western bias. decolonisation goes further and deeper in challenging the institutional hierarchy and the monopoly on knowledge moving out of the Western framework, decolonisation is by no means a small task and therefore I intend to conduct a policy inquiry into solely decolonising not only the curriculum but the services available to students.

Henn Warwick 18:46

As we VP Wellbeing and Diversity, I have seen the enormous workload expected of the well being staff. I will conduct an insight report to produce a strategy to proactively address the lack of resources to what in my opinion is the most, one of the most crucial services at Royal Holloway. Mental health and well being support is non negotiable. And as Royal Holloway expands, so should their support services.

Henn Warwick 19:10

To review the student misconduct policies, following the tragic racial abuse occurred online just before Christmas, students have expressed frustration with the lack of transparency surrounding misconduct investigations held by the University and I stand with them. The misconduct policies are outdated and are in desperate need of review. This notably includes the necessary sanctions if students fail to comply. I believe the best way to do this is unity, unity between the SU, the university and students, involving students within this process will aid the university into understanding the student values and to help develop a more inclusive culture. I am truly dedicated to representing and serving all of the best interests of Royal Holloway students. So I'm asking you students today hand it to him for the role of SU President.

Kate Roberts 19:58

Thanks Henn and thank you All candidates for your opening statements. We're now going to move on to questions where you'll have five to answer. You'll have two minutes to answer each question. Your first question is, all candidates are running with broadly similar ideas. What makes you different? For this question, we're going to start with Remi.

Remi Gruszka 20:20

Thanks. And I agree all candidates are running with very, very good ideas, and they have very good concepts. And I think there are a few ways where I think I'm better candidate. First of all, a lot of the candidates are saying what they think is best they're not actually going to the students. Look, this is your voice. This is actually your, your role to propel these ideas forward. As an SU president, it's not for me to basically ram ideas down people's throats, it's for me to propel your voice, because the SU is round for voice.

Remi Gruszka 20:51

Second of all, I don't need this role on my CV. For me, this isn't a CV playing exercise. For me, this is an important thing, you know, students voices have been brushed under the carpet and I felt this as a student. So ultimately, I think this is a great opportunity to actually put some real change forward and not stamp something off of a CV or ramming idea down someone's throat. I think that's why I simply am the best candidate.

Remi Gruszka 21:17

I've worked with other organisations in bigger roles to put real change forward. I've recently helped set up the National BAME student network. I've recently helped the legal advice centre Royal Holloway startup. I've done this before. And I think for me, this is going to be a great year of change, as well as it is going to be for the SU. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 21:39

Thank you, Remi. Our next candidate is Henn.

Henn Warwick 21:50

Thanks, Kate. As the Vice President of Wellbeing and Diversity, I have a detailed understanding of how the university and the SU interact with each other. I have also worked incredibly hard to develop positive working relationships between myself and the senior staff, as well as the staff within the

wellbeing services. I feel this puts me at quite an advantage to understand and to work quickly into working with the university. I am truly dead. I am a truly dedicated activist that is very, sorry. I am a truly dedicated activist that will serve the best interests of all students, I refuse to be told no without clear, justified reasoning, and therefore strive for changes to be made. I will do everything I can to achieve the highest possible standards of care to all students.

Kate Roberts 22:37

Thanks Henn. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Luke.

Luke Barrowman 22:43

Alright, so my manifesto is a reflection of my personality. Wait have we gone to me? Wait, it's on me? Okay. So my, my manifesto is a reflection of my personality. And whereas other candidates might have written their manifesto points with, we're going to achieve this, we're going to do this, I'm going to do that. My manifesto is me, is me telling you that I'm going to make change. And I'm going to take into account students as well. A lot of my manifesto is listening to students, and giving them an opportunity to say what they want.

Luke Barrowman 23:25

I want to make the you know, the University the SU more approachable than ever so that students do you feel comfortable with coming forth, and putting forward their point of view.

Luke Barrowman 23:34

I'm also the only candidate that talks about a post COVID world but not just a the, the post COVID world as a university, but as the Students Union and what it can do to make the university more academic and more noticeable. So that all the students are a, the students benefit from putting Ross or Holloway down on their CV. So that's where I differ from the other students, though, from the other candidates.

Kate Roberts 24:03

Thanks, Luke. We'll now move on to our next candidate. Alissa.

Alissa Chohan 24:08

Thanks, Kate. I think the one thing that makes me stand out is probably my experience and the skills that I've gained throughout this academic year. When you start working at the SU, there's that period of time where you have to understand how the SU operates, how it works, and how the university operates as well. There's quite complex structures in there that you have to understand and having that knowledge of the college strategy and the SU strategy as well and how your thoughts and aims align to that how it differs and, and how to connect if, if they do differ.

Alissa Chohan 24:40

And I'm probably not my relationship, not only with students, but with the university as well. I'm in meetings day in, day and day out with senior management of the university and also academics and departments as well. So I've already got that strong relationship built with them. And it just means that we can reach an agreement quicker and there's that compromise that can be easily achieved.

Alissa Chohan 25:01

But I also know a lot of different range of students as well from speaking to the academic reps from student groups, collectives, or various other people. And I've also started work recently in improving that relationship with the PGR community, which will be really positive moving forward, I think it's a really key area of the SU that could be improved in terms of human communication. And I'm also the only one that sits on on meetings such as college counsel other than the president, so I have that prior knowledge. I have that experience. And I think that's what really sets me apart from the other candidates. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 25:37

Thank you, Alyssa. And thank you, everyone for your answers to that question. We're now going to move on to your second question, which is, this year has seen serious social issues arise on campus from ablest and racist social media attacks to transphobia? What will you do to ensure such issues are treated with a severity they deserve? And how will you work to dismantle this culture on campus? For this question, we're going to start with Henn.

Henn Warwick 26:09

Thanks, Kate. Students at this university wants to see the senior leaders of the university and the SU taking ownership and responsibility and accountability for tackling such events. Events such as ableism, racial social media attacks, and transphobia really bring down the culture that is at Royal Holloway. Royal Holloway was founded on the culture of being inclusive and allowing women to be educated within higher education. So it's very disappointing to see that these events are still happening at this stage.

Henn Warwick 26:39

This year, I have worked closely with the university to introduce the RH Be Heard platform that allows students to report incidents such as this, however, this needs to be developed further. And I want to include the phase two platform, which will allow students to get professional and supervised support for these for these sorts of events.

Henn Warwick 27:01

I believe that the university needs to take into account its failings in the past and provide apologies when necessary, allowing students to move forward, but also including students in the formal decision making wherever possible. And this directly relates to my fourth manifesto point of reviewing the student misconduct policies, it's clear that there are not adequate sanctions available for students who do not comply with the policies, and therefore this needs to be reviewed and discussed at a higher level. But also students need to be involved. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 27:35

Thanks, Han. We're now going to move on to our next candidate, Remi.

Remi Gruszka 27:40

Thanks, Kate. And I think in general, this is a bigger societal issue. And it's not just an issue of Royal Holloway. And we see this as general issue in the general public, on TV, on social media, and especially at our university. I think students are the next generation of society. And I think we need to lead by example. And we need to lead by what we want from the future.

Remi Gruszka 28:04

As I've mentioned earlier, the SU don't really have a diversity strategy, which needs to be developed ASAP, which will be one of the first things that I will do as President, I've already started drafting something with my team to put through straightaway.

Remi Gruszka 28:18

I think the university needs to have a general inquiry into the way they handle these incidents with a very clear outlined plan, because currently everything is done behind closed doors. And the students until they see a statement from the university or from the SU. They do not know what's going on. They don't know what's happened to their issue. They don't know if they're even being heard out. A lot of students have been talking to me. And I've been saying that they feel ignored. They simply don't know. They've important, reported something and they don't know what's happening to it. They don't know if anything's being done until it's too late.

Remi Gruszka 28:51

And in general, I think we're an international university. We have students from all over the world, not just the UK. We are a multicultural university with societies from all over the world. And I think everybody gets their say, I think we should sit down as a university, develop the strategy in tandem with Royal Holloway and Royal Holloway SU, put this strategy in work as a whole. Then going forward, we can basically use this as a future springboard for using these strategies ever really, everywhere else in the nation, where it happens to the other shoes, the National University Students Union, I think in general, there has to be a bigger inquiry and a bigger basically, strategy put in place that isn't just going to focus on one sole incident because this is bigger than me, than you, than anybody. This is a bigger societal issue. Thanks, Kate.

Kate Roberts 29:44

Thanks, Rami. The next catch that we're going to hear from is Alissa.

Alissa Chohan 29:49

Thank you. So this is obviously a very loaded question. And there isn't just one answered answer to it. There are several things that need to be done and is privileged to be previously be mentioned the report and support system. And the second phase of it being rolled out. In my opinion, the first phase needs work on before that before the second one. People don't, a lot people don't know the report system even exists. And those who do don't have confidence, don't have trust in it. So building up that report system, making sure it's effective, making sure that people actually reporting. Because if the university don't know anything about it, nothing can be done. But students need to have that trust and that confidence to be able to report it for something to be done. So getting that reporting system, right, and then the support and the follow up afterwards.

Alissa Chohan 30:35

For me, support definitely needs to be diversified in, in the people delivering it. For example, students need to be able to talk to someone who they can relate to, who feels, who feel they understand their issues, what they're going through, and don't have to go through that phase of sort of validate, validating how they feel. So really that support element and, and it being embedded in sort of everyday university life. And that follow up is really important.

Alissa Chohan 31:02

And it's also been obviously mentioned that key issue of transparency. And students knowing when these issues happen, what happens about it, really refining this discipline, disciplinary process, making sure it's as quick and swiftly as possible. If it's not, sometimes it is longer, that students are aware and kept up to date as much as they can.

Alissa Chohan 31:23

And another element is to have change in that culture. So working closely with student groups, we have things like Black History Month, LGBTQ+ month, and we do special sort of events and stuff during this period. But I want to make sure this is embedded into the university culture and community, for example, during Black History Month there was a food market, have it all throughout the year. So really embed in these cultures into university life. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 31:51

Thanks, Alyssa. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Luke.

Luke Barrowman 31:56

Nothing disgusts me more than discrimination. And I think it's a very important question to ask. And it's an import, important question that I addressed in my first point of my Manifesto. When writing about this, I thought, what do I want? I want massive reparations, I want punishments, I want people to be so deterred from doing this, that they never do it again. But that's me saying, I know what's best for students, when I don't.

Luke Barrowman 32:25

That's why I want to create the opportunity for a conversation between the right people so that they can discuss what they feel is best, or would make them feel most secure. And then as President, I could act quickly on that, and fix it, solve the problem, and put the university in a better place in regards to this issue than it was before.

Luke Barrowman 32:46

I agree with the other candidates, that is a massive issue. And to fix it all in one year would be near impossible. But I wanted to put in place the foundations so that discrimination becomes a very, it comes an issue that doesn't happen often. And that we can stop it from happening overall, over the course of several years.

Kate Roberts 33:10

Thanks, Luke. And thank you very much, everyone, for your answers to that question. We're now going to move on to your third question, which is, what should be the main priority for the campus to become more sustainable? This question, we're going to start with Alissa

Alissa Chohan 33:27

Thanks, Kate. And I'd probably say in terms of becoming carbon neutral, obviously won't happen overnight will take a long time. But that would be a main thing. And, and in terms of sustainable construction, so as the university looks to increase the number of students on campus, there'll be more buildings, more construction. So for example, student halls, more, more buildings to facilitate classes, etc. So making sure these are sustainable going forward, such as having the solar panels for green roofs, FC, FSC certified wood and natural ventilation systems, LED lights, all and all of that are really prioritising the sustainability side of it over the financial side for for that long term gain essentially. It's really, really important, obviously very big projects there. But I think it's definitely important to focus on those big things that will make a big difference, as opposed to the smaller things, they are very much important, but they are being implemented a fair amount across campus at the moment. And I think where the university can improve and the SU are on these bigger projects for sustainability moving forward.

Kate Roberts 34:39

Thanks, Alissa. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Luke.

Luke Barrowman 34:45

So I think the biggest thing moving forwards in terms of saying that sustainability is using small businesses. They have had a really tough year and because of the pandemic and they haven't been used enough and quite a lot of them in difficult situations, we use quite a lot of food trucks. And I believe if we incorporated more small businesses into that that'd be very beneficial. In terms of mental health, and arts and crafts and things like that. We can bring in small businesses to help us make these things. And we should also promote them. And that's a great sign for sustainability and make the university a much better place.

Kate Roberts 35:25

Thanks, Luke. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Henn.

Henn Warwick 35:42

Thanks, Kate. Sorry, my internet keeps going really dodgy. I will openly admit that sustainability is not one of my main aims. And I haven't mentioned it on my Manifesto. But I do entirely recognise it's important and I will always strive to do my part on a personal level. And of course, that flows into everything the SU should do. I will ensure that the sustainability policy statements that have been created are respected and always adhere adhere to. Equally this year, the current President has run a sustainability campaign, which had a survey where students have given their own opinions and advice on how to achieve a more sustainable campus. So I would definitely listen to those aims and work, work with students.

Henn Warwick 36:21

In terms of priorities, I would definitely be aiming to work with student groups that wanted to make positive changes on campus, such as the climate action change group.

Henn Warwick 36:30

And also as highlighted by Alissa, the college strategy is aiming to increase the student body over the next few years. And with this increased with increased students, obviously, there needs to be a space for these students. So I would definitely focus on using sustainable products when building new buildings in halls of residence, and simple things such as having lights on a sensor, so students can't leave them off, of, can't leave them on overnight, and those sorts of things. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 37:01

Thanks, Han. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Remi.

Alissa Chohan 37:05

Thanks, Kate. So I actually did a lot of research about sustainability. And I don't know if anyone else knows. But a tote bag requires 7200 times for you to reuse it, for it to actually repay its lifecycle. And a lot of people a lot of research has come back saying that plastic bags end up being less wasteful than tote bags because we simply don't use them enough.

Alissa Chohan 37:30

There are countless small things that we can do to build this sustainable effort up. For example, I think Coronavirus has pushed us towards a more digital future. And I think the University are now realising that one, it's more cost efficient, to it's more environmentally efficient, and free, it just speeds up time. I personally come from a digital consultancy background and I can see exactly where we can implement more technology to basically one, balance out our needs and our uses and at the same time have an environmental aspect from it.

Alissa Chohan 38:06

I think there is a lot of things in the SU shop that can go, when it comes to plastic, we need to decrease the amount of plastic we use, look at what big shops are doing. Especially when it comes to reusing things and going towards a bagless society. I think the bonus we have is we have that shop on campus. And imagine being able to go to the shop, pick something up that's not wrapped in 10 layers of plastic, go out, eat it or have a drink, and just be overall sustainable.

Alissa Chohan 38:34

I think there has to be a sustainability aspect. In every single thing that we do. Every single consultation that the SU or the university does, has to go through a brand new green, basically plan, we have to make sure that we look at everything we do. And look at what legacy it's going to leave behind. If it's going to leave a bad legacy. We should change the way we do it. Thank you. Okay.

Kate Roberts 39:00

Thanks Remi. And thank you, everyone for your answers to that question. We're now going to move on to your fourth question, which is, what does accountability for the president look like to you? For this question, we're going to start with Luke.

Luke Barrowman 39:14

Accountability looks like what's on your screen right now. I'm telling you, I'm going to create change. That's what I'm going to do. And you're going to see it next year if you'd vote me pPresident. Yeah, that's all I've got to say.

Kate Roberts 39:31

Thanks, Luke. Next catch that we're going to hear from is Alissa.

Alissa Chohan 39:36

Thanks, Kate. I mentioned in my opening statement, the three words transparency, consistency and student led change. I think that's what accountability is all about. Obviously, we're student representative. So it's really important to actually speak to students, because although we have our own ideas, and our own student experiences, they are very different and not all students are ever going to agree with each other, but it's about gathering that student opinion, relaying it to senior management or giving students the opportunity to do so. And finding those alternatives, finding what, what, what works best for students.

Alissa Chohan 40:14

And then in terms of updates as well. So if I were elected as President, I would give probably weekly updates, nothing major, just a post on Instagram, something in the newsletter, a short video clip to say what I've been up to this week, what I'm working on how my manifesto projects are going, if they're not keeping track, why aren't they as we know, with the pandemic, things come into our lives, which we do not expect. And sometimes that causes us to do a lot of reactive work. And it can appear to students that things aren't really being done. But so much goes on behind the scenes, and it moves 100 miles per hour. And I think it's really important that students really understand what's going on how we've been involved in meetings this year, especially things haven't necessarily gone the way we wanted the way students wanted it to go. But we have fought students along the way. And I think it's really important that they're aware of that and and the work that we do.

Alissa Chohan 41:09

And so yeah, providing those really regular updates for people making sure students have the right input in that student led change. And that consistency in the updates that we're giving out, and what we're informing to students. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 41:23

Thanks, Alissa. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Remi.

Alissa Chohan 41:28

Thanks, Kate. And I think there is a bigger underlying issue here. Year in year out, we see an election happen, we see a President go in, we see another election happen and another President go in. Ultimately, I've spoken to a lot of students, and they can't remember what our last year's President did. They can see what our current President is doing. But they can't remember what happened. And next year, the same thing will happen. No matter what other candidates says, we're not seeing that tangible

change. We're not seeing that tangible effect. Students don't know what the SU doing. They don't feel the changes, although they are happening, students don't know about it. The current candidates that we've got on the panel, two of them have already done that students don't feel the effect.

Alissa Chohan 42:12

My main goal is students need to be able to call me out as a president. And as an SU as a whole, on every single thing that I do, students should be able to go on to the SU website and see every single project that we are working on, and how that's going to impact them. Every single project should be tracked by an impact score, it should make sure that every single thing and every single minute that the SU spends on what they do is going to impact students. And it's not just going to be a bit of waste of time and wasted money. Therefore, students have to know every single thing that the SU is doing every single thing that the SU President is doing for them, and how that is going to leave tangible change. If at the end of my campaign, and my time as President, students can't remember what I've done. I failed as a president. And I understand that every other candidate on this board believes that as well. But that has to go into action. And students need to be able to response to what their president is doing live. And they can't do that if they don't know what the President's doing. Thanks, Kate.

Kate Roberts 43:20

Thanks, Remy, the next candidate, we're going to hear from is Henn.

Henn Warwick 43:27

Thanks, Kay. To me being accountable as a President means that I am able to accept the consequences of my actions for the areas for which I'm responsible. So the role of SU President is essentially to be responsible and to represent over 10,000 students on campus. And it's important when you're discussing accountability, to set clear and achievable expectations. So students need to be aware of in order to keep you held to account.

Henn Warwick 43:56

Of course, accountability isn't just a one time thing. It's an ongoing effort. And this means that students need to be kept up to date, keeping them informed and allowing them to give feedback to the President to ensure that the President can act in the best interests of students.

Henn Warwick 44:11

I want students to know that I am here, I want students to know that I'm approachable. And most importantly, I want students to know that I want to do everything I can to support them for their student experience. And to do that you have to be accountable, because let's be real people make mistakes. And sometimes things don't go according to plan. And the president needs to be able to stand there and hold themselves to account and say, Okay, next time we'll try better or we will always learn from these situations and move forward as a union together to continue to support students. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 44:44

Thanks, Henn, and thank you, everyone for your answers to that question. We're now going to move on to your fifth and final question, which is, a significant amount of changes were made across the

university due to the impact of the pandemic, as we move into the next academic year, what would you keep and what would you change? For this question, we're going to start with Remi. Thanks, Kate.

Remi Gruszka 45:09

I think the question states a lot. The way the question starts, a lot of impact was made due to the pandemic, I think, not enough change happened too late, too little too late. And I think as I mentioned earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic actually unwrapped a can of worms that's been hidden in a cupboard somewhere, students have only now been able to actually get that point across, because they can't be as ignored as they were because things are not just normal. Students and the general society around us is now seeing the issues that we've faced for the past. I think online learning, it has to be adapted, I think the SU, not the issue, the University of push towards this form of basically online learning from day to night, I work at Royal Holloway's IT department. And I know exactly how that looked, we literally switched over to online learning, within 24 hours, there was no thought behind it. And we've carried on for over 12 months now, in that way, we need to basically look towards an asynchronous way of living a way that's gonna work for every single student.

Remi Gruszka 46:18

I have struggled so much to learn online, I cannot concentrate on lectures, I do not learn through online seminars, it doesn't work, it doesn't work for me, it works for some of my peers. That doesn't mean that we need to scrap it altogether, I think we need to find a medium that works for everybody, and look to return to regular teaching, as soon as we can, with an online element still students that travel and students that are international, and students that prefer working at their own asynchronous pace, look towards that.

Remi Gruszka 46:51

Overall, companies are now also looking to switch to an asynchronous work from home environment. So I think once we finish university that's not going to go away, companies are going to push us towards that. So not only do we have to adapt, we have to do it in a way that's sensible for every single student, and a way that's going to work for everyone. Thank you, Kate.

Kate Roberts 47:11

Thanks Remi. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Henn.

Henn Warwick 47:21

Thanks, Kate. As per my first manifesto point, COVID-19 recovery, I fully support giving students the choice to continue with a blended approach. But this is not just to online learning, but also to all services on campus. As the question is highlighted, COVID-19 has forced the university and the SU to adapt their services. And in doing so they have become more accessible. This is something that disabled community has fought for continuously. So I want to see these changes kept, but also they need to be improved.

Henn Warwick 47:55

For example, online resources, captioning, lecture recordings, and streaming online, an online access to wellbeing and mental health support. This is a huge step in the right direction. However, there are

still some failings, for example, being unable to log your attendance, using Campus Connect can be a really difficult situation that I've personally seen lots of students struggling with. And this clearly needs to be adapted.

Henn Warwick 48:21

And of course, ensuring that Moodle pages are fit for purpose. And they've got everything that students need that needs to really be improved and moving forward.

Henn Warwick 48:29

And I think Lastly, the thing that I would like to highlight is the continuation of mental health support online means that the university seriously needs to review their resources, because moving online allows for staff to have more workloads because their meetings are shorter. However, having shorter meetings means they can fit more students in, which means they need to increase staff to meet the need. So I feel that the university needs to really challenge the situation and make sure that the adaptations they make improve the services for students. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 49:09

Thanks, Han. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Luke.

Luke Barrowman 49:14

Thank you. So I think the first things first, first things first is to look at what's gone well, this year. The recording of lectures has been something that's been really beneficial to a lot of students, they can look back on and when the exam period comes, they can look back on these lectures and it will benefit them even more. So that's something I definitely want to keep.

Luke Barrowman 49:36

I think something that the university did really well in first ter, were staggered lectures, where half the class would be in for one week, and the other class would be in the next. So if we were in a similar situation, as you are September this, last year, and that's something else I'd really like to keep.

Luke Barrowman 49:54

But something I'd really like to change is the emphasis on mental health. I like That'd be a greater degree of responsibility put upon the lecturers and staff members so that they can ask students and check up on them and make sure that they're okay. Because quite a lot of people with quite a lot of time p, students are struggling and the staff don't realise that. So maybe if a seminar takes place and a student isn't responding or putting their all into it, a staff member should take it upon themselves, through appropriate training, to go and ask that students Okay.

Luke Barrowman 50:32

So, whilst we do have some beneficial things, like the recorded lectures in the staggered, staggered attendance, something I really would like to focus on is mental health and how staff members can take a greater responsibility for students mental health. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 50:50

Thanks, Luke. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Alissa.

Alissa Chohan 50:55

Let's start with what went well, and halfway into term one, I launched a digital education 2.0 report. And that was really insightful to see what students have found, has gone really well so far. As other candidates have said, lecture capture very big one, I am conscious going into next academic year, what the format will look like, that lectures stopped doing that. So we really need to make sure this continues. Not only that they're, that they're recorded, but the quality of the microphones is as high as well, and that the lectures are being uploaded within a 24 hour period.

Alissa Chohan 51:30

Also, the communication formats, as the mentioned the mental health services, and also the career services as well, it's a lot more accessible. Online, and a lot of instances, you can just log on have that appointment, or you can go to sessions that are recorded. So if you have a seminar or lecture and that time, you can watch it back afterwards. So you can fit in that extra curricular and that careers knowledge afterwards as well.

Alissa Chohan 51:56

In terms of what needs to change 100% the workload from speaking so many students reps this year, the workload has been unmanageable. Getting that balance back now between exams and coursework will really be crucial, and student consultation within that will be key as well.

Alissa Chohan 52:11

Secondly, the extensions policy, it's been really difficult this year for students to one keep up with their workload, therefore applying to extensions have their clear issues with the system, which I've read or been in conversations with senior management that they need to work on. And I'm part of that work already.

Alissa Chohan 52:28

As an as is in my Manifesto, the attendance monitoring system, very big one, and it just needs a change to the IT system and a change of platform. And that can be relatively easily done. And then the disciplinary procedures and the personal tutoring is a very big one. With personal tutoring. It is good sometimes to have that quick call online. But what students miss very much are those face to face interactions as well. So catering for different students, whether you're, have caring responsibilities, or commuting student making sure everyone is catered for. Thank you.

Kate Roberts 53:04

Thanks, Alissa. And thank you everyone for your answers. So that brings us to the end of the questions this evening and for the whole week.

Kate Roberts 53:12

In our voting system, we use single transferable vote, which is also known as STV. This means that you can rank candidates in order of your preference, candidates will need to secure 50%, plus one, of the total votes in order to secure the position. If this is not achieved right away, the person with the lowest

votes will be removed from the election, and their votes will transfer to remaining candidates according to your preferences. This will continue to happen until either a candidate achieves the 50% plus one line, or only one candidate remains.

Kate Roberts 53:43

You will also see that there is a candidate called RON in all of the elections. This stands for reopen nominations. This gives you the option to still vote in the election, but to say that you would rather open up the election to new candidates, rather than the ones currently standing.

Kate Roberts 53:58

Thank you so much to our candidates and to you for joining us this evening. Across the week we've heard from candidates for the roles of NUS delegates, School reps, Vice President Societies and Sport, Vice pPresident Wellbeing and Diversity, Vice President Education and now President.

Kate Roberts 54:14

They've told us what is important to them and have answered your questions. We hope that this has provided you with more insight and to each of the candidates and you feel more informed about who to support.

Kate Roberts 54:24

While candidates continue to campaign over the weekend. The rest is now up to you. Voting is open from Monday the 22nd of March until Wednesday the 24th of March. Results announced later that night live on Zoom and Facebook. Thank you again for joining us at Candidate Question Time 2021. I hope you have a fabulous weekend and a lovely evening. Thank you very much, everyone.