

Democracy review

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Prepared for:

Executive Committee

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Background

In September 2015, the Union approached NUS to support a review of our representative structures and consider possible alternatives and innovations to strengthen decision-making and democratic participation.

The following functions of democracy were agreed with key stakeholders:

- 1) Empower students to decide which ideas to enact to make change
- 2) Empower students to be critical and steer the actions of officers
- 3) Provide an accessible and inclusive space to have all voices heard
- 4) Be a rewarding experience that helps all students engage and influence beyond the university walls

A survey was developed in order to understand preferences of the membership in relation to democracy and representation. There were a total of 824 responses in all, approximately 5.1% of the membership. NUS produced a report recommending the type of innovations that would suit the membership of the Union.

Proposed changes

Full-time officer roles

2016/2017	2017 onwards
President	President
Education Officer	Vice President (Arts, Law and Social Sciences)
Welfare Officer	Vice President (Business)
Activities Officer (Cambridgeshire)	Vice President (Health, Social Care, Education and Medical Science)
Activities Officer (Essex)	Vice President (Science and Technology)

Key rationale

- Only 25.7% surveyed felt they understood what all of the full-time officers do
- Only 51% surveyed agreed or strongly agreed they can hold the full-time officers to account
- 33.1% surveyed felt the current full-time officer roles were neither extremely effective or effective
- Experience Officer (Essex) and Experience Officer (Cambridgeshire) were considered to be the most administrative full-time roles
- 93.3% surveyed felt it either important or slightly important that the full-time officers' roles include responsibility for academic representation, 90.8% for communications, 90.3% for equality, 88.1% for wellbeing/welfare, 87% for disability liberation, 86.9% for campaigning
- 56.4% surveyed felt either very or slightly likely to share the same views as someone who shares their interests, 53.4% the same course, 46.8% the same level of study

(1) Someone who shares the same interests	(8) Someone with the same gender
(2) Someone who studies the same course	(9) Someone from the same country
(3) Someone doing the same level of study	(10) Someone with the same faith
(4) Someone with the same socio-economic status	(11) Someone who lives in the same place
(5) Someone with the same mode of study	(12) Someone who studies at the same campus
(6) Someone the same age	(13) Someone with the same heritage
(7) Someone who grew up in the same place	(14) Someone with the same ethnicity

Table: very and slightly likely to share the same views

A 'Multi-portfolio' model

President

The responsibilities will include to:

Chair, lead and coordinate the Faculty Voice Committee providing day-to-day support for the full-time officers championing accountability and communication;

Act as the primary spokesperson and figurehead for the Union to the University.

Vice President

The responsibilities will include to:

Act as the lead representative for a faculty or faculties;

Lead, inspire and support all elected representatives and volunteers within the faculty or faculties and Union.

(1) Academic representation	(6) Campaigning
(2) Communications	(8) Employment
(3) Equality	(10) Democratic procedures
(4) Wellbeing/welfare	(11) Societies

(5) Disability, (7) black, (9), LGBT, (12) women's liberation	
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Table: priorities for full-time officers

Part-time officer roles

2016/2017	2017 onwards
Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) Rep at Cambridge and Chelmsford
Communications Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	Disabled Students' Rep at Cambridge and Chelmsford
Disabled Students' Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	International Rep at Cambridge and Chelmsford
Environmental & Community Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	LGBT+ Students' Rep at Cambridge and Chelmsford
International Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	Trans* Students' Rep at Cambridge and Chelmsford
LGBT+ Students' Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	Women's Rep at Cambridge and Chelmsford
Mature Students' Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	
Postgraduate Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	
Societies Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	
Sports Club Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	
Trans* Students' Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	
Welfare Campaigns Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	
Women's Rep at Cambridge, Chelmsford and Peterborough	

Key rationale

- 58.2% felt democracy in the students' union should be control of the organisation by all of its members, compared to 34.8% who felt it should be control by a majority
- 68.2% surveyed felt it important that the full-time officers' roles include responsibility for disability liberation, 67.3% for women's liberation, 58.2% for black liberation, 55.6% for LGBT liberation

- This is compared to 35.6% for sport, 46.2% for community work and the environment, 45.2% for volunteering, 48.2% for societies

'All not majority'

Reduce the number of part-time roles with responsibilities, including the implementation of policy, to those that represent minority groups;

Create further opportunities through volunteer roles and societies to meet the needs identified through other roles.

Timeline

The proposed changes will be considered by the Student Council on Thursday 17 November 2016 with a view to implement from July 2017.