

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST STUDENTS' UNION
MINUTES

Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council
held on 22 January 2024 in The Cube, Level 1, Queen's Students' Union.

Present:

Adam Wilson	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Aidan Moran	Student Officer Campaigns and Engagement
Amitha Simon	Postgraduate School Rep - School of Pharmacy (SPMY)
Aobh Hollywood	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Ben Friel	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Benjamin Pepperrell	Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) Postgraduate Research Faculty Representative
Beth Elder	Student Officer - Union President
Beth Noble	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Bisma Arshad	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Cameron Shaw	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Chris Beaumont	Undergraduate School Representative - Social Sciences, Education and Social Work (SSESW)
Daniel Abayomi	Students' Union Council - International Student Representative (including INTO)
Odeyemi	
Daniel McCormack	Undergraduate School Representative - School of Chemistry & Chemical Engineering (SCHEM)
Devrath Singh Rathore	Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) Postgraduate Taught Faculty Representative
Ellie McGuigan	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Emily Burke	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Ethan McBriarty	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Grace Duffy	Student Officer Education
Hazel McMorrow	Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) Undergraduate Faculty Representative
James Dixon	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
Jamie-Lukas Campbell	Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) Postgraduate Research Representative
Jason Wong	Students' Union Council - All First Year Representative
Jean F. Leonard	Student Association Chairperson - Student Parents' and Carers' Students' Association
Jess Hindley	Student Officer Welfare
Joel Hartley	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
Joel Sheridan	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
John Brown	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Jonathan Boyd	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Joseph Aaron Sanjaya	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Jue Tong	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Karnika Behl	Postgraduate School Rep - School of Arts, English and Languages (SAEL)
Kieran Minto	Student Officer Postgraduate
Leo Davies	Student Association Chairperson - Environmental Action Students' Association
Maria Miln	Students' Union Council - All First Year Representative
Mischa Gerrard	Student Association Chairperson - Disabled Students' Association
Moksh Ahire	Undergraduate School Representative - School of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering (SMAE)
Nadine Curtis	Undergraduate School Representative - School of Biological Sciences (SBIO)
Niamh Bone	Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) Postgraduate Taught Faculty Representative
Niamh Mallaghan	Postgraduate School Rep - School of Mathematics & Physics (SMP)
Oliver Cunningham	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Olivier Gastinel	Student Association Chairperson - LGBT+ Students' Association
Prithish Roy	Postgraduate School Rep - School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics (SHAPP)
Róisín Costelloe	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Ryan Irwin	Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) Undergraduate Faculty Representative
Salim Usman	Student Association Chairperson - International Students' Association
Sinead Hosain	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Sinead Reid	Undergraduate School Representative - School of Arts, English and Languages (SAEL)
Sreyashi Acharjee	Postgraduate School Rep - School of Biological Sciences (SBIO)
Thomas McCormack	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Tiarnan Smyth	Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)
Tim Chan	Undergraduate School Representative - School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering & Computer Science (SEECS)
Venkataharish Rayi	Postgraduate School Rep - Queen's Management School (SMGT)

In Attendance:

DAMIEN CORRIDAN (CLERK OF COUNCIL)
 CIARAN HIGGINS (STUDENTS' UNION DIRECTOR)
 ANNA LEAHY (REPRESENTATION SUPPORT OFFICER)
 BARRY CRUICKSHANK (REPRESENTATION SUPPORT OFFICER)
 MATTHEW MCCALLION (UNION SPEAKER)

The Speaker of Council welcomed all attendees to the fourth Statutory Meeting of the 2023-24 session of the Students' Union Council.

1. APOLOGIES

Ashish Kandel	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Ben Wilson	Undergraduate School Representative - School of Law (SLAW)
Caroline Kirwin	Postgraduate School Rep - School of Psychology (SBS)
Ethan Crawford	Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) Postgraduate Research Faculty Representative
Jack Lydon	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Jack Powell	Postgraduate School Rep - School of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering (SMAE)
Jamie-Lukas Campbell	Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) Postgraduate Research Representative
Jean F. Leonard	Student Association Chairperson - Student Parents' and Carers' Students' Association
Kelly Razey	Postgraduate School Rep - Social Sciences, Education and Social Work (SSESW)
Lia Obiyan	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Maria Murray	Undergraduate School Representative - School of Pharmacy (SPMY)
Megan D'Arcy	Undergraduate School Representative - School of Mathematics & Physics (SMP)
Muskaan Adhani	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Niall O'Hare	Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) Postgraduate Taught Faculty Representative
Patrina Loughran	Undergraduate School Representative - School of Nursing & Midwifery (SNAM)
Rheannon Platman	Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)
Róisín Keenan	Student Association Chairperson - Women Students' Association
Rubina Maani	Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)
Ryan Rogan	Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative
Saqib Gulzar	Students' Union Council - International Student Representative (including INTO)

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**2.1 Minutes of Statutory Meeting (Annual Business Meeting) of 5 December 2023 SUC/M/23/7**

It was agreed that the minutes of the Statutory Meeting of 5 December 2023 (SUC/M/23/7) were a true and accurate record of proceedings.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**3.1 Policy Updates****3.1.1 Consent, Bystander, Handling Disclosure Training for QSU and QUB Staff**

Jess Hindley, Students' Union Welfare Officer updated Council that she is currently developing a consent survey to find out what areas of consent, bystander and handling disclosure training, students want to focus on. The results of this survey will be used to shape the content of consent training going forward.

3.1.2 Consent, Bystander and Disclosing Training for All Students' Union Positions

Jess Hindley, Students' Union Welfare Officer updated Council she is currently developing a consent survey to find out what areas of consent, bystander and handling disclosure training, students want to focus on. The results of this survey will be used to shape the content of consent training going forward. She further updated that there is a planning meeting scheduled for February and will update Council of further developments.

3.1.3 Decolonise, Demilitarise and Democratise Queen's university Belfast

Beth Elder, Students' Union President, updated Council that a letter response was received from Dr Ryan Feeney, Vice-President Strategic Engagement and External Affairs regarding proposed interventions to address the concerns of students articulated through the recent Decolonise, Demilitarise and Democratise QUB Referendum. Beth, Students' Union President, Damien, Policy and Engagement Manager, and Ciaran Students' Union Director will meet to draft a response. This will be approved at the next SU Weekly Catch Up.

COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 Condolences

There were none.

4.2 National Students' Union Updates

4.2.1 Update from NUS-USI

Chloe Ferguson, the NUS-USI President gave Council an overview and update on NUS-USI, what they do, and what they are currently working on.

NUS-USI is your national union representing all university and college students in Northern Ireland. It's unique. It's one of the first organisations in Northern Ireland that was set up to work on both an all - Ireland and all – UK basis.

Being part of NUS-USI means that students' unions here take part in the democracy of the National Union of Students UK (NUS) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), as well as forming their own authentic voice and campaigns through the Northern Ireland based NUS-USI. NUS-USI recognises something that the student movement has at its core – that we're better off when we work together. Currently 100% of students' unions in Northern Ireland are members of NUS-USI.

Over the last 2 years alone, with students' unions and students working together they had some big wins for students.

Recent wins:

- Over £40 million in support for students through the #StudentsDeserveBetter campaign. Including £500 Covid Disruption Grants which were paid directly to all full-time undergraduate students.
- In our push for the payment to be extended to all students we gained over 3500 petition signatures and secured a debate in the NI Assembly debate, winning the House's support.
- £2000 payments were made to Health & Social Care students, securing one of the asks of the Student Healthcare Heroes campaign which we run alongside QUBSU and UUSU.

- We secured the inclusion of support for students in the 10 year Mental Health Strategy, with commitment to annual funding.
- We secured Period Poverty pilots schemes at universities and colleges.
- By working with USI we secured access to Erasmus for NI students through the Irish government.
- We hosted a protest at Stormont on student housing crisis as part of the USI 'No Keys No Degrees campaign' drawing support from across the political spectrum.

Current NUS-USI campaigns:

- Cost of Survival
- Free Transport for students

4.2.2 Update from USI

Zaid Albarghouthi, Vice President for Campaigns gave Council an overview and update on USI, what they do, and what they are currently working on.

USI is the national representative body for the 374,000 students in third level education on the Island of Ireland. USI are a membership organisation – our members are our affiliated Students' Unions around Ireland, North and South.

Democracy

USI is a democratic organisation. The supreme authority of the Union is Comdháil (Congress), which is representative of each affiliated students' union, apportioned according to the size of the student body in each union. Each union also sends one voting member to Comhairle Náisiúnta (National Council) – the executive body of the organisation. Issues relating to governance are delegated by the National Council to a Governance Committee. Day to day management and policy execution are delegated by USI Comdháil to an elected committee of Sabbatical student representatives called the Coiste Gnó (Executive Team).

Northern Ireland

A trilateral arrangement exists between USI, the National Union of Students in the United Kingdom and NUS-USI, the Student Movement in Northern Ireland. NUS-USI was formed in 1972 to ensure that all students in Northern Ireland could be members of the national union movement without distinction as to personal political or religious beliefs, particularly on the Northern Ireland constitutional question.

USI members

USI members are the students' unions recognised by the colleges below. Not every student body in Ireland is eligible for membership according to our constitution. We refer to our members as 'Member Organisations' or MOs'. Individual students gain their membership of USI through their membership of a local students' union. We refer to individual student members as 'Ordinary Members'.

4.3 National Conference Delegate Elections 2023-24 – Update

Council noted that as well as campaigning and representing students' interests during the year, our national students' unions each have a big, multi-day, annual conference. This is where the national student officers are elected and what the national unions will work on over the years ahead is debated, discussed and decided upon.

Every students' union sends delegates to these conferences. They make decisions on a national level, meet loads of like-minded people, hear about new ideas and enjoy a great programme of events.

Any Queen's student can stand for election to become a delegate and they are then elected by an all student vote. This ensures that our delegates are as representative as possible!

Becoming a National Conference Delegate

Nominations for National Conference Delegate positions are closed. Elections for QSU representatives (delegates) to national students' union conferences took place in December 2023. Details of elected representatives are below.

Union of Students in Ireland (USI) Congress

This will take place from Mon 25 Mar – Thu 28 Mar 2024. The event will take place in Co. Sligo (provisional).

The delegates representing Queen's Students' Union are:

- Emily Burke (Elected Delegate)
- Beth Elder (Student Officer Team Representative)
- Grace Duffy (Student Officer Team Representative)
- Mischa Gerrard (Elected Delegate)
- Róisín Keenan (Elected Delegate)
- Kieran Minto (Elected Delegate)

National Union of Students (NUS) Conference

This will take place from Wed 17 Apr - Thu 18 Apr 2024. The event will take place in the Winter Gardens Blackpool, Blackpool.

The delegates representing Queen's Students' Union are:

- Beth Elder (Student Officer Team Representative)
- Jess Hindley (Elected Delegate)
- Róisín Keenan (Elected Delegate)
- Aidan Moran (Elected Delegate)

National Union of Students - Union of Students in Ireland (NUS-USI) Conference

This will take place on Wed 20 Mar - Thu 21 Mar 2024, at a Ormeau Baths, Belfast.

- Mischa Gerrard (Elected Delegate)
- Yurii Liudomyrskyi (Elected Delegate)
- Ethan McBriarty (Elected Delegate)
- Róisín Keenan (Elected Delegate)
- Kelly Razey (Elected Delegate)
- Salim Usman (Elected Delegate)
- Beth Elder (Student Officer Team Representative)
- Grace Duffy (Student Officer Team Representative)
- Jess Hindley (Student Officer Team Representative)
- Sajid Khan (Student Officer Team Representative)
- Kieran Minto (Student Officer Team Representative)

- Aidan Moran (Student Officer Team Representative)

4.3 Student Leader Elections 2023-24 Update

Council noted that nominations are currently open for the Student Leader Elections 2023-24 and will close Thursday, 1 February at 5.00pm. Council further noted elections would be 4 days beginning on Monday 4 March, and ending Thursday 7 March 2024.

4.4 Council Membership

The Clerk of Council updated Council that there are currently 98 members of Council.

5. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS/RULE AMENDMENTS

There were 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

Beth, Students' Union President further updated Council that the Students' Union Pantry has had its funding extended for the rest of this academic year and that the University is relaunching the Cost of Living focus group and she will continue to attend and update accordingly.

Council noted that the Students' Union Mental Health and Wellbeing team delivered free hot lunches and snacks to Students on 9 days over the Months of November and December and

supported over 5,000 students. As well as giving out free lunches and snacks there was opportunities for students to win practical items such as hot water bottles and blankets as part of the Students' Union keep warm initiative.

Council further noted the Students' Union Mental Health and Wellbeing team will be giving out over 3,000 free breakfast on the 21, 22, 27 & 28 February in One Elmwood lobby.

Council noted that the Student Officers and the Students' Union have been working hard to represent Students needs to the University, ensuring they understand the financial pressure everyone is experiencing.

Recent successes have included:

In 2022, we lobbied strongly for a financial intervention package that would help and support all students.

As a result the University announced it would provide:

- A cash payment to students both undergraduate and postgraduate (approximately 21,400 students) of £150. This payment was made in January 2023.
- A cash payment of £400 was made to students with a household income of less than £25k (which amounts to 3,600 students).
- An increased amount of funding in the Student Hardship Fund of £600.
- Library fines will be waived for the Academic Year 22/23.
- £47 Graduations fees were waived in December 2022 and Summer 2023.
- Disciplinary fees will be halved - a positive first step in our long-term lobbying aim of having them abolished.

In February 2023, we opened The Pantry in Partnership with the University. This is a free refill station for students, and to date it has seen over 6,000 students visit.

During Semester One of the 2022/23 Academic year, we distributed over 4,800 free breakfast in the SU and in Semester Two of the 2022/23 Academic year we also provided Free Breakfasts for two weeks across three locations on Campus, including in the SU Lounge.

Over and above this the Students' Union has been offering practical and immediate help and support:

- The Students' Union is a home from home – with lots of areas to relax, study and meet up with friends, open Mondays-Saturdays, 8am-10pm, and Sundays, 8am-6pm
- Free tea, coffee and milk is available in the SU Lounge
- Free period products in the building

The Students' Union has also been representing students by:

- Joining forces with our national students' union, NUS-USI, in their 'Cost of Survival' campaign, calling on the NI Executive to provide:
- Cost-of-Living Payment for all students in further and higher education
- Rent freeze in the private sector and purpose-built student accommodation
- Free public transport for all students, as well as fuel payments and increased mileage rates

Lobbying the NI Executive for:

- Distinct fuel bursary (£400 for students directly)
- Changes in landlords' responsibility to create energy efficient homes
- Giving you helpful tools and advice about managing your money and making savings where possible, like free access to interactive learning platform Blackbullion
- Promoting the financial support that may be available to you including:

- Foodbanks
- Student support funds
- Benefits
- Encouraging you get involved in our campaign
- Asking for your ideas/feedback as to how we can help students during this time

7.2 2023-24 Academic Year – Emerging Issues / Concerns

This item was deferred to the fifth meeting of Student Council.

7.3 Students' Union Mental Health Activity – Update

Beth, Students' Union President further updated Council that the Students' Union Pantry has had its funding extended for the rest of this academic year and that the University is relaunching the Cost of Living focus group and she will continue to attend and update accordingly.

Council noted that the Students' Union Mental Health and Wellbeing team delivered free hot lunches and snacks to Students on 9 days over the Months of November and December and supported over 5,000 students. As well as giving out free lunches and snacks there was opportunities for students to win practical items such as hot water bottles and blankets as part of the Students' Union keep warm initiative.

Council further noted the Students' Union Mental Health and Wellbeing team will be giving out over 3,000 free breakfast on the 21, 22, 27 & 28 February in One Elmwood lobby.

Beth Elder, Students' Union President updated Council that the Mental Health and Wellbeing team have appointed a Social Prescriber to their team, Elaine Reid. This is a new, permanent position within the University and Queen's Students' Union is one of the first unions in the UK and Ireland to appoint a Social Prescriber.

The Committee further noted that the OMNI mental health survey results has now been published and can be accessed on the Students' Union website. The OMNI Action plan is also located on the website.

7.4 Students' Union Strategic Plan 2020-25 – Update

The Clerk of Council gave Council an update on the Students' Union Strategic Plan 2020-25. He further updated Council that we are currently on year 3 of the 5 year Strategic Plan, and informed councillors the full plan could be accessed on the QSU website.

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

Beth, Students' Union President led a discussion on a Proposal to Extend Daily Teaching Hours in Queen's from members, which was very constructive and beneficial with positives and negatives feedback. She further explained that there has been discussions with Queen's management around extending teaching hours to give students less days on campus, and less days to commute.

Beth, Students' Union President further explained how important this feedback would be in shaping future Students' Experience at Queen's and would update Council of any further developments.

7.6 Students' Union Democracy Review – Discussion on Next Steps

The Clerk of Council updated Council on the Students' Union Democracy Review, the progress that has been made so far, and some feedback so far. The Clerk of Council explained how important this feedback would be in shaping future officer teams, and the new Students' Union.

The Clerk of Council then led a discussion on the Students' Union Democracy Review getting feedback from members, which was positive and supportive of the review. The Clerk of Council further updated that the proposal should be ready and submitted at the next meeting of Council for approval.

8. BYE-ELECTIONS

There were none.

9. ELECTIONS

9. There were 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 (Students Officer Campaigns and Engagement)
 Seconder: Beth Elder (Students' Union President)

Following a vote, this motion was carried.

10.2 Policy Submitted to MUS-USI Conference 2024

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.

Consent, Bystander and Disclosure Training for All Students' Union Positions

Council Notes:

- There is currently no mandatory consent, bystander or disclosure training for any Students' Union positions.

Council Believes:

- That any Students' Union position involves dealing with other students. As such, being trained in bystander and handling disclosures is incredibly important to minimise potential further harm done to a student in a vulnerable moment if opening up about a situation.
- Furthermore, gender-based violence is an emergency and has declared to be such. Thus, to implement this training, particularly regarding consent, is a natural next step that we must do.
- Council mandates that the SU must implement mandatory consent (with opt-out) training and bystander / handling disclosure training for all Students' Union positions (course representatives, faculty representatives, student association chairs, school representatives, etc.). Following the framework of SU Council meetings, this training will be delivered in-person.
- Although SU representatives will not be required to sit the training twice in the same academic year, this motion will ensure that all SU representatives will receive mandatory (with opt-out) consent training whether from the SU or the University. However, the mandatory bystander and handling disclosure training will remain in place regardless of the university consent training roll out.

Proposer: Jess Hindley (Student Officer Welfare)
 Seconder: Beth Elder (Students' Union President)

Following a vote, this motion was carried.

11. REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 Report of the Management Board

Beth Elder, the Students' Union President gave a verbal report of Management Board.

This report was accepted.

12. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 Report of the Executive Management Committee

Beth Elder, the Students' Union President gave a verbal report of Executive Management Committee.

- This report was accepted.
- 12.2 Report of the Union President (December 2023) SUC/P/24/1
This report was accepted.
- 12.3 Report of the Student Officer Campaigns and Engagement (Dec 2023) SUC/P/24/2
This report was accepted.
- 12.4 Report of the Student Officer Equality & Diversity (Dec 2023) SUC/P/24/3
This report was accepted.
- 12.5 Report of the Student Officer Postgraduate (Dec 2023) SUC/P/24/4
This report was accepted.
- 12.6 Report of the Student Officer Undergraduate Education (Dec 2023) SUC/P/24/5
This report was accepted.
- 12.7 Report of the Student Officer Welfare (December 2023) SUC/P/24/6
This report was accepted.
13. REPORTS FROM OTHER UNION COMMITTEES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
There were none
14. REPORTS FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES
There were none.
15. CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS
There were none.
16. QUESTIONS (TO ELECTED STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES)
There were none.
17. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS
18. DATE OF FIFTH MEETING OF THE STUDENTS' UNION COUNCIL

The Fifth Meeting of the Students' Union Council 2023-24 will take place on Thursday 29 February 2024, In the Blue Sky Room, in the Students' Union Building.

Agenda Items Deadline: Thursday 22 February 2024, 9.00 a.m.