

# Bye Law 4: Governance, Decision Making and Academic Representation

## Overview (purpose of Bye Law)

This Bye Law outlines the rules and regulations for the Unions representative governance structures including Executive Committee, Student Council, general meetings and making changes through the online Ideas Forum. It also outlines to Union's provision for Academic Representation.

**If you have any difficulty in understanding or interpreting this Bye Law, please contact the Students' Union (studentsunion@worc.ac.uk).**

## Key Terms

Members (of the Union)	All Worcester students automatically become full members of the Union (for free) when they join the University unless they choose to opt-out of membership. Alumni and University staff can apply and pay for associate membership of the Union. Student Council can also grant up to five people per year Honorary Life Membership of the Union
Trustee	A person on the Union's Board of Trustees who is responsible for ensuring good governance of the Union.
Officer Trustee	One of the elected Full Time Officers of the Union - they are also Trustees of the Union (also see Trustee definition).
Lay Trustee	A person who is independent from the Union who is appointed to the Union's Board of Trustees (following an interview) as they have expertise in a particular field e.g. finance or HR (also see Trustee definition).

Student Trustee	A current student of the University who is appointed to the Union's Board of Trustees (following an interview) to help ensure good governance and continuous development of the Union.
Conflict of Interest	A situation where a person has or may have a personal interest in the decision made by a group or committee they are on e.g. they may benefit financially from such a decision (so they must declare that fact before the matter is discussed).
Policy	An idea that student/s, submit to Student Council, which they believe will improve the student experience. Once passed by Student Council, policies are binding for three academic years (inclusive of the academic year in which the Policy was passed). The Union must ensure policies are actioned and progressed during that time to effect change, often by working with the University.
Idea	An idea submitted by a student through the online Ideas Forum. If an idea receives 15 positive votes on the Ideas Forum, it will be considered by the Executive Committee. If the Executive Committee unanimously agree it is a good idea, it will be actioned. Any Idea that affects the wider welfare or educational interests of students or is not unanimously supported by the Executive Committee will be sent to Student Council for consideration. Ideas passed by Student Council become Policy.
Policy Motion	An idea submitted directly to Student Council or one of its sub-committees for consideration. If passed by Student Council, the motion will become Policy.
Simple majority	A vote where 50% plus 1 members (with voting rights) at a meeting are required for a decision to be valid.
Annual General Meeting	A meeting for members that takes place each year where the Union reports on the year's events and asks members to approve its annual accounts and the organisations the Union has formal

	relationships (affiliations) with (e.g. NUS UK). The AGM is often branded as the All Student Meeting.
General Meeting	A meeting open to all members of the Union.
Referenda	A vote on a single question or proposal with a yes/no answer, usually put to the whole student body by the Union.
Chair's Aid	A member of staff who attends a meeting to support the Chair and provide advice to them on matters relating to governance and to the operation of the meeting. They do not hold any voting rights.

## Executive Committee

1. The Executive Committee will consist of the three Officer Trustees.
2. The Executive Committee works to improve the lives of students through campaigning and representation work. They do this by:
  - a. overseeing and promoting the Union's campaigns
  - b. considering the day-to-day matters affecting students;
  - c. consulting with members, representing their needs and defending their rights;
  - d. overseeing the Ideas process and actions not sent to Student Council;
  - e. overseeing the implementation of passed Ideas and Policy from Student Council that have not been delegated to another committee, council or network;
  - f. agreeing and delivering the "Officers' Annual Objectives" for the academic year;
  - g. approving applications for new societies, sports clubs, networks, student-led services and any variations on their required membership for affiliation (societies and sports clubs only) as laid out in Bye Law 6 (Societies, Sports Clubs, and Student-Led Services);
3. The Executive Committee works to support the functioning of the Union by:
  - a. acting as a channel of communication between Student Council and the Trustee Board;
  - b. working with the Chief Executive and Union staff team to formulate the Union's strategic and operational plans;
  - c. carrying out decisions made by the Trustee Board, Student Council and referenda;
  - d. taking responsibility for communication between members, the University, and other organisations;

- e. on behalf of the Trustee Board, determining the fees for Associate Membership of the Union and consider and approve applications for Associate Membership;
  - f. presenting WSU's affiliations to the Annual General Meeting (AGM), commonly known as the All Student Meeting (ASM);
  - g. providing an update on their activities to the Trustees and Student Council at each of their respective meetings.
4. The Executive Committee will meet a minimum of once per month.
    - a. Minutes will be made available on the Union's website.
    - b. There must be at least two officer trustees present for a decision to be made except when a unanimous decision is required (see Points 62 and 63 of this Bye Law below).
  5. The Union's Senior Management Team and members of the core staff team may attend the Executive Committee in an advisory capacity.

## **Student Council**

6. As laid out in Clause 94 of the Union's Constitution the general responsibilities of Student Council are:
  - a. To represent the voice of the Members of the Union;
  - b. subject to Clause 60 of the Union Constitution, set the Policy, as well as approve Ideas submitted, to Student Council;
  - c. subject to Clause 94.2 of the Union Constitution, refer Policy and Ideas to referenda of the members, where it feels necessary;
  - d. make, repeal and amend the Bye Laws jointly with the Trustees in accordance with Clause 94.3 of the Union Constitution;
7. Unless otherwise stated, approval shall be by simple majority of the voting membership.

8. Student Council shall:
- a. Receive and approve reports or updates from
    - i. the Executive Committee;
    - ii. Education Council;
    - iii. Welfare and Inclusion Council;
    - iv. Student Activities Council.
  - b. Receive reports for information and discussion from the joint Students' Union/University of Worcester Academic Representation Oversight Group.
  - c. Ensure that the Officer Trustees remain accountable to our members, scrutinising and approving Officers' reports;
    - i. Officers reports to Student Council will be published on the website;
    - ii. It is councillors' responsibility to scrutinise reports before the meeting, consult with the students they represent and come prepared with questions for the officer trustees;
  - d. To consider new affiliations of the Union to be taken to the Union's Annual General Meeting (AGM);
  - e. To approve at regular intervals the joint Students' Union and University of Worcester Student Charter;
  - f. To mandate a member to lead involvement in a regional or national campaign.

- g. Approve Honorary Life Membership (subject to approval by the Trustee Board).
  - h. Approve the Officer's Annual Objectives by a two-thirds majority.
9. As laid out in Clause 60 of the Union's Constitution, decisions are subject to the overriding authority of the Trustee Board. The Board may overrule Student Council if they deem that their decision will have a significant financial, reputational or legal impact on the Union.

## Membership

10. Student Council will consist of the following members:
- a. The Full-Time Officer Trustees;
  - b. All Chairs of Student Networks. Network Chairs may send a nominee to attend in their place;
  - c. The Chairs of all Student-Led Services. Services may send a nominee to attend in their place;
  - d. One representative from each of the University of Worcester's ten schools to be elected, by secret ballot, from the pool of Department Reps at Education Council. Only members of Education Council will be entitled to vote in these elections;
  - e. Up to 8 representatives from societies and sports clubs, elected by secret ballot at Student Activities Council. Only members of the Student Activities Council will be entitled to vote in these elections.

## Chair

11. The Vice President Education shall act as Chair of Student Council.
12. In the absence of the Chair, the members of Student Council, who have a vote, will elect, by simple majority, from their members an interim chair.

13. The Chair of Student Council will:

- a. ensure the proper conduct of meetings in accordance with Points 86 to 101 below;
- b. ensure the meeting is in order, that remarks and points made are relevant to the question or issue under debate, that speakers are not intimidated and that no defamatory or offensive remarks are made by anyone concerning another member (whether present or not);
- c. ensure all items on the agenda are debated within the time allotted and in line with Point 18 of this Bye Law;
- d. rule on whether the meeting is quorate;
- e. allow the meeting to be adjourned for comfort breaks;
- f. give rulings and interpretations;
- g. suspend the meeting if it is not functioning appropriately until such time as it comes back to order;
- h. be impartial and not participate in any debate or offer personal opinions;

14. If the Chair wishes to participate in debating an item on the Agenda they will temporarily hand the duties of the Chair to the Chair's Aid to facilitate the debate. Once that item has been discussed they will resume as Chair.

15. In the case of a tied vote where the Chair is participating the President will hold the casting vote.

16. A member of Union staff shall act as Chair's Aid and shall advise the Chair on matters relating to governance and to the operation of the meeting. They will not hold any voting rights



## Meetings

17. Student Council will meet a minimum of twice per semester (four times per year). The Chair supported by Union staff will call such meetings. The Union's President may call an extraordinary meeting of Student Council if they consider it to be in the interests of the Union to do so.
18. Quoracy shall be at least 50% plus 1 of the filled Student Council positions.
19. Meetings shall last no longer than two hours (except where an extension of an additional half hour is approved by the Chair) and in all incidences will finish by 20:00.
20. Any full member of the Union may attend Student Council and shall be entitled at the invitation of the Chair:
  - a. to speak for a policy or Idea they have submitted to Student Council for consideration;
  - b. to speak against a policy or Idea that has been submitted to Student Council for consideration;
  - c. to provide opinion and/or information on an agenda item discussed at Student Council.
21. Full members of the Union who are not members of Student Council will not be entitled to vote at Student Council.
22. Lay and Student Trustees may, by exception, be invited to Student Council to discuss specific policy issues but they will not be entitled to vote.
23. The Union's Chief Executive is entitled to attend and speak at Students Council but is not entitled to vote. The Chief Executive may send a nominated deputy to attend in their place. Other members of Union staff may attend on the invitation of the Chair.

24. A member of Union staff shall act as secretary of Student Council meetings and will support the coordination of the agenda alongside the Chair.
25. All agenda items will be submitted no later than one week before the meeting or at the discretion of the Chair. Agendas will be sent to councillors and be published on the Union's website no later than 3 working days before the meeting.
26. All Officer Trustees will be required to submit a written or video report to each Student Council. These will be published on the Union's website no later than 3 working days before the meeting.
27. All Network committees are required to provide a written update to Student Council to the second Student Council in each semester. These will be published on the Union's website no later than 3 working days before the meeting.

## Voting

28. Every member of Student Council is entitled to one vote only which must be exercised in person. However, if quoracy is not met, an online vote option will be provided to ensure all members have the opportunity to participate.
29. If an individual holds more than one Councillor position, then they shall be entitled to vote on behalf of each of their constituencies they represent.
30. Voting will normally be by show of hands unless a secret ballot is called for.
31. In the event of a tied vote, the President will have the casting vote.
32. Any motion or report approved by a majority of those present and eligible to vote, shall become 'Union Policy' at the close of the meeting, except proposals to amend the Bye Laws which are subject to the approval of the Trustees, in accordance with Clause 60 of the Union Constitution.

## Sub Committees of Student Council

33. There will be three sub-committees of Student Council:

- a. Education Council
  - b. Welfare and Inclusion Council
  - c. Student Activities Council
34. Student Council may delegate its responsibilities or activities to those sub-committees.
35. All sub-committees will be chaired by an Officer Trustee.
36. A member of Union staff shall act as secretary for all sub-committee meetings and will support the coordination of the agenda, alongside the relevant Chair.
37. A member of Union staff shall act as Chair's Aid and shall advise the Chair on matters relating to governance and to the operation of each of the sub-committee meetings but they will not hold any voting rights.
38. Other members of Union staff may attend on the invitation of the Chair.
39. The Chair may invite other members of the Union to attend at their discretion.
40. All sub-committees will meet a minimum of twice per academic year. Additional meetings will be at the discretion of the Chair.
41. Unless otherwise stated, approval shall be by simple majority of the voting membership.

### Education Council

42. The role of Education Council will be:
- a. to consider matters that affect students in relation to their academic interests and to discuss and formulate related policy to be submitted to Student Council;
  - b. to discuss changes to University and external policies that will impact on the education of University of Worcester students;
  - c. to receive updates from Department Representatives and the Vice President Education;
  - d. to work with the Vice President Education to promote the Academic Representation System;

- e. To elect the Student Council Representatives from the pool of Department Representatives.
43. The voting members of Education Council will be as follows:
- a. The Vice President Education (who shall be Chair);
  - b. All Department Reps appointed through the Academic Representation System;
  - c. A representative from the Postgraduate community;
  - d. Chairs of Academic Societies or a nominee from their Society's committee can attend in their absence.
44. Quoracy of Education Council, for the meeting to go ahead, shall be 30% of filled positions.
45. The Education Council must ratify any Policy Motions that it wishes to submit to Student Council by 50% plus 1 of those present.

### Welfare and Inclusion Council

46. The role of Welfare and Inclusion Council will be:
- a. to consider matters that affect students in relation to:
    - i. the health, welfare and wellbeing of students;
    - ii. international students;
    - iii. sustainability;
    - iv. diversity and inclusion, including protected characteristics, faith and beliefs;
    - v. the development of a strong student community;
  - b. to discuss and formulate policy on the topics above to be submitted to Student Council;
  - c. to discuss changes to University and external policies that will impact on the student body at Worcester;
  - d. to receive updates from Networks and Academic Society Representatives, and the President;

- e. to work with the President to promote the Union's work on diversity, inclusion, sustainability and student welfare and Welfare and Inclusion.
47. The voting members of Welfare and Inclusion Council will be as follows:
- a. The President (who shall be Chair);
  - b. The Chairs of all Networks or a nominee from their Network's committee;
  - c. Chairs of Faith and Cultural Societies or a nominee from their Society's committee can attend in their absence.
48. Quoracy of Welfare and Inclusion Council, for the meeting to go ahead, shall be 30% of filled positions.
49. The Welfare and Inclusion Council must ratify any Policy Motions that it wishes to submit to Student Council by 50% plus 1 of those present.

### Student Activities Council

50. The role of the Student Activities Council will be:
- a. to provide a platform for feedback and discussion for all Union-affiliated societies, sports clubs and student-led services to enable the Vice President Student Activities to update these societies, sports clubs and student-led services on their work;
  - b. to formulate and approve Policy Motions to be submitted to Student Council on behalf of the Student Activities Council;
  - c. to discuss changes to Union, University, and external policies that may impact on members of Union-affiliated societies, clubs and student-led services and/or the wider student body at Worcester;
  - d. to elect Student Activities Representatives to Student Council.
51. The voting members of the Student Activities Council will be as follows:
- a. The Vice President Student Activities (who shall be Chair)
  - b. All committee members of societies, sports clubs and student-led services. Each society, sports club and student-led service will have

one vote per committee.

52. Student Activities Council meetings can be held separately with the different types of student-led groups, at the discretion of the Vice President Student Activities.
53. Quoracy of Student Activities Council, for the meeting to go ahead, shall be 30% of all societies, sports clubs and student-led services. If the Vice President Student Activities calls separate meetings of Student Activities Council for the different types of student groups, quoracy will remain at 30% (e.g. if the meeting is for societies, representation from 30% of all society committees is needed for quoracy).
54. Student Activities Council must ratify any Policy Motions that it wishes to submit to Student Council by 50% plus 1 of those present.

## Policy

55. Policy sets out the position the Union will take on an issue or mandates the Union to work on a particular action or campaign.
56. Clause 105 of the Union's Constitution defines policy as set by Referenda, Student Council, general meeting or annual general meeting. The methods for introducing new Policy or changing Policy are defined in the Decision Making section of this Bye Law.
57. The Secretary and Chair of Student Council will ensure that a true and accurate record of passed policy be maintained on the Union's website. Updates must be made within five working days of any Policy change.
58. An Idea or policy passed by Student Council will stand for the remainder of the academic year and then for a further two academic years. Should an Idea be rejected, the reasoning as to why will be given to the member who submitted the Idea within three working days of the decision.
59. The President shall update the Chief Executive on additions or changes to Policy that have been made. Policies will be referred to the Trustee Board if they will have a financial or significant other impact on the Union.

60. The Secretary of Student Council shall keep the Council informed of any Policy that is about to lapse.
61. Policy set by Referenda cannot be overturned by Student Council but may be overturned by subsequent Referenda, by an Annual General Meeting (AGM) or a general meeting. Student Council may amend or overturn all other current policy. A simple majority is required to overturn or amend an existing Policy.

## Decision Making

### Submitting Ideas and Policy

62. Any full member of the Union may submit an Idea for change through the Union's online 'Ideas Forum'.
63. When submitting Ideas, members must ensure that the Idea states what the member wants to change and why they want to make this change.
64. The Idea will be published on the Union's website for discussion. If the Idea receives 15 positive votes, it will go to Executive Committee for consideration.
65. Any Idea that relates to an operational matter of the Union or the University and is unanimously agreed to be uncontentious will be actioned by the Executive Committee.
66. Any Idea that affects the wider welfare or educational interests of the Union's members or is **not** unanimously agreed as uncontentious by the Executive Committee will be sent to Student Council for discussion.
67. Any Idea that proposes changes to the Union's Constitution or Bye Laws will automatically be referred to the next meeting of Student Council. Any changes to the Constitution or Bye Laws will also need to be approved by the Trustee Board. Any Idea that will have a financial or other significant impact on the Union will be referred by Student Council to the Trustee Board.

68. Ideas remaining on the online Ideas Forum without achieving the minimum level of votes to pass to Executive Committee will remain on the site until 90 days after it was submitted. The Idea will then be archived.
69. No Idea that is essentially the same in content can be submitted more than twice in one academic year and should a member try to submit an Idea that has met this threshold, they will be advised on the outcome of previous submissions and asked to submit it the following year if they wish.
70. If an Idea is submitted that is materially the same as a current passed idea or policy of the Union, the Idea will be suspended until such time that the student who submitted the Idea can be spoken to and asked to support the existing, policy's implementation. The Executive Committee will then agree with the student as to whether the Idea should be approved and put up to vote on the Ideas Forum.
71. Ideas can be temporarily removed from the Ideas Forum if the Idea is identified by the Executive Committee as:
- posing a financial implication for the Union;
  - posing a legal implication for the Union;
  - posing a reputational risk to the Union.
72. If an Idea is acknowledged to have implications for the Union under Points 68 of this Bye Law, then the extent of the implications will be identified and explained to the member who submitted the Idea. This member will be then given the option to:
- Change their Idea so that it is no longer acknowledged as having negative implications under Point 68 of this Bye Law before it is posted on the Ideas Forum;
  - Withdraw their Idea;
  - Ask that their Idea be submitted to the Trustee Board to decide if it should be reinstated on the Ideas Forum.
73. Executive Committee will report to Student Council and the Trustee Board on all Ideas that are removed from the Ideas Forum.



74. The Union reserves the right to remove any Ideas submitted that are offensive or defamatory in any way.
75. Policy Motions will be able to be directly submitted to Student Council from the following:
- The Officer Trustees (both individually and as an Executive Committee)
  - Union Networks
  - Education Council
  - Welfare and Inclusion Council
  - Student Activities Council
76. If a Policy Motion is deemed to have implications for the Union under Point 68 of this Bye Law, it will be sent to the Trustee Board to decide if it should be discussed at Student Council.
77. If a Policy Motion is submitted that is materially the same as a current passed idea or policy of the Union, the Policy Motion will be suspended until such time that the body or group who submitted the motion can be spoken to and asked to support the existing, policy's implementation. The Executive Committee will then agree with the student as to whether the Policy Motion should be submitted to Student Council.

### Discussion of Ideas and Policy Motions at Student Council

78. Student Council will discuss each Idea or policy motion referred to it and a decision for or against is made.
79. All Student Councillors must declare any conflict of interest they may have in relation to the Idea or policy to be discussed. Should any member declare a conflict of interest they will not be allowed to vote on that Idea or policy.
80. Members who originally submitted the Idea for change may be invited to discuss the Idea further with Student Council. They will be invited to attend no later than seven days before the meeting. A speech against the Idea may

also be heard if another member wishes to speak.

81. Should a member not be able to attend a panel they may submit a written statement no later than 48 hours before the meeting. This will apply to students wishing to speak both for and against.
82. Student Council will debate and then vote for or against the Idea. Ideas will be passed if 50% plus 1 of those present votes in favour of the Idea. Student Council must meet its quoracy before a vote can take place.
83. Should a vote be tied, the Idea will be submitted to the Trustee Board for consideration.
84. The outcome of an Idea or Policy Motion submitted to Student Council or Executive Committee will be communicated to all Union full members within five working days via the Union's website.
85. When an Idea or Policy Motion is passed, it will become the Policy of the Union and be assigned to the President or one of the Vice Presidents to oversee its implementation. The Union shall endeavour to action it as soon as possible and will provide regular updates on its progress on the Union's website. Progress reports will be submitted to Student Council at timely intervals.

## General Meetings

86. As stated in Clause 24 of the Union's Constitution, the Union shall hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) in each calendar year. These will not be more than 18 months apart. During the annual general meeting the following will take place:
  - a. ratification of minutes of the previous meeting;
  - b. receiving a report from the Trustees on the Union's activities since the last meeting;
  - c. receiving the accounts of the Union from the previous financial year;

- d. approving the list of affiliations of the Union (including those of Societies, Sports Clubs, Student-Led Services and Student Networks) and;
  - e. open questions to the Trustees by the members.
87. In line with Clause 25 of the Union's Constitution, the Trustees may call additional general meetings at any time. The Trustees will also call a general meeting on receipt of a request by at least 1% of the membership.
88. The Chair of all general meetings will be a Trustee or someone appointed by the Trustee Board to undertake this role. Should no person be put forward the members present and entitled to vote shall choose one of their number to be chair.

### **Code of Conduct at Meetings**

89. All meetings, including Annual General Meetings (AGMs), held by the Union, must follow the regulations contained in this Bye Law, to ensure procedures are fair and democratic and to facilitate open and participative discussion.
90. All meetings open to members of the Union shall be publicised at least 10 working days in advance via the Union's website and social media.
91. The Chair of Union meetings, including an AGMs, shall conduct their role in line with Point 12 of this Bye Law.
92. All members of the Union shall be entitled to attend all Union meetings and have the right to speak but only the membership of that meeting may vote.
93. Any person whose conduct of presence prejudices the good order or conduct of the meeting may be ordered to leave by the Chair.
94. At the start of the meeting, the Chair shall call for a quorum count and shall present the agenda for approval by the meeting. Once approved, the agenda cannot be amended.

## Debates on Policy Motions at General Meetings and Student Council's Sub Committees

95. Debates on policy motions shall be conducted by open debate.
96. The proposer of any motion has the right to speak first and outline the content of the motion and the rationale behind it. This may not last for more than two minutes.
97. The open debate may last as long as the Chair deems necessary. The debate may include requests for clarification of points made and suggestions for amendments to the motion proposed. The Chair will ensure that the same points are not covered multiple times during the debate.
98. The Chair shall invite the proposer or their nominee to summarise the motion before the vote. This should last no more than one minute.
99. All full members of the Union will be entitled to vote and decisions will be passed by simple majority.

## Amendments to Policy Motions or Ideas

100. Amendments to motions must be discussed one at a time and must relate to the original policy motion or Idea.
101. All amendments will be subject to a vote by the members of the meeting. If the amendment is passed by simple majority it will become part of the motion and then be referred to as the 'substantive' motion in any summary speech.

## Reports

102. The Chair will invite questions from the members of the meeting after which the report will either be accepted or rejected.

## Academic Representation

103. The Union will coordinate the Academic Representation System jointly with the University of Worcester through the Academic Representation Oversight Group (AROG) which shall be a joint Union-

University committee and report to both Student Council and the University's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee.

104. The rules and regulations for the Academic Representation System will be outlined in the joint Union-University Code of Practice which will be made available on the Union's website.