

UPSU Governing Documents

Political Parties Bye-Law

February 2019

Approval Details

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Review lead staff member:	Director of Student Experience		

Reviewing this document

This document may be amended with the permission of the Board of Trustees, following pre-approval by Governance and Appointments Committee.

Union Council will then review any significant changes to this Bye-Law prior to any such change taking effect in order to permit the Council the opportunity to provide feedback and raise any concerns in respect of any such change directly with the Union Chief Executive who will refer such feedback and concerns to the Board of Trustees for further consideration.

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1 Political Parties

1.1 The Union has to recognise its obligations as both a Students' Union and as a Charity. It also needs to recognise the differences between political parties, and student led Societies. Students' Unions have legislative obligations from a number of areas. These include:

- the Education Act 1994,

- the Representation of Peoples Act 2000,
- the Charities Law 2006,
- Charity Commission Regulations,
- The Memorandum and Articles of Association

1.2 The main regulatory points of relevance are from the Charities Commission. It states:

“A charitable Students’ Union may not support a particular political party but it may... encourage students to develop their political awareness and acquire knowledge of or debate political issues. To achieve this it may make grants to political clubs or societies on the campus. But these should be even-handed and non-discriminatory and for the purpose of the clubs or societies.” Charity Commission Operating Guidance 48 B3: Students’ Unions: The Activities of Charitable Students’ Unions.

“In a political arena, a charity must stress its independence and ensure that any involvement it has with political parties is balanced. A charity must not give support or funding to a political party, nor to a candidate or politician” Charity Commission CC9: Speaking Out – Guidance on Campaigning and Political Activities by Charities.

2 External Political Parties and Political Speakers

2.1 The Union must not give its support to any one political party. It may express support for particular policies which will contribute to the delivery of its own charitable purposes, so long as its independence is maintained and perceptions of its independence are not adversely affected.

2.2 The Union may only engage with political parties to the extent that the engagement furthers the Union's own purposes. It must remain politically neutral, and consider working with all / other parties to further its purposes. There are various ways that the Union can engage with political parties. For example, it can lobby parties or individual MPs, provide information and briefings, and take part in public debates.

2.3 Charities, such as University of Plymouth Students’ Union, can also carry out political activity, such as trying to change a law or government policy, until its goal has been met, but political activity cannot become the only activity of a charity indefinitely; it should be a means to an end, rather than the end itself. Political activity might include raising public support for a change in the law, or seeking to influence political parties or independent candidates, decision-makers, politicians or public servants to accept the charity's position. It may also be responding to consultations carried out by political parties.

2.4 All party political events, and any instance where a guest speaker is invited to engage with Union Members, must be approved by the Societies and Activities Department, and follow the Union [External Speakers Policy](#).

- 2.5 Full Union members may mandate elected representatives through a Referendum. If a mandate is in place then elected representatives must abide by the decisions made.

3 Student-Led Political Societies

- 3.1 The Union recognises that a party political Society can be formed following a register of student interest (of no less than 20 names), alongside a fully functioning committee. Once this request has been passed by the Societies Forum, and all relevant documentation has been provided to the Societies and Activities Department, the Society can be officially recognised.
- 3.2 The Union will allow political societies the same access to facilities, support, and service as any other Society.
- 3.3 Aggressive campaigning is not permitted. Complaints relating to allegations of aggressive campaigning will be dealt with by the Accountability Board.
- 3.4 All Clubs and Societies must adhere to any University of Plymouth campus policies regarding the distribution of leaflets, and posters.
- 3.5 Final decisions relating to constitutional, policy-based, and legislative obligations will lie with the members of the Union Council with guidance from the Student Voice Team, and the relevant Senior Manager.

For further help and advice, please contact the Governance Team

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