

# CUSU stance on the Student Fellows

*Louvain-la-Neuve - CUSU Seminar May 2024*

## Intro

A key element in the launch of the next phase of Circle U. is the introduction of the Fellow program. This marks a great step for the alliance and a great opportunity for students. As such, it is important that we decide upon a structure and definition of these student fellows, especially since it is one of our flagships.

Some member universities have already begun hiring Student Fellows, and from their experiences we are able to analyze the practices that make sense for Circle U.

It is important that we define both their overall tasks, conditions and relation to the alliance, for us to have the best possible implementation. This is why we suggest the following, as overall guidelines for the Fellow program.

## What Student Fellows should be doing

The Student Fellow role is not only to fulfill the roles classically assigned to student employees, but instead to partake in the development of alliance activities within the borders of the framework set by Circle U. and CUSU.

### **Organizing and developing within Circle U:**

The Student Fellows should be considered an integral part of the development of the alliance, as developers, organizers and consultants. The academic backgrounds of the students are of course diverse and these should be considered an asset.

They should be actively involved in developing specific projects or helping to develop hubs. Their tasks include generating new ideas and reviewing ongoing projects to ensure they align with goals and expectations.

### **Work with academically relevant subjects:**

As universities and students it is in our shared interest to develop the competencies of our students as much as possible and give them the most options for academic experience. As such, the work of Student Fellows should be as academically relevant to them as possible.

# What Student Fellows should not be doing

## **Communication-related events:**

Fellows should not be confused with Ambassadors and should therefore not be assigned any promotion tasks.

While it is tempting to have Student Fellows use their student connections to promote Circle U activities, it should be acknowledged that this is the role of the Circle U. Student Ambassadors. There should be a clear distinction and divide between the two roles. However, there should be proper communication, when relevant, between the two groups to facilitate collaboration.

## **Representing the students' voice:**

It is crucial to state that the Student Fellows are not academically elected by the Student Parliament. Thus, they are not legitimized to represent the students' voice. They can speak for themselves individually, but shouldn't be used to talk in the name of the students.

Even though they discuss issues related to students, they do not officially represent the student body. Their role is more focused on conveying general sentiments and observations rather than serving as elected representatives.

Student Fellows do not hold decision-making power. Their role is more an advisory and supportive one : contributing ideas and feedback without having the final say in decisions.

## **Partake in decision making boards on behalf of their position:**

In conjunction with the previous point, it is important to highlight that Student Fellows are not meant to be part of decision making boards, as this is the role of the CUSU representatives. They can, of course, partake in meetings as a consultative party, but not decide on anything outside their project.

## **Purely menial labor :**

The Student Fellows should be considered something separate from an ordinary student employee. The idea of having such a role put in place, is not for them to act as secretaries or bureaucratic assistants. The Fellow should be academically enhanced by the work they are doing and, as such, should not only do the practical work. This does not, of course, mean that they should be completely exempt from such tasks, but this should not be their primary focus.

# Recruitment processes

## **Their rights:**

It is important to consider that the Student Fellows are first and foremost students, whose lives are structured around classes, exams, and social activities. It is essential that the Fellows have access to the same workplace well-being and inclusivity standards as others, and also that they are not burdened with excessive workloads during critical periods such as exam times.

It is also necessary that Fellows have a training program before starting their assignments, so as not to feel lost in the initial period.

**An inclusive and broad recruitment process:**

As part of their student rights, it is also undeniable that the recruitment of those said Fellows needs to respect the diversity resulting from a multi-university alliance. For the position of the Student Fellows, the recruitment process must be both extensive and bias-free, to make sure all interested students have the possibility to apply and to ensure diversity within the Fellowship programme.

Student Fellows should also be recruited based on their abilities and their knowledge rather than be hand-picked because of any connections they might already have to Circle U. or the academic chair, in order to make sure the best candidates for the position are chosen.

**CUSU involvement:**

The local CUSU representatives should, to some extent, be involved from the beginning of the recruitment process, this should not include the hiring process but the recruitment formulation. The university planning to launch the Fellows program should first discuss the student aspect with the local CUSU representatives (or others if local representatives have not yet been appointed or are unavailable) thus fostering a constructive dialogue on university and CUSU expectations regarding the roles of Student Fellows.

It is also important to note that CUSU representatives represent Student Fellows. Therefore, both parties must maintain regular contact.

More broadly speaking, universities can launch their calls for applications and conduct the recruitment in coordination with the various structures that will host the Fellows, taking into account the importance of inclusivity and representation within the institution.

## The CUSU-Student Fellow relationship/cooperation

Regular communication is crucial for maintaining consistent alignment to the present course and addressing concerns promptly. Establishing open channels of communication, such as email groups, messaging platforms, or dedicated online forums, can facilitate continuous dialogue and enable resolution of issues. This transparent communication framework helps build trust and ensures that all stakeholders are on the same page.

By working together on the design and implementation of projects that benefit the student community, Student Fellows can bring their on-the-ground experiences and innovative ideas to the table, while CUSU provides the organizational framework and legitimacy needed for a successful cooperation.

**CUSU should not be above the Student Fellows:**

The student fellows are hired to perform certain tasks within the alliance. As such, their work is more closely related to certain academic chairs rather than CUSU. Their job is not to work under CUSU, which does not have the resources to administer them, especially as the number of Fellows increases. CUSU should not be considered as employers, but as an interest and support entity.

**Student representation:**

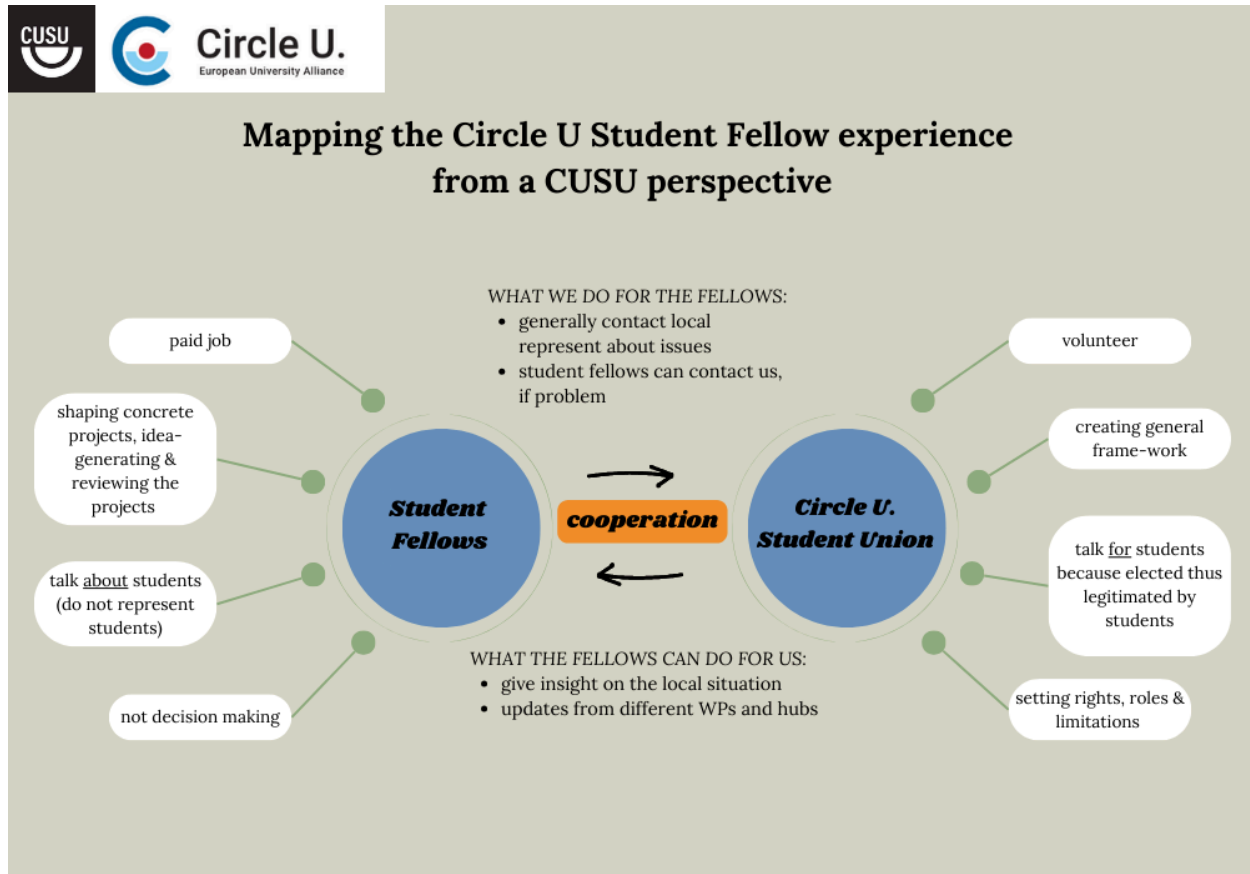
Given the fact that Student Fellows are students, they are represented by CUSU. As such it is the job of CUSU and, to some extent, the local student bodies, to represent and protect the Student Fellows.

While we trust that everyone has good intentions, it is still important that Fellows have a body that they can contact in case of arising issues. We consider CUSU as playing a part in this role. It would be mutually beneficial for them to have our assistance, and for us to have information about when things are not quite optimal.

**Support and Information flow:**

In order to optimize our work, it would be a benefit if relevant information was sent by Student Fellows to CUSU. The Fellows will have much more concrete information about their specific projects than CUSU will be able to obtain. Keeping a stable flow of information would make the work of CUSU more efficient.

# Appendix



This structured mapping helps clarify the distinct yet complementary roles and responsibilities of both groups, highlighting the collaborative efforts to support and represent the student community within the Circle U. alliance.

This framework clarifies the distinct yet interconnected roles of Student Fellows and the Circle U. Student Union, facilitating effective collaboration and mutual support in their efforts to enhance the Student experience.