

Hustings Questions- VPI

Answers by Umme-Kulsum Pisavadi

To all candidates:

1. You've all been on the HUS before, what do you think was your biggest accomplishment?

Most of the work that we did as welfare officers was confidential, and so I cannot disclose any details, but the three of us advocated to college on behalf of several students, and had many conversations with members of senior staff about how pastoral care in college could be improved, and about current problems with the college's welfare systems and policies. We worked really hard to voice concerns and problems that other students had encountered with existing measures in the past, and this year there have been some changes made that suggest we were listened to. On a lighter note though, one thing that I am particularly proud of is Cookie Fairy – it was a lot of logistics to juggle, and we encountered loads of unexpected problems on the day as well, but I think we still pulled it off pretty well in the end.

2. How do you think you will be able to support the rest of the HUS team effectively?

As I already know how the HUS works, and have a general understanding of all the other roles, this puts me in a good position to be able to support the other team members from the get-go. I think some of the most important things are that we establish clear boundaries from the start of the year concerning what exactly is (and is not) expected from everyone, and that we make sure all the team members know that the HUS should never be their main priority. I'd check in frequently with members of the exec team to make sure that none of them feel too overwhelmed or have any problems. I think it will also be crucial to emphasise how important it is that the entire HUS works as a team and that we are all there to support each other.

VPI Specific:

1. What do you think is the most important quality for a VPI to have, and how do you embody that quality?

I can't pick one single most important quality, but I think the top three are: organisation, knowing how to communicate with and handle college, and a willingness to listen to the student body. The role of welfare officers involves many staff meetings, and it is necessary that you are a good listener to be welfare officer, so I have already demonstrated both of these. Welfare also required a lot of organisation in all aspects of the role, and my internship role in Paris was literally "in charge of planning", so I think I can safely say that I'm pretty organised. When I was welfare officer, I did always feel slightly out of place in meetings with staff, but my two year abroad jobs have also given me a lot more confidence when it comes to communicating with "adults" and asserting myself when in meetings, which is something that will definitely prove useful for whenever I want to represent the opinions of the student body at Homerton.

2. How would you work to improve welfare at Homerton?

I would continue the discussions that we started in my second year and do my best to make sure college follows through on any promises they make. I'd try and get as much student input and feedback as possible, whether through meetings, surveys, or anything else, so that I can make sure college is updating its procedures and policies in line with what the students actually want and need. This is one area where the support team and the exec team would really have to work together, to ensure that welfare provisions are as well rounded as they can be – whether its working with the treasurer to clarify the processes for accessing funding for counselling, CBT, or other health related things; helping the president and welfare officers tackle the harassment reporting procedures; communicating regularly with the BME and Disabilities officers to find out what gaps there are in welfare for BME students and students with disabilities. I've said it before, but essentially I would just be there to listen to any concerns, raise them to staff members, and come up with solutions as much as possible.