

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST STUDENTS' UNION

To: Members of the Students' Union Council

Dear Councillor,

Please attend the fourth Statutory Meeting of the 2023-24 Students' Union Council, to be held on Monday 22 January 2024 at 5.00pm in The Cube, Level 1, One Elmwood.

Yours sincerely,

DAMIEN CORRIDAN

Clerk to the Students' Union Council

AGENDA

FIRST CIRCULATION

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of Previous Meetings
 - 2.1 Minutes of Statutory Meeting of 15 November 2023 SUC/M/23/7
3. Business Arising from the Minutes
 - 3.1 Policy Updates
 - 3.1.1 Consent, Bystander, Handling Disclosure Training for QSU and QUB Staff
 - 3.1.2 Consent, Bystander and Disclosure Training for All Students' Union Positions
 - 3.1.3 Decolonise, Demilitarise and Democratise Queen's University Belfast
4. Communications
 - 4.1 Condolences
 - 4.2 National Students' Union Updates
 - 4.2.1 Update from NUS-USI
 - 4.2.2 Update from USI
 - 4.3 Student Leader Elections 2023-24 – Update
 - 4.4 Council Membership – Update
5. Constitutional Amendments/Rule Amendments

There are none.

6. Business for Consideration

6.1 Clubs and Societies Committee of Council – Continued Approval

At its meeting of Tuesday 24 October 2023, Council approved the establishment of a Special Committee of Council, named the Clubs and Societies Committee as follows:

THE CLUBS AND SOCIETIES COMMITTEE

The remit of the Clubs and Societies Committee, as delegated by the Council, will be:

To address issues related to Clubs and Societies;

To consider proposals for recognition or dissolution of Clubs & Societies;

To consider Students' Union governance arrangements for Clubs and Societies; and

To consider other relevant issues delegated to it by Council.

The membership of the Clubs and Societies Committee shall be ten elected members with voting rights.

In addition to the ordinary membership of the Committee, as outlined above, the Committee shall be chaired by the Student Officer Campaigns and Engagement, who shall be responsible for convening meetings of the Committee.

The Council is required by the Constitution to review the continued operation of any Special Committee at the third meeting of Council following a decision to approve a Special Committee.

It is proposed that the Clubs and Societies Committee continue in operation as a Special Committee of Council until the First Statutory Meeting of Council in the 2024-25 academic year.

7. Business for Discussion

7.1 Cost of Living Crisis – Update and Discussion

7.2 2023-24 Academic Year – Emerging Issues / Concerns

7.3 Students' Union Mental Health Activity – Update

7.4 Students' Union Strategic Plan 2020-25 – Update

There is none.

7.5 Proposal to Extend Daily Teaching Hours in Queen's – Discussion

7.6 Students' Union Democracy Review – Discussion on Next Steps

8. Bye-Elections

There are none.

9. Elections

There are none.

10. Motions

10.1 Policy Submitted to NUS Conference 2024

The following policy proposal which was submitted by Queen's Students' Union to NUS Conference 2024 formally requires ratification by the Students' Union Council. (Note: This motion will not become the formal policy of Queen's Students' Union and will not become part of our live policy file.)

Solidarity with People of Palestine

Policy Area: Decolonisation

What's the issue and how does it affect students?

This policy addresses the escalating pressure and censorship faced by students and Students' Unions involved in pro-Palestinian activities post the October 7th attacks. Many students observe a lack of condemnation from political leaders and academic institutions concerning atrocities and human rights violations, contradicting earlier stances on international humanitarian crises. This incongruity deeply unsettles students, especially those linked to the region and individuals from marginalised communities. The policy urges NUS to reaffirm campus free.

Speech and empower students and Students' Unions to maintain their proud traditions of advocating for global human rights, including utilising efficient strategies such as divestment from organisations whose practices are against their values.

What changes would we like to see in society to change this?

Fighting injustice is fundamental to the student movement, and NUS, as the representative body, must uphold this commitment. This policy aims to empower activists, students, and Students' Unions to protest and mobilise against ongoing violence in Gaza, treating it with the same seriousness as any other atrocity. Criticising the Israeli government, or the Israeli state for violating Palestinian rights should not be equated with antisemitism as long as it is 'similar to that levelled against any other country' (IHRA 'working definition of antisemitism'). NUS must protect students' rights, recognizing the interconnectedness of all forms of racism and oppression. Upholding these principles ensures NUS's dedication to combating injustice remains steadfast.

What action could NUS, students and SUs take to work on this?

NUS must provide resources for student and SU empowerment and education against injustice, ensuring compliance with legal frameworks. This entails training, resource packs, political organising, information about antisemitism and islamophobia, and parliamentary advocacy. NUS should counter the suppression of lawful political actions within the student movement by universities, media, and government.

How does it impact FE students / Apprentices?

Apprentices entering the workforce face an unsettling crackdown on pro-Palestinian activity, echoing an authoritarian trend seen in workplaces across the UK. Colleges where students are studying further education qualifications have been subject to similar pressures.

How does it impact on black*, disabled, LGBT+, trans and women students?

Censorship and institutional silence on Gaza disproportionately impact marginalised communities. Many members of these communities see parallels with their own oppression. Universities' failure to condemn the war contradicts anti-racist commitments. The conflict has

fuelled alarming rises in anti-Black, anti-Arab, and anti-Jewish racism. Islamophobia is exacerbated through PREVENT. Muslim students disproportionately targeted in censorship incidents.

How does it impact on International Students, Postgraduate Students, Part Time and Mature Students?

International students engaging in pro-Palestinian organizing are pressurised, with visas at risk. Many have personal ties to the region. Mature students, active in organising and local politics, bear a heavier censorship burden. Part-time and postgraduate students, including internationals, grapple with unique challenges, juggling academics amid heightened censorship. Addressing these multifaceted impacts is crucial.

Is there a particular impact or response for small and specialist institutions?

Small student unions with limited resources may need additional support from NUS both to provide resources to guide students on organising pro-Palestine activities within legal boundaries as well as to emotionally support students with friends and families in the region.

Extra Information

NUS National Conference recognises that the historic and current occupation of the Palestinian territories, and the ongoing crisis in the region, is of great significance to the student movement.

Many of NUS' member organisation have passed motions affirming solidarity with the Palestinian people, and ongoing violence in Gaza is demonstrably of huge importance to the student movement.

Many thousands of students continue to engage on this issue with local and national politicians, attend demonstrations, and attempt to organise on their campuses to promote safety and prosperity for people everywhere. Many students - of differing opinions - are facing unacceptable resistance to exercising their lawful rights to campaign, protest, and speak out. It would be wholly inappropriate for NUS National Conference to ignore this issue.

NUS National Conference recognises that discussion of Israel-Palestine within the student movement has historically been loaded with toxicity, and all too often, racism. This is a highly emotive subject, particularly for those with personal and familial connections to the region.

Through the 'Independent Investigation into Antisemitism,' including the 'Tuck Report,' NUS has repeatedly laid out commitments such as to 'minimise harm' and 'facilitate and support debates and campaigns regarding Israel and Palestine' ([NUS Antisemitism Action Plan](#)). The goal of this motion is to support and strengthen that work.

Stigmatising pro-Palestinian activism, and driving it underground, risks creating an environment where antisemitism thrives unchallenged. NUS has a responsibility to step up and continue to lead, and all students have a responsibility to listen to each other and learn, so that oppression can continue to be challenged without recreating division and hatred.

NUS National Conference believes:

- None of our Palestinian, Israeli, Jewish, Muslim, or other student communities are responsible for the actions of the Israeli state or of Hamas and racial discrimination should be fought against and rejected.
- It is indisputable that when violence escalates in the Middle East, incidents of both antisemitism and islamophobia on UK campuses and in wider society [increase dramatically](#).

- Conflating entirely legitimate criticism of the Israeli state with anti-Jewish racism undermines the possibility of demonstrating solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against oppression, undermines freedom of speech and academic freedom, and - crucially - undermines efforts to tackle antisemitism.
- 'When passionate advocacy and campaigning for Palestinian rights and condemnation of the policies or acts of the state of Israel are in issue, there has been considerable alienation of Jewish students' (NUS [Independent Investigation into allegations of antisemitism within NUS](#), page 105).
- 'It will be important, when ensuring that NUS is a welcoming environment for Jews, to ensure that other student groups are not alienated' (NUS [Independent Investigation into allegations of antisemitism within NUS](#), page 107). Tackling antisemitism is vital, but NUS risks alienating a large portion of its membership, including supporters of the Palestinian people (many of whom are Jewish), if advocating for the rights of the Palestinian people is not accommodated (as seen by the significant number of disaffiliation campaigns that have taken place over the last 18 months).
- NUS' mission to 'bring about a new culture around this topic in all corners of student politics' ([NUS Antisemitism Action Plan](#)) cannot be achieved if NUS is not clear about its stance as a democratic political organisation.
- 'Legitimate discussions about Israel and Palestine do not need to be discriminatory. Campaigning on Palestinian causes is not inherently antisemitic. Defending the right of the state of Israel to exist is not inherently discriminatory.' ([NUS Antisemitism Action Plan](#))
- NUS holds responsibility to educate and empower students to lawfully protest atrocities in Palestine, and to equip Students' Unions to do the same.
- Universities need to be consistent in their condemnation of oppression. It is a double standard for them to take a stance on Russia-Ukraine while staying silent on Israel-Palestine.
- Silence regarding ongoing violence in Palestine contradicts university anti-racism commitments.
- The PREVENT programme and PREVENT referrals are weaponised to suppress legitimate support for Palestine.
- The purpose of universities is to broaden the minds of their students, working to produce knowledge that improves health, wellbeing and security around the world. It is therefore legitimate for students to campaign to get UK universities to [divest from the military and defence sector, and to end shares in arms companies](#).
- Universities and Students' Unions have a duty to promote freedom of speech and academic freedom, including expressions of support for Palestine.

We would like to see the NUS and the UK government openly stand in support of the Palestinian people and condemn the actions of the Israeli government. In the immediate term, we would want the British government to call for a ceasefire, halting the tragic loss of innocent Palestinian lives.

Proposer: Aidan Moran (Student Officer Campaigns and Engagement)

Secunder: Beth Elder (Students' Union President)

The following policy proposal which was submitted by Queen's Students' Union to NUS-USI Conference 2024 formally requires ratification by the Students' Union Council. (Note: This motion will not become the formal policy of Queen's Students' Union and will not become part of our live policy file.)

Political Mobilisation and Democratisation

Policy Area: Democracy

What's the issue and how does it affect students?

Students do not have enough influence over issues that affect them both within their institutions and wider society.

Education is run in a manner where decisions are made in the interests of profit and managerial interests rather than the benefit of students.

Students and young people have low rates of voter registration and voter turnout when compared to other age groups which limits their ability to affect policies that impact them. In Northern Ireland, voter registration is difficult, especially for non-local students and those living in PBSAs.

Politicians are able to dismiss issues facing students as students, as a block, are not a promising demographic in regards to voting.

What changes would we like to see in society to change this?

Democratisation of institutions' governance processes through significant student reputation on relevant committees such as those which determine investments, accommodation, and chancellor appointments.

Significantly increased voter registration and turnout amongst students in NI so that students' priorities are taken more seriously by those with the power to determine local and national policy.

Politicians openly talking about the needs of students and ensuring that policies are written with concern as to what the student body's reaction is going to be.

What action could NUS, students and SUs take to work on this?

Work with MPs and MLAs to form an education bill that mandates the democratisation of academia and protects the rights of Student Unions.

Work to introduce a form of automatic voter registration for all incoming students over the age of 16. Campaign for student ID to be a valid form of voter ID.

How does it impact FE students / Apprentices?

Everyone from the age of 16+ can register to vote and this will benefit everyone's ability to influence their local and national community.

How does it impact on black*, disabled, LGBT+, trans and women students?

The views of these groups are often not represented on either an institutional, local, or national level. This policy will help students who identify with these categories to have their voices heard.

How does it impact on International Students, Postgraduate Students, Part Time and Mature Students?

International students are treated like cash cows and cannot vote in UK elections. Therefore, this gives them some control over their local political dynamics by giving them more influence over the institutions which they interact with.

Proposer: Jess Hindley (Student Officer Campaigns and Engagement)

Seconder: Beth Elder (Students' Union President)

11. Report of the Management Board and Recommendations
- 11.1 Report of the Management Board
12. Report of the Executive Management Committee and Recommendations
- 12.1 Report of the Executive Management Committee
- 12.2 Report of the Union President (December 2023) SUC/P/24/1
- 12.3 Report of the Student Officer Campaigns and Engagement (December 2023) SUC/P/24/2
- 12.4 Report of the Student Officer Equality & Diversity (December 2023) SUC/P/24/3
- 12.5 Report of the Student Officer Postgraduate (December 2023) SUC/P/24/4
- 12.6 Report of the Student Officer Undergraduate Education (December 2023) SUC/P/24/5
- 12.7 Report of the Student Officer Welfare (December 2023) SUC/P/24/6
13. Reports from other Union Committees and Recommendations
- There are none.
14. Reports from University Committees
- There are none.
15. Constitutional Questions
- There are none.
16. Questions (to Elected Student Representatives)
- There are none.
17. Any Other Competent Business
18. Date of Next Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council
- Thursday 15 February 2024 at 5.00 p.m. in The Cube, Level 1, One Elmwood.
- Agenda Items Deadline: Tuesday 6 February 2024, 9.00 a.m.
- Constitutional Amendments Deadline: Tuesday 30 January 2024, 9.00 a.m.