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LSE Students' Union

Democracy Summit Recommendations Report

2022

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LSE Students' Union Democracy Summit

Recommendations Report

LSE Students' Union Democracy Summit

Recommendations Report

Democratic Society, April 2022.

democratic society

Who are the LSE Students' Union Democracy Summit Members?

The members of the LSE Students' Union (SU) Democracy Summit are a group of 25 randomly selected people who represent the student population.

They came together in-person over three days in March 2022 to discuss one question:

"LSESU is a democratic organisation run by students for students. Many students feel that the Union doesn't represent them as well as it could.

How can we reimagine and strengthen the future of LSESU democracy so it can work better for everyone?"

The summit members are:

Haya
Additti
Akshita
Bartolomeu
Bertie
Claudia
Dan Tudor
Daniel
Eshana Danya
Eulalia
Gaurev
James
Jérémy
Luna
Malika
Merilynn Si Lyn
Muhammad Awwal
Noor Laela
Nupur
Nura
Oron
Sanjana
Sergen
Thomas
Wei Xuan

Who was involved?

London School of Economics Students' Union

London School of Economics Students' Union[1] (LSESU) is a not-for-profit organisation led by students, for students. Their aim is to help LSE students make the most of all the life-changing experiences open to them during their time at university. LSESU has this year made it a strategic priority to review its democratic structure in the pursuit of an answer to one simple question - what democratic model would most effectively meet the needs of LSE students?

Democratic Society

Democratic Society[2] (Demsoc) works for more and better democracy, where people and institutions have the desire, opportunity, and confidence to participate together. They work to create opportunities for people to become involved in the decisions that affect their lives and for them to have the skills to do this effectively. They were joined by two academic collaborators, **Professor Simon Pek** and **Dr Jeffrey Kennedy** [3] for the purpose of this work, offering advice at during the design and delivery phase and leading independent evaluation in the post-summit phase.

Sortition Foundation

The Sortition Foundation[4] promotes the use of sortition (random selection) in decision making. They were responsible for recruiting people to take part in the Democracy Summit. Their aim was to ensure the summit was broadly representative of the diversity of the population of LSE.

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[1] https://www.lsesu.com

[2] www.demsoc.org

[3] Professor Simon Pek, University of Victoria, Canada and Dr Jeffrey Kennedy, Queen Mary University of London

[4] https://www.sortitionfoundation.org/

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone involved in making this incredible Democracy Summit happen.

Our sincere thanks go to all the fantastic participants, guest speakers, facilitators, support team, and of course to the staff at LSE Students' Union for providing the necessary funds, imagination, and determination to make it happen.

The recommendations developed by the summit members detailed in this report, will be drawn up into a motion by Josie Stephens, LSESU General Secretary and Faiso Kadiye, LSESU Community & Welfare Officer, for all students to vote for at their Student Members' Meeting in 2022.

The Students' Union will then use these recommendations to strengthen LSESU democracy and put into action a model which works better for everyone.

Summit members will be involved and updated throughout each of these next steps.

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Foreword

At its core, the LSE Students' Union (LSESU) exists to help LSE students get the most out of their time at university. Therefore, amplifying the student voice through carefully crafted democratic channels is fundamental to our purpose as a charity. As an elected representative, I know the current democratic structure wasn't set up to effectively serve this vision. So over the last 9 months, we have undertaken a review to reimagine the shape and structure of our democracy.

This report shares a diagnosis of the issues prevalent within our current democratic structure, collected through all-student surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews. It then explores student-led recommendations for a new and improved system of governance, discovered through a democracy summit in March 2022.

I am extremely proud of the work that has gone into this project and the commitment it shows to putting student voice at the heart of everything we do. As a social science institution, it's about time LSESU had a pioneering democratic structure to do justice to our name and history.

Thank you to the Democratic Society, to Simon, Jeff, Leonie, Caroline, Sinead, Freya, Faiso, Ed, Ricardo and everybody else at the LSESU whose invaluable contributions made this possible. It's been an honour working with everyone involved in this project and I cannot wait to see the impact it will have on enriching the student experience. The completion of this democracy review represents a huge stride towards becoming a union for all, thereby ensuring that LSESU is representative of, and accountable to, our entire LSE community.

With thanks,

Josie Stephens

General Secretary 2021-2022

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Executive Summary

LSE Students' Union committed to undertake a rigorous **Democracy Review**, to arrive at a model which better meets the needs of LSE students.

The review included broad and deep engagement with students in early 2022, to build a picture of current experience and bring together new ideas for improving the LSESU democratic structure.

Wider engagement with students was gathered through focus groups, interviews, and an online survey.

It provided evidence for review by a further group of students, randomly selected by civic lottery, to be participants at the **Democracy Summit** in March 2022.

Over three consecutive Wednesdays, student summit members heard from a range of speakers with practical and subject-matter experience, to help them understand the problem and scope of the issue. Using this evidence, summit members deliberated and tested ideas, enabling them to develop a set of recommendations in answer to the calling question:

"LSESU is a democratic organisation run by students for students. Many students feel that the Union doesn't represent them as well as it could.

How can we reimagine and strengthen the future of LSESU democracy so it can work better for everyone?"

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Recommendations

The recommendations were individually voted on by summit members to show if, and by how much they supported each recommendation. A total of 23 of 25 participants completed the online voting ballot. Each recommendation received over 85% support, and therefore all were accepted by the summit.

A summary of the final recommendations and the levels of support they received are as follows:

Recommendation Statements	**SUPPORT** % Rounded to nearest whole number
Structural Reform	
Recommendation 1: Create a new structure for the SU (which includes two chambers and a scrutiny board) to make the deliberative process constant	91%
Recommendation 2: Modify the functioning of the election of societies and officers	95%
Recommendation 3: Create a chamber of deliberation and officers to allow for a bicameral system that follows a strong policy-making cycle	91%
Recommendation 4: Create scrutiny board to structures processes and outcomes	95%
Recommendation 5: Introduce incentives for student roles, either monetary (stipend, hourly) or otherwise (gym memberships, discounted food and drinks, etc.)	100%
Recommendation 6: Create new channels of feedback, capitalising on existing staff and societies and high traffic areas at LSE	100%
Recommendation 7: Department student representatives act as liaisons between students, departments, and the SU	100%
Recommendation 8: Changing postgraduate role to more part-time roles that are less intense and represent post-graduate students more effectively	100%

Transparency & Accessibility	
Recommendation 1: Make communication from the SU to students more efficient, clear, and engaging (using infographics, pictures, and news bites)	91%
Recommendation 2: Make the process of society formation and running accessible and easier.	96%

Student Engagement	
Recommendation 1: Create an incentives-based system for participation through points or rewards such as vouchers, discounts, memberships, etc.	87%
Recommendation 2: Creating a system (platform, hub, page) that collects ideas on how to make the SU better and allows for an accountability mechanism that shows how ideas translate into recommendations that are implemented. It could be added into the SU website.	87%
Recommendation 3: Different methods of engagement to tackle student apathy and get more students involved. Include more fun, democratic, and creative ways to engage students on campus. Ensure they are targeted throughout the year, after the rush of freshers' week. Ensure that it targets all demographics of students.	100%
Recommendation 4: Design and dedicate a yearly week to the SU, titled "SU Week" with SU-led events, democratic activities for feedback, show ideas that the SU has implemented	96%
Recommendation 5: The SU should create more opportunities for points of physical contact through stalls in non-SU buildings and offering drop-in sessions, both online and offline	91%

These recommendations and the reasons why the summit members felt they are important are presented in more detail in section 3 of this report.

1. Introduction

This report captures the journey of the LSESU Democracy Summit and shares the recommendations written by the members who were part of this process.

1.1 How it worked

A summit is a meeting of people who are important in solving a problem. It is used all over the world to look at issues and come up with solutions.

The aim was to bring together a diverse and representative group of students from across LSE, to hear evidence, discuss the issues together in-person over three days, and decide how the LSESU should make changes to be more democratic for all.

The students who attended learnt about the issues, what works elsewhere and were able to discuss ideas for how to make the Students' Union more democratic and more representative. They went through a process of deliberation to decide on actions for how that change should happen.

Summit sessions were delivered in three phases:

Learn – understanding context, challenges, and other areas of innovation

Deliberate – discussing potential solutions

Decide – agreeing practical action and recommendations

The summit heard from a range of subject-matter and lived-experience experts during the sessions. Through time spent learning, and deliberating together, summit members agreed on a set of 15 recommendations.

1.2 How summit members were selected

To recruit participants for the LSESU Democracy Summit, invitations were sent to 3000 students. This represents approximately one quarter of the student population, with the aim to achieve a 5% response rate and create a pool of around 150 students to recruit from.

The process of randomly selecting a group of students who broadly represent the student body of LSE was led by the Sortition Foundation, who used a stratification framework with the following demographics:

- Gender;
- Ethnicity;
- Disability;
- Level of study;

- Fee status;
- In receipt of a bursary;
- Previously voted in an LSESU election.

This table shows the targets aimed for, for each category (as a % of the student body and summit members as a group) and any variance from the target. These were set to make sure the summit reflected the diversity of LSE students.

Stratification Criteria		Student body targets	Final summit members	Variation of summit members from target
Gender	Female	57.1%	52%	-5.1%
	Male	42.7%	48%	+5,3%
Ethnicity	BAME	60.9%	64%	+3.1%
	White	36.5%	32%	-4.5%
	Prefer not to say	2.6%	4%	+1.4%
Disability	No	89.6%	96%	+6.4%
	Yes	10.4%	4%	-6.4%
Level of study	Undergraduate	47.1%	56%	+8.9%
	Postgraduate	52.9%	44%	-8.9%
Fee status	Overseas (outside of EU)	52.4%	52%	-0.4%
	UK	29.8%	28%	-1.8%
	Home EU & Overseas EU	17.8%	20%	+2.2%
Bursary	No	89.2%	100%	+10.8%
	Yes	10.8%	0%	-10.8%
Voted in an LSESU election	No	74%	60%	-14%
	Yes	18%	36%	+18%
	Don't know	8%	4%	-4%

The Sortition Foundation received 150 student expressions of interest and availability, of which the target for detailed recruitment was 24. This was slightly raised to 25 to give a wider pool of numbers for the sessions. Academic commitments and covid-related illness had an impact on attendance, fluctuating between 85% and 95% across the three weeks.

The overall retention rate through the summit process was 95%.

Each summit member was given £250 as a gift of thanks, either in cash or as a voucher, to recognise the time and commitment they gave.

1.3 Welcoming and onboarding

As the summit was being delivered in-person, great care and attention was made towards ensuring that all participants were able to fully take part.

Staff from the Democratic Society spoke to each participant before the first session to welcome them to the process and ensure they had everything they needed to take part and engage with the process in a meaningful way (for example paid childcare, transport, accessible materials, other needs/factors that needed considering). The main consideration was to build in flexibility, so that a small number of participants were able to dip in and out to attend academic meetings.

Any barriers to involvement were addressed, so that summit members were able to fully take part and have a meaningful experience.

1.4 Wider engagement and speaker input

Wider engagement was gathered from a series of focus groups and interviews, and an online survey as part of the **Democracy Review** in the weeks leading up to the **Democracy Summit**. Results from the wider engagement survey and focus groups and interviews were analysed, synthesised, and presented as evidence for the Democracy Summit to consider.

Focus groups and interviews

The aim of the focus groups and interviews was to target and engage students who may not traditionally have a voice, and to make sure people with diverse characteristics were heard and had an input into the review.

They included 31 students from a range of groups that the Students' Union thought it was important to reach:

- International Students
- PHD Students
- BME Students
- Masters Students
- Commuting Students
- LGBTQ+ Students
- Students with a disability

Topics for discussion included previous experience of getting involved with the Students' Union, how well represented people felt, what prevents people from getting involved in Students' Union democracy related activities, and elements that improve peoples' democratic experience of the Students' Union. Inclusion and how accessible people find the Students' Union was another core topic explored, with a final topic finding out people's thoughts and ideas on how students can affect change and hold the Students' Union to account.
(See learning from focus groups and interviews in Appendix 6.1)

Each person who took part was given a £15 voucher of their choice to thank them for their time.

Wider engagement survey

An online survey based on the same topics was distributed, with 640 students taking part. The survey consisted of 10 questions, covering students' experiences of the SU as well as their ideas to improve its democratic structure.
(See learning from wider engagement survey in Appendix 6.2)

Stakeholder communication and engagement
Stakeholder communication and engagement also played a key part in the lead up to the summit, to ensure that a wide range of 'critical friends' were aware of and/or included in the summit.

These included:

- The School Management Committee
- Executive Committee (Sabbatical Officers & Part-Time Officers)
- The Democracy Committee
- Senior Leadership Team
- Wider Students' Union
- Student Media Groups
- Societies & Sports Clubs
- Academic Reps
- LSE Academic Departments
- Campaign Groups
- Newly elected students
- Company Secretary
- Students in general

Each of these stakeholders will play an important role in delivering of the results of the Democracy Review, whether it be in constitutional change, communication, or operational delivery.

Students themselves are fundamental to voting in any changes through their Student Members' Meeting in May/June 2022.

Democracy Summit speakers

Speakers with a range of backgrounds and experiences were invited to make sure that input at the summit was accurate, balanced, and unbiased.

1.5 Recording and sharing evidence

Copies of all the presentations and other materials were available for summit members to access between sessions to refresh knowledge, or to refer to in their own time. These were available electronically in a shared online folder. Paper copies of presentations were also provided during the summit.

A small number of observers were present throughout all summit sessions and were able to hear speakers giving evidence. They were not allowed to listen in to table discussions or approach summit members, to prevent interruption or undue influence.

Observers were both individuals and from organisations with an interest in the topic and/or the process of hosting a summit.

1.6 A high quality experience

Given the long-term approach to the topic, a lot of careful planning and consideration went into the design of the process.

It was important to ensure summit members were able to participate in the learning, deliberation, and recommendation phases in an inclusive way. Attention was given to detailed process planning and the venue set up before each session, so that every element was in place.

The Students' Union, and the Democratic Society worked as 'one team' to provide:

- A prayer room – accessible at any time;
- A quiet room for anyone who needed some time out;
- Locally sourced refreshments, supporting university-run catering businesses;
- Long lunches and regular breaks to give people time to unwind and also connect with each other;
- A physical space to 'park' ideas that didn't necessarily contribute to the topic discussions;
- Dispensation to leave early for critical course meetings;
- Briefing meetings with the facilitators and support team, to make sure the best support was provided for summit members;
- Space in welcoming venues, accessible for all.

2. The work of the LSE Students' Union Democracy Summit

The process was designed by the Democratic Society with input from LSE SU staff and academic researchers, Professor Simon Pek and Dr Jeffrey Kennedy.

The LSE Students' Union Democracy Summit met over three days in March 2022:

- **Wednesday 9 March**
- **Wednesday 16 March**
- **Wednesday 23 March**

Summit members took part in around 20 hours of learning, deliberation, and decision-making as a group. Materials were shared in an online folder for people to access content from each of the summit days.

Activities for each session were constructed carefully, drawing on learning and insights from the other Students' Unions and their democracy work. It was also important to make sure that there were ample opportunities to explore the findings from the broad-based engagement that came via focus groups, interviews, and survey results.

Each session was led by experienced lead facilitators, Mel Stevens and Pandora Ellis from the Democratic Society.

Small group discussions were facilitated by experienced table facilitators, also from the Democratic Society. There was one facilitator with between six and eight summit members at each of the three tables. Summit members sat according to a seating plan which was changed for the first and second day but remained on the same tables for the final day as they completed their final recommendations.

Across the three days, the summit members heard and discussed a range of evidence from the wider engagement work, local and national speakers, subject-matter experts, and people with practical experience, before developing their 15 recommendations to improve LSE Students' Union Democracy.

2.1 The Democracy Summit process in detail

Day One – Wednesday 9 March

Deepening our understanding, the context, and the challenge

The first day brought summit members together to meet one another and get established as a group.

This included getting comfortable together and agreeing ways of working. Activities and inputs supported summit members to understand the scope and purpose of the summit, and why it had been called.

Time was spent learning about LSESU, democracy and other Students' Unions. The purpose of the summit was outlined so that participants were able to understand the impact of their involvement.

Conversation Guidelines

In the morning, after a first round of introductions and icebreaker activity, summit members were asked to draft a set of Conversation Guidelines for how they wanted to work with each other during the event.

A base of best practice Conversation Guidelines for deliberative events was shared with participants, who were then invited to edit, change, and add their own ideas to the list.

All the ideas were reviewed and compiled at lunchtime to create a set of collective guidelines to be adopted by participants after lunch. (see Appendix 6.3)

Speakers input and Q&A

The summit members heard next from Josie Stephens, General Secretary of LSESU and Faiso Kadiye, Community and Welfare Officer of LSESU. Between them, they gave an overview of the Democracy Review context and some of the key challenges that the SU is facing. Josie and Faiso also gave some context about how the SU works through a quick quiz to keep summit participants engaged and inject some fun. Finally, the impact that was expected from the summit was highlighted, with commitment of the Students' Union to take action on the recommendations.

Nick Smith, Education & Charity Consultant and LSESU Company Secretary, presented some of the key legal elements that structure Students' Unions and LSESU in particular.

Summit members had a chance to discuss and reflect on what they heard, and agree questions they would like to ask LSESU speakers. Notes and questions were captured by facilitators for each table.

The next speaker was Graham Smith, Professor of Politics, University of Westminster & Director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy. He presented a broad understanding of the topic, focusing on what democracy means in different contexts, with an outline of

different types of democracy. He also highlighted examples of innovative democracy initiatives and case studies.

Summit members also had a chance to discuss and reflect on what they heard, and agree questions they would like to ask Graham Smith.

Day One - Speakers

Democracy Review and its purpose	**Josie Stephens** - General Secretary of LSESU **Faiso Kadiye** - Community and Welfare Officer of LSESU
Legal Framework	**Nick Smith** - Education & Charity Consultant and LSESU Company Secretary
Wider context & democracy	**Graham Smith** - Professor of Politics, University of Westminster & Director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy

After lunch, the Democracy Summit reviewed and adopted their Conversations Guidelines.

Expert Carousel

Experts from three different Students' Unions were invited to talk to participants directly at their table. Summit members were able to ask their questions and draw from the experts' different experiences of running and reforming Students' Union democratic structures.

Queen Mary University of London Students' Union	**Marianne Melson -** Student Voice and Insight Manager
University College London (UCL) Students' Union	**Simon To** - Policy and Governance Manager
University of Westminster Students' Union	**Heather Doon** - Head of Student Voice (previously Greenwich Students' Union)

Introducing the three themes

Three themes were identified by LSESU as a guide for summit members to reflect on:

1. A model of representative leadership
2. A way for students to shape SU priorities and direction on political issues (i.e., through policy)
3. A way to ensure marginalised groups are represented in a way that doesn't rely on free labour/burdening marginalised students

LSE Keynote Speech

Dilly Fung, Professional Director of Education at LSE, gave an inspirational speech highlighting ways in which LSE students get involved in creating change as well as some of the challenges to engage all students.

Day One – Keynote Speaker

LSE	**Dilly Fung** – Professional Director for Education at LSE

Reflections from participants

For the rest of the afternoon, summit members had a chance to reflect on the inputs from all the speakers. They had time to discuss in pairs and as a table some of the key elements that stood out to them. Then, each table shared 2 key insights from day one.

The day ended with a sharing activity in pairs, for people to exchange what surprised them from day one and what they were looking forward to for day two.

Day Two – Wednesday 16 March

Diving deep into LSESU's challenges and thinking about solutions

The second day of the summit was all about getting a better understanding of the key challenges faced by LSESU and hearing from the Democracy Review's wider engagement focus groups and survey.

This was to spark ideas for summit members to arrive at initial solutions, which could be tested with practitioners. Summit members were also reminded to draw from their own lived experience as LSE students.

Focus groups and wider engagement survey

After an icebreaker activity, Sinead Gavin from LSESU presented the main insights from the focus groups and the wider engagement survey.

Summit members were provided with a printed copy of the slides with visual representations of the results, so they could refer to it throughout the summit.

For the full analysis of focus groups and wider engagement survey See Appendix 6.1 and 6.2

LSESU Question Time

To get a better understanding of the key issues and challenges that LSESU faces as well as what it hopes to achieve with the Democracy Review, a series of questions drafted by LSESU and Demsoc, was posed to LSESU members by lead facilitator Mel Stevens.

Summit members heard from Josie Stephens, General Secretary; Faiso Kadiye, Community & Welfare Officer; James Hann, Chief Executive; and Freya Govus, Representation Manager.

The members of the panel talked through LSESU's current structure, budgets as well as their hopes and fears.

LSESU Speakers

General Secretary	**Josie Stephens**
Community & Welfare Officer	**Faiso Kadiye**
Chief Executive	**James Hann**
Representation Manager	**Freya Govus**

Democracy Innovation

After focusing on LSESU, lead facilitator Mel Stevens added wider context and insight from examples of democratic innovation happening across the world.

This input aimed to stretch summit members' ideas and ambition, by drawing thinking from outside the university environment.

Stretch thinking, ideation and big ideas

Following on from the additional insights that were contributed to the summit in the morning, summit members were invited to think about ideas and solutions.

First, a quick stretch thinking session was introduced.

Lead facilitator Pandora Ellis asked some '*What if'* questions to help expand participants' thinking and unlock their ideas of what the SU could be like in the future. For example, *What if you had unlimited money to meet this challenge?*

Next, summit members had a chance to chat in pairs and start listing their ideas according to three themes: **Reimagine**, **Strengthen** and **For everyone**.

The three themes prompted participants to think about all aspects of the question that the summit set itself to answer: *How can we reimagine and strengthen the future of LSESU democracy so it can work better for everyone* (see Appendix 6.4)

Finally, each table prioritised ten top ideas to add to the BIG ideas wall. Participants shared their big ideas and added them to the wall in a collective feedback session ready to be clustered by the team over lunchtime.

Testing and refining ideas

In the afternoon, summit members were assigned batches of ideas collected from the morning. They were invited to work in small groups of 2 or 3 to explore ideas with 'Testing Partners.' Broadly, this offered an opportunity to ask questions and discuss thinking, across a range of people with a mixture of academic and practical experience.

'Testing Partners' were located around the room so that participants could roam between them and choose who they wanted to hear from.

After testing their ideas with one or several practitioners, summit members had time to refine the ideas and think about how its success could be measured and why it might fail.

Then, the table worked together to prioritise the refined ideas according to how easy or difficult it was to achieve and whether the predicted impact was high or low.

This exercise resulted in developed ideas which formed the basis of the recommendations for the final summit day.

Day Two – Testing Partners

Waltham Forest Youth Independent Advisory Group	**Abdur-Raheem Modan** – Young Adviser
Oxford Brookes Students' Union	**Emilie Tapping** – Chief Executive
LSESU	**Nick Smith** – Company Secretary
Author, campaigner, and journalist	**Robin McAlpine**
Ecorys UK and previously LSESU & the Beaver	**Morgan Fairless** – Project Assistant at Ecorys UK and former LSESU Postgraduate Students' Officer and former editor of the Beaver
TPX Impact	**Kelly McBride** – Deliberative Democracy Lead
Co-housing UK	**Juliet Millican** – representative
Involve	**Madeleine Gough** – Project & Inclusive Practice Officer

The day ended with a sharing activity in pairs, for people to exchange what surprised them from day two and what they are looking forward to for day three.

Day Three – Wednesday 23 March

Refining, completing, and presenting recommendations

The final day of the summit focused on thinking bigger and completing recommendations to present them to a panel made up of the main stakeholders.

Democracy Horizon Grid and Systems Map

Day three started back with a reminder of refined ideas for recommendations from day two. Summit members summarised each idea into one sentence on a post-it and were then invited to plot post-its onto the SU Horizon Grid. The SU Horizon Grid represented the current LSESU democratic structures gathered into the previously explored themes:

- Representative Leadership
- Agenda Setting & Shaping Priorities
- Accountability
- Electoral Processes

For each of these, participants plotted their ideas into two sections: **Strengthens** or **Reimagined**.

After all ideas were plotted into the Horizon Grid, summit members had a chance to reflect on what the sum of their ideas would achieve and to critically think about any gaps, contradictions or things that were missing.

From there, the last section of the Horizon Grid labelled **End Result,** was a place to gather the future thinking from participants, creating a vision of what the SU would look like if all their ideas were implemented. (see Appendix 6.5)

Then, participants were invited to create their own systems map. Ideas were collected from the Horizon Grid to be added onto a big wall. In plenary, summit members discussed how to best organise their ideas into a system and clustered all their ideas into it. (see Appendix 6.6)

Creating recommendation themes

With all the ideas clustered onto the system map, summit members had a chance to visualise how the ideas worked together and how they could best be themed to structure their set of recommendations.

A consensus building activity facilitated conversations to reach agreement on key themes.

Participants discussed their preferred themes in groups of 3 before coming together as groups of 6, then 12, until all summit members collectively agreed on the final themes.

The themes agreed were:

- **Structural reform**
- **Student engagement**
- **Transparency/Accessibility**

Drafting and writing final recommendations

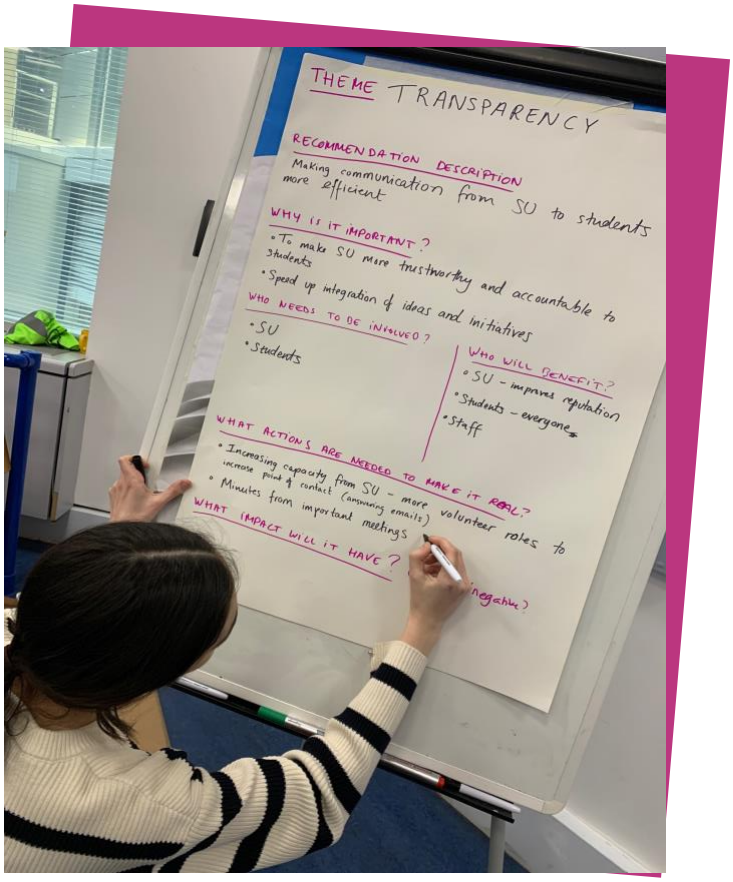
In the afternoon, each of the three tables was assigned one of the three themes - one of the themes being spread across two tables to share an equal number of ideas across participants.

Summit members worked in small groups to turn ideas and clusters of ideas into draft recommendations. They were invited to write their recommendations on big posters, thinking about why it's important, the actions needed to make it happen, the impact, who would be involved and who would benefit.

When participants were happy with their draft recommendations, they pinned them on the wall. All summit members were then encouraged to take part in a roaming feedback session, reading and commenting on each other's recommendations using their critical thinking. This was to give everyone a chance to give feedback and have input on every recommendation in each theme across the whole summit.

Participants then came back to their table to work on their final recommendations, making sure to include each other's feedback.

Facilitators prompted their groups on whether their recommendations were written clearly and were understandable to others, whether each recommendation was ambitious enough and answered the calling question.



Preparing to present recommendations & presentations

The final part of day three was to share the recommendations by presenting them to LSE Students' Union, Director of LSE Baroness Minouche Shafik and, as importantly, to each other as a whole summit.

To prepare, summit members at each table were asked to decide who would present, aiming for everyone to be involved as much as possible, as a great opportunity to conclude their participation in the summit. Participants had the chance to practice and keep to time.

Each table then presented each of their recommendations to the panel who also had the opportunity to give a first response.

The day ended with an Open Mic session where all participants could share freely about their experience, and an outline of the next steps by LSESU.

Receiving recommendations
The Democracy Summit members
Baroness Minouche Shafik - Director of LSE
Jack Dhillon - LSESU Returning Officer & Member of the Democracy Committee
Josie Stephens – LSESU General Secretary
Faiso Kadiye - LSESU Community & Welfare Officer
Vaibhav Sharma - LSESU Postgraduate Students' Officer
Ed Hall - LSESU Activities & Development Officer

3. The Democracy Summit Recommendations

At the end of the process, Democracy Summit members presented a set of final recommendations in response to the question the summit had been set:

"LSESU is a democratic organisation run by students for students. Many students feel that the Union doesn't represent them as well as it could.

How can we reimagine and strengthen the future of LSESU democracy so it can work better for everyone?"

Recommendations were in three areas:

1. Structural reform
2. Transparency & Accessibility
3. Student Engagement

These recommendations were presented to the Director of LSE, the LSESU Returning Officer & Member of the Democracy Committee, the LSESU General Secretary, the LSESU Community & Welfare Officer, the LSESU Postgraduate Students' Officer and the LSESU Activities & Development Officer.

They were also presented to each other as members of the summit as a whole.

In the days directly after the summit, summit members voted to indicate whether they supported each of the final recommendations, with the option to strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose each one.

23 of 25 summit members filled out this voting poll, the results of which are shown with each recommendation.

3.1 LSE SU Democracy Summit recommendations and results of the vote

The Democracy Summit developed a set of recommendations to create a new democratic structure for the SU, to be presented as a motion at Student Members' Meetings.

The summit members showed their strength of support by voting to approve each recommendation in the week following the final day three.

Students will ultimately vote on this proposal to approve or oppose change in mid-2022.

Please note that the percentages shown below are rounded up to a whole number and therefore might not always sum to 100%.

3.2 Structural Reform

Structural Reform

Recommendation 1 - *Create a new structure for the SU (which includes two Chambers and a Scrutiny Board) to make the deliberative process constant.*

Why is it important?

The current structure doesn't work or promote a democratic process in line with 21st century ideas on participatory democracy

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
Officers, neutral scrutiny board, students

Who will benefit?
Everyone

What impact will it have?
Democratic, deliberative, transparent

What actions are needed to make it real?
Creation of new chambers and scrutiny board that works on campaigns, policies, and negotiation with LSE, informed by Student Members' Meetings.

- Chamber of officers (legislative and executive): chosen by improved elections
- Chamber of deliberation (legislative): chosen by representative sortition
- Scrutiny board: ensures agreements aren't edited and maintains fair processes and outcomes

Student Members' Meetings inform the chambers to create a motion of the term and/or month. Both chambers are equal, and policies are only final where both chambers agree. Introduce termly policy cycle between the chambers.

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	14	6	1	1
Percentage	64%	27%	5%	5%

Structural Reform

Recommendation 2 - *Modify the functioning of the election of societies and officers.*

Why is it important?

There is an asymmetry of information between the SU and students surrounding elections. We are recommending small changes to make elections more transparent and increase turnout.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
Societies, the SU, the electorate

Who will benefit?
Student body

- More engaged
- Democracy is more accessible

What impact will it have?

Positive: Increase turnout and develop a sense of community

Negative: Requires more organization, Logistics may be complicated and difficult

What actions are needed to make it real?
Ballot box system

- Ways to vote on campus in person
- Tablets on tables that students go up to in the SU, the library, etc.
- Dual system that still allows for online voting
- Elections take place in MT
- Should be at a similar time to society elections
- End of MT? to better include post-grads
- Linkage between SU and society elections necessary

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	13	8	1	0
Percentage	59%	36%	5%	0%

Structural Reform

Recommendation 3 - ***Create a chamber of deliberation and officers to allow for a bicameral system that follows a strong policy-making cycle.***

Why is it important?

Recreates democracy review process (March 2022) and applies it to a wider range of topics. More democracy.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
Student body to be chosen by sortition

Who will benefit?
Student body, LSE due to better policy outcomes

What impact will it have?

Positive: Representative, more creative policies, deliberative
Negative: more expensive, hard to organise

What actions are needed to make it real?

- Process of sortition to get a termly chamber
- Clear, paid, facilitator roles (officers? Democracy committee?) to organise the process

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	13	7	1	1
Percentage	59%	32%	5%	5%

Structural Reform

Recommendation 4 - *Create scrutiny board to structures processes and outcomes.*

Why is it important?

Neutrality: to check if processes are democratic and representative.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
The SU democracy committee, facilitator (mentioned previously)

Who will benefit?
Structure by providing circular feedback

What impact will it have?
Ensure fairness in the structure

What actions are needed to make it real?
Incorporate the democracy committee into the scrutiny board

- Half chamber of deliberation and half from democracy committee?
- Randomly selected?

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	16	5	0	1
Percentage	73%	23%	0%	5%

Structural Reform

Recommendation 5 – *Introduce incentives for student roles, either monetary (stipend, hourly) or otherwise (gym memberships, discounted food and drinks, etc.).*

Why is it important?

- Improving representation, competition, and attracting more people to roles
- Compensating shows appreciation for people's hard work, especially minority representatives.
- Encouraging commitment and motivation

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?

- Board of Trustees because they outline salaries
- SU for implementation
- Possible associates for rewards such as the gym or cafes
- Students running for PTO positions
- Legal team for legal and budgetary concerns

Who will benefit?

- Student body, especially those from marginalised and underrepresented communities like post-grads
- Part time officers given increased recognition due to compensation

What impact will it have?

Positive: representation for individuals and the wider community, motivation, minority representatives being compensated for their labour, highlighting the importance of these roles to put on equal footing with paid-sabbatical officers.

Negative: budget and monetary restrictions, legal restrictions such as who pays and how roles will be structured, might change motivations for running, might create a hierarchy, compensated roles can only be held for 2 years so it may limit re-election possibilities or running for multiple roles

What actions are needed to make it real?

Setting a budget for part-time officers and making necessary alliances with gym and cafes
Creating a legal framework

- Formalising roles, responsibilities, and compensation
- Establishing a mechanism for accountability, can be done by scrutiny board

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	18	4	0	0
Percentage	82%	18%	0%	0%

Structural Reform

Recommendation 6 – *Create new channels of feedback, capitalising on existing staff and societies and high traffic areas at LSE.*

Why is it important?

Strong engagement from a larger number of students.
Build strong relationships between SU and societies.
Improve representation of students from marginalised students' societies.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
SU liaisons, acting as advisors

Who will benefit?
Marginalised communities

What impact will it have?
Short term: raise issues that are highly specific to societies, higher collaboration between societies and the SU, continuous testing of ideas and constant feedback
Long-term: improve representation, build strong relationships between the SU and societies, strengthen student engagement

What actions are needed to make it real?
Flatten the leadership structure by having SU staff work as advisors
Create a feedback loop to strengthen structure and communication

Create new roles:

- Community Action Researchers: paid roles to conduct random sampling of students to collect feedback and test ideas from student feedback
- SU liaisons: elected role within selected societies to represent issues from marginalised communities to the SU

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	16	6	0	0
Percentage	73%	27%	0%	0%

Structural Reform

Recommendation 7 – *Department student representatives act as liaisons between students, departments, and the SU.*

Why is it important?

Allows for more effective communication of issues.
Department reps are given a channel by the SU if they are not heard by their department.
The SU can identify any common feedback across departments and address these.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
Student representatives, students, the SU, academic departments

Who will benefit?
Departments, students within their course studies

What impact will it have?
Student voices being heard
Creating a more democratic system for ALL students

What actions are needed to make it real?
Regular meetings between course representatives and the SU
Deliberative democracy review after the work of course representatives
The SU facilitating new position of course/department representatives

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	17	5	0	0
Percentage	77%	23%	0%	0%

Structural Reform

Recommendation *8 – Changing postgraduate role to more part-time roles that are less intense and represent post-graduate students more effectively.*

Why is it important?

Improve student trust in the SU and facilitate student representation.
Increase the number of students applying for SU roles.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
Course representatives, existing societies, permanent SU staff

Who will benefit?
Post-graduate students

What impact will it have?

Positive: representation of post-graduate students, more students applying for roles due to part-time nature with less burden

Negative: increased number of roles

What actions are needed to make it real?
Create lighter/easier roles for post-graduate students, unless more responsibility is desired
Separate the undergraduate academic officer from the post-graduate academic officer, creating a new role.

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	14	8	0	0
Percentage	64%	36%	0%	0%

3.3 Transparency & Accessibility

Transparency & Accessibility

Recommendation 1 – *Make communication from the SU to students more efficient, clear, and engaging (using infographics, pictures, and news bites).*

Why is it important?

To make the SU more trustworthy and accountable to students as greater awareness will allow students to engage and hold the SU accountable.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
The SU communications and IT teams
Students

Who will benefit?

- The SU by improving its reputation
- Students
- Staff such as those involved with societies (e.g., LSESU Econ)

What impact will it have?

Positive: Students will feel that their voices are being heard and they are not just talking to a 'void,' allowing students to opt-out while also having information available elsewhere will counter the overwhelm of emails

Negative: more transparency could raise suspicion and overwhelm students

What actions are needed to make it real?

- Increase capacity from SU via more volunteer roles to increase points of contact such as answering emails
- Minutes from important meetings, such as student members' meetings included in newsletters
- Create a page for Frequently Asked Questions

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	10	11	2	0
Percentage	43%	48%	9%	0%

Transparency & Accessibility

Recommendation 2 – *Make the process of society formation and running accessible and easier.*

Why is it important?

Efficient: saves time for students and the SU.
Centralised: one place/page/platform.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
The SU and societies

Who will benefit?
Students and the SU

What impact will it have?

Positive: reduce staff related costs by having them deal with less email, more effective and friendly process for societies

Negative: building a new platform and re-engineering the old one might be costly

What actions are needed to make it real?

- Create a new platform with all relevant documents under different subheadings with upcoming submission deadlines
- Re-build the SU website to be more user-friendly

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	15	7	1	0
Percentage	65%	30%	4%	0%

3.4 Student Engagement

Student Engagement

Recommendation 1 – *Create an incentives-based system for participation through points or rewards such as vouchers, discounts, memberships, etc.*

Why is it important?

- Increases participating in the SU
- Reduces the burden of time and financial constraints
- Makes people feel valued

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?

- Students because they need to participate in the system
- The SU because they need to make the point system clear

Who will benefit?
Participating students!

What impact will it have?

Positive: greater student participation and representation
Room for change e.g., different rewards

Negative: reduces budget for alternative uses, possibly doesn't work or is only effective in the short run, malicious or disruptive uses?

What actions are needed to make it real?

- Effective online software system that is easy to use and understand
- Communication since students need to know about it
- Budgeting to know what rewards can be distributed

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	14	6	3	0
Percentage	61%	26%	13%	0%

Student Engagement

Recommendation 2 – *Creating a system (platform, hub, page) that collects ideas on how to make the SU better and allows for an accountability mechanism that shows how ideas translate into recommendations that are implemented. It could be added into the SU website.*

Why is it important?

- Anyone can be involved without having special roles.
- Easy to make change, easy access.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?

- Students because they need to make use of the software
- The SU to promote the software and advertise to that every student knows where to go

Who will benefit?
Students, the SU, and LSE

What impact will it have?

Positive: has potential for large change and students can have a voice and create change

Negative: No one gets involved, budget costs, time to create all of this

What actions are needed to make it real?

- Effective online software system
- Students must know it is happening (communication)

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	13	7	3	0
Percentage	57%	30%	13%	0%

Student Engagement

Recommendation 3 – *Different methods of engagement to tackle student apathy and get more students involved. Include more fun, democratic and creative ways to engage students on campus. Ensure they are targeted throughout the year, after the rush of freshers week. Ensure that it targets all demographics of students.*

Why is it important?

- Focuses more on the enjoyment aspect of the SU's responsibilities so that students feel more involved with the SU when partaking in on-campus activities such as bouncy castles, mini concerts, dance performances, etc.
- Focusing on participatory mapping (students involved in coming up with activity ideas) will create a more democratic process

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
SU events officer, SU finance officers (to fund activities) students, people running events

Who will benefit?
SU events officer, SU finance officers (to fund activities) students, people running events

What impact will it have?

Positive: increased participation rate with the SU, increased democracy, students will have a more enjoyable university experience

Negative: increased costs associated with events

What actions are needed to make it real?

- Gathering data from students about the activities they would like on campus (e.g., surveys)
- Planning events (SU events officer)
- Gathering resources
- Attracting students and implementing events ideas throughout the year
- Start off by coming up with own ideas and as students become more engaged, they will give their own ideas

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	12	11	0	0
Percentage	52%	48%	0%	0%

Student Engagement

Recommendation 4 – *Design and dedicate a yearly week to the SU, titled "SU Week" with SU-led events, democratic activities for feedback, show ideas that the SU has implemented.*

Why is it important?

The work of the SU feels technical and not engaging to many students.
Having a week for SU allows focus to be placed primarily on SU as focusing on making activities fun would be a better way to involve more students.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
SU event officer, societies

Who will benefit?
Student and the SU

What impact will it have?

Positive: accountability as the SU can showcase what they have done, fun to make students more engaged

Negative: additional time cost on top of classes and assignments

What actions are needed to make it real?

- Decide which week is best for "SU Week" (end of the term is preferrable as students will have less assignments and responsibilities)
- What activities would go into "SU Week" (gather ideas democratically through participatory mapping)
- Students should be encouraged to take part, meaning fun is the focus (consider a carnival-like atmosphere)

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	12	10	1	0
Percentage	52%	43%	4%	0%

Student Engagement

Recommendation 5 – *The SU should create more opportunities for points of physical contact through stalls in non-SU buildings and offering drop-in sessions, both online and offline.*

Why is it important?

Awareness, engagement, and visibility on campus.
For democracy to work, people need to know their rights and resources.

Detailed Description

Who needs to be involved?
The SU via community action researchers and department representatives, the estates division, and people to run the stalls

Who will benefit?
The SU and students

What impact will it have?

Positive: transparency, communication, courses/ideas for policy/campaigns, engagement, constant touch with the SU

Negative: cost-benefit issues regarding salaried staff members, USP as compared to other stalls, online? videos? Zoom calls?

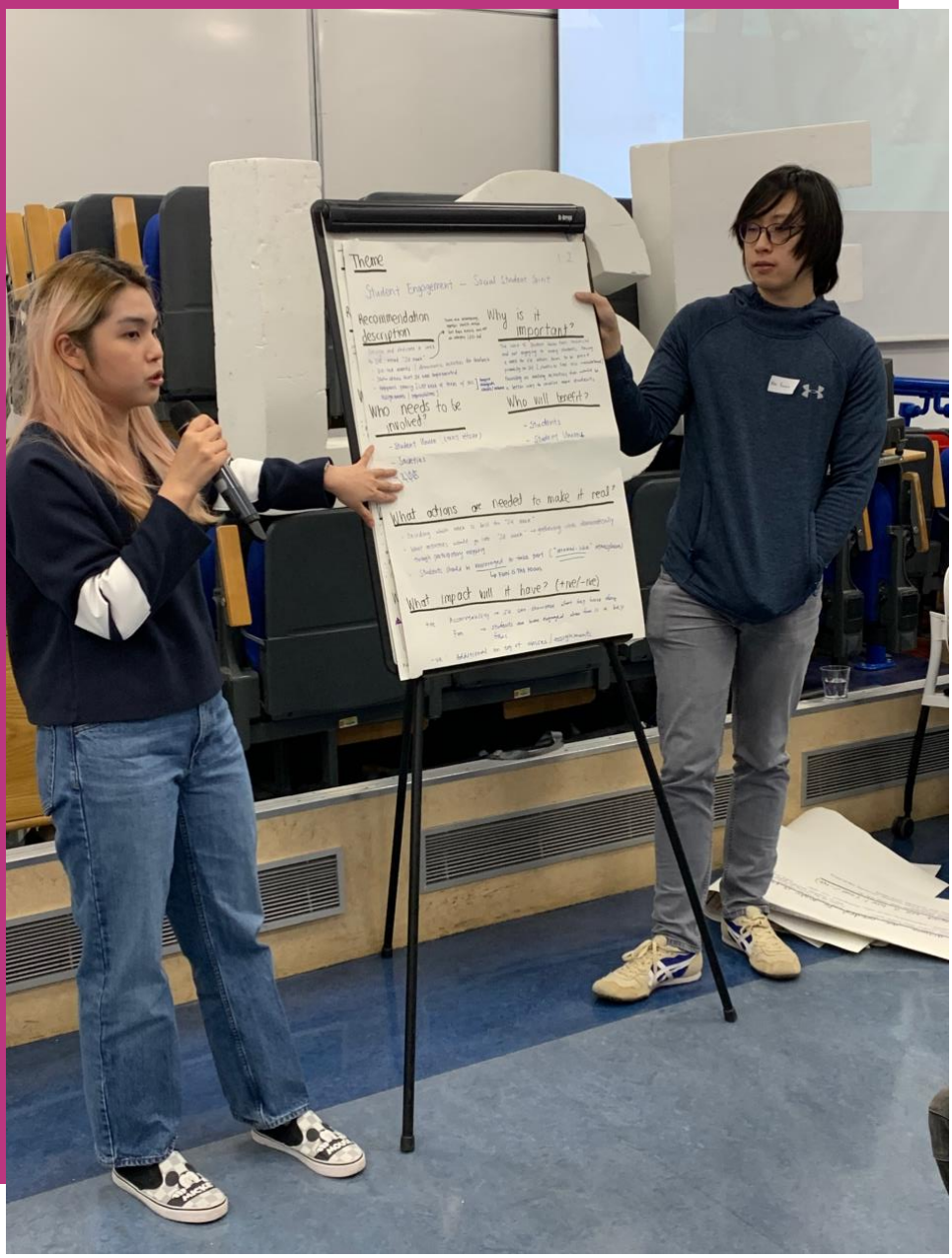
What actions are needed to make it real?

- Have it at peak times, not every day all-day
- Make a schedule of the stalls or drop-in options available
- Have incentives/ideas to make people interested in coming/engaging in physical/online touchpoints
- Promoting online websites/SU newsletter or Moodle (ads?)
- Chat box

43

Voting Results

	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
No. Votes	15	6	1	1
Percentage	65%	26%	4%	4%



4. Evaluation and Learning

Evaluation and Learning formed an important element of the summit process.

Members were invited to complete paper surveys prior to beginning the process, and at the end of the final summit day. These surveys were used to understand summit members' attitudes towards both the topic and the process, and to determine how these attitudes changed throughout the summit member journey.

Survey answers were collated and compared, identifying, and exploring common themes.

Surveys also asked members to identify how they wanted to stay involved, with the Students' Union and also as a group.

A separate evaluation process, led by academic researchers Professor Simon Pek and Dr Jeffrey Kennedy, will be conducted in parallel to the Democracy Review, capturing in-depth understanding of the approach taken in this work. Results will be shared with the Board of Trustees, broader academic and practitioner community, and – of course – the students.

4.1 Starting survey: how members felt before the summit

All 25 summit members filled in the starting survey at the start of the summit. The results are detailed below.

What summit members were most looking forward to when taking part in the Democracy Summit

We asked members what they were most looking forward to about the upcoming summit.

This question received 24 members responses. The main theme was about making a **positive difference,** with 12 members commenting on this.

"The opportunity to make positive change in the way that LSE is run and the relationship between students and the LSESU"

"I'm looking forward to addressing some important issues and coming up with solutions for them"

Another theme was about **learning** (ten comments). This included learning about the deliberative process, learning more about LSE Students' Union, democracy, forming considered proposals and hearing the views of other students.

"Hearing from others, learning about student participation, understanding how deliberation works"

"Learning more about LSESU, statistics and experts so I can help solve issues"

Four members commented that they were looking forward to feeling a part of the process which included getting a **chance to be heard** and **contributing to change**.

Two members were looking forward to **meeting new people** and hearing their **different views and opinions.**

Summit members' concerns ahead of taking part

Members were asked if there were any aspects of the upcoming summit that concerned them. All members commented on this with only two having no concerns.

The main theme was the overall impact/feasibility of the summit, with **8 members commenting on this.**

"Not enough time to make real change"

"Whether LSE will actually act on any of the information I give within the sessions"

Five members said they were unsure of the Summit process, including how democracy works at LSE.

"I don't know anything about LSESU or how democracy currently works at LSE"

Two members commented that they had general worries, such as feeling a bit daunted with the prospect of making suggestions.

Summit members' hopes for what would result of the process

Members were asked what they hoped the upcoming summit would result in.

Most responses here were on a similar theme, focussing on **impact** and these making a **positive change** at LSE with 17 members commenting on this.

"We will come up with ideas that can be presented to the Students' Union, which can therefore promote change"

"I hope that the Students' Union will become more representative of the actual student body and been seen as a union that is deliberative and addressing the issues of students"

Seven members commented on **inclusion** and hoped that *all* students would be included in decisions made at LSE Students' Union.

"Better participation of all students in LSESU democracy"

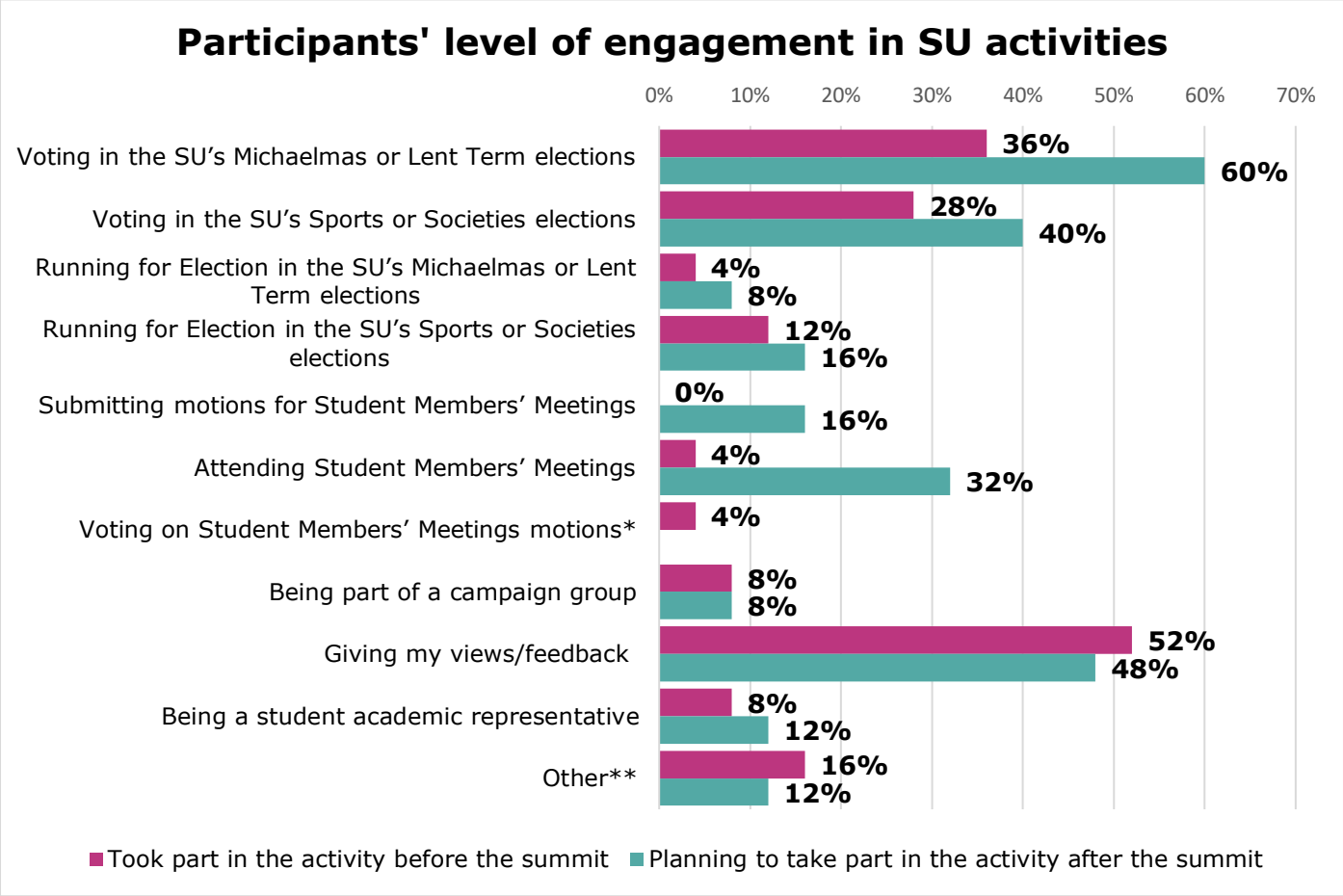
Three members were **unsure**, and one hoped to '**learn** and **understand**.'

4.2 Comparison data: what changed between the start and the end of the summit

This section gives an overview of the changes in views and attitudes from summit members between the starting survey and the ending survey.

Participants' level of engagement in SU activities

Participants were asked which activities they had previously taken part in before the summit and which activities they were planning in taking part in after attending the summit.



**Due to an error in the post-engagement survey, this question wasn't included.*

***Some other activities mentioned in the starting survey were LSESU petitions; subcommittees and committees; campaigning for the creation of a new society. In the ending survey, one member mentioned going to events and two others pointed out they would graduate before being able to take part in the activities.*

Evolution of participants' views and attitudes

Participants were asked to answer a series of questions before and after the summit. We compared the data in the results below which combine 'Strongly support' and 'Support' sentiments expressed in the survey. Results are shown as percentages of those who completed each question (in some places one or two respondents skipped statements).

Views on the Democracy Summit

80% thought the Democracy Summit would lead to positive change

96% thought the Democracy Summit was a good idea

100% were happy to take part in the Democracy Summit

96%

100%

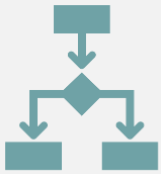
100%

Views on the Democracy Summit increased in the post survey results, apart from being happy to take part which stayed the same at 100%.

Views on LSE Students' Union

56% thought LSESU would act on what comes out of the Democracy Summit

36% felt LSESU listens to students



32% felt they had the ability to influence decisions about how LSESU is run

82%

72%

64%

Views on the Students' Union increased positively in the post survey results.

Participants' level of confidence

88% felt confident about putting their views forward

100%

Participants' confidence about putting their views forward increased after taking part in the summit.

4.3 Ending survey: how summit members felt at the end

After the final summit we asked members to fill in a final questionnaire. Out of 25, 22 completed it. Results are shown as percentages of those who completed each question (in some places, one or two respondents skipped statements). The results are shown below:

How participants felt during the summit

100% felt included

100% felt respected

91% felt inspired

96% felt they had plenty of opportunities to express their views

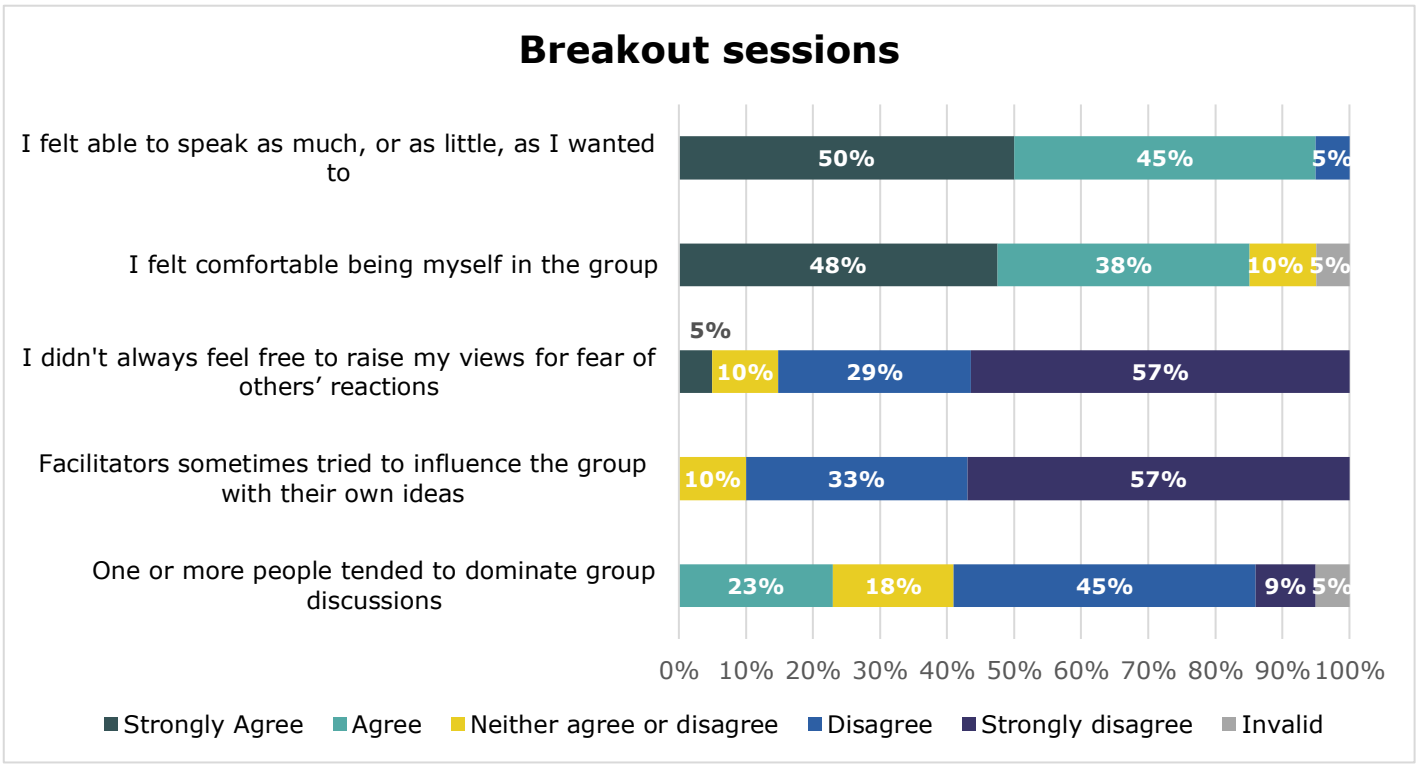
100% met people they would not normally have met

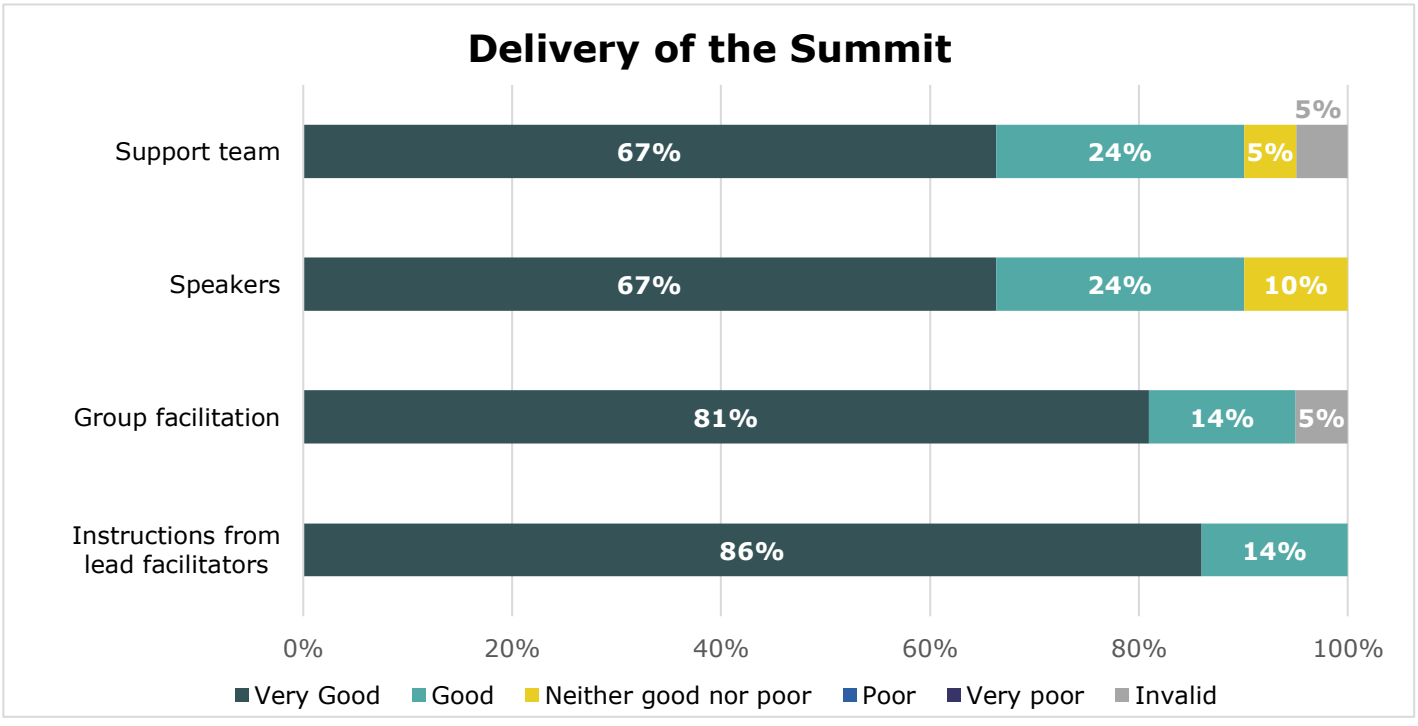
86% felt like some of their opinions changed during the summit

How participants found different parts of the process

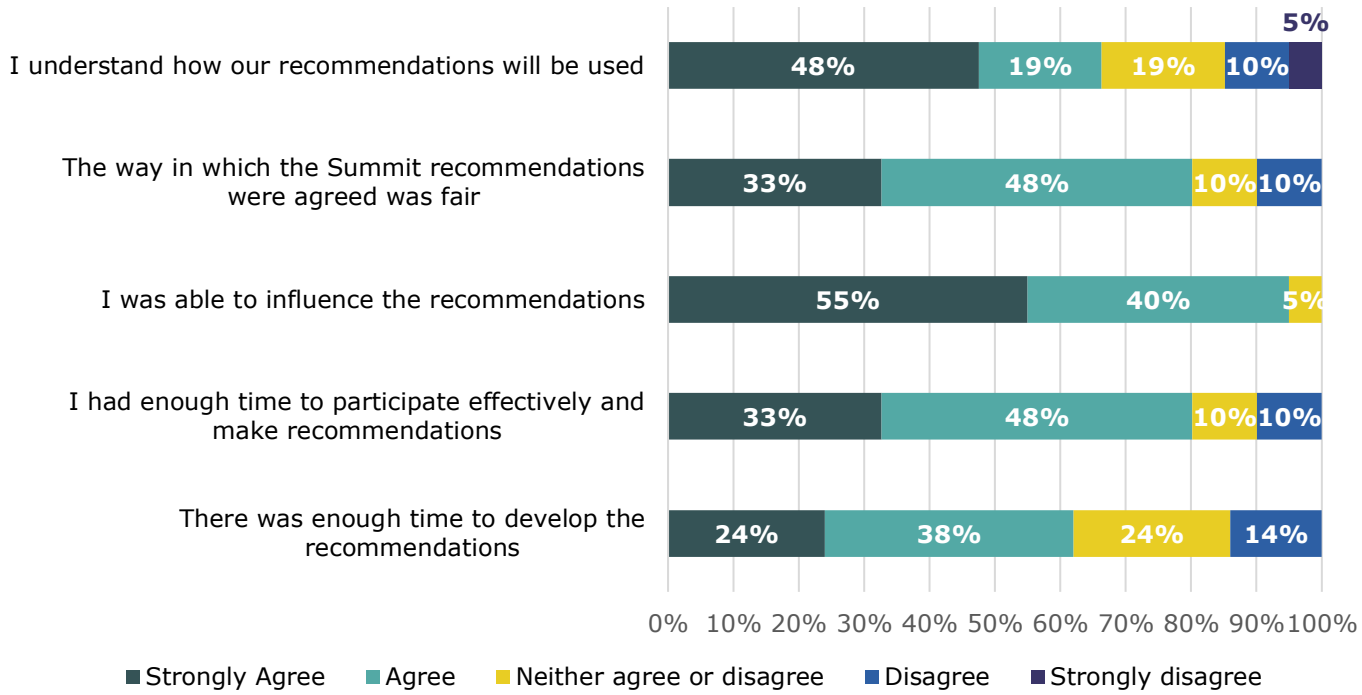
The charts below show how participants found the different parts of the process they went through. Results are shown as percentages of those who completed each question (in some places one or two respondents skipped statements).

As these were paper surveys, some participants have ticked two boxes, for example 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree'. In that case, the results have been counted as invalid to avoid skewing the percentages.





Writing the recommendations



Communications about the Summit

BEFORE

86% thought the communications received before the Summit were very good or good

DURING

95% thought the communications received on the Summit days were very good or good

IN BETWEEN

90% thought the communications received between the Summit days were very good or good

What summit members enjoyed most about taking part in the Democracy Summit

We asked members what they enjoyed most about taking part in the summit. 20 members commented on this.

Being part of the process was the biggest theme with 16 members commenting on this. This included members feeling that they had a **voice** and **felt engaged** in discussions with experts and peers.

"Being part of the decision-making process and actually having a platform to voice my opinions"

"Being part of something that will have real impact on people's lives for the better"

Another theme was **learning**, particularly learning more about LSESU, with four members commenting on this.

"Learning about LSESU"

"Increased awareness of SU processes and learning about different students experience"

Two members enjoyed **meeting new people** and one member noted that they felt the process was inclusive.

"It was a safe space (respectful, open-minded, inclusive). It felt my options/ideas were relevant and similar to other peoples' too. Everyone was approachable"

Summit members' concerns after taking part

We asked members if there were any aspects of the summit that concerned them. eight members said they had no concerns.

Of the ten members who did have concerns, the main theme was the **process of the summit**. This ranged from feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information given and not enough time to discuss in-depth issues resulting in a loss of ideas.

"It was a bit overwhelming at times to rush through, we had lots of discussions that had to be cut short/didn't meet resolution"

"At some point, the process seemed very 'table' heavy – possibly more interaction with the whole summit group would be good"

Three members commented that they were concerned about the **impact** of the summit and how this would be implemented at LSESU.

Two members felt that they needed further information on LSESU commenting that they still didn't know enough about the Students' Union.

Summit members' hopes as a result of the process

The final questionnaire asked members their hopes from taking part in the summit. Two main themes emerged: **Impact** and **Positive Change**.

The majority of comments (14 members) were about hopes for **positive change** at LSESU as a result of the summit.

"I hope that LSE takes into account our recommendations to bring positive change"

"I hope engagement and excitement returns to the SU. It's an incredible institution that I care for very much and I hope other can feel the same way"

Ten members commented that they hoped that the summit would be **impactful**.

"I hope we can see tangible changes in SU that we can identify as a result of this Democracy Summit

"The SU takes on majority of the recommendations, test it and hopefully implement it permanently"

Two members commented that they would like future involvement in the changes with one member commenting that they would like to see more Democracy Summits at LSE.

Inclusion

We asked if there *'were there any issues or barriers that prevented you from taking part or made you feel unsafe or unwelcome*?'. All members said **'no'** to this.

We also asked about what helped people feel included and welcome: *'Was there anything that we did that was particularly important for helping you take part of feel welcome?'*

Comments from 11 members showed that the most significant view on inclusion was that summit felt like a **safe space.**

"Made it a safe space"

"Making it a safe space for people to talk about everything"

There were another for comments about the process, specifically the introduction that helped members **feel welcomed**.

"Introductions with exciting questions"

One member commented that they appreciated the gift of thanks, and another noted that the facilitators made them feel really welcome.

Suggestions

At the end of the Closing Questionnaire, we asked: *'Do you have any final suggestions for how a Summit like this could be improved in the future?"*

There were nine comments related to different parts of how the process works, included having more **time** to focus on topics, having more time to refine recommendations and allowing members to select category of **priorities**.

"More time for discussion over recommendations"

"Maybe more day or refining recommendations instead of handwriting. Hard to know others' ideas as well as them when taking over"

There were two comments about time commitments suggesting that the process was too long and would prefer if it was over two days instead of three. One suggested having the sessions on a Saturday. One member commented that they would like a schedule of events given prior to the summit to explain better what it is about beforehand.

5. Conclusion

The LSE Students' Union Democracy Summit was the first of its kind in the UK. For the first time, the democratic future of a Students' Union was put into the hands of a randomly selected group of students to discuss, strengthen and reimagine it.

It has been a powerful demonstration that participatory democracy processes have a place at the heart of universities. Throughout the summit, the group of students – some of them unfamiliar with the role of their Students' Union before joining - have learnt about how they are currently represented, how democratic processes work and how to transform existing democratic structures.

The journey through each day of the summit showed a shift from everyday student life considerations to more ambitious and structural recommendations, whilst remaining deeply seated in summit members' lived experience of studying at LSE.

The summit was also a great opportunity for students to feel more connected to LSE Students' Union, to experience a unique democratic experience, to raise their voice and to get more involved in their university's democratic life.

As such, the Democracy Summit process and its recommendations should be carefully considered by practitioners, and anyone interested in the topic of Students' Unions, students' representation and participatory democracy in academic contexts.

5.1 Next steps

Having presented their recommendations on day 3 of the Summit, the next steps from here are for LSESU are to review all the data collected from the democracy review, the summit, as well other feedback from the student body, LSE and working groups.

Highlights will feature on the Students' Union Democracy Review webpages.

The plan is to come up with new proposals as to how democracy works for everyone at LSESU. These will be run past the Trustee Board and the finalised proposals will, after consultation with students, ultimately go to a vote at a Student Members' Meeting for approval.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1 – Learning from Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus groups and interviews were held with students who may not traditionally have a voice, to make sure their views were part of evidence reviewed by summit members.

Below is a summary of the main insights from these conversations. Full results can be sought from the Students' Union.

Cross cutting themes that emerged were poor communication from LSESU on a variety of issues and a greater need for knowledge and awareness of what the Students' Union does.

Summary of main insights

Who was involved?

31 Students participants in 7 focus groups

- 7 international students
- 5 BME Students
- 2 Masters Students
- 3 Commuting Students
- 11 PHD Students
- 2 LGBTQ+ Students
- 1 Disabled Student

What was explored?

- Students' experience of the Students' Union
- Inclusion
- Making change happen

Barriers faced by students:

International Students	BME students
• Lack of knowledge and understanding of what the Students' Union does and how its democracy works	• Bureaucracy, communication issues and how to get support from the SU as a student

- Societies and sports clubs are perceived as being for undergraduate and British students and heavily connected to drinking culture

- Representing BME students in their diversity and complexity
- Encouraging more connections between societies that represent different cultural groups

Masters Students

- The SU is for undergraduates and doesn't represent postgraduate students well
- Masters students struggle to engage with the SU as they are only at LSE for a year

Commuting Students

- LSE SU feel less politically biased than other SU's
- Information is mainly accessible in SU building; it needs to reach wider.

PHD Students

- PHD have specific issues like isolation and lack of connection with LSE and the Campus
- SU is associated with undergraduate students socialising

LGBTQ+ Students

- Lack of advocacy and individual support
- Need to represent more identities, not just one LGBTQI+ officer
- Not enough awareness about opportunities and to get involved, policies and work of current officers.

Disabled Students

- Need for disabled students to be part of a community
- Lack of information and communication
- Need for targeted engagement especially on social media

6.2 Appendix 2 – Learning from Wider Engagement Survey

An online survey based on the same topics as the focus groups and interviews was distributed to LSE Students. Below is a summary of the main insights. Students were asked to identify ways in which they engaged with the SU changes they would make to improve their democratic experience of the SU, barriers to engagement and ways in which the SU could support change.

Cross cutting themes repeated throughout the survey showed that clearer communication and a greater range of engagement activities and encouragement to take part from the SU, would enhance students' overall experience of engaging with the SU.

Summary of main insights

Who was involved?

640 Students participated in the survey

- 7 Qualitative questions
- 3 Quantitative questions
- 2000+ open-ended free text

What was explored?

- Students' experience of the Students' Union
- Inclusion
- Making change happen

Students' experience of getting involved in the Students' Union

- 43% voted in SU's Michaelmas or Lent Term Elections
- 8% Voted on motions for Student Members' Meetings
- 37% Gave their views/feedback (e.g., completing SU surveys)

Inclusion (barriers to engaging in the SU's democratic activities)

- Time
- Finances
- Improve communication
- Encourage engagement

Making change happen (how should LSESU support students to create change)
• Support engagement by organising more events • Offering financial support • More information and communication • Creating space to contribute and share ideas

6.3 Appendix 3 – Conversation Guidelines

- No question is a bad question. Stick to the question structure.
- Agree to disagree, address the point not the person.
- Be open to change, listen to ideas before rejecting anything. Be willing to change your opinion.
- Be respectful of people's different experiences, don’t make assumptions about others and their experiences
- Step forward, step back. Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. Take space, make space.
- Don’t talk over people when they are talking.
- Acknowledge everyone’s ideas and be attentive.
- Listen with an open mind and no judgement.
- Speak in ‘I’ statements and explain your reasoning.

6.4 Appendix 4 – Reimagine, Strengthen and For Everyone - Long list of ideas

This table gives full details of ideas against each of the three themes explored during the summit Reimagine, Strengthen and For Everyone.

Long List of ideas	
Reimagine	
• Ballot boxes (community connection) • Integrate SU more into students' daily lives • Thinking about if the SU structure moves? • Discovery platform • Target those who don't usually participate in the SU with long term initiatives • Financing and formalising partnerships, e.g., uber discounts, clubs, etc. • Funding • Links with other SUs • Remove red tape • Communication to students • Thinking how the SU stands out from LSE • Reimagine how to keep students engaged • Personal interaction about SU events through talks at the library/other SU building • Q & A sessions with SU to see what SU is doing and holding them accountable	• Have a points system with rewards for SU engagement • Self-help groups focused on life as a student and creating mobilised groups • Games for more engagement • SU as a direct point of contact for support • Events to know the candidates • Changing the one-year structure • 2-week welcome period • Have a university wide meeting/conference at the beginning of the year to explain the SU structure • Centralised communication channel that everyone knows about • New student council • Issue-specific deliberative councils could make involvement more attractive for concerned students • More leadership opportunities throughout the year • University-wide events? • Sufficient data collection from anonymised applications and reach out to minority employee networks to establish outcome

Strengthen

- Better communication (include posters outside buildings)
- LSE student rep becomes SU student rep
- More inter-society events
- International/regional society executives turn into subcommittees
- Number of representatives
- More involvement with each department and their specific issues
- Offering free drinks/food for all democracy-related events (good starting point but not going further would be bad)
- More representation in the SU for post-grad
  - Have easier and more roles
  - Frequent communication with their lecturers
  - Better financial incentives for roles
- Mandatory participation in society democracy?
- More important on emails (the current emails are all predictive and there is little incentive to open)
- Better represent post-grad students
- Access and inclusion
- More discourse/interaction between SU officers and students
- Increase engagement
- Societies working with the SU to increase representation of student staff and elected reps
- More motions and much more UGM participation
- More activities focusing on community like summits and festivals
- More academic support such as self-help groups
- For student members' meetings, making it engaging will help through food, incentives, and interesting presentation
- Information from the start
- Paying the part-time officers would make these positions more attractive and inclusive
- Incentives for students
- Events that are engaging with food or other welcoming things
- Collective meetings
- Integrate SU with classes (which everyone attends) by having reps ready to talk after classes
- Pay all participants
- Voting in person, outside
- More discussion space for ideas that are heard
- Changing election dates
- Compulsory SU events in the beginning of every year and one for freshers for explaining the SU
- Student SU reps in each department with a focus on quantitative departments to share about SU activities
- Strengthen communication with prospective students, what they should know coming in

- Measured through satisfaction in surveys
- Have designated officers for certain demographics, e.g., communing/private accommodation students
- Talk to more people directly

- Conducting quarterly sessions with selected students to provide an avenue for constant feedback on how things can be done better
- Better communications campaign to familiarize incoming students with what the SU is all about

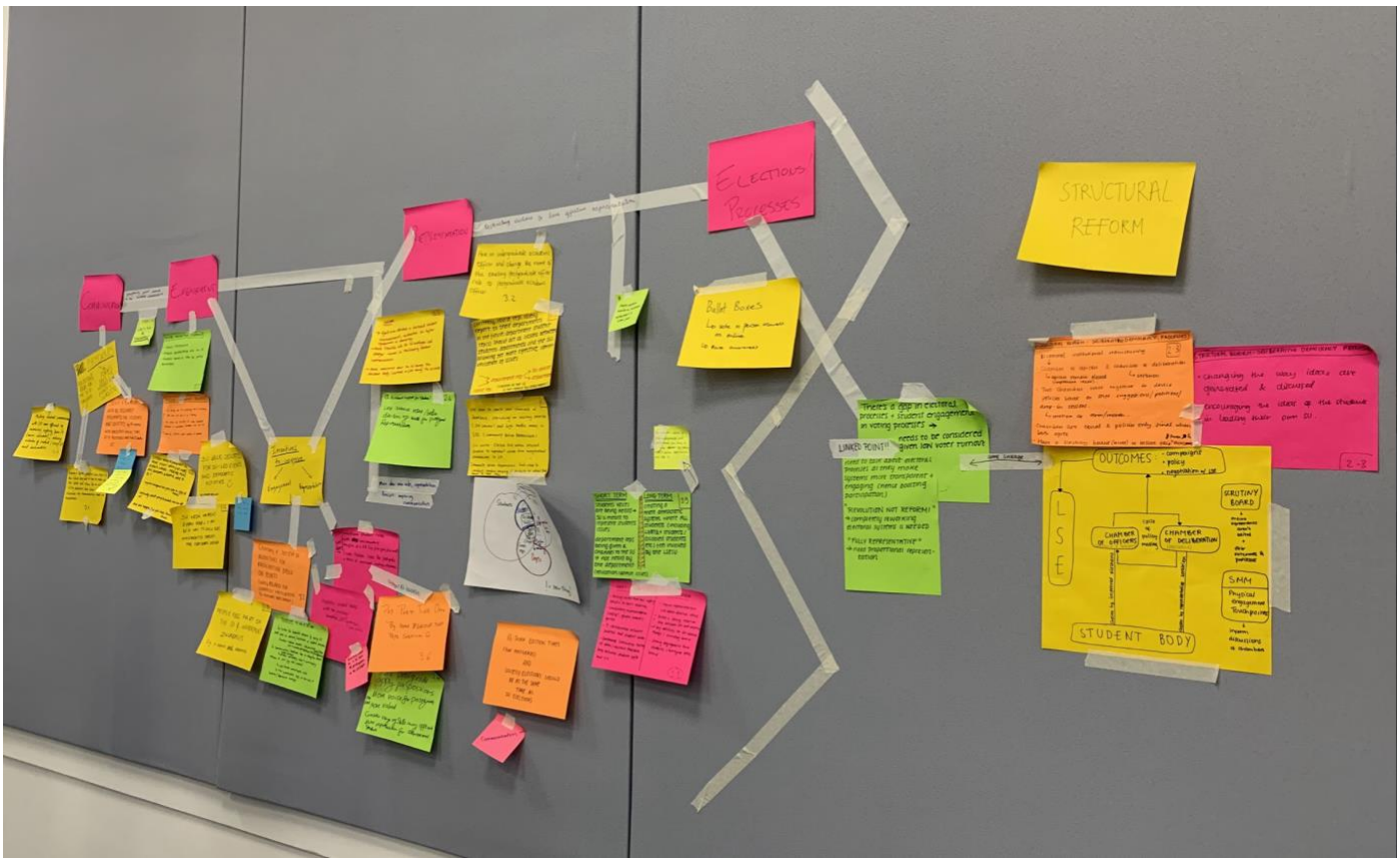
For Everyone

- Events that feel inclusive of different people
- Activities that are fun and people feel involved
- LSESU attending departmental activities to showcase the activities of the union and opportunities available to students
- Direct events during freshers and include postgrads
- Exploring new ways of reaching ethnic minorities through phone calls and text messages
- More time for postgrads
- Introduction of undergrad officer
- Link societies and AC reps to SU
- More events in the daytime for commuting students
- Personalised support and mentors?
- Information meetings for minorities

- Pay part time officers
- More involvement from quantitative departments by campaigning outside their respective buildings
- SU needs to be more active in taking roles during yearly events like Black history month and pride week
- Direct and welcoming communication with international students
- Organising events to target ethnic minorities during open week
- More club and society promotions (not just in September)
- Events for non-members?
- Better communication, e.g., Moodle pop-ups
- Financing support
- Sports scholarships
- Lower society membership fees

6.5 Appendix 5 – Democracy Horizon Grid

6.6 Appendix 6 – Democracy Systems Map



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