

Contact details	
Your name (Proposer of the policy)	William Styles
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The name of a person who supports the policy (Seconder of the policy)	Chukwudi Ezenyi (KC)
Seconder's email	chukwudi.ezenyi@su.plymouth.ac.uk

  

Student Impact	
Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how.	Members of Union Council and a students known to have set out to gather signatures though abandoned the effort.
How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students?	It will increase democratic engagement by making the barrier to entry less formidable.

  

Policy Proposal	
<b>The Union Notes</b> (Facts) This section should include facts, not reflection or opinions. Please provide references where possible.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Student's Union is Democratic.</li> <li>2. The Student's Union is Student Led.</li> <li>3. The Student's Union facilitates policy creation.</li> <li>4. The existing physical signatory count needed to trigger a student referendum or to resubmit a motion is 400. This was raised from 200 without Union Council input.</li> <li>5. The UPSU website requires 250 upvotes (digital signatures) on the "platform for change" page with 75 more upvotes than downvotes before "action" is taken. (This platform is currently out of service)</li> <li>6. A new platform has been launched aimed at collecting feedback.</li> </ol>	
<b>The Union Believes</b> (Opinions/Beliefs) This section requires reflection on the facts stated in 'The Union Notes'	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That democracy requires significant participation.</li> </ol>	

2. That the policies mentioned above are underutilised and largely unknown and this is a detriment to the resilience of our democracy.
3. That a lower threshold for physical signatures would promote greater engagement.
4. That physical signatures (which require face to face communication and interaction) are more informed and valuable than digital ones due to the greater activation energy required.
5. Student feedback and input into the democratic process is now more valuable than ever.

**The Union Resolves (Actions)** Here you will describe the action you want to be taken, be specific.

1. That the threshold for physical signatures is to be ~~returned to 200~~ set at **1% of the student population** to trigger a student referendum or to resubmit a policy to Union Council.
2. That the new feedback tool is to be actively advertised and promoted.

**Appendices/supporting information** Please include any supporting information relevant to your motion, this could include; consideration of how you would achieve any points in 'The Union Resolves', links to news articles or online publications

### Excerpt of minutes from the meeting 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021

#### Signature Requirements Policy Proposal

William Styles, Part-time Postgraduate Officer gave an overview of the proposal. Will explained that UPSU By-laws were changed without discussion with Union Council and the number of signatures needed to call a referendum or revisit a matter previously discussed was increased to 400 from 200. Will added that the proposal seeks to reinstate the lower figure to remove some of the barriers to students participating in democratic processes.

Antony Blackshaw, UPSU CEO noted that the number of signatures is stated in the Memorandum and Articles of Association which was set at the time that UPSU incorporated in 2017.

Antony explained that changes to the M&A's need to be changed by the Board of Trustees unlike a simple change to the By-law which would be approved at Union Council and ratified by the Board.

Antony also added that the figure of 200 signatures is in line with sector practice for these democratic activities. He further noted that there may be other things needing updating in the M&A's and it would make sense to change all things at the same time.

India Ellis, School of Law, Criminology and Government Rep queried that 200 is only 1% of the student population and in her opinion that felt a little low but agreed with making the process digital.

Verity Lemm, VP Activities added that the current estimate of student of UoP was 16,000. Will commented that 1% of 16,000 is 186

Takudzwa Mawera, Part-time BAME Officer also agreed that 200 seems too low, however, as the figures are part of legally binding documents and he did not agree with the fact that students were not consulted. Taku expressed concern about the effectiveness of the Union Council if policy that positively impacts on the student body. The SU is not looked upon favourably by students.

Will Styles added that the 200 signatures does not pass policy, it only re-raises an issue at Council or prompts a referendum, it does not circumvent democratic process.

Viv Hocking School of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics reminded Council that not all students are engaged with the SU and it was unrealistic to expect that the number of students engaging with democratic process to be on par with the number of students at the university.

Owain Gullam, Part-time Welfare Officer noted that all this is doing is reducing the minimum that is not to say that you will only ever speak to 200 students as the more students that are engaged the better in terms of a campaign.

Sam Pritchard, Part-time LGBT+ Rep agreed that students should never be deterred from engaging in democratic process and agreed it should be reduced.

Will Styles noted that KC, SU President and seconder of the motion suggested 100 signatures which does feel too few but if that was agreed to be an appropriate figure then he would accept that amendment.

Viv Hocking suggested that the figure be changed to 1%, Will accepted this suggested amendment.

Verity Lemm agreed that all processes would need to be managed and 1% seems reasonable, as elected representatives Union Council are here to represent the minority as well as the majority.

The Chair called for a vote on the amendment

For: 21

Against: 2

Abstentions: 1

The amendment was passed and accepted by the Proposer.

Chair called for a vote on the proposal as a whole

For: 21

Against: 1

Abstention: 2

The policy proposal to reduce the number of signatures need to raise matter for discussion at Union Council or to call for a referendum was passed.

Antony Blackshaw, UPSU CEO added that 3% of the student body do need to vote in the referendum for it to pass. He noted that the changes needed to amend the M&A's will be taken to Board of Trustees, summarised with other necessary changes and taken to All Student Meeting for agreement, final approval will then be needed from the University Board of Governors.