

Proposal to change Union's Student Led Committee Structure

Background:

The Union's current student led Zone Committees all feed into the Union Executive (Exec). Policy motions can be sent to Exec from Zones and also directly from students. All Zone and Exec meetings are open for students to attend and speak, although only elected students can vote. The two top elected zone members on each of the four zones sit on Exec, with some exceptions (e.g. in Activity Zone, Team Surrey Chair and Societies Exec Chair sit on Exec).

There have been no student motions submitted to Union Exec since 2019, and Exec has had a long term problem with student engagement. For the past two years, important student issues have led to student open meetings/forums being planned e.g problems in the research student community with the University re-opening post covid, and most recently the Women's Safety issues around nightlife.

As the Union's Zone structure is heavily promoted in the run up to and during the election process, students also tend to engage more readily with Union zones. It is also important to channel student opinion through the zone structure because this is where elected officers are doing their day to day work, supported by the Union's staff structure which supports the zones.

Proposal:

- All zone meetings will continue to be open to students, however there will be one zone meeting per month which will be heavily advertised. Each monthly zone meeting should have a publicised agenda and key student interest groups should be invited to speak and give updates. Each monthly zone meeting should have actions which are reported to the next meeting and there should be space on each agenda to discuss zone outcomes. Between monthly zone meetings, members can plan content for their next meeting, similarly to how Voice Forum operates.
- The Union Chair's role to ensure that elected officers are held accountable and students understand how to influence Union decision making will be maintained through 'open forum'¹ meetings which will take place once per semester. These meetings will be open and publicised to all students. All officers will be expected to attend, and full time elected officers will also be expected to report updates and outcomes at these meetings.
- Any decisions that require a vote, either at zone meetings or at all-officer meetings, will follow the Union's current byelaws on voting in meetings. All elected officers will have voting powers at their respective zone meetings, and at the open forum meetings.

This proposal would mean that our meeting structures on paper would match what we do in reality. This also structures the Union's student led committees in a way that would make sense to the student body because it aligns with the zone structure. All elected officers would be equal except for the expectation and accountability being greater for full time paid officers. The focus on outcomes that have been delivered for students is crucially important to the Union's Pulse objectives, where students need clarity over how their opinions can influence Students' Union decision making.

¹ Please note we do not have an agreed name for these meetings yet

To note:

The current description of the Union Exec level includes two standing votes at that committee for members of liberation/underrepresented groups. It is worth considering how this can be mitigated.

Possible solutions:

- 1.) Requiring that liberation issues are on the agenda for every zone meeting
- 2.) Requiring that two members of the Liberation Network attend every monthly zone meeting
- 3.) Inviting liberation network members to speak at Forum meetings.

Action needed:

In order to make this change we would need to hold a cross campus referendum, triggered by a unanimous vote at the existing Executive Committee.

Diagram of proposed structure:

