

City University London

Sikh Society CULSU



Annual Report

2012-2013

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

Our Vision

Our vision is to create a strong and fun society where members get involved and feel connected to others in the Sikh community within City University London. We also envision using this environment as a platform to help our members develop as individuals and as a Sikhs, whilst learning more about the Sikh faith and way of life.

Our Objectives

The Sikh Society has various objectives we aim to achieve throughout the year:

- 1) Unify the Sikh community at City University London and provide networking opportunities with Sikhs at other universities and within the wider community.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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.
- 4) Raise awareness and understanding of Sikh practices, culture and customs through discussions and celebration of dates and festivals on the Sikh Calendar at City University London.
- 5) Promote a positive image of the Sikh way of life to our members and other likeminded individuals at City and beyond, through programmes, charity events and the way in which we generally conduct ourselves.
- 6) To raise awareness of issues which affect the Sikh Society members in an organised and professional manner.

Introduction

The City University London Sikh Society has had another good year. Although we did not have as many events as last year and were not able to host one of our most popular events from last year, 'Equality Street', I feel the events that we did have were all successful. We saw an increase in official members and extremely high attendance for all our events held in the first term. Although we did attempt to have an equal number of social and spiritual events, the balance was slightly tipped in favour of social events.

For a second year, Sikh Studies classes were held at City. These classes were very popular among attendees and had a good weekly turnout. All feedback we received was particularly positive. As in previous years, our largest event by far was the Samosa, brownie, cupcake and soda party. We had over 100 people at the event and even with our altered structure due to room assignment; the majority of feedback received was encouraging.

We aimed to follow the traditions developed by the previous committee, one of which was our mascot 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. 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 the now annual balloon launch to the gladiator tournament to raise money for charity.

One of the major things we tried to ensure was the quality and experience of events. This required a lot of planning and organisation, and therefore we weren't able to host as many events as we would have liked. As a committee our timetables didn't allow for us to have as many meetings as we would have like or needed. However in spite of this we did manage to hold quite a few good events.

The Sikh society continued to be a member of the Nishaan network and although beneficial at the start of the year, the Nishaan concept showed cracks further along in the year. 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 Laser Tag and Collaborations tickets were sold to City Sikh society members.

As a society both our committee and members played a vital role in making it a successful year. There were a number of members that took on unofficial roles and were very helpful in the organisation process and during the events themselves. We have seen many new friendships develop within the society and between members of other Sikh Societies in London as a result of the Nishaan network. I hope these friendships aid in making future events more successful and hopefully go some way in helping individuals outside of university life and in future careers. I hope that the society provided everyone with a positive environment to develop as Sikhs.

In closing I would like to wish the next committee all the best in their endeavours. I hope the society continues to be a success and develops into an even bigger and better society. Face all challenges with a smile and think outside of the box. Have fun, and everyone else will too!

Committee and Membership

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: Harsimran Kaur

Vice President: Parmasher Singh

Treasurer: Raspinder Kaur

Media Coordinators: Ajmeet Singh

Senior Advisor: Inderpreet Kaur

Society Membership

Number of paid members: 36 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 8, with some events attended by far more members, i.e. Samosa, Brownie, Cupcake and Soda Party

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

Freshers Fayre

Date: 26th September 2012

The Welcome Fayre was our first opportunity to attract the attention of the Freshers, as well as older students, who might not have been aware of the Sikh Society. 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 as well as our mascot. This year we purchased a lion costume to help promote the Sikh society, we bought rather than rented as it made more financial sense. Although we were right at the back of the hall we put up lots of helium balloons and posters on the wall, made sure our bright blue hoodies were visible at all times and had our mascot lead people over to the stall. 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.

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 the stall, we had two clipboards with sign-up sheets, where we took down names, course & year of study, email addresses and mobile numbers. We also had some images and videos on display on a laptop.

A question that nearly all stall visitors asked was 'so what kind of stuff will Sikh Society 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.



Weekly Activities

Sikh Studies Classes

This year was the second year the Sikh Studies course, run by Naujawani.com, was offered at City University London. We received quite a lot of interest in the classes however the timing was not suitable for everyone therefore the turnout was not as good as we had anticipated. However, we did have a weekly attendance of around 6 students; this included a few students from UCL as well.

Events

Samosa, Brownie, Cupcake and Soda Party

Date: 4th October 2012

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.

There were some problems with room booking and although we had applied for a room more than a month in advance, due to issues within the SU the room was not confirmed until the day of the event. The room booked for us was also not what we had hoped for; it was a lecture hall rather than an open spaced room as per our request. Because of these issues we had to alter the structure of the event. We split all attendees into four teams and intended to use icebreakers in order for them to interact with each other. Although this did work well, we found that this only enabled individuals to network within their teams and not with everyone there. Although, we did have time at the end during the samosa eating competition and afterwards whilst the food was served, whereby everyone had a chance to talk.

The food at the event went down very well, and we had record number of entries for the samosa eating competition, including a few females which was positive to see. There was however some food left over, which we had to distribute to people that attended so as not to waste any. Taking everything into consideration, including the feedback of people who came, the event was a success and was quite different from all the other typical socials.



Bandi Chor Balloon Launch

Date: 14th November 2012

We decided to celebrate Bandhi Chhor in the same way as last year as it was very popular with our members. 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 it was so different. The event was very simple – we wrote out messages on little pieces of paper, which were placed inside the balloon which was then pumped with helium.

The event was held in Northampton Square outside the university, and albeit a small number of balloons got 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. We received a lot of positive feedback and it seems to be one of our more popular events.



Sikh Research Institute Talk

Date: 18th October 2012

This talk by Harinder Singh was on Religion in Modern Society. It focused on the questions; do adherents of a religion have any responsibilities towards society at large? Does religion promote accepting the status quo? How relevant is religion to addressing the Social, Political and Economic issues facing us today?

Since the event was promoted through Nishaan we had an extremely good turnout, with well over 50 people in attendance. Like Harinder Singh's previous talks, this too gained a receptive audience and much positive feedback. One improvement I can think of however is to start promotion of the event earlier. If this had been done I believe that we could have achieved an even larger attendance.

Movie/ Game Night

Date: 27th February 2013

This event was promoted as a movie night and the intention was to watch the film 'Ocean of Pearls', however a lot of the people attending the event had to leave early

because of deadlines etc. Therefore in light of this we changed the event to a game night and decided to watch the film at a later date. However, this event never materialised. On the other hand, the game night although improvised went really well. With all those attending really enjoying themselves and suggesting we make it a weekly event.

Gladiator Tournament

Date: 5th April 2013

This was our final event of the year. We wanted a way to celebrate Hola Mohalla and to raise money for charity and felt this was the perfect way. We intended to charge £2 for anyone entering the tournament and £1 a go for anyone not taking part in the actual tournament. We also had a cake sale on the day to help raise more money. However, we didn't have as good a turnout as we hoped for. There were two main reasons for this; the promotion of the event was left too late and also the event was held too late in the term and the majority of students had deadlines or had finished for the term. Although, those that did attend did say they enjoyed the event and hoped we would do it again. If this event is to be held again, the date should be more aptly selected and promotion should begin at least 3 weeks prior to the event.

Nishaan Events

What is Nishaan?

Nishaan is a network connecting Sikh Societies across London and the South East of England. It is created on the principle of 'for the students by the students'. Sikh societies in Nishaan retain their individual independence and work together to collaborate and make events bigger and better.

Laser Tag

Date: 10th October 2012

Last year a paintballing event was held but it was found that there was quite a lot of hassle in terms of travel and organisation and attendance was not as high as it could have been because of this. Therefore this year it was decided to try laser tag instead. There was a really good turnout, especially from City, and it allowed for students from other universities to interact with each other. Since the event was in Central London, travel was easy and it was an easy location for everyone to get to, also it worked out a lot cheaper than paintballing as well. The event received an encouraging response and most people suggested making it an annual occurrence.



Seva Day

Date: 24th October 2012

Although Seva Day was a Nishaan event, City was the event organiser. This year we collaborated with S.W.A.T who provided us with a van for transport, clothing and other snacks to give to the homeless. As students we made sandwiches and tea in the langar space provided by Shepherds Bush Gurdwara. We then travelled with the S.W.A.T representative to the homeless 'hotspots' to hand out the food, drinks and clothing. Attendees found the event to be very fulfilling and showed a lot of enthusiasm throughout the day. It is an event that should definitely be carried out again.



Collaborations

Date: 6th December 2013

This event was well attended by City students and we were also quite involved in the organisation and planning. Although the event did have many positives as a networking event there was some negative feedback in regards to the timing and some of the acts on the day. The event itself started almost an hour late and the food also arrived very late. However, in terms of networking the event worked quite well, with the icebreaker going down pretty well amongst the students. Also when the food did arrive, everyone commented on how good it tasted. If this event is to be repeated it needs a lot more preparation and better delegation of roles and setting of deadlines.



Communication with Members

At the Welcome Fayre, we took down the email addresses and mobile numbers of all the Freshers, and compiled a spread sheet with last year's members too. We were also 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 and like in the previous year we attempted to make them as colourful and engaging as possible. The emails tended to be quite 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. And we used this method frequently.

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.

Although we didn't produce a newsletter, our emails effectively acted as a newsletter. 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. At the moment we do not have our own webpage however, we are in the process of getting one through the SU.

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 **242**, 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 society reps in the Facebook group. This made it easier for members to find reps when tickets to events were being sold like Collaborations or laser tag, or just to come over and say hello.

Handover

Although the Students Union at City will conduct the official handover, below is some of the basic information you need in order to get started.

Forms

All the forms you will need for things like making a room booking or speaker requests are all available online on Moodle. These forms need to be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the event. All events also need an event request form to be submitted. Without the permission of the SU no event can take place therefore this part is crucial.

Finance

As outlined by the SU, each society can receive up to £500 worth of funding per event. You can spend up to £50 without putting in a formal request in advance. Finance forms are available in the SU and on Moodle. If you are going to be spending more than £50 on an event then an expenditure request form must be filled out before any money is spent. The SU also controls our private account and expenditure request forms must also be filled out to use money from this account.

In order to claim back any money spent you must fill out a claims form with all receipts attached. If the amount spent is below £30 you will receive the money in cash. However any amount above this will be put into the bank account of your choice.

In order to find out the exact balance of the societies private account please contact the SU.

The Future

We tried our best to deliver events and activities of a high standard throughout the year. We tried to enhance the quality of our events and as a society we did manage to reduce the 'Desi timing' factor this year. We also managed our budget quite successfully this year. Although, there are still a few purchases that need reimbursing, these expenditures have all been authorised by the SU.

This was another good year for the Sikh society, however it could have been better. The committee have tried to organise a wide range of events throughout this academic year, but nevertheless there were some events that had been planned but were unable to go ahead. The main event that we were disappointed didn't take place was 'Equality Street'. This event was recognised as 'Event of the Year' last year and received a lot of positive feedback. I urge next year's society to try and conduct this event again and if possible on a larger scale as it was very popular.

The society suffered a lot in terms of attendance at some events mainly due to late promotion therefore I would like to suggest that the future society takes this into consideration and tries to start promoting events at the earliest they can.

As a society we have a lot of potential, 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.

Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh