

## QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST STUDENTS' UNION

### MINUTES

Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council  
held on 2 December 2019 in Queen's Students' Union.

#### Present:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Adam McKenna           | Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)                               |
| Aditya Ajit Sali       | Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)                               |
| Aidan Moran            | Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Aodhán Ó'Baoill        | Executive Management Committee - Irish Language Officer                                    |
| Axelle Larue           | Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Calum Irvine           | Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Christopher Leneghan   | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                                      |
| Ciarán O'Brien         | Executive Management Committee - VP Welfare  |
| Connor Veighey         | Executive Management Committee - Union President   |
| Conor Loughran         | Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)                               |
| David Griffith         | Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Doris Obialor          | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                                      |
| Dyuti Das              | School Representative - School of Pharmacy (SPMY)  |
| Eden Baker             | School Representative - School of Nursing & Midwifery (SNAM)                               |
| Ellen Fearon           | Executive Management Committee - VP Student Activities                                     |
| Elliot Beever          | Executive Management Committee - LGBT+ Officer   |
| Emily Bond             | Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)                               |
| Emma Quin              | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                                      |
| Gift Sotonye-Frank     | Executive Management Committee - VP Postgraduate   |
| Grian Ní Dhaimhín      | Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Hamsavani Rajeswaren   | Executive Management Committee - VP Equality & Diversity                                   |
| Hannah Orr             | Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Hayley Donnelly        | School Representative - School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences (SMED)       |
| Jacob Kyle             | Students' Union Council - MHLS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Jamie Waring           | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                                      |
| Jan Carson             | Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Jason Bunting          | Executive Management Committee - VP Education  |
| Jessica Lawrence       | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                                      |
| John Ewing             | Students' Union Council - All First Year Representative                                    |
| Jonathan Davis         | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                                      |
| Katie McCleary         | School Representative - Social Sciences, Education and Social Work (SSESW)                 |
| Kit Penlington         | Executive Management Committee - Trans Students' Officer                                   |
| Lauren Bailey          | Executive Management Committee - Postgraduate Taught Officer                               |
| Leah Rea               | School Representative - School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics (SHAPP)   |
| Liam Magill            | Executive Management Committee - Environmental and Ethical Trading Officer                 |
| Mark Francos           | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                                      |
| Mark Hamilton          | Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)                               |
| Matthew Kelly          | Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Michael Upham          | School Representative - School of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering (SMAE)                |
| Midhun Madhusoodanan   | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                                      |
| Molly Liggett          | Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Nathan Horbury         | Students' Union Council - All Student Representative                                       |
| Nathan Redmond         | School Representative - Queen's Management School (SMGT)                                   |
| Neville Cobbe          | School Representative - Institute of Theology (ITHEO)                                      |
| Niall Polland          | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                                      |
| Olivia Fletcher        | Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Peter McMurray         | Executive Management Committee - Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) Faculty Officer |
| Ruairi McLarnon        | School Representative - School of Arts, English and Languages (SAEL)                       |
| Ryan Zantinge          | Executive Management Committee - Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) Faculty Officer   |
| Samuel Holst           | School Representative - School of Mathematics & Physics (SMP)                              |
| Sandisiwe Nyanda       | Students' Union Council - International Student Representative (including INTO)            |
| Scott Moore            | Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Sean-Diarmaid Kelliher | Students' Union Council - AHSS Representative (Undergraduate)                              |
| Tanys Insley           | Students' Union Council - International Student Representative (including INTO)            |
| Xinlu Zhang            | Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)                               |

**In Attendance:**

Damien Corridan (Clerk Of Council)  
 Kristina Connolly (Deputy Clerk Of Council)  
 Ciaran Higgins (Students' Union Director)  
 Pete Kernoghan (Development Director & Founder, No More Traffik)  
 Tom Magennis (Student)  
 Niamh Moggan (Student)  
 Dowa Karikunwel (Student)  
 David Obasi (Student)

The Council Speaker welcomed all attendees to the third Meeting of the 2019-20 of the Students' Union Council.

## 1. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from the following Councillors:

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Chawit Jittanoon             | Students' Union Council - International Student Representative (including INTO) |
| Holly Huddleston             | Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)                    |
| Lauren Connell               | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                           |
| Rebecca Russell              | Students' Union Council - EPS Representative (Undergraduate)                    |
| Sarah Biggers                | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                           |
| Sophie Carlisle              | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                           |
| Virendra Ramesh Rao Ghorpade | Students' Union Council - Postgraduate Representative                           |

## 2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

## 2.1 Statutory Meeting of 12 November 2019 (SUC/M/19/6)

The following amendments were asked to be made to the minutes:

## 1. Academic Freedom in QUB (Professor Colin Harvey)

Change:

“QUBSU remains politically neutral and condemns all threats to staff and students as well as the oppression of the freedom of speech.”

To:

“QUBSU remains politically neutral on the constitutional question and condemns all threats to staff and students as well as the oppression of the freedom of speech.”

## 2. Reattribute the questions to the correct Student Officers

## 3. Include that the answers provided by the Student Officers in response to their questions had not been provided within ten working days, as outlined in point 19.3 of the Constitution.

It was agreed that once these amends were made, the minutes of the Statutory Meeting of 12 Nov 2019 (SUC/M/19/6) were a true and accurate record of proceedings.

## 3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were none.

## 4. COMMUNICATIONS

## 4.1 Pete Kernoghan, Development Director &amp; Founder of No More Traffik addresses Council on today, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery.

## 4.2 Part-Time Student Officer Bye-Elections

Damien Corridan, Clerk of Council announced that:

- 11 nominations had been received for the position of Part-Time International Students' Officer
- 10 nominations had been received for the position of Part-Time Women Students' Officer
- 0 nominations had been received for the position of Disabled Students' Officer

He explained that the Student Voice Team were currently in the middle of processing these nominations and that voting would take place on Thursday 5 December.

4.3 Damien Corridan, Clerk of Council announced that Conference Delegate Elections would soon be taking place for the following:

- NUS Conference Delegates
- USI Conference Delegates
- NUS-USI Conference Delegates

Further information would be circulated

4.4 Damien Corridan, Clerk of Council announced that there had been 7 nominations for the Scrutiny Committee which were all deemed elected. He noted that there were 2 further vacancies for the Committee.

4.5 Damien Corridan, Clerk of Council announced that nominations for the Student Leader Elections will be opening in January 2020.

## 5. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS/RULES AMENDMENTS

Union President, Connor Veighey outlined that the proposed Constitutional Amendments (as detailed in Paper SUC/P/19/21) had been developed through feedback collated from Queen's students and research into other Unions for best practice, in an attempt to improve our democratic structures.

Damien Corridan, Clerk of Council explained that the Constitutional Amendments will be divided into and voted on in blocks. He further states that any that are agreed will be put to an all student referendum held on Thursday 5 December.

### 5.1 Constitutional Amendment – Full-Time Student Officer Terms of Office

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)  
 Seconder: Ellen Fearon (Vice President Activities)

#### 5.1.1 An amendment to reduce the total number of terms of office that may be held by a Full-Time Student Officer (i.e. a Sabbatical Officer) from three years two years.

Connor Veighey, Union President moved the amendment by stating that this shouldn't affect that many Student Officers as not may run for three terms of office. He further stated that after two terms, Officers can be disconnected from the bread and butter issues like canvas, funding models etc.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Following a show of voting cards, the Constitutional Amendment passes:

For: 47  
 Against: 0  
 Abstentions: 1

### 5.2 Constitutional Amendment – Removal of a Student Officer for Good Cause

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)  
Seconder: Ellen Fearon (Vice President Activities)

An amendment to replace the current provisions for removing Student Officers from office with a provision that requires a referendum to be held to remove them from office. A referendum may be held on receipt of a petition from students, or if a two-thirds majority of Council so decides. A referendum by petition may only be called twice within a single term of a Student Officer. A Full-Time Student Officer will be removed from office if the number of votes cast to remove them is greater than the number of votes cast in their favour when they were originally elected to their role.

Connor Veighey, Union President moved the amendment stating that this is beneficial as it removes the aspect of popularity.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Following a show of voting cards, the Constitutional Amendment passes:

For: 45

Against: 1

Abstentions: 1

### 5.3 Constitutional Amendment – The Students' Union Council

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)  
Seconder: Ellen Fearon (Vice President Activities)

An amendment to require the Management Board, through the Union President, supported by the Director of the Students' Union, to provide a written report to the Students' Union Council once per semester on the activity of the Board. This report shall include activity associated with the advisory, support and development services of the Union. The Council may make relevant recommendations to the Management Board.

An amendment to establish a new constituency of Council titled "Queen's Accommodation" to elect students to represent the interests of those living in Queen's Accommodation. All students may stand for election and vote in the constituency, which shall have a maximum size of five seats.

An amendment to establish a Scrutiny Committee of Council to review the work of Student Officers, in particular by reviewing their published Reports, to question Student Officers on their published Reports, to make recommendations to Council on the work of Student Officers, to make recommendations to Council on existing processes for scrutinising the work of Student Officers, with a membership of nine members of Council.

An amendment to limit to one Student Officer, the number of Student Officers who may propose or second a single motion / proposal to Council.

An amendment to limit students standing for election to only one of the following constituencies of the Students' Union Council in any concurrently held elections: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Engineering and Physical Sciences; Medicine, Health and Life Sciences; Postgraduate; All First Year Student; All Student Constituency and International Student.

Connor Veighey, Union President moved the amendment.

A friendly amendment was submitted and accepted regarding the following Constitutional Amendment to remove the word 'Sabbatical':

An amendment to limit to one Student Officer, the number of Student Officers who may

propose or second a single motion / proposal to Council.

INSERT the following new clause (into Rule 7 – COMMITTEE CONDUCT, 1.6) and number / renumber accordingly:

A motion or amendment may have no more than one Sabbatical Student Officer named as a Proposer or Secnder.

This was therefore changed to:

An amendment to limit to one Student Officer, the number of Student Officers who may propose or second a single motion / proposal to Council.

INSERT the following new clause (into Rule 7 – COMMITTEE CONDUCT, 1.6) and number / renumber accordingly:

A motion or amendment may have no more than one Student Officer named as a Proposer or Secnder.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Following a show of voting cards, the Constitutional Amendment passed:

For: 46

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

#### 5.4 Constitutional Amendment – Part-Time Student Officers and Executive Management Committee

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)

Secnder: Ellen Fearon (Vice President Activities)

An amendment to require the Management Board, through the Director of the Students' Union, to provide a written report to the Executive Management Committee on a quarterly basis on the activity of the Board. This report shall include activity associated with the advisory, support and development services of the Union. The Executive Management Committee may make relevant recommendations to the Management Board.

An amendment to merge the posts of Mature Students' Officer and Part-Time Students' Officer into a single post titled Mature and Part-Time Students' Officer.

An amendment to merge the posts of Student Parents' Officer and Student Carers' Officer into a single post titled Student Parents' and Carers' Officer.

An amendment to limit to one, the number of Executive Management Committee positions to which a person may nominate themselves in any single set of elections. This shall allow students to stand for election to the Executive Management Committee and Council if the elections are conducted concurrently.

An amendment to enable Part-Time Student Officers' Elect to assume post immediately in the event that the post to which they have been elected (but not yet assumed office) becomes vacant.

An amendment to remove the requirement for a Part-Time Student Officer to provide a written report to each Statutory Meeting of the Council or to provide a written report to the Student membership every two months, and replace these requirements with a

requirement to provide a report to on meeting of Council in each semester (including the Annual Business Meeting) and to provide one report for publication to the Student Membership in each semester.

An amendment to require the Executive Management Committee to produce a single annual Plan of Work which shall be presented to Council for approval, to incorporate the individual activities / projects of Student Officers and overall priority projects for the term of office of the Committee.

An amendment to rename the Environmental and Ethical Trading Officer to Environmental Officer

Connor Veighey, Union President moved the amendment.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Following a show of voting cards, the Constitutional Amendment passed:

For: 47

Against: 0

Abstentions: 3

#### 5.5 Constitutional Amendment – Full-Time Student Officers

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)

Seconder: Ellen Fearon (Vice President Activities)

An amendment to rename the post of VP Student Activities to VP Campaigns and Engagement and amend the role description to include a focus on coordinating Students' Union campaigns and relationships with external campaigning organisations, building a sense of community on campus, overseeing the student development activities of the Students' Union (including Clubs and Societies), working on environmental issues and working with residents' groups. Amendments to other Student Officer roles to reflect the new responsibilities of the VP Campaigns and Engagement.

An amendment to the role description of the Vice President Equality & Diversity to remove references to specific campaigns, to align the role more closely with policy work and liaison with relevant external community groups, to focus on providing advice and support to relevant underrepresented groups and empowering leadership by Part-Time Student Officers in representation of under-represented groups.

An amendment to require Full-Time Student Officers to spend a minimum of three hours per week, during teaching weeks, directly engaging with students.

Connor Veighey, Union President moved the amendment.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Following a show of voting cards, the Constitutional Amendment passed:

For: 49

Against: 0

Abstentions: 1

#### 5.6 Constitutional Amendment – Referendums

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)

Seconder: Ellen Fearon (Vice President Activities)

An amendment to reduce the number of students required to call a referendum from 2.5% of the Student membership to 1.5% of the Student membership.

An amendment to remove the requirement for a petition of 50 signatures to be provided to the Returning Officer to enable a digital referendum petition to be opened by the Students' Union.

An amendment to require that all referendum petitions opened by the Students are valid for 20 working days. (i.e. Petitioners have 20 working days to achieve the required number of students in support of a referendum.)

An amendment to remove the provision that enables referendums to be called which have no formal impact on the Union and cannot mandate the Union on an issue (as detailed in Rule 1, Section 4, 4.17).

Connor Veighey, Union President moved the amendment.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Following a show of voting cards, the Constitutional Amendment passed:

For: 48

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

#### 5.7 Constitutional Amendment – Union Policy

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)

Seconder: Ellen Fearon (Vice President Activities)

An amendment to require all Union policy approved by Council to be reaffirmed by an all-student vote at the end of each session of Council. (i.e. at the end of the academic year.) Policies not reaffirmed by the membership would lapse immediately. Policies affirmed by students would remain as policy for three years.

Connor Veighey, Union President moved the amendment.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Grian Ní Dhaimhín speaks against the amendment, commenting on the practicalities about how this would work. She explained that there are Full-Time and Part-Time elections running in March which brings fatigue and she doesn't think that it is fair that the onus is on Councillors to campaign students to vote in this referendum as it is exhausting for canvassers. She believes that thus devalues the work that they do as Councillors, and that Students' Union and Officers should be lobbying the University to take Council decisions more seriously. She further states that any student can propose motions and speak for or against them.

Councillor [MHLS Rep] David Griffith spoke against the amendment, asking is it every policy, stating that the amendment is too loose and it is not the point of referendums.

Councillor [School Rep] Katie McCleary spoke for the amendment, stating that the Union is a bubble and what would be the issue having more students get involved in the decision making process. She further stated that the onus wouldn't be up to Councillors to get the message out, that would be the role of the Students' Union.

Councillor [All First Year Rep] John Ewing spoke against the amendment, stating that as elected Councillors they should be able to represent the student body and that this amendment goes against the intended aim of streamlining processes.

Councillor [School Rep] Eden Baker asks a question whether there would be a mandatory turnout.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Scott Moore speaks against the amendment, stating that this issue isn't that we need this particular procedure, the issue is the marketing and engagement regarding Council.

Councillor [School Rep] Michael Upham speaks on the amendment by stating that students will vote if they care and will engage if they are engaged. He states that Councillors were all elected to their positions and to those asking why would we go back to them - they should be going back to the students who elected them in to make sure that they are getting it right and representing them correctly.

Councillor [Student Officer Welfare] Ciarán O'Brien speaks for the amendment, stating that this will make an effort to pop the bubble. Everyone at Queen's is a member of the Students' Union and should have a say in the policies of the Union. He understands Councillors who feel that they fight hard to get a policy through and why should they have to fight again at referendum time, but it opens up our democratic structures to all students.

Student Lucy Simmington speaks against the amendment, stating that she isn't a Councillor and she wouldn't participate in a referendum at the end of the year. She doesn't think other students would and we as a Union shouldn't be putting effort and work in to something that wouldn't get much engagement.

A motion to vote was called.

Connor Veighey, Union President summates.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Following a show of voting cards, the Constitutional Amendment falls:

For: 15

Against: 29

Abstentions: 8

## 5.8 Constitutional Amendment – Non-Student Issues

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)

Seconder: Ellen Fearon (Vice President Activities)

An amendment to require motions at Council that are not deemed to be Student Issues to require a two-thirds majority to become policy. The Union Speaker may rule as to whether an issue deemed a student issue, whose determination may be overruled by Council.

Connor Veighey, Union President moved the amendment.

Councillor [School Rep] Neville Cobbe speaks on the amendment, stating that it gives a lot of power to the Council Speaker, and asks what if a minority of students are affected by something that wouldn't be deemed a student issue by the majority?

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Sean-Diarmuid Kelliher speaks against the amendment, stating that Students' Unions in the past have led the way for civil rights, and if we were to pass this amendment, it would make it difficult for students to send their solidarity to students across the world and locally.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Scott Moore speaks against the amendment, explaining that what is and what isn't a student issue is a fine line. He believes that this amendment

gives the Speaker of Council too much power and he can think of times in the past where a previous Speaker used their power in a biased way and this opens Council up to this.

Deputy Union Speaker, Mark Francos, makes a Point of Information that Council would have the ability to overrule The Speaker's decision as to what is a student issue or not.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Scott Moore asks a question – whether this would be a simple or super majority.

Students' Union President Connor Veighey answers that this would be a super majority.

A motion to vote was called.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote was carried.

Following a secret ballot, the Constitutional Amendment falls:

For: 6

Against: 46

Abstentions: 2

#### 5.9 Constitutional Amendment – Administrative Amendments

An amendment to formalise the appointment of the Returning Officer for elections to Council, conference delegations and for referendum.

An amendment to specifically require the Returning Officer to publish an Elections Pack for elections, rather than just provide candidates with an Elections Pack.

Amendments to correct textual / grammar / spelling / numerical errors in the Constitution.

An amendment to provide consistency in wording in the calling of bye-elections for Executive Management Committee posts (i.e. consistency with Rule 4, Section 1, 1.9: Bye-elections “should be held within a reasonable period of time”)

An amendment to provide consistency in wording in the calling of bye-elections for Executive Management Committee posts (i.e. consistency with Rule 4, Section 1, 1.9: Bye-elections “should be held within a reasonable period of time”)

An amendment to support any transitory requirements to support implementation of amendments approved by Council.

Connor Veighey, Union President moved the amendment.

Following a show of voting cards, the Constitutional Amendment carried:

For: 45

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

#### 5.10 Constitutional Amendment – Academic Representatives

Proposer: Connor Veighey (Union President)

Seconder: Jason Bunting (Vice President Education)

An amendment to move elections for the three Faculty Rep posts to the second semester.

An amendment to enable elections for School Representative posts to take place in Semester Two.

An amendment to rename the Part-Time Faculty Officer posts to Part-Time Faculty Representative posts.

An amendment to give each Faculty Rep responsibility for the organisation and coordination of representative activity by Course Representatives and School Representatives in their Faculties.

An amendment to have Faculty Reps in attendance at meetings of the Executive Management Committee (without voting rights) and also remove the requirement for them to attend all meetings of the Executive Management Committee.

An amendment to create a Postgraduate School Representative constituency on Council, whose membership shall be Postgraduate School Representative from Each School / Institute in which postgraduate Students are enrolled, as defined by University Regulations.

An amendment to increase the size of the Students' Union Council from 120 to 140, primarily to facilitate the addition of Postgraduate School Representatives.

An amendment to establish a Committee of Council to be known as the School Representative Committee, whose membership shall include the Vice President Education, the Vice President Postgraduate and School Representatives

Councillor [Student Officer Education] Jason Bunting and Councillor [Student Officer Postgraduate] move the amendment.

Following a show of voting cards, the Constitutional Amendment passes:

For: 49

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

## 6. BUSINESS FOR CONSIDERATION

### 6.1 Recognition of Clubs & Societies

There were none.

### 6.2 Report on Clubs & Society Investigation

Damien, Clerk of Council, outlines the report on Clubs & Societies Investigation to inform Council.

## 7. BUSINESS FOR DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Students' Union Redevelopment Project – Update

Union President Connor Veighey explains that focus groups are ongoing and that he is currently working with the Students' Union and Queen's University Marketing Teams regarding hording designs to ensure that they promote the current Union building. He further updates Council that they have got the green light from Belfast City Council to start the demolition in January and the build will start in the summertime.

### 7.2 Planned protest by An Cumann Gaelach (Aodhán Ó'Baoill, Irish Language Part-Time Students' Officer)

Councillor [Irish Language Part-Time Student Officer] Aodhán Ó'Baoill explains that two years ago Council passed the need for an Irish Language Officer and that the Union

should be using the language in all campaigns. He further states that there is a huge desire for bilingual signage to be used. He informs Council that a protest is planned for Wednesday 4 December at the Gates of the Lanyon Building to show Queen's that the denial of these rights should be stopped and encourages Councillors to join the protest.

A motion to suspend standing orders to go to motion 10.2 was submitted.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to suspend standing orders falls.

A motion to extend the guillotine by half an hour, from 9pm to 9.30pm was submitted.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to extend the guillotine passed.

## 10. MOTIONS

### 10.1 **Supporting Nursing staff, students and Allied Health professionals**

Council notes:

Members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) in Northern Ireland have voted overwhelmingly to take industrial action, including strike action, over the current nursing staffing crisis and pay discrepancies when compared to nurses working in England, Scotland and Wales. This is the first time in the history of the organisation that RCN members have voted to take strike action. 96% of those members who returned their ballot papers voted to take industrial action and 92% voted to take strike action (1) The total number of those balloted was around 8,000, with turnout of 43.3%. The main driver behind this decision is that staff feel all other avenues to advocate for building a safer health service have been exhausted and this is the only way to bring about the changes necessary to deliver the expected high standard of patient care.

On December 3rd, 10th and 11th members of the RCN intend to take Industrial Action including not carrying out overtime, they will not work unpaid additional hours, they will not be answering phones, they will not be doing administrative tasks and will only complete paperwork directly related to patient care, and they will not be collecting bloods or pharmacy prescriptions in the community. This will subsequently be followed by full strike action on December 18th. The RCN will work with the employer to agree exemptions from taking action where there would otherwise be direct harm to patients or danger to the life or limb of any person. This means that members covering roles that are exempted are not expected to participate in strike action. (2)

There are currently 3000 unfilled nursing staff vacancies within Health and social care Northern Ireland (1). Across the NHS 1 in 10 posts are vacant (3). A newly registered nurse in Northern Ireland currently earns £1,419 less each year than in England and Wales, and £1,875 less than in Scotland. This is a major contributing factor to the number of vacancies in the country, which in turn has a significant impact on patient care. (4)

The British Medical Association is supportive of this action and is in agreement that "the current Northern Ireland nursing workforce is in crisis. Nursing staffing levels has a serious impact on service delivery and patient care as well as having a negative impact on the productivity of the medical workforce in many parts of the health and social care system." (5) In particular Emergency Departments and the mental health sector are particularly affected by staff shortages (6).

The Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Party are standing on manifesto pledges to increase NHS funding if they are successful in the December 12<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary election

Throughout their training Queen's Nursing Students undertake regular clinical placements in which they contribute significantly to the care of patients. After they

graduate they continue to contribute to the education of future nurses through acting as mentors and tutors for QUB students. Without the input of these mentors the QUB nursing programme would not function. Furthermore, nursing students spend half of their training in clinical practice placements, and due to staff shortages are being relied upon more and more when staffing the ward, even though they are supposed to be supernumerary. The effect of this on their learning is that they get less one to one time with their mentors and cannot always avail of learning opportunities such as going to theatre or observing procedures, which translates to poorer development of their clinical practice, due to the fact they are relied upon to essentially work as an unpaid nurse.

There are very limited placement opportunities for current nursing students. The School of Nursing and Midwifery is finding it challenging to get all their students good quality placements despite the Nursing and Midwifery Council requiring all providers to offer student placements

Council believes:

The NHS is a public service we should all be proud of, and one which serves a vital function in caring for all members of society in times of sickness, injury and other medical situations such as child-birth. The dedication and commitment of all NHS staff to their patients is to be commended, and the future of the NHS must be protected

The high level of vacancies puts staff under considerable pressure with staff having to work extra shifts and many wards not being covered with the number of staff the Regulatory and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) sets out as being required. This leads to a detrimental impact on patient care (7)

The training of nursing students by Queen's University must not be compromised by using nursing student merely for service provision due to staffing shortages as it is vital that all students are fully trained, educated and prepared for the roles they will be fulfilling in the NHS in the coming years.

Local political parties should advocate for an increase in local NHS spending to be prioritised on hiring and retaining nursing staff and allied health professionals to ensure all Northern Ireland hospitals are staffed to a safe level (as advised by RQIA)

Nursing staff working in Northern Ireland should receive fair and equal pay, pensions and working conditions to those working across the rest of the United Kingdom

Council mandates:

The SU President and Faculty Officer for MHLS shall write to the Minister of Health (or if one is not in place at the time, to leaders of all parties that stand in the upcoming December 12th election in Northern Ireland) along with the permanent secretary for health to outline our above concerns relating to patient care and to encourage them to take action to improve staff levels and working conditions for nurses and allied health professionals within the NHS; and to acknowledge the invaluable contribution being made by QUB nursing students to the NHS in Northern Ireland

Executive Management Committee to lobby for an increase in the number of nursing course places made available by the University to help train additional nurses to fill vacancies and support this by advocating the Faculty Education Board to encourage more providers to facilitate more nursing students as they are duty bound to do by the Nursing and Midwifery Council

SU Welfare Officer to release a press statement in support of nursing students and communicate via global email to all current QUB nursing students to advise on the outcome of this motion in order to communicate to students that the Students Union is fully aware of the concerns about NHS working conditions along with student placement difficulties and is using its voice to lobby for reforms on their behalf

References

1. NI, Royal College of Nurses. RCNNI. [Online] [Cited: ] <https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/nurses-vote-to-take-industrial-action-including-strike>.
2. Ballot FAQs. RCN. [Online] [Cited: ] <https://www.rcn.org.uk/northernireland/getinvolved/ballot/ballot-faqs>.
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Proposer: Peter McMurray (Student)  
 Seconder: Eden Baker (Student)

Councillor [MHLS Faculty Officer] and Proposer Peter McMurray moves the motion. He explains to Council that QUB students undertake a significant amount of placements and this is the first time that they have taken strike action and that Council has a duty of care to our alumni and current students to support them. He further states that staff feel that all other avenues have been exhausted and that this is the last resort.

Councillor [School Rep] and Seconder Eden Baker speaks for the motion. She explains that there are 3,000 nursing places in Northern Ireland that are not filled and student nurses are being used to fill these gaps. She states that as a nursing student herself, she is not developing the skills or getting the learning she needs as she is being used to facilitate care like ECGs and taking bloods, instead of spending her 30 hours with her mentor. She further explains that morale amongst nursing students and staff is low and that patients are frustrated because student nurses just can't give them the care that they need.

A motion to vote was submitted.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion to vote passes.

Peter McMurray waved the right to summate.

Following a show of voting cards, the motion passes.

## 10.2 **Students' Union response to decriminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland**

Council notes:

As of October 21st 2019 abortion has been decriminalised in Northern Ireland. It currently remains active Students Union policy to advocate for the decriminalisation of abortion.

This is a divisive and contentious issue within Northern Ireland, with many people taking strong views of both sides of the debate.

A recent SU social media post celebrating the decriminalisation of abortion resulted in a significant number of disappointed comments from current students and alumni who did not share the view that this was something to celebrate, likewise many other students have publically expressed their views in favour of this change of the law.

Council believes:

We represent a vast student body with a much-divided view on the issue of abortion. In light of the recent legal developments we feel that as a matter of equality, in order to represent the views of all students and not alienate a large group of our students it

would be in the best interests of the Student's Union to revert to a neutral position on this issue.

This would be in keeping with other divisive political issues where council has opted to remain neutral in order to fairly and equally represent all our students (eg Policy OTH/2014/8/5). This would also bring our university policy into line with other leading UK institutions such as Cardiff University (1) (2) Council has previously mandated that "religious freedom is an important part of each individual's freedom of choice and should not be oppressed or limited" Policy Reference: OTH/2015/8/2. By adopting a neutral position on this issue we would be better able to uphold this freedom for those among the student body who are opposed to abortion, while also ensuring those who are in favour of abortion have that same freedom to express their views.

Council resolves:

To update our policy regarding abortion in light of recent legal developments to take a neutral stance on the issue of abortion, respecting the current legal position in Northern Ireland and not advocating in a Union capacity for or against further reforms.

To respect the freedom of choice of all members of the students union to take their own personal stance on this issue as a matter of conscience and to promote such views in a personal capacity. Students Union branded clothing should not be worn when promoting views in a personal capacity and clothing promoting a non-neutral position should not be worn when representing the Students Union in an official capacity.

#### References

1. Cardiff Students vote against pro-abortion motion. Catholic Herald. Nov 28, 2014
2. Cardiff University students back free speech on abortion. Christian.org.uk. Dec 5, 2014

Proposer: Peter McMurray (Student)

Secunder: Danika Mann (Student)

Councillor [MHLS Faculty Officer] and Proposer Peter McMurray moves the motion. He states that he knows on Council there will be many students who agree with the decriminalisation of abortion, but this motion is to be inclusive of all students. It is not to stop students or Student Officers as individuals from having an opinion but rather the Students' Union as a whole not to have a stance. Peter referred to the Facebook post, dated 21 October 2019 regarding the Students' Union's Statement on the Decriminalisation of Abortion and Introduction of Equal Marriage in Northern Ireland, which showed how divisive this issue was amongst the student body.

Peter further stated that the Students' Union has a mandate to represent all students and that adopting a neutral stance would be in keeping with other policies where we take a neutral stance in able to be inclusive of all students. He also commented that this would be in line with other SUs too.

Peter stated that this motion isn't to silence discussions, but to ensure that all voices are heard. That the Students' Union represents Christian students, Muslim students, Medical students, Hindu students, those students with prenatal conditions who are relieved that they themselves weren't terminated.

He confirms that this motion isn't debating the rights or wrongs of abortion or Councillors own opinions, and it is not a motion to bring about a pro-life stance but it is one of tolerance. He states that students feel alienated from the Students' Union and that he has consulted with Chaplains and gained a number of students' signatures for a petition.

Councillor [Student Officer Equality & Diversity] Hamsavani Rajeswaren speaks against the motion. She states that she has been elected twice on a pro-choice manifesto and is proud of what the Students' Union has stood for and achieved. She explains that the pro-choice position has enabled the Students' Union to campaign for repeal and take

part in nation-wide reform. It also means that Student Officers have been able to help students who often come to them for help with crisis pregnancies. She states that the Students' Union being pro-choice doesn't silence pro-life students.

Councillor [All Student Rep] Nathan Horbury speaks for the motion. He states that the Students' Union states that they are equal and inclusive to all, but that diversity of opinion isn't covered in the Student Officer Team. That there is a spectrum of students across the student body, and we can't let students feel alienated. He further states that through campaigns and stances like these, the Students' Union is disregarding this large section of the student body. He explains that this is a sensitive issue, and that the SU talks about inclusivity but that it needs to show it in the actions taken. He explains that this is not a pro-life or pro-choice motion, but it is to make the SU inclusive to all.

Councillor [School Rep] Eden Baker speaks against the motion. She states that in lieu of consulting with the students she represents due to not receiving the Agenda in time, she is using position statements from the two medical bodies, Royal College of Nursing and Royal College of Midwives, which outline that every woman should have a say over her body and fertility. As a progressive Students' Union, we cannot disagree with healthcare professionals who believe that abortion isn't a criminal act.

Councillor [EPS Rep] Connor Loughran speaks on the motion, stating that the Students' Union isn't religious and that Chaplains do not represent students.

Councillor [School Rep] Nathan Redmond makes a Point of Information, stating that when you start University you can sign up to a Chaplaincy so these Chaplains do represent students.

Student Lucy Simmington speaks for the motion, stating that she is not here to represent a specific student group or Society, but that she is pro-life. She explains that she disagrees that the Students' Union had taken this stance due to the undemocratic nature of the way pro-choice policy was passed.

NUS-USI Women's Officer Jill McManus speaks against the motion, stating that it is to prevent Student Officers and Part-Time Student Officers from engaging in campaigning and also inhibits them from helping students who are having crisis pregnancies.

Student Niamh Porter speaks for the motion, stating that the Pro-Life Society Pages have been receiving a lot of abuse. They have not reported these threats to the Union as they don't feel like they would care about them. The stance is not representative of all students and if it was made neutral it would make them feel a part of the Students' Union.

Councillor [AHSS Rep] Grian Ní Dhaimhín speaks against the motion, stating that Societies at Queen's have a lot of power to campaign. She further states that having a pro-life stance means that if a student has a crisis pregnancy they will still be able to come to the Union for all the help they need.

Councillor [School Rep] Michael Upham speaks on the motion explaining that the wording pro-choice in itself means pro more than one choice. He himself if he were a woman would not have an abortion but he does understand that other people have other views.

Councillor [Student Officer Postgraduate] Gift Sotonye-Frank speaks for the motion, stating that the Students' Union should be on the side of all students.

Councillor [MHLS Faculty Officer] and Proposer Peter McMurray summates by stating that Council should work to ensure that all students feel represented by the Union. He further stated that in regards to women presenting themselves with crisis pregnancies, information about both sides could be given to the students. He explains that his

intention isn't to minimize women's rights by passing this motion and that we are not voting for or against abortion, it is just regarding the stance that the Union has.

Following a secret ballot, the motion falls.

For: 20

Against: 32

Abstention: 1

11. Report of the Management Board and Recommendations

Council agreed that this matter be considered at the 14 January Statutory Meeting of Council.

12. Report of the Executive Management Committee and Recommendations

12.1 Report of the Executive Management Committee

12.2 Report of the Union President SUC/P/19/15

12.3 Report of the Vice President Education SUC/P/18/16

12.4 Report of the Vice President Equality and Diversity SUC/P/18/17

12.5 Report of the Vice President Postgraduate SUC/P/18/18

12.6 Report of the Vice President Student Activities SUC/P/18/19

12.7 Report of the Vice President Welfare SUC/P/18/20

Council agreed that this matter be considered at the 14 January Statutory Meeting of Council.

13. Reports from other Union Committees and Recommendations

Report of the Standing Committee (to follow) SUC/P/19/22

Report of the Environmental and Ethical Committee (to follow) SUC/P/19/23

Council agreed that this matter be considered at the 14 January Statutory Meeting of Council.

14. Reports from University Committees

There are none.

15. Constitutional Questions

There are none.

16. Questions (to Elected Student Representatives)

16.1 *To the Vice President Equality & Diversity*

At the recent QUB Remembrance Sunday service there was one solitary representative from the Executive Management Committee to represent the Student's Union in the laying of a wreath, in stark contrast to all other University organisations present which had multiple representatives. Would there have been merit in a larger attendance as a show of support to all former and present students affected by both the World Wars and ongoing conflict; in particular in your equality role as a show of solidarity for students from racial, gender and ethnic minorities and the LGBT community who were particularly targeted by the Nazi party during World War Two? Will this be prioritised in future years?

Proposer: Peter McMurray (Student)

*The below answer was submitted outside of the required timeframe:*

The Students' Union has a long standing practice to send rep to the University's annual Remembrance Sunday service, even when some student officers found it personally very difficult to be there.

In my role I think it's important to recognise & commemorate the suffering and loss experience by the groups mentioned in your question, both historically and in present times. It's also vital that we recognise the violence and oppression those groups have been subject to especially due to colonisation in the global south.

These groups always suffered disproportionately, and are historically oppressed, but especially heightened in conflict. These communities hold commemorative events such as, Trans Day of Remembrance, Black History Month and Reclaim the Night, which the Students' Union has actively been involved in, hosted and supported over the last number of years. I'm open to discussion about how our commemoration of the suffering and the loss of these groups can be opened up to everyone in society. I would like all communities, religious & political groups on campus actively supporting these events.

#### 16.2 *To the Vice President Postgraduate*

You will be aware that it is Union policy 4.17 that Amazon vouchers should not be used as rewards/incentives for students. The postgraduate school has sent out several surveys this semester with Amazon vouchers as incentives. What steps will you take to ensure the faculty is encouraged to support local Northern Irish businesses when selecting incentives for student feedback surveys?

Proposer: Peter McMurray (Student)

*The below answer was submitted within the required timeframe:*

Hello Councillors,

The question asked is a pertinent one and I am grateful that it is coming forward at this time.

I am always thinking of further ways we can promote local businesses by using their products in line with SU policy as incentives for further and better student engagement. Please get in touch with me with any ideas you have and I am happy to work together to make this a reality.

I have also been in touch with the Graduate School regarding their use of Amazon vouchers and they have responded with the following comments below:

The Graduate School uses a range of incentives to promote student engagement, but also acknowledges student preferences and concerns. At present this includes (but is not limited to):

- Cash prizes (e.g. 3MT, poster competition)
- Social enterprise / green basket from range of local suppliers, which has been used particularly for our Green Impact programme
- A loyalty scheme, that promotes reducing single use cups, and rewards with coffee from a campus location
- Welcome Centre at Queen's
- Queen's Film Theatre
- A range of local businesses during our welcome and induction week, including We Are Vertigo, No Alibis bookstore, Boojum

We have also taken proactive steps within areas of significant procurement, such as catering, to use to support local business, such as using organisations impacted by the Primark fire exclusion zone. In October 2019 we were recognised by Social Enterprise NI as 'Stakeholder of the Year' for our approach to deliberately including social enterprise in our supply chain. We are continuing to build this into different elements of

our approach, ensuring we are in line with University procurement policy as well as providing incentives that students value.

Please kindly get in touch with any other comments or queries at [su.postgraduate@qub.ac.uk](mailto:su.postgraduate@qub.ac.uk)

Thank you again for your question and hope to continue working with you all in the New Year.

Gift Sotonye-Frank,  
Postgraduate Officer

16.2 *To the Vice President Welfare*

As part of your much-needed Weeks Don't End scheme do you have any plans to liaise with local churches and chapels to help promote student focused services/meals that many of them put on through the academic year?

Proposer: Peter McMurray (Student)

*The below answer was submitted outside of the required timeframe:*

Unfortunately I am not the relevant officer for this question to be directed to as 'Weeks Don't End' is a brilliant project created by Ellen Fearon our Activities Officer. Having spoken to Ellen she has said that currently she has not given it any consideration.

17. Any Other Competent Business

There was none

18. Date of Next Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council

Deputy Speaker Mark Francos announced that the next Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council would take place on Tuesday 14 January at 6pm in the Lounge, Level 1, SU - Elmwood.

Kristina Connolly (Deputy Clerk, Students' Union Council)