

## Byelaw: Union Assembly and Policy

1. University of Manchester Students' Union seeks to reflect the views of its students. To reasonably do this it sets 'policy' to resolve conflicts and offer an agreed, democratic position for its thousands of members.
2. The purpose of the policy-setting process is threefold:
  - i. Reaching 'corporate conclusions': political statements that reflect the views of the Students' Union's members at a point in time but do not always lead to further action by the Union
  - ii Encouraging the Exec Officers to pursue goals and objectives that affect students in their capacity as students ('students as students') and make changes to their educational experience
  - iii. Providing a forum for students to research, discuss and debate social issues to facilitate the educational development of students

Proposals that affect 'students as students' (Purpose ii.)	Proposals that do not affect 'students as students' (Purpose iii.)
<p>Due diligence the Union will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk assessments</li> <li>- Seeking legal advice where necessary</li> </ul> <p>Assessing practicality and affordability of proposed actions</p>	<p>Due diligence the Union will undertake will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk assessments</li> </ul> <p>Seeking legal advice where necessary</p>
<p>The Union will support the proposer to develop an effective proposal by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing policy expertise to support impact</li> <li>- Connecting the proposer with staff members to develop the practicality of the proposal</li> </ul> <p>Directing SU resources to further the proposal's aims e.g. campaigning, funding, meetings with representatives</p>	<p>The Union will support the proposer to develop an effective proposal by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing policy expertise</li> <li>- Supporting the proposer to seek input from students who hold a different viewpoint</li> </ul> <p>If possible, highlighting organisations in Manchester that can help</p>

3. The views of the members of the Students' Union shall be reflected in the democratic policy Union Assembly sets.
4. When representing the Students' Union to stakeholders or the public, Officers of the Students' Union will express the views reflected in Union policy.

### Principles of Policy Setting

5. Policy should seek to do the following:
  - a. Advance the educational experience of students at the University of Manchester or improve their welfare and conditions while studying.

- b. In the design of the policy proposal, involve as many parties as possible for whom the issue impacts
  - c. Be clear on who is accountable for the policy within the Officer team
  - d. Adhere to the Union's obligations as a charity, employer and membership organisation in the view of the Students' Union Trustee Board
  - e. Where the policy contains actions for the Union, they must be legally and practically actionable
6. Policy will be set by a referenda, a meeting of all student members or the Students' Union Assembly process. The rules for referenda and all student meetings are available in the Referendum and Annual Members' Meeting byelaws.

### **Activity before a Union Assembly meeting**

- 7. A member of Students' Union staff shall act as the nominated person to provide administrative support to Union Assembly.
- 8. The nominated person shall advertise the provisional dates and timings of Union Assembly meetings at least a term in advance. There will be a minimum of three Union Assemblies in an academic year. Additional Union Assembly meetings can be called when there is a need or demand for them, as decided by the Union Assembly Committee.
- 9. Any member of the Students' Union is able to submit a policy proposal to Union Assembly.
- 10. The deadline for policy proposals, written questions and reports, to be submitted to [campaigns.su@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:campaigns.su@manchester.ac.uk) directly or through the SUGgestions online platform, will be set and communicated to students by the nominated person. Students should seek to send their proposals as early as possible before a meeting of the Assembly as late proposals may not be accepted.
- 11. The nominated person will set out any templates or formats for policy proposals, overseen by the Union Affairs Officer. The nominated person will make this available on the website at least a term in advance of Union Assembly meetings. These will always include the requirements of explaining why the issue is important to students and how the proposer has collaborated with other students to construct the proposal.
- 12. Once received, the proposal will be assessed by the nominated person, overseen by the Union Affairs Officer, on whether it furthers the purpose of the policy-setting process. They will liaise with the student to develop the proposal.
- 13. Feedback will be given to the student who will be able to make any changes up to 2 calendar weeks before the Assembly meeting.
- 14. If the proposal does not further the purpose of the policy-setting process or can be achieved by other means, the nominated person will support the student to access other Students' Union resources to achieve their aims.

15. All proposals that require higher levels of due diligence will be considered by a subcommittee of the Trustee Board, "Union Assembly Committee" established to assess whether the proposal adheres to the Union's obligations as a charity, employer and membership organisation. Risk assessments and recommendations will be provided by the nominated person.
16. The nominated person shall arrange for any additional information on policy proposals that will help the Union Assembly attendees contribute to the policy development process. Union Assembly attendees should proactively request any information they need to make their decision as soon as possible before the meeting.
17. The agenda, proposed policies and all supporting information shall be published on the website not less than 1 calendar week before the Assembly is due to meet. This may mean that depending on when all relevant due diligence is completed, and additional information is collected, a proposal is scheduled at a future, rather than the next, Union Assembly meeting.
18. The Union shall seek to ensure that, as far as practically possible, the viewpoints in the Union Assembly meeting are diverse.

#### **Union Assembly Committee Role and Powers**

19. The role of Union Assembly Committee is to help facilitate the democratic will of the student body through ensuring policies are actionable
20. Membership of the Union Assembly Committee is as follows;
  - a. Union Affairs Officer, who shall be the Chair of the Committee
  - b. Not less than two additional Executive Officers, appointed by the Executive Officers
  - c. The Chair of the Union Assembly
21. The Union Assembly Committee has delegated responsibility from the Trustee Board to:
  - a. Ensure the general management and proper constitutional functioning of Union Assembly and policy formation process
  - b. Manage business for Union Assembly meetings
  - c. Review the meetings of the Union Assembly and its democratic processes and suggest improvements in their functioning;
  - d. Ensure policies developed via Union Assembly that have actions are being implemented as agreed;
  - e. Respond to questions from students about progress on passed policy;
  - f. Decide when and how long voting lasts;
  - g. Refer items of business to other Union bodies for consideration;
  - h. All other functions and powers assigned to it in this bye-law.
22. The quorum for all meetings of the Union Assembly Committee shall be three members.
23. The Students' Union shall provide a secretary to the Union Assembly Committee.
24. This committee may, at their sole discretion, remove or amend any policy proposal to Assembly in line with the Articles on, but not limited to, the following grounds:

- a) It is not in accordance with this Bye-Law or another element of the Union rules;
- b) It is sufficiently uncertain or unclear as to be meaningless or ineffectual;
- c) It is defamatory or has been submitted in bad faith;
- d) It seeks to authorise significant items of unbudgeted expenditure that can't be facilitated in other ways;
- e) It mentions individual members of staff in any regard, or criticises the staff of the Union generally;
- f) It is too similar to a proposal that has previously been rejected in the current semester;
- g) It would cause the Union to act illegally;
- h) Reword to ensure plain English and good grammar, or correct formatting, provided this may not be used to bring about a substantive change in the meaning.

25. This committee will communicate to proposers of policies why amendments have been made for transparency.

26. At any point up until voting begins, the proposer can withdraw the proposed policy. The proposer can submit another policy to a future Union Assembly providing the resubmission is substantially different to the policy withdrawn and follows the process outlined above.

### **Role of the Chair and order of events at a Union Assembly Meeting**

27. The agenda for the meeting shall be set by the Chair. The order of items will be as follows:

- a) Notices about the running of Assembly including policies about to lapse
- b) Reports from the Officers and from other bodies and questions to them
- c) Policy proposals

28. The agenda will include timings for each item to indicate their length. This may be altered at the Chair's discretion. The meeting shall not last longer than the advertised time.

29. The Chair of the Union Assembly meeting shall be elected by cross campus ballot. Candidates for this election, shall be deemed eligible following a process of selection which tests their skills, experience and ability to impartially moderate debate. The Chair must be a member of the Students' Union.

30. The Chair shall seek to ensure that the running of the meeting is fair and impartial, and that discussion during the meeting allows students to understand the diversity of opinion and information on an issue and to freely form their own opinion.

31. If members present at Union Assembly feel that the Chair is unwilling or unable to fulfil their duties, then a vote of 'no confidence' may be held once during an Assembly meeting.

32. Two members present at the Assembly meeting may call a vote of no confidence. One of the members who called the vote will outline, in a speech of up to three minutes, why they feel the Chair should be removed. The Chair will then have up to three minutes to respond to these reasons. After these three speeches the Assembly will vote on whether to remove the Chair.

33. If the vote passes by a simple majority (more than 50% of those present), the Chair will immediately leave. Successful no confidence motions in the Chair shall last for the duration of the Assembly in which they were held.
34. A new Chair will be appointed from members present in Union Assembly. An Exec Officer shall invite any members to nominate themselves for the role of Chair for the duration of the meeting. In the event of multiple members nominating themselves, each candidate for Chair will be given one minute to say why they should be voted in as Chair. After these speeches the Assembly will vote on which candidate should be appointed as Chair. The candidate with the most votes will be appointed. In the event of a tie, there will be a second vote between the tied candidates and the candidate with the most votes will be appointed as Chair. If a Chair from students present is not nominated, an Exec Officer can nominate themselves as Chair.

### **Policy development process during a Union Assembly meeting**

35. The Chair will seek to facilitate a deliberative process that ensures members are informed of the impacts of and restrictions on any policy proposed. When deadlines for Assembly are published the Chair will also set out a number of formats for how they will operate this process. The specific deliberative process per policy proposal will be published at least 1 calendar week before the Union Assembly meeting.
36. Before the discussion on any policy proposal members will be made aware of any assessment done on the policy proposals.
37. Before the discussion on any policy proposals members will be made aware of any wellbeing resources available to them during and following the meeting.
38. Members will discuss the proposal in a format decided by the Chair.
39. Members will feed back their thoughts on the proposal. At this point, the Chair may allow members to suggest amendments to the proposal. The Assembly will vote on whether to accept the amendments.
40. If 2/3rds or more of those members present vote for an amendment it will be added to the proposal. If fewer than 2/3rds vote for an amendment it will fall.
41. Members may repeat the process described in 39 and 40 above until agreement on a final proposal is reached or the Chair determines in their opinion that enough time has been given to deliberation.
42. Once a final proposal is reached and the meeting concludes, voting will be opened to the whole student body, usually online. Voting will usually be open for 7 calendar days, unless the Union Assembly Committee have published a rationale for something different. The number of votes cast to decide on a policy must be at least 500. If the policy does not meet the threshold of 500 ballots cast in the vote, the policy shall not pass.
43. Minutes must be kept of all meetings of the Assembly by a staff member of the Students' Union and published on the website.

44. The Union Assembly Committee reserves the right to remove or amend any amendment for reasons outlined in section 24. The Committee must publish its rationale before voting begins.

### **Process after the Union Assembly**

45. After the voting concludes, results will be communicated to the student body and new policies will be added to the website.
46. If the policy affects 'students as students' (Purpose ii.), students, Union staff and Exec Officers will meet to agree how the policy can be enacted. The student(s) who originally proposed the policy will be contacted to see if and how they wish to participate in its implementation.
47. If the policy does not affect 'students as students' (Purpose iii.), there will be no further actions for the union to take. This would have been made clear via the template the policy went to Union Assembly in.

### **Policy**

48. Any policy proposal approved by the Union Assembly, a meeting of all student members or a referendum shall become Union policy, which is a "corporate conclusion". Policy shall be collated into a policy book, divided into appropriate sections or categories.
49. If a policy requires only specific practical actions it will remain policy until the soonest of
- a. all of the actions are completed;
  - b. the policy is specifically revoked by another decision of Union Assembly or referendum, except that a policy passed by a referendum cannot be revoked by Union Assembly
50. Three years after its passing, a policy will lapse automatically.
51. Any policy that has lapsed shall cease to have effect and shall be deleted. Students may wish to re-propose lapsed policy using the process above.
52. Progress on policy actions will be updated periodically on the Union website.