

## Working with Students – Reflections from our Student Advisory Committee

July 2024

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*Head of Influencing & Communications*

Our Student Advisory Committee (SAC) had the joy of coming together in person for our third meeting this summer. Our in-person meeting is always my favourite of the year as it's an opportunity to connect beyond the screen, build closer relationships and, on this occasion, enjoy the glorious sunshine that we so rarely get.



With our meeting falling right after the results of the General Election we unsurprisingly spent a lot of time discussing students' hopes and aspirations for what they want to see our new government focus on and achieve, building on the work we'd done with our [Student Mental Health Manifesto](#). We also spent time discussing our content packages on [Student Space](#) and how we can empower students to take rights-based approaches and better advocate for themselves. Our third focus was on our visual imagery and illustrations used across a number of our projects and sub-brands. The SAC's feedback has been so vital as we kickstart our efforts in doing a much-needed visual brand refresh across the organisation.

As ever, I am incredibly grateful for the feedback, the insight and the fun that the SAC brings to our work. Their ambitions for what they want to see our government work on - and what they'd like to see Student Minds challenge them on - are considered, pragmatic and necessary. Their candour on our content and our visual illustrations was brilliant and it's that trust in being able to give detailed critique and input that helps to keep our content fresh and relevant to our audiences.

I'm really glad that Mahbub has also shared his reflections from the meeting below and hope our audiences - and future prospective SAC members - find it a useful read.

We'll soon (October!) be opening recruitment for our 2025 SAC cohort, so watch this space.

## What I want to see from the Labour Government

*Mahbub Alom Shuhag - Former Student Leader at Coventry University  
Students' Union and Member of the Student Minds' SAC*



This month, our SAC meeting covered various topics, from the UK General Election to Student Minds' branding. One topic that particularly resonated with me was what my fellow committee members and I want to see from the Labour government in the Health and Education sectors for students.

Some key points that I would like the government to address are:

1. **Education Funding:**
  - **Importance:** Adequate funding is critical for maintaining and enhancing the quality of higher education. Improved facilities and resources not only enrich the learning experience but also ensure that institutions can support cutting-edge research and innovation.
  - **Expectation:** I urge the government to increase the budget allocation for higher education, ensuring that universities are well-equipped to meet the demands of the modern educational landscape.
2. **Student Housing:**
  - **Importance:** Affordable and accessible housing is a cornerstone of student well-being. High housing costs can be a significant barrier to accessing education, causing financial strain and affecting academic performance.
  - **Expectation:** The government should implement policies to regulate the student housing market, ensuring that affordable options are available and accessible to all students.
3. **Mental Health Support:**
  - **Importance:** Mental health is a crucial aspect of overall student well-being. Expanding mental health services ensures that students have the support they need to succeed academically and personally.
  - **Expectation:** I call for the expansion of mental health services within educational institutions, including increased funding for counselling and psychological services.
4. **International Student Support:**
  - **Importance:** International students bring diverse perspectives and enrich the campus community. Removing caps on student numbers fosters a more inclusive and global learning environment.
  - **Expectation:** The government should remove the cap on international student numbers, making it easier for students from around the world to contribute to and benefit from our educational system.

## 5. Employment and Visa Opportunities:

- **Importance:** Facilitating smoother transitions from education to employment is vital for graduates. Lowering the salary threshold for graduates and maintaining the Post-Study Work (PSW) visa enhances employability and retention of skilled talent.
- **Expectation:** Policies should be implemented to lower the salary threshold for graduate employment and to sustain the PSW visa, thus supporting graduates in finding relevant job opportunities post-graduation.

## Reflecting on my time on the SAC

Being a member of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC) has been a profoundly rewarding experience. It has provided me with a platform to voice my concerns and those of my peers, engaging in meaningful discussions that influence policies impacting student lives.

Our SAC meetings are always enlightening, bringing together diverse perspectives to address common challenges. It's inspiring to see the passion and commitment of my fellow committee members and students' leaders from across the UK Universities towards driving positive changes in our educational system and student life.

Through my involvement with the SAC, I have developed a deeper understanding of the various issues students face, from mental health struggles to financial difficulties. This experience has helped me to develop my range of skills and networking, the ideas and experiences that we all students' leaders were shared genuinely listened to and considered in policy making.

So far on the SAC, there are two significant contributions that I am particularly proud of:

### 1. Expert Roundtable on "How to Promote Student Mental Health within UK Universities"

One of the standout moments of my tenure was the expert roundtable on "How to Promote Student Mental Health within UK Universities." This event was truly remarkable, featuring influential figures from the higher education and mental health sectors. At the roundtable, we engaged in deep, meaningful discussions on how to enhance student mental well-being by bridging the gap between student leaders and policymakers. Our conversations underscored the urgent need for improved mental health policies in higher education and how to promote it within universities. The event provided a unique platform to advocate for these changes, emphasising the importance of connecting student voices directly with those who have the power to implement policy reforms.

### 2. Contributing to "The Student Mental Health Manifesto"

Another significant accomplishment was my involvement in the creation of The Student Mental Health Manifesto. This ambitious, evidence-led document is a comprehensive outline

of our vision for enhancing student mental health and create an environment where mental health is a priority, services are accessible and inclusive, and students can thrive both academically and personally. It was a collaborative effort that brought together the insights and expertise of various stakeholders, focuses on five main themes: ensuring all students have access to quality and timely mental health support, addressing financial difficulties, improving support and investment in higher education institutions, promoting inclusivity in education and healthcare, and advocating for a holistic approach to the nation's mental health and well-being and I am proud to have been a part of it.

***Learn More***

*If you'd like to read more about our SAC, [check out our webpage](#) which introduces our members. You can also [sign up to our newsletter](#) to find out about recruitment window for SAC 2025.*