



IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON

SILWOOD PARK STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

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1 Background

1.1 The Silwood Park Campus

The Silwood Park Student Union represents the students studying at Imperial College Silwood Park Campus. This campus belongs to the department of Life Science and is solely research focused. With the convenient on campus fieldwork sites and experimental labs, this campus provides the perfect environment for ecological and evolutionary studies, and is world-renowned in this field.

Silwood Park Campus hosts over 100 postgraduate students and researchers (over $\frac{2}{3}$ are international students in this academic year), with several staff members on site providing technical and administrative help. All master's students and a few PhD students, researchers and staff live on or within 6 miles around campus.

The Campus locates far outside London, getting from here to London takes averagely 1 hour of driving if without traffic jams. Most students here this year do not own a car or a driving licence, for us to get around, we need to walk 30 minutes to the train station (or take a £6 cab), and the open-return train ticket to London costs at least £10 off-peak, and £12 at peak hours. Therefore transportation for students from/around Silwood to anywhere else has been an unresolved problem for decades.

As I am also one of the four resident assistants on campus, we have agreed to merge union events with halls this year, as they mainly function the same purpose regarding social activities, so a larger group is involved in providing ideas, organizing and running on campus events.



1.2 The Union Committee

The Silwood Union committee was elected on Oct.13th, 2022, which is approximately one week after the beginning of the academic year at Silwood Park. Besides president, vice president, treasurer, this year we have 4 volunteers for Ents team (entertainment), 2 ministers of transport and 2 chancellor of fur in charging of the campus cat Mr.Tinkles.



President: Danica Duan
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Vice President: Alice Armstrong
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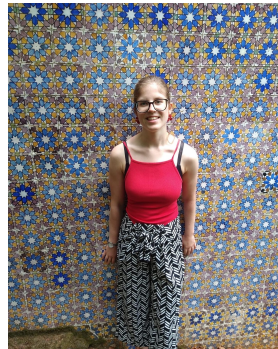
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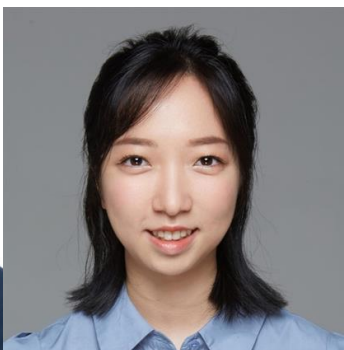
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2 Current Progress

2.1 Activities

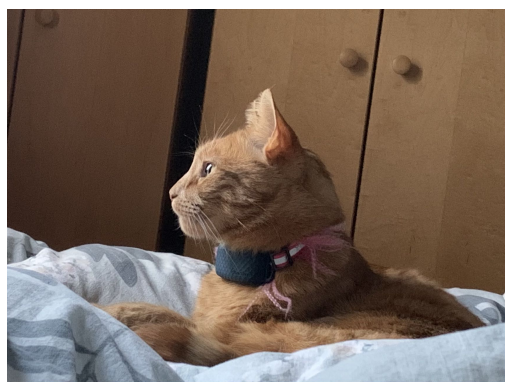
For students' well-being in a far and isolated campus, most of our attention has been on running activities. To accommodate the interest of the high proportion of international students on campus this year, we've also decided to integrate more fun games into activities instead of having mostly drink and dance parties as in previous years. So far, we've had many amazingly fun activities organized by the Ents team including Halloween, Thanksgiving and bar games. We've also helped the department with Guy Fawkes' night ([with amazing on-campus fireworks!](#)), and are currently planning on activities for Chinese New Year.



2.2 Transport

Due to Silwood's isolated location, and the situation that most students on campus cannot drive, cycling became the best substitute option for transporting to surrounding areas. However, Silwood campus owns few bikes and most of which were broken for quite some time. To resolve this issue, the transport team marked all bikes parked on campus then made announcements for people to remove tags from their own bikes, and claimed all bikes with tag unremoved after a certain period as campus properties. In the meantime, the team purchased several bikes online as well, and collected the toolkits purchased by students from the previous year. The team then contacted Dr.Bikes for a free bike workshop session on Dec.14th and borrowed one of the greenhouses on campus to host this workshop.

2.3 Taking care of Mr. Tinkles



Mr.Tinkles has been a member of the Silwood family for several years, and every year two Chancellor of Furs are selected for the Silwood Union, solely in charge of taking care of this fluffy friend of ours.

Since he is an extraordinary hunter for mice and bunnies, he used to wear a bell around his neck which was intended to lower his success rate in hunting - that's where his name came from. However, he had soon managed to by-pass this obstacle by balancing his body perfectly and had become a master of this, so the bell would not ring when he walks or moves, and only rings whenever he wants it to. Not long after that, he then learned to apply this superpower of his into manipulating

people, and found that whenever he shakes his bell, without a meow out of his mouth, surrounding humans would willingly kneel down and do his bidding. He has then scammed for a substantial amount of cans, pets and salmon flavored treats by doing this.

This year, the furs team confiscated his bell (and his ego), and purchased a new GPS tracker for him in order to track his location and to check his health conditions on a daily basis. The team is also providing regular flea treatment for him with full body massage services.

2.4 Others

We've previously sent a survey to Silwood students regarding improvements they would like to see on campus, including the transport issue, questions about Silwood gym, etc. We've then set a suggestion box (bright red color) with pen and paper at the foyer of the Hamilton building according to the survey result. Students can now put in anonymous notes of their suggestions or expectations of the union and the Union committee will check this box on a monthly basis.

Previously, the Union committee had to contact a member of staff for posting any announcement. This was costing low efficiency in work at the beginning of the year, mainly because the union operates at a different timeline (after class/work) with staff, and the announcements could not be posted when the staff member was on strike or on leave. Therefore I have communicated with the administration officer, and got the permission for posting to the distribution lists for both the postgraduate research (PGR) and postgraduate taught (PGT) students.

I've also been attending the staff meetings on campus every Monday to keep updated on news and decisions regarding the Silwood Campus. I've also asked for a time slot on behalf of the Silwood students on the meeting, however was not granted a regular seat but a temporary one for whenever I would like to bring anything regarding the department (staff members included) into discussion. I've then done a progress report on what the student union has been doing so far and what we are hoping to accomplish, the report was well-appreciated.

2.5 Societies Report

Silwood societies are ran and joined by only students and staff on Silwood campus. Vice president Alice has been put in charge of Silwood societies.

2.5.1 Dungeons and Dragons Society

The Dungeons and Dragons Society is designed to allow people to play and run RPGs (role playing games) with particular focus upon the RPG Dungeons and Dragons (DnD). They aim to bring people together by exploring the game, the behind-the-scenes aspects of running games (e.g. storytelling, map making, character building) and to have fun! To date, they have run two taster sessions of DnD and are hoping to run sessions every 2 weeks. Given the time commitment involved in running sessions, they will be running groups in parallel. Finally, they hope to test other RPGs in the future!

2.5.2 Birdwatching Society

Silwood Birdwatching Society is a community for students who are interested in birds and birdwatching. They have completed several bird surveys and birdwatching walks, along with setting up feeders to attract birds for future birdwatching and ringing sessions. Members are encouraged to and share information about bird sightings on campus. They plan to have several ringing sessions on campus, organise birdwatching daytrips off-campus and arrange some fun bird-related competitions e.g. identification quizzes.

2.5.3 Arts and Crafts Society

The society aims to provide a space in which people can practise creative hobbies with their friends. Arts and crafts provide some craft supplies which can be used by beginners not willing to invest in their own supplies yet. Currently they meet once a week and people can bring their own activities to do. They may also hold future workshops for specific skills eg. mending, friendship bracelets etc. but they will want to buy materials for these so that there is enough for everyone to participate.

2.5.4 Silwood Sports Society

The Silwood Sports Society strives to ensure a diverse and engaging sports life for Silwood students. This society initially put out surveys to get an idea of which activities people are most keen to do, and found that climbing was the most popular. It organizes regular sports activities both inside and outside Silwood as well as sports equipment management for daily rental. This society has run two climbing sessions to the nearby climbing centre (Slough Climbing Wall), along with managing sports equipment audit and rental and a badminton session. In the future they plan to arrange two team sports events (football, rounders in summer), squash introduction sessions, weekly ball games, fortnightly basis indoor climbing trips and sports trips (swimming etc.) on demand.

2.5.5 Beekeeping Society

The beekeeping society is yet to have a session as this time of the year tends to be quieter. They are working towards setting up a honey jarring session soon, but are just trying to set it up somewhere where it won't be too cold or too far from where all of our heavy equipment is.

2.5.6 Music Society

Music society has had persistent weekly meetings usually on a Thursday evening in the Silwood bar. They play music together, and members have also exchanged sheet music. They plan to organise more practice sessions and hopefully a ceilidh for Burns Night.

2.5.7 Allotment Society

Allotment Society have not done much yet given the season, but plots have been allocated and they are organising getting the new shed built, giving London-based undergraduate students their own plot and plan on doing a big seed shop.

2.5.8 Chicken Society

Chicken Society is a society for people interested in looking after the chickens at Silwood. Members of the society are responsible for feeding the chickens twice a day, as well as giving them water, cleaning their enclosure, and collecting any eggs that they lay. So far this year they have organised induction sessions to demonstrate how to take care of the chickens. They had to move the chickens to the greenhouse to protect them from avian flu, which involved picking up the chickens (harder than it sounds!) and moving them to their new home. In a few months they plan to move the chickens back outside.



3 Future Plans

Our plans in progress mainly includes providing free sexual health supply for campus, getting pet insurance for Mr. Tinkles. Most importantly investigate on further options regarding the transportation issues of Silwood and union management of the campus bar.

4 Issues

The major issue the students of this campus faces is the department has low concern for the master students. This is possibly the product of Silwood history that the campus only started to provide master courses over these recent few years.

An obvious example of this issue is described in detail as follow:

This year we've had a series of events regarding the 75th anniversary of Silwood Park Campus. One of the events has taken place in Ernst Chain Lecture room on SouthKen campus. The department decided only to provide one coach off-work to London, but refused to provide a coach for the return trip late at night, making it very hard especially for master students to attend who all live on or around campus, as they would have to either walk from the Sunningdale train station through woods and streets without or with very fainted lights for half an hour, or these over 50 students would all have to arrange taxis from station and wait in the cold winter air.

I've brought this issue up with the department and the replies I've got include: 1) This was only marked with Silwood Park 75th anniversary but was not actually a campus event (which does not really make sense). 2) The department shouldn't pay for students commute (This was then disputed by another member of staff that "Inter-campus travel to your non-primary work location is not commuting"). 3) The funding for a return coach was used to fund an after lecture pub event for PhD students and up to attend, because they assumed that the students would have their own plans after the lecture instead of going home. This assumption did not change even after I've issued a survey on students opinions and got over 50 responses.

I had then been negotiating with the department, with the support of several staff members who also see this as unfair, and we had learnt that a coach between SouthKen and Silwood for 52 people only costs £420 (which we would assume is not a large amount for the department). Then the transport team posted another survey for a head-count for the return coach, and contacted the coach company for quote. This negotiation with the department had been on for weeks and we asked the department repeatedly for covering this coach, then finally got a yes on the matter. And the sheet for signing up the return coach was filled up in few minutes, and everyone showed up on time, contradicting the department's assumption on low attendances. We believe that if the department cared more about the students on campus (mainly masters' students), and asked and valued the opinions of the students, all this wasted time and energy on negotiation could've been saved.

We also think the department should invest more on both teaching and entertainment facilities on Silwood Campus, since the campus belongs to Life Science department, and though this is a beautiful campus, the facilities here are far from matching those in other Life Science department buildings located in London.

We are open for any suggestion or idea on communicating with the department regarding our issues.

Thanks for your reading!

For any questions, please feel free to contact me via email.