

**Newman Students' Union**  
**Bye Law D:**  
**GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING**

**Overview**

This Bye Law outlines the rules and regulations for the Union's representative governance structures including the Voice & Support Committee, Community & Wellbeing Committee, Student Council, general meetings and making changes through the online Student Forum. It also outlines the Union's provision for Academic Representation.

**Officer Trustees**

- 1) There will be two Officer Trustees of Newman Students' Union.
- 2) The Officer Trustees work 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, including making decisions on whether an Idea should be discussed by the Voice & Support Committee or Community & Wellbeing Committee or both;
  - e) overseeing the implementation of passed Ideas and Policy from Student Council that have not been delegated to another committee;
- 3) The Officer Trustees work 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 Union Director 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) producing an annual report of Newman Students' Union affiliations to be sent to the Annual General Meeting (AGM);
  - f) providing an update on their activities to the Trustees and Student Council at each of their respective meetings.

**Student Council**

- 4) As laid out in Clause 102 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;
- 5) Student Council shall also:
  - a) Receive and approve reports or updates from:

- i) the Voice & Support Committee (approved by a simple majority vote);
- ii) the Community & Wellbeing Committee (approved by a simple majority vote);
- b) Ensure that the Officer Trustees remain accountable to our members, scrutinising and approving Officers' reports by a two-thirds majority;
  - 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;
- c) To consider new affiliations of the Union to be taken to the Union's Annual General Meeting (AGM);
- d) To approve at regular intervals the joint Students' Union and Birmingham Newman University Memorandum of Understanding;
- e) To mandate, by simple majority vote, a member to lead involvement in a regional or national campaign.
- f) Approve Honorary Life Membership (subject to approval by the Trustee Board).
- g) Approve the Officer's Annual Objectives.
- h) As laid out in Clause 67 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**

- 6) Student Council will consist of the following members:
  - a) Full-Time Officer Trustees
  - b) Part-Time Officers
  - c) Faculty Representatives
  - d) Union Chair

## **Chair**

- 7) The Union Chair shall act as Chair of Student Council.
- 8) 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.
- 9) The Chair of Student Council will:
  - a) ensure the proper conduct of meetings in accordance with Points 58 to 63 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 12 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;

- i) 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.
- j) In the case of a tied vote where the Chair is participating the President will hold the casting vote.
- k) 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**

- 10) Student Council will meet a minimum of twice per semester. 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.
- 11) Quoracy shall be at least 50% plus 1 of the filled Student Council positions.
- 12) Meetings shall last no longer than two hours (except where an extension of an additional half hour is approved by the Chair).
- 13) 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.
- 14) Full members of the Union who are not members of Student Council will not be entitled to vote at Student Council.
- 15) 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.
- 16) The Union Director is entitled to attend and speak at Students Council but is not entitled to vote. The Union Director may send a nominated deputy to attend in their place. Other members of Union staff may attend on the invitation of the Chair.
- 17) A member of Union staff shall act as secretary of Student Council meetings and will support the coordination of the agenda alongside the Chair.
- 18) 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.
- 19) 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.
- 20) The Voice & Support Committee and Community & Wellbeing Committee are required to provide a written update to Student Council. These will be published on the Union's website no later than 3 working days before the meeting.

## **Voting**

- 21) Every member of Student Council is entitled to one vote only which must be exercised in person.
- 22) Voting will normally be by show of hands unless a secret ballot is called for.
- 23) In the event of a tied vote, the President will have the casting vote.

- 24) 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 67 of the Union Constitution.

### **Sub-Committees of Student Council**

- 25) There will be two sub-committees of Student Council:
- a) Voice & Support Committee
  - b) Community & Wellbeing Committee
- 26) Student Council may delegate its responsibilities or activities to those sub-committees.
- 27) Both sub-committees will be chaired by an Officer Trustee.
- 28) 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.
- 29) 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.
- 30) Other members of Union staff may attend on the invitation of the Chair.
- 31) Sub-Committees will meet at least four times per semester.

### **Voice & Support Committee**

- 32) The role of the Voice & Support Committee will be:
- a) To consider matters that affect students in relation to:
    - i) academic provision at Birmingham Newman University;
    - ii) changes to Union, University and external policies that may impact on members ability to study;
    - iii) trends in Academic Issues being reported through the Union's Advice Service;
    - iv) representing Birmingham Newman University on National Issues;
    - v) campaigns as identified through policy set by Union Council, subject to approval by the Trustee Board and;
    - vi) public relations.
  - 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 Birmingham Newman University;
  - d) to receive updates from Faculty Representatives and President;
  - e) to work with the President to promote the Union's work within the University and externally.
- 33) The members of the Voice & Support Committee will be as follows:
- a) President (who shall be Chair)
  - b) Union Chair
  - c) Academic Affairs Officer
  - d) Campaigns & Communications Officer
  - e) Postgraduate Students Officer
  - f) Accessibility & Inclusion Officer
- 34) The Voice & Support Committee can be held separately with Academic Representatives at the discretion of the Chair.
- 35) Quoracy of the Voice & Support Committee shall be 30% of committee membership.
- 36) The Voice & Support Committee must ratify any Policy Motions that it wishes to submit to Student Council by 50% plus 1 of those present.

## **Community & Wellbeing Committee**

- 37) The role of the Community & Wellbeing Committee will be:
- a) To consider matters that affect students in relation to:
    - i) the health, welfare and wellbeing of students;
    - ii) changes to Union, University and external policies that may impact on members life as students;
    - iii) diversity and inclusion, including protected characteristics, faith and beliefs;
    - iv) the development of a strong student community;
    - v) supporting and developing student-led societies, projects, events and initiatives;
    - vi) sustainability and the University environment.
  - b) to discuss and formulate policy on the topics above to be submitted to Student Council;
  - c) to receive updates and feedback from Union Societies and the Vice- President;
  - d) to work with the President and Vice-President to promote the Union's work within the University and externally.
- 38) The members of the Community & Wellbeing Committee will be as follows:
- a) The Vice-President (who shall be Chair)
  - b) The LGBTQ+ Officer
  - c) The Wellbeing Officer
  - d) The REACH (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage) Officer
  - e) The Mature Students Officer
  - f) The Environment & Sustainability Officer
- 39) The Community & Wellbeing Committee can be held separately with representatives from Union Societies at the discretion of the Chair.
- 40) Quoracy of the Community & Wellbeing Committee shall be 30% of committee membership.
- 41) The Community & Wellbeing Committee must ratify any Policy Motions that it wishes to submit to Student Council by 50% plus 1 of those present.

## **Policy**

- 42) Policy sets out the position the Union will take on an issue or mandates the Union to work on a particular action or campaign.
- 43) Clause 115 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. The Secretary and Chair of Student Council will ensure that a policy book will be maintained on the Union's website as a true and accurate record of the Policy of the Union. Updates must be made within five days of any Policy change.
- 44) 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.
- 45) The President shall update the Union Director 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.
- 46) The Secretary of Student Council shall keep the Council informed of any Policy that is about to lapse.

- 47) 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**

- 48) Any full member of the Union may submit an Idea for change through the Union's online 'Ideas Forum'.
- 49) When submitting Ideas, members must ensure that the Idea states what the member wants to change and why they want to make this change;
- 50) The Idea will be published on the Union's website for discussion. If the Idea reaches 15 votes, it will go to either the Voice & Support Committee or the Community & Wellbeing Committee for consideration.
- 51) 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 either the Voice & Support or Community & Wellbeing Committee.
- 52) Any Idea that affects the wider welfare or educational interests of the Union's members or is not unanimously agreed as uncontentious by the Voice & Support or Community & Wellbeing Committee will be sent to Student Council for discussion.
- 53) 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.
- 54) Ideas remaining on the online Ideas Forum without achieving the minimum level of votes to pass to the Voice & Support Committee or Wellbeing & Community Committee will remain on the site until 90 days after it was submitted. The Idea will then be archived.
- 55) 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.
- 56) 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 Officer Trustees will then agree with the student as to whether the Idea should be approved and put up to vote on the Ideas Forum.
- 57) Ideas can be temporarily removed from the Ideas Forum if the Idea is identified by the Officer Trustees as:
- a) posing a financial implication for the Union;
  - b) posing a legal implication for the Union;
  - c) posing a reputational risk to the Union.
- 58) If an Idea is acknowledged to have implications for the Union under Point 57 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:
- a) Change their Idea so that is it no longer acknowledged as having negative implications under Point 57 of this Bye Law before it is posted on the Ideas Forum;
  - b) Withdraw their Idea;

- c) Ask that their Idea be submitted to the Trustee Board to decide if it should be reinstated on the Ideas Forum.
- 59) Officer Trustees will report to Student Council and the Trustee Board on all Ideas that are removed from the Ideas Forum.
- 60) The Union reserves the right to remove any Ideas submitted that are offensive or defamatory in any way.
- 61) Policy Motions will be able to be directly submitted to Student Council from the following:
  - a) The Officer Trustees
  - b) Part-Time Officers
  - c) Voice & Support Committee
  - d) Community & Wellbeing Committee
- 62) 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.
- 63) 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 Officer Trustees 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**

- 64) Student Council will discuss each Idea or policy motion referred to it and a decision for or against is made.
- 65) 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.
- 66) 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.
- 67) Should a member not be able to attend Student Council 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.
- 68) 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.
- 69) Should a vote be tied, the Idea will be submitted to the Trustee Board for consideration.
- 70) The outcome of an Idea or Policy Motion submitted to Student Council or the Voice & Support or Community & Wellbeing Committee will be communicated to all Union full members within five working days via the Union's website.
- 71) When an Idea or Policy Motion is passed, it will become the Policy of the Union and be assigned to the President or Vice President 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**

- 72) As stated in Clause 24 of the Union's Constitution, the Union shall hold an Annual General Meeting 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 and;
  - e) open questions to the Trustees by the members.
- 73) 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.
- 74) The Chair of all General Meetings will be the Union Chair. Should the Union Chair be absent, the members present and entitled to vote shall choose one of their number to be chair.

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

- 75) All meetings, including Annual General Meetings, 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.
- 76) 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.
- 77) The Chair of Union meetings, including an AGMs, shall conduct their role in line with Point 9 of this Bye Law.
- 78) 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.
- 79) Any person whose conduct of presence prejudices the good order or conduct of the meeting may be ordered to leave by the Chair.
- 80) 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**

- 81) Debates on policy motions shall be conducted by open debate:
- 82) The proposer of any motion has the right to speak first and outline the content of the motion and the rationale for its proposal. This may not last for more than two minutes.
- 83) 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.
- 84) The Chair shall invite the proposer or their nominee to summarise the motion before the vote. This should last no more than one minute.
- 85) 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**

- 86) Amendments to motions must be discussed one at a time and must relate to the original policy motion or Idea.



87) 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**

88) Reports presented by members of the meeting must not last more than three minutes.

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

### **Voting in General Meetings**

90) Voting at Union meetings shall be as laid out in Points 22 and 23 above.