

NUS Delegate Accountability Policy Proposal

Contact details

Your name (Proposer of the policy)	Lowri Jones
The name of a person who supports the policy (Secunder of the policy)	Maja Smith

Student Impact

Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how.	The importance of holding NUS Delegates to Account was discussed at the Union Executive Committee in March 2016, link to minutes; https://www.upsu.com/resources/7137/Minutes-of-the-meeting-21st-March-2017/
How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students?	Following the implementation of the proposal, students can be confident that delegates are being representative of the student body and not just acting in their own interests. This proposal also empowers students to engage with student issues at a national level, regardless of party politics or factions.

Policy Proposal

<p>The Union Notes (Facts) This section should include facts, not reflection or opinions. Please provide references where possible.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The National Union of Students (NUS) holds an annual conference which votes on policies, mandates NUS' actions, and elects national officers. 2. Each Students' Union affiliated with NUS can send delegates to the conference, the number of which is based on the number of students at the institution at that time. 3. UPSU's delegates are elected through a ballot of all UPSU members after candidates have submitted a manifesto. 4. Candidates are able to further promote themselves through speeches hosted by UPSU

5. NUS' conference guide states that policies to be submitted to conference must firstly be approved by a political body at the Students' Union, and suggests Union Council, AGM or the Sabbatical Officer team

The Union Believes (Opinions/Beliefs) This section requires reflection on the facts stated in 'The Union Notes'

1. Although delegates are elected democratically, delegates in the past have not been held to account after returning from conference.
2. Accountability is vital to ensure that the student body is fairly and accurately represented.
3. Members should be facilitated to discuss policies submitted to conference and the candidates running in the elections, and should furthermore be able to mandate delegates to vote in particular ways.
4. Students submitting motions to the conference should also be encouraged, and the process to do so should be accessible for all.

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

1. When submitting a manifesto in the election to become a delegate, candidates should be **honest and upfront about political leanings, including NUS factions. disclose any factional preferences and whether or not they will be campaigning on the behalf of any particular NUS election candidates.**
2. To submit a policy to NUS Conference, students or representatives should submit the policy to UPSU's Sabbatical Officer team to be voted upon, after appropriate consultation with the student body. This could comprise of open feedback upon publication of proposals on the UPSU website and circulation via social media. Details of approved or declined proposals will also be published.
- ~~3. UPSU must host an open meeting prior to conference where students can propose policies or candidates that UPSU's delegates should either vote for or against. Where no preference is given by the student body, delegates will be able to vote as they choose. All students in attendance will be able to vote on each policy or candidate.~~
3. UPSU must host an open meeting prior to conference where students can propose that all UPSU delegates vote in a particular way regarding specific policies submitted to conference or candidates running in NUS' elections. All students in attendance at the open meeting will be able to vote on each policy or candidate brought forward.
 - Where a proposal passes, all delegates are mandated to vote in the stated way.
 - Where no preference is given by the student body, delegates will be able to vote as they choose.

- If a policy or candidate is not brought for discussion to the open meeting, delegates may vote as they wish at conference, as long as it does not contradict their manifesto or current UPSU policy.
- Should a student feel conflicted between the mandated vote and their personal disposition, they have the right to abstain from voting and should notify at Sabbatical Officer.

~~4. If an elected delegate has stated in their manifesto that they will be campaigning for a particular candidate at conference, if mandated to vote in a different way at the open meeting, they are still permitted to campaign, but must vote as mandated.~~

4. Union Council to decide the quoracy of the open meeting. If the quoracy is not reached the delegates can take the vote under advisement but it will not be binding.
5. UPSU's delegates should record and publicly disclose on the UPSU website, supported by the Student Voice department, how they voted on all motions and in all elections at conference,
6. If delegates fail to follow any of the above processes, they may be ~~asked to repay some or all of the costs of conference, including travel, accommodation and food.~~ they may be given a censure (following the usual process for censure as stated in the Union Council byelaw) The sanction will be decided by Union Council on the recommendation of the Sabbatical Officer team.

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

UPSU are entitled to send 7 delegates, the President and 6 other delegates that are elected in a cross campus ballot.

More information about NUS Conference can be found here;
<https://www.upsu.com/studentvoice/nus/> and
<https://conference.nusconnect.org.uk/>

NUS Delegate Accountability Policy Proposal (see appendix 4)

Lowri Jones – President, explained that the issue of NUS Delegate Accountability was raised last year when they had received emails from students asking if the union could mandate all delegates to vote for a specific candidate or motion. There was also an issue with students not disclosing how they voted afterwards, nor completing a report on their return from conference.

Lowri noted that it costs hundreds of pounds of students' union money to fund attendance to conference and it is only right that delegates are held to account by the students they represent.

Lowri explained that they had received feedback from students prior to the meeting and would like to table several amendments;

1. 'When submitting a manifesto in the election to become a delegate, candidates should be honest and upfront about political leanings, including NUS factions.'

3. 'UPSU must host an open meeting prior to conference where students can propose that all UPSU delegates vote in a particular way regarding specific policies submitted to conference or candidates running in NUS' elections. All students in attendance at the open meeting will be able to vote on each policy or candidate brought forward.'

- Where a proposal passes, all delegates are mandated to vote in the stated way.
- Where no preference is given by the student body, delegates will be able to vote as they choose
- If a policy or candidate is not brought for discussion to the open meeting, delegates may vote as they wish at conference, as long as it does not contradict their manifesto or current UPSU policy.'

6. 'If delegates fail to follow any of the above processes, they may be given a censure (following the usual process for censure as stated in the Union Council byelaw). The sanction will be decided by Union Council on the recommendation of the Sabbatical Officer team.'

Remove point 4

The speech against the proposal was waived.

James Lord – Chair of Accountability Board explained that the board had discussed the proposal and had concerns with resolves point 3. They felt there should be a quoracy at the open meeting and thought that delegates could be given the opportunity to abstain from voting if mandated to vote on something which strongly conflicted with their personal opinion.

Lowri explained that it was discussed that, if for whatever reason, a delegate needed to change their vote due to an amendment or an especially convincing speech then they would be able to vote differently from what was stated in advance but they would have to explain why.

Emily Adams – Deputy Part-time Environment and & Sustainability Officer, asked if students voted to their personal preference or representationally.

Lowri explained that delegates should vote on behalf of Plymouth University students, but unless there is existing policy, it's not always clear how students would like to vote. Candidates can use their manifesto to outline their personal beliefs and students can then vote for delegates they feel would represent their views, without specifically giving feedback for each motion.

Maja Smith – VP Education asked how the Accountability Board thought that quoracy should be set. James suggested 50% of the number of students voting for that Candidate. Lowri suggested it could be discussed further at the next meeting in February

Action: Union Council to set quoracy for the open meeting to discuss NUS Conference motions and candidates

Kat Pierce – Part-time Volunteering Officer, expressed concern regarding block voting, if only a small number of attendees turn up, it's not really representative of the student body.

Lowri noted that lots of unions do block voting and it's really only meant to be for policies submitted, or candidates, that are relevant to Plymouth so it's really not going to be all policies. It will only really apply to those motions that students are passionate about and if there are really heated debates at the open meeting it could be decided that all delegates will vote individually.

Ryan Skidmore - School of Computing, Electronics and Maths asked if voting is done by secret ballot. Lowri explained that only voting for candidates is done using secret ballot, voting for motions is done by raising a voting card in the air.

Tamsyn Hudson-Rose - Part-time Welfare Officer, asked if this adversely affects minority or under-represented groups.

Maja Smith agreed that minority or underrepresented groups should be represented but acknowledged that this doesn't already happen without the proposed policy. For example, how can we tell if a part-time officer is being representative when attendance at their forum is poor. This does fall under wider issue of representation and engagement.

James Warren – VP Welfare, suggested that motions could be taken to forums. The Chair of Union Council noted that two entire sections of conference cover liberation policy. Lowri further added that they also get covered in sections conferences.

Gina Connelly – UPSU CEO, noted that student attendance at open meetings is generally poor. Lowri acknowledged the fact but felt that it is still important that the option is there for students, whether they choose to use it or not.

Tamsyn suggested if quoracy is not met then the recommendation could be taken under advisement but it would not mandate delegates.

James Lord suggested the following amendments which was accepted by the proposer;
Resolves point 3 should a student feel conflicted between the mandated vote and their personal disposition, they have the right to abstain from voting and should notify at Sabbatical Officer.

and

Union Council to decide the quoracy of the open meeting. If the quoracy is not reached the delegates can take the vote under advisement but it will not be binding.

For: 21

Against: 1

Abstentions: 3

The amended policy proposal passed. There was also an action to set the quoracy of the open meeting at the next Union Council