

**City University London**

**Sikh Society**

**CULSU**



**The City University London Sikh Society promotes activities that appreciate the culture, history and ideology of the Sikh way of life.**

**Annual Report  
2011-2012**

## OUR VISION

To create a strong and fun society where members get involved and feel well connected with other members of the Sikh community within City University London, and use this environment as a platform to develop themselves as Sikhs and learn more about the Sikh faith and way of life.

## OUR OBJECTS

Unify the members of the Sikh faith studying at City and the Sikh Community generally.

Organise talks and workshops on aspects of concern and interest to our members and provide opportunities for those interested to reflect on Sikh ideologies through meditation, the recitation of prayers, and the singing of hymns.

Positively involve our members at our local Gurdwaras through participation in 'seva' (selfless service) and encourage involvement from students in activities, events and collaborations with the wider Sikh community and other organisations.

Raise awareness of Sikh practices, culture and customs through discussions and celebration of dates and festivals on the Sikh Calendar.

Promote a positive image of the Sikh way of life to our members and other like minded individuals at City and beyond, through programmes, charity events and day to day actions.

**Mascot:** Sher Singh



## **INTRODUCTION**

*Report from City University London Sikh society President 2011-2012*

Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh

The Sikh society at City University London has had a wonderful year this year, especially compared with previous years where it was not very active. There was a very fresh feel to the society and we saw an increase in the number of official members, with events attended by more members than ever before. We tried our best to reach out to as many students as possible, and tried to balance the social and spiritual events. The society acted as a community and it felt like a large family where everyone felt comfortable and welcomed. We were extremely excited to see how making friends within the society inspired quite a few individuals to embrace the Sikh way of life.

The society was extremely active and took part in over 30 events throughout the year, not including the weekly Sikh studies classes, and Tanti Saaj lessons! This year was the first year Sikh studies classes were run at City. The largest event of the first term was the Cha, Samosa, Brownie, Cupcake and Soda Party, which saw a massive turnout of approximately 150 guests. The turnout throughout the first term was very large. However, this decreased in the second term, as deadlines and examinations approached. The largest event of the second term was Equality Street, which was the Sikh society's breakthrough event in front of the University. The Students' Union recognised the success of the event by awarding it 'Event of the Year' and it has led to many opportunities for ensuring equality within the university.

One of the major things we tried to ensure was the quality and experience of events. This required a lot of planning and organisation, but we have managed to compile many resources to help future years. We tried collecting feedback from our members as frequently as we could, or after large events, so that we could learn how to improve and what to try again. After evaluating events, we realised that part of the formula for creating successful events was to make them fun and unique. Students can become members of many clubs and societies, and amidst all of them, your aim is to make your society stand out, and for those students to benefit from attending your events. We put in a lot of effort to make all the Sikh society events unique, be it in the naming, promotion or concepts, and collectively created many diverse and quirky events/activities, ranging from balloon launches to bike rides on the Boris Barclays bikes to raise money for charity. We frequently had 'Meet Up Thingys', which incorporated Kirtan, games, films (like Amu), discussions and food.

We also had a lion mascot called Sher Singh who was given to a different member every week as an incentive to attend events. Another method used to



include members in the society was by encouraging them to upload pictures of their week with Sher Singh into the Facebook group.

This year, the Sikh society was a part of Nishaan - the Sikh Society Network, and we found that being involved was extremely beneficial. There was a much larger turnout to events and City students were able to attend events that would not normally be accessible to them, like Kirtan Darbaars at other universities. Events were better publicised and our members felt more welcome at other universities. It also provided a better opportunity for students to build inter-University relations and network with other students. There was also greater support when organising large events. City students had excellent attendance to Nishaan events, and we were often the best represented university. A large number of Paintballing and Collaborations tickets were sold to City Sikh society members, and quite a few students actually took part in showcasing their talent at Collaborations.

A major achievement for the society this year was resolving an issue we had the SU and the University regarding the lack of a multi-faith prayer space. We sought assistance from the Student Advisory Board for Nishaan, who helped us deal with the problem and we are extremely grateful for the advice and support we received. We hope that future years have access to a prayer space and have no problems in utilising it when they wish to. Throughout the year, we only had two Simran and Kirtan sessions. The society has purchased a vaja so future years can utilise it.

The Sikh Society also went on to achieve the title of 'Best Society of the Year', and this is the biggest indicator of how successful this year was. ☺



I learnt throughout my experience that delegation is extremely important. Being a perfectionist, I began the year by trying to do everything myself, and it wore me out. The committee is made up of individuals who want to help each other and help in the society, and actually understanding this is vital. Once I started sharing the responsibility, the committee helped me realise and appreciate the Sikh way of sharing and working together.

The committee and society members were all incredibly enthusiastic and some very talented individuals have emerged throughout the year. I hope that the society provided everyone with a positive environment to develop as Sikhs. I have certainly enjoyed my experience at University because of my involvement in the society, and I would strongly urge others to take part!

Finally, I would like to wish future years the very best of luck! Face all challenges with a smile and think outside of the box. Have fun, and everyone else will too! 😊

Preety Kaur

## MEMBERSHIP & OFFICERS

### **SELECTION PROCESS**

The current committee was selected after discussions amongst the previous year's committee members. They opted to appoint roles based on merit and on experience. However, throughout the year, the committee evolved as more keen members got involved and wanted to help with their skills.

### **SOCIETY OFFICERS**

President: Preety Kaur

Vice President: Pavnish Kaur and Manpreet Kaur

Treasurer: Sunny Singh Nagi

Media Coordinators: Ajmeet Singh and Rajinder Kaur

Sports Coordinator: Gurjeet Singh Seehra

Social Secretary: Gagandeep Singh

### **SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP**

Number of paid members: 24 members paid officially through the SU website

Cost of membership: £3

General attendance figures: Varied by event and time of the year, with a weekly average of 10, with some events attended by far more members, i.e. Cha, Samosa, Brownie, Cupcake and Soda Party was attended by approximately 150 students

Data collected through membership: names and email addresses, however, at the Freshers' Fayre, we compiled a mailing list, and collected data such as names, courses, year of study, email addresses and mobile numbers

## STUDENT SERVICES

# ACADEMIC STUDIES

This year was the first year the Sikh Studies course was offered at City University London by Naujawani.com. Under the Nishaan system, City, LSE and UCL were grouped together as the Central Division so that one class could be held for all the students at these universities. For the first two weeks, City attended the classes at LSE, but since a lot more students from City were interested, we moved them to our campus for lesson 3. Initially, 6 students from City attended the classes, but after switching locations, we saw many more students attending, with approximately 15-20 City students attending in the first term, and 5-10 in the second term.

# WORKSHOPS

## ***November 1984 - Sikh Pogroms in India***

Through Nishaan, we had Harinder Singh from the Sikh Research Institute (Texas) deliver a talk at Kings College London on the events of 1984. This was a great opportunity for students to learn, understand and evaluate what happened across India. The turnout for the event was excellent. The lecture theatre was packed (100 + attendees), of which approximately 15 students were from City University London.

## ***Exploring your potential workshop***

This was originally planned to take place at City, but in the end, it took place at LSE. However, the workshop was still best attended by City students with 8 students. An incentive to attend was the charity bike ride which ended at LSE, and this encouraged some of the students to stay for the workshop.



# ASSISTANCE

We received a generous donation from some generous Sikh Soc alumni for our Cha, Samosa, Brownie, Cupcake and Soda Party, which allowed us to purchase our samosey without incurring any losses. Throughout the year, the committee was offered support from the Advisory Board for Nishaan, and we received assistance when we were trying to sort out the Prayer Room situation with our SU. We tried our best to offer support to our members, and we regularly checked up on the wellbeing of the Freshers. However, a mentoring system is a future development that we would really encourage the next committee to develop, where older and younger students sharing a particular degree course would be paired together, and academic assistance or study tips could be offered.

## ACTIVITIES

### **SPORT**

This year, although we originally planned to engage in sporting activities, this did not materialise, and there were only 2 events involving physical activity. One of these was a football tournament organised at KCL, which had good attendance by City, and we managed to compile and send 2 teams to participate. The other physical activity was the Charity Bike Ride organised by City in the second term and had an attendance of approximately 10 students.

### **ARTS**

This year, we encouraged students to get involved in artistic endeavours of various types, including music, poetry and art. In the first time, a handful of students attended the weekly Tanti Saaj classes held at UCL. We discovered that there are many talented musicians at City including Dilruba players, singers, Tabla players etc. The society group on Facebook reached a comfort level where individuals shared their musical compositions with everyone, which inspired many people in the group.

The Nishaan T Shirt competition saw the highest number of entries from City students (half of the entries were from City University alone!) The competition was then won by Rajinder Kaur from City, and it was really good to then include Rajinder on the team to help with design work and branding. Another student, Ajmeet Singh, became very involved as well through the medium of art, and willingly created posters, logos etc for the society and took lots of photographs as well. The Nishaan poetry competition had a few entries from City as well.

### **WELL-BEING**

As mentioned above in the sports section, an event which contributed to the good physical health of the members was the Charity Bike Ride, which was organised to raise money for charity, and to encourage students to opt for healthier and more environmentally friendly modes of travel like cycling. This was done using Boris Bikes located on campus. Whilst this activity was good for the health and wellbeing of our members, I feel that it was done too late in the year when less members attend events due to exams and deadlines. If it took place earlier in the year, more students could have been encouraged to cycle.

We also had a few talks and discussions, on concepts like love and Guru. The aim of these was to reach out to students who wanted to discuss more spiritual ideas, and for them to learn and develop themselves. We tried incorporating these with socials, however, some students did not appreciate the level of spirituality at these, and we struggled to strike a balance.

City students actively took part in the Nishaan Kirtan events at other universities, and often, discussions took place between members to interpret the shabads.



## FRESHERS WEEK

### **The Welcome Fayre**

Date: Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011

The Welcome Fayre was our first opportunity to attract the attention of the Freshers, as well as older students, since Sikh Society at City had been very quiet over the past few years. Many students were pleased to see that we had a stall, since Sikh Soc didn't have a stall last year.

To attract Freshers, we promoted on all the Fresher groups that Sikh Society would be at the Fayre and that everyone should look out for orange and blue balloons. Our society was allocated limited space at the back of the venue, in the corner of the stage, but we made the most of the space we had and made our stall stand out! We put up lots of helium balloons on the wall, and made sure our bright blue hoodies were visible at all times.



We really appreciated all the goodies that Naujawani.com provided us with, including the Sikh Society banner, leaflets and flyers etc. The Lassi and Prauthe recipe cards were the most popular goodies and everyone really liked the creativity. We also gave out lots of lollypops, chocolates (and even some matthis and shakarparey) so that people would visit our stall. Something we would definitely consider for next year would be carrier bags for everyone to put their goodies inside.



*Enticing the freshers with lollypops & neatly arranged leaflets*

The most important document we handed out was our Welcome leaflet, which had an introductory welcome message, and details on membership and contact information. At quieter periods during the Fayre, we sent committee members to walk around the venue (towards the front), look for the kara and hand out these leaflets, which proved to be good initiative, since many people came back to find the stall once they knew we were there!



*Signing up to the mailing list*

At the stall, we had two clipboards with sign-up sheets, where we took down names, course + year of study, email addresses and mobile numbers. A laptop or an iPhone with spreadsheets / sign up forms are definitely feasible ideas, since we struggled reading some of the email addresses on the sign-up sheets.

A question that nearly all stall visitors asked was 'so what kind

of stuff will Sikh Soc be doing this year?' In order to answer this question, preparation was very important. We made sure that all committee members were briefed on what the society was offering, and we promoted the forthcoming events with lots of enthusiasm.

# CELEBRATIONS

## The Cha, Samosa, Brownie, Cupcake and Soda Party

Date: Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2011

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0MEwZmgeJ8&context=C4e246feADvjVQa1PpcFPJBd16BvToIFRqTbJe7H2BABzvOSZTaZU=>



This was our first social event of the year. We were sure to make it as different and as creative as possible, hence the hilariously long name. The turnout was incredible. From the number of plates used, we've estimated approximately 150 people attended. ☺ The room was perfect for the event; we booked it months in advance, so we managed to secure a really good conference suite to hold the party in. The only problem with the room was that it was very hot, and the air conditioning wasn't switched on, so next time, ensure everything is working a few hours in advance. We decorated the room with lots of balloons and banners and drawings. We had chairs scattered around half of the suite facing the projector, and the rest of it was open for a standing reception feel.



*Lots of Samosy, Brownies, Cupcakes, Cha & Soda!*

For the first hour of the party, we didn't have samosy because they were still being transported. The positive that came out of this was that people stayed longer because they were waiting for the samosy, so there was a good build up, but next time, they should fashionably late of up to half an hour max, rather than an hour. In the meantime, everyone was enjoying

the eggless brownies and cupcakes and sweets and drinks. We realised that unless there is Indian masala tea, not many people drink tea, and the soda was in demand. Soda is the way forward! We ordered 500 samosey, which turned out to be too many and we had to distribute the leftover samosey amongst ourselves and our members, and we also gave some to the homeless. Next year, an order of between 300 and 400 samosey would be better.



For entertainment, we played Jus Reign videos in the background, so some people watched these and had something to laugh about with others. This also built up the background ambience well. Some committee members thought we would need music in the background, but the atmosphere was so good that we didn't need any. Everyone was socialising and walking around to mingle with others, and we used this opportunity to get to know our Freshers. Before the event, we'd be worried that breaking the ice would be awkward and feared that separate groups would form, but nothing of the sort happened and there was a really positive feel and atmosphere. We also showed the first Nishaan video (Mount Snowdon Challenge). Initially we thought a lot of people were uninterested, but after we showed the video, lots of people were talking about the video and Nishaan generally.



*Guess the number of lollies in the box*

Throughout the party, we also had Sikh Soc reps walking around with a giant mushroom bank and a giant box, fundraising for Sikh Soc by having everyone guess how many lollies were in the box. We collected quite a lot through this since everyone donated generously, and we announced the winner of the box of lollies at our first Sikh Soc meet up thingy.



The Samosa competition was a lot of fun! The format of the competition was good, with all the participants facing everyone on the chairs in a straight line, all trying to consume 4 samosey the fastest (adapted from the original game of eating the most in 2 minutes). Having a fun and engaging Samosa Host worked well, and everyone liked the prize of a free hoodie. Next year,

we definitely need to get more girls involved in the competition!

Some organisational tips for next year would be to find someone with a car, who can drive to the university with samosey, leaflets, drinks etc, so that running around with heavy stuff on the tube is limited. This would also alleviate the stress of making sure everything arrives on time and that there are enough Soc reps to carry all the things. Another very important piece of advice would be to make sure everyone does what they have been delegated to do, i.e. serve food, take care of hoodie orders etc, and make sure everyone understands to take initiative to help where it is required. A few Freshers and external guests did a lot of the work that the committee should have been doing, so next year, be alert and conscious! ☺



All in all, a very successful first event, and very different to the typical, average Cha and Samosa Party!

## The Bandhi Chhor (Diwali) Balloon Launch



The original date set for this event was on Wednesday 26th October, which was the actual Bandhi Chhor date, but this was postponed because of heavy rain. Thursday turned out to be a better day and the sun was on our side!

We decided to celebrate Bandhi Chhor in a creative way, and from the turn out of the event, and messages we received during the promotion and after the event, our members really liked the idea and the fact that we thought outside of the box! The event was very simple – we signed helium balloons with our Bandhi Chhor wishes, and released them together. We did this in the park outside the university, and albeit a small number of balloons getting caught in the trees, the rest flew nice and high. We were careful to ensure we were environmentally friendly, by using biodegradable, latex balloons, and not using any ribbon which could harm wildlife and aviation. The only negative about the event was the late arrival of the balloons, but everyone stayed around, and we enjoyed a tasty, eggless 'Happy belated Bandhi Chhor' Cake too! Overall, it was a good event with lots of happy members and good vibes!



# EXCURSIONS

## Golden Temple 1588 Exhibition

Brunei Gallery, SOAS

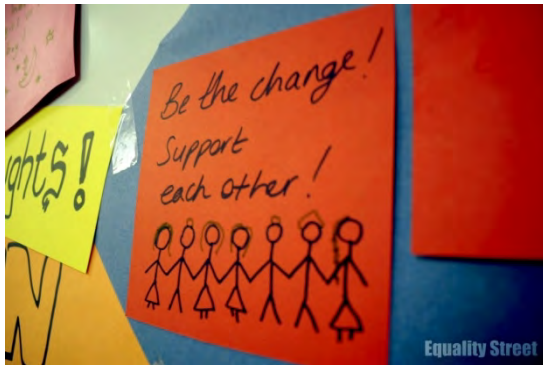
We went on the day after our Welcome Fayre, and promoted the event at the Fayre with large posters, GT leaflets marked with trip details. The Freshers seemed impressed with the efficiency of organising events. The turnout was good - there were 7 of us initially, but other members joined us later, so there were a total of 16 members present at the exhibition.

## CAMPAIGNS & EVENTS

# MAJOR EVENT

## Equality Street

Wednesday 22nd February 2012



Sikhism advocates that man and woman are equal and there should be no discrimination, however, culturally and socially, it is not put into practice. Equality Street was a very unique event held at City University London by the Sikh Society this year, with its main aim being to raise awareness about gender discrimination issues in society, particularly in the South East Asian community. The event had a unique format, in that it was an audience lead

interactive discussion with fully trained facilitators as opposed to a lecture or talk, which aren't as effective. Students had a chance to share views and express opinions and ways to reform society on four main aspects: individually, within social circles, family circles and then on a wider community scale.

The event was open to everyone, including students from all societies and faiths and backgrounds, and we invited students from other universities too. The turnout was very good, as we had 50+ attendees. Facebook, and word of mouth were our main ways of promoting the event, which worked very effectively. There was a promotional video we created as part of our advertising campaign, which we and Sikh societies from other universities literally spammed everywhere:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giGG-0q-cIc&feature=relmfu>

The event began with icebreaker, followed by though provoking videos covering themes affecting both genders in Sikh and Asian families. The first task was for everyone to highlight which themes they thought the videos covered, with a breakdown in later

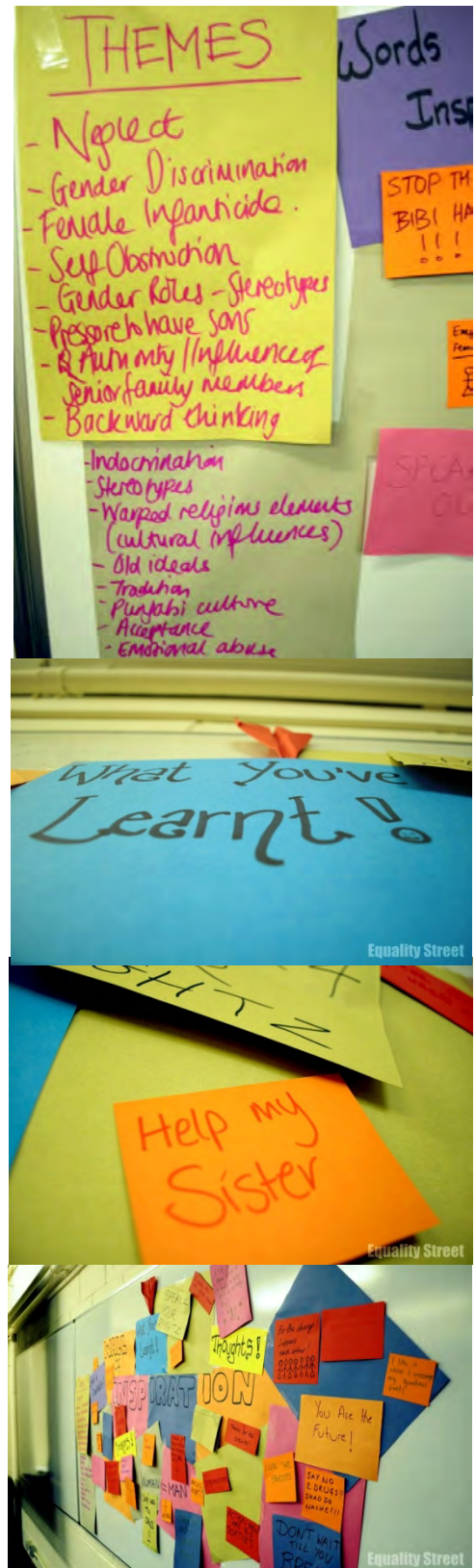
workshops. Other workshops included a questionnaire (which took a very long time to develop) which made particularly the male gender begin to question their own behaviour and realise how unjust the treatment of women can be. It was also an eye opener for the females since many admitted that they did not realise that they contributed to the problem themselves because they didn't question injustices and simply acknowledged them as acceptable. Other workshops included detailed discussions on problems, and then solutions were sought.

The concluding session was the most effective and important, since it gave an opportunity for both genders to discuss and feedback how they felt about equality and discrimination, and it gave them a chance to think of solutions, and in particular, how they could help each other in achieving equality. We created a wall of inspiration, which was very valuable, since everyone stuck up or wrote down how they felt, and it was covered in inspirational quotes/solutions.

In the evaluation forms we handed out at the end, 100% of the attendees said that they enjoyed the event and it exceeded their expectations. They also said they would like more thought provoking events that think outside of the box, and they would recommend this event to the university to run again. We provided everyone with information on different organisations and campaigns supporting the cause. The event was well documented since we had many wonderful photographers and filmmakers attending; here is a video we created after the event with highlights, which also featured on the City University page.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSLYtRT\\_IIg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSLYtRT_IIg)

The event was recognised by the Students' Union as the 'Event of the Year' and has since provided many opportunities to Sikh society members to have their voice heard by the University. We would definitely recommend the event to be repeated next year, but with a different issue being addressed. We have accumulated many resources which should be useful to reuse and recycle in future years, and hopefully, they should provide a framework on how to organise such events.





# ACTIVISM

The Sikh society took part in RAG week (Raising and Giving) by fundraising for the Hope and Compassion charity. A charity bike ride was organised and a sum of £150 was collected and donated to the charity.

The society also took part in Seva Day in October, which included a homeless food run, where sandwiches were prepared and given to the homeless in hotspots around Central London. We also collected warm jackets and blankets to give to the homeless. Cards were made here for unwell children, and all of these were sent to the Hope and Compassion charity.

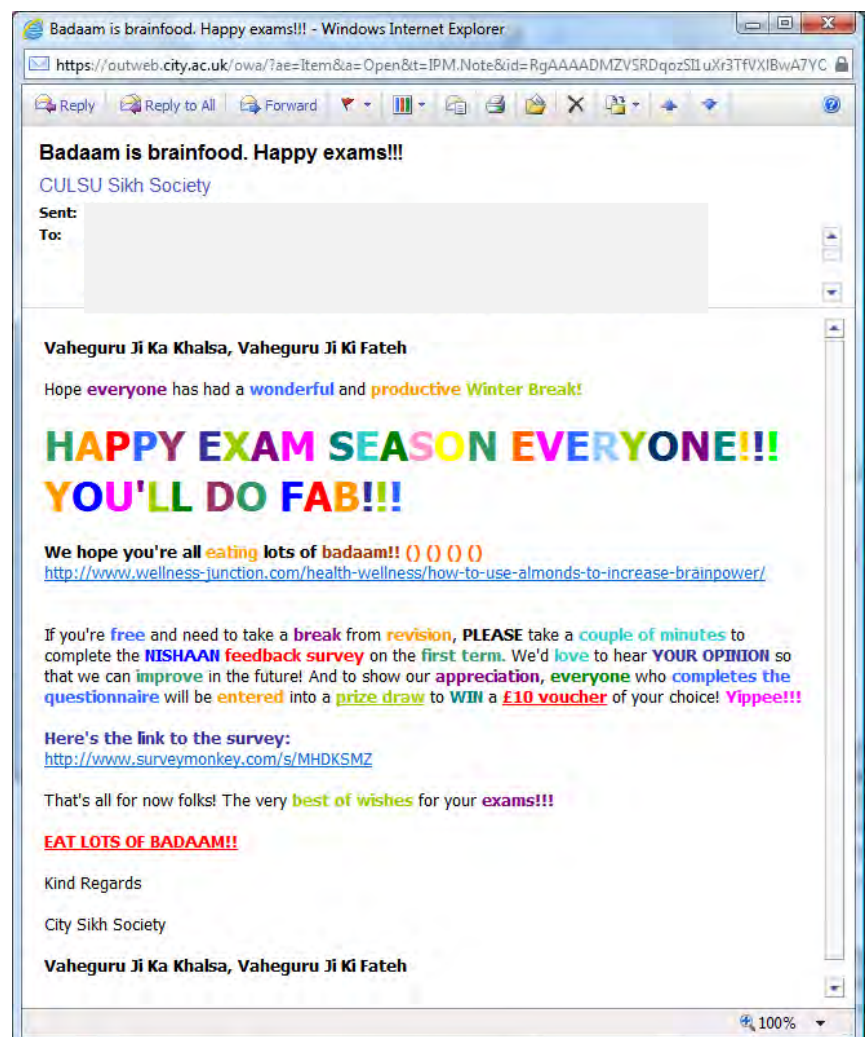


## COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

# MODES

We tried out lots of different modes to communicate with the students throughout the year. At the Welcome Fayre, we took down the email addresses and mobile numbers of all the Freshers, and compiled a spreadsheet with last year's members too. This year, we were careful to ensure we took down everyone's year and course of study too, so that the mailing list could be edited in future years (so that graduated students go on the alumni mailing list and not on the current members' list).

Emails were very effective ways of letting everyone know what's happening each week. I tried to make the emails as colourful and engaging as possible, (often spending 3-4 hours decorating each one).



The emails ended up being very informative and contained links to facebook events, albums etc. I think that the structure of these emails was extremely effective, and they received a lot of positive feedback. I would strongly urge future committees to use the templates that have been created which are available upon request.

Texts were very convenient when we had to remind people about events on the day, or had to inform everyone about changes to the plans.

We used flyers at the Welcome Fayre to inform everyone about the Sikh Society and to give them links to the SU website for membership and to the relevant facebook groups. We produced far too many flyers, which we distributed to new members who were not at the Fayre. They can be distributed at next year's Welcome Fayre though, so that the new committee do not have to worry about printing new ones.

We didn't produce a newsletter, but the emails effectively acted as a newsletter, in that they contained funny summaries of all the previous events in the past week, with anecdotes to keep members interested, followed by details for upcoming events. We didn't have a separate website for ourselves, but we had a page on the Nishaan website dedicated to City Sikh Society. However, this was not used actively.

Our facebook group was the most effective and efficient way of communicating with our members. The final number of members in the facebook group at the end of the year was **175**, of which approximately 40-50 used the group actively. We posted a lot in the group, including event pages, youtube videos and adverts, inspirational material and pictures. We also did a lot of promotion around the university campus by announcing the location of Sikh soc reps in the facebook group. This made it easier for members to find reps when tickets to events were being sold like Collaborations or Paintballing, or just to come over and say hello.

## PARTNERSHIPS

### **WITHIN CITY UNIVERSITY**

We invited other faith societies and the Amnesty society to a few of our events. The relationships with other societies generally could have been improved.

### **NATIONAL BODY**

The Sikh society did not create any relationships with any national executive body.

### **EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

City Sikh society had a good relationship with Nishaan - the Sikh society network, which consisted of other students from the Sikh societies of London Universities.

Naujawani.com helped the Sikh society throughout the year and provided us with Freshers' packs to give to our students in the first few weeks of joining the society and at the Freshers' Fayre. We really appreciate all the help we received, and for the running of Sikh Studies classes at City, which was brilliantly taught and enhanced the learning experience for our members.

Funds of £150 raised at our Charity Bike Ride were donated to the Hope and Compassion charity, alongside all the cards made for unwell children at Seva Day.

## FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

### **SUMMARY**

Unfortunately, the finances were not well looked after this year, and many society officers were in a personal deficit. A lot of unnecessarily money was spent at the Cha, Samosa, Brownie, Cupcake and Soda Party and at the Fresher's Fayre on leaflets, and other petty costs accumulated. There is no record of the costs that were not claimed back in from our budget. However, these came out of personal accounts and not from the Sikh soc account.

We purchased a vaja for £100 which is in the Sikh society inventory and used the grant we received from the Students' Union.

We also put in two orders for hoodies from Bananamoon.com at the start of the year, one order for committee members and the other for society members after the first few events. We incurred a loss for the second order because many students did not pay the full amount for their hoodies after their initial deposits, and many people who ordered hoodies did not collect them. We have a bag containing uncollected hoodies in the SU storage.

The only expenditure from the Sikh society account was on tea purchased from the University for the Cha, Samosa, Brownie, Cupcake and Soda party. This was purchased using the membership money from the year before. All other costs came from the personal accounts of society officers and were not claimed back. As far as I am aware, none of the membership money for this year was used and the society has a healthy balance which will roll over to the next year.

### **ACCOUNTS**

Unfortunately, we do not have a report of finances from the Treasurer.

## THE FUTURE

We tried our best to deliver events and activities of a high standard throughout the year. Whilst we tried to enhance quality, the society functioned on 'standard desi timing' throughout the year, which was extremely unprofessional, and I urge future years to not follow our example and to value time. We also made a lot of mistakes with our finances and did not budget very well. Our best piece of advice here would be to carefully assess costs before events and consider whether they would actually enhance the event experience for members and guests.

This year was an excellent year for the Sikh society, and we were officially recognised as the best society at City University London by the Students' Union. However, this is not the limit to the potential of the society and there is always room to further grow and develop and become even better. I would suggest to the new committee to make the society their own, and provide a service to the members that they would like to receive themselves. By adding a personal touch to the society, it becomes less intimidating for Freshers, and if the society becomes a large group of friends or a family, everyone will feel more comfortable and you will enjoy the experience more in the process.

I hope this report has been helpful in providing an idea of what was successful so it could be considered again, and how other areas could be improved. The very best of luck for the future!

Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh