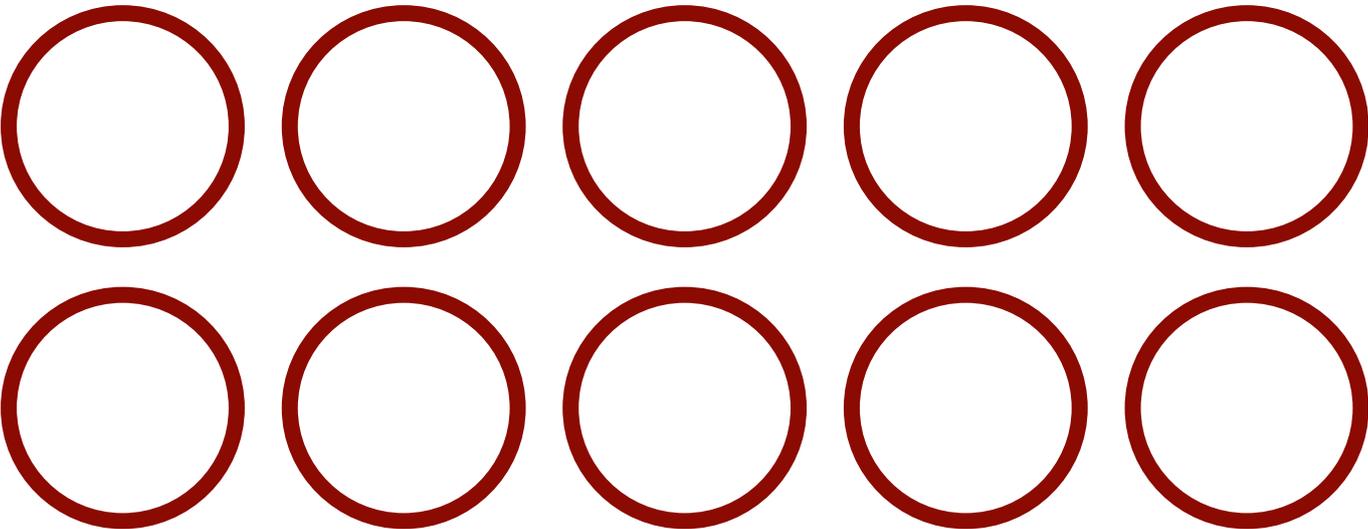


The Governance Review





“ A democratic structure which is agile, cheaper, and more accessible – with clarity between roles of officers and staff, and which enables the organisation to make decisions that benefit members. Simpler processes, and better outcomes. ”

The Governance Review

Making NUS better

NUS has been helping students to make their voices heard, pool resources, and bolster their students' unions, guilds and associations since 1922.

As NUS has grown, we have taken on new issues, activities and services. Some would say too many. In fact, our activities have become so diverse that some people thought that NUS was there to do everything, for everyone, for ever.

Our new mission takes us back to our core purpose of developing and championing strong students' unions, as well as being a pioneering, innovative and powerful campaigning organisation – the voice of UK students – promoting, defending and extending their rights.

We'll fight barriers to education, empower students to shape both a quality learning experience and the world around them, and support influential, democratic and well-resourced students' unions.

That's what NUS is about. That's what it is. That's what it's for.

Improving our governance

Governance is about creating an organisation that has clear, relevant and attainable goals, is run transparently and effectively, has healthy finances, good forward planning, and trained and motivated staff with a real understanding of the members it serves.

In the past, NUS has fallen short in some of these areas. In an increasingly complex environment, the structures have not kept pace. Not only has decision-making become bogged down in processes to the detriment of outcomes, but access to those processes has been increasingly difficult for our members.

Following a period of intense research and consultation with you – our students' union members – NUS is undertaking a governance review to help attain our collective goals.

From now on, NUS will be benchmarked against the best out there – trade unions, charities, voluntary organisations and students' unions themselves – to make sure that we are an organisation of which you are proud to be part.

It will take time and it won't be perfect first off, no organisation is, but we believe that NUS is shaping up to be the kind of organisation you want and students deserve.

Enduring values

As part of the review and after wide consultation, we have developed a set of guiding principles or "values" that we want our members and society at large to support and share.

These values guide our work, our activities, our structures and the way we work to benefit students and their unions.

Equality

We believe there should be equality of opportunity to enable everyone to participate fully in a society that celebrates diversity.

Democracy

Our policies and priorities must be student-led and students' union focused through building open, transparent and accessible democratic structures that increase performance and strengthen accountability.

Collectivism

Students and students' unions are more effective when they organise together locally, nationally and internationally: unity is our strength.

Bringing it together

Of course, it's not just about mission statements and principles. Over the past year we've been working with you to change NUS' structures too. You set us that task in meetings, conversations and then at the NUS Annual Conference, and we believe that this new structure can deliver.

We're making the system easier to understand, easier to take part in, and focusing on issues and outcomes instead of processes. We're going to consult, carry out research and use expertise from inside and outside the organisation to help inform the decisions you make. Involvement will get easier and wider – there will be more chances to serve as a volunteer – and more opportunities to feed in and ask questions.

3D Member Benefit Test

We are the “National Union of Students” – a confederation of student organisations. That doesn’t mean we don’t do things that benefit students – but we know that to serve students best, our key focus should be on issues that you – as students’ unions – raise, and making your organisations better.

So as part of our governance proposals we have developed the “3D Member Benefit Test” – a means to guarantee that what we do benefits you:

Demand – our work will focus on your needs

Design – we’ll get your input on how we work, in order to maximise the benefit for you.

Delivery – where we can, we’ll involve you in getting our work done. We’ll also get input from students’ union staff, partners and other national student groups – but only students will make the final decisions.

Zones, Nations, Liberation and Social Policy

To make NUS policy-making and implementation more effective, we have proposed a clearer division of roles and responsibilities.

Policy areas are defined in five ‘Zones’:

- **Higher Education Zone**

What, when, how and why students learn in universities. How universities are funded, supported and maintained

- **Further Education Zone**

What, when, how and why students learn in further education. How colleges are funded, supported and maintained

- **Welfare Zone**

How students are treated– their money, their life, their health and their housing

- **Society and Citizenship Zone**

Students have an important role in wider society. Our universities form a core part of our diverse communities, and have an increasing role in our globalized world

- **Union Development Zone**

Students want, need and deserve good students’ unions. We are here to help make that happen

Each zone will have:

- A programme of work and campaigns that deliver real outcomes for unions and their students
- A committee made up of volunteers from students’ unions so that you can be directly involved
- A conference where you can hear from experts, learn from others, study, research and feed in ideas and proposals for the year ahead

Our new structures will mean that you’ll be consulted on the issues, you’ll be able to take a central part in the planning process and you’ll be crucial to making things happen.

On many issues, you’ll all agree – and we can take those forward. On others you won’t, and on those we’ll make sure that we have a proper and open debate.

Nations

Since key government policy areas such as education have been devolved to regional parliaments across the UK, unions and their students in Nations also need local representation and decision-making processes. As such, in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland (in partnership with the Union of Students in Ireland) there will be a programme of work and campaigns, a locally elected committee, conferences and events.

The details of Nations’ structures are in their own hands – after all, they are best placed to define their own organisation and issues. We will also remove any overlaps or gaps between Nations and “NUS UK” and strive to create a cohesion that will be mutually beneficial.

Liberation

We’re proud of our work on Liberation, Equality and Diversity at NUS. Just as we believe that students know best about issues that affect them, those facing discrimination and oppression are also best placed to make decisions for themselves.

Like Zones and Nations, there is a programme of work and campaigns, a committee conference and events. And like Nations, we’re leaving the definition of structures and issues to these students.

We will also help the campaigns to increase their impact by giving them the tools and the support they need to help us wipe out discrimination and prejudice for good.

Above all, Equality and Diversity are central to the whole of NUS – not just the Liberation campaigns.

Social Policy

NUS is striving to improve the work it does for all types of student. As there are more international, part-time and mature students in education than ever before, our international students campaign and the mature/part-

time students campaign will be better supported and structured to have a greater impact on the students that need them.

Where student groups, such as postgraduates, nurses, midwives, teachers, already have an existing organisation, we'll make sure those students and organisations also have a voice within NUS. They will become associate members of NUS and we will seek to co-operate better than ever.

Structurally sound

The new structure of NUS aims to create an accountable and representative balance of power, capable of ensuring maximum policy impact while guaranteeing the greatest empowerment and involvement of students' unions:

Coming together – the Annual Congress

There's real sense in bringing together people from our unions once a year to make decisions which will shape our organisation's future, whilst learning from the year gone by. That's what annual congress will do. Delegates from every union across the UK will be invited and encouraged to take part.

- It will discuss and approve "consensual" policy reports from the Zones
- It will "ratify" decisions made by Nations, Liberation and Social Policy campaigns – so these issues become "ours" not just "theirs"
- It will elect and appoint people to committees, boards and student leadership positions ("officers")
- It will review and recognise NUS' achievements of the past year and democratically debate the controversial issues of the day
- It will also act as the NUS "AGM", receiving the annual report and accounts and approving the outline budget for the year ahead

The Political Leadership – the Senate

At the heart of NUS will be the "Senate" – the body acting as the political leadership of NUS. It will ensure that the decisions of Congress get turned into action. It will coordinate campaigns and political activity as well as acting between meetings of Congress.

The Senate will be comprised of:

- The President – elected by Annual Congress
- The elected officers that lead each Zone, Nation, Liberation campaign and Social Policy campaign

- Other representatives from each of these groups
- A block of members – some from further education and some from higher education to represent the diversity of NUS' membership
- Non-voting attendees from partner student organisations

The Administration – the Board

The new Board will assist NUS in running more effectively as an organisation. Student-led but with expertise from people who share our values, it will avoid questions of politics or policy, focusing instead on how NUS' buildings, cash and staff can better deliver for the political leadership. It will supervise the finances, scrutinise the performance of the chief executive and staff, and deal with legal issues such as risk management.

The Board is appointed by the Annual Congress and remains answerable to it.

The Board will be comprised of:

- The President
- Elected student officers
- Elected "ordinary" students
- Relevant experts appointed by the Annual Congress

Ensuring Democracy – the Steering Committee

The new Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring that the democratic processes are in line with the constitution.

The Steering Committee will be comprised of:

- Elected "ordinary" students
- Relevant experts

Informal Groups

We will also support other groups and networks as they arise. It might be by

helping to organise an event, advising on a campaign or just providing an email list.

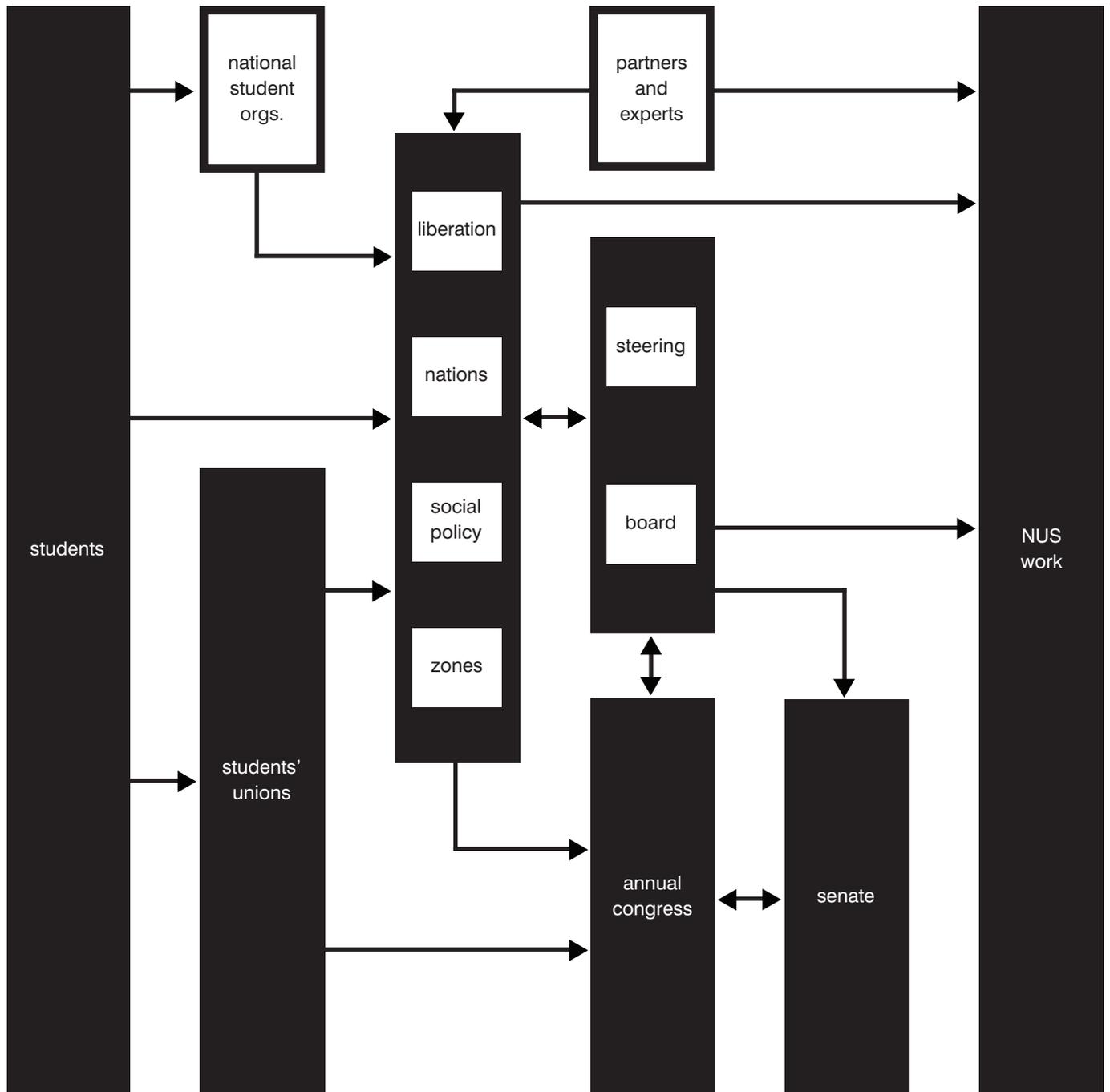
These might include:

- Mission groups – types of institution and their unions (such as the 1994 group)
- Area groups – groups of local unions wanting to network and campaign
- Issue groups – if a set of students or unions are facing a particular issue, we want to help facilitate action.

NUS can't do everything – and we can't constantly change the constitution or build new structures – but we do want to be an enabling organisation. When students want to work with people from other unions, they can count on help and support from NUS.

“There's real sense in bringing together people from our unions once a year to make decisions which will shape our organisation's future”

Structure





“ The new structure of NUS aims to create an accountable and representative balance of power ”

The next steps

As with every stage in this process we want to get your feedback. Meanwhile, we are drafting a new “core constitution” and the current National Executive Committee is asking you to “call” an “extraordinary conference” to debate that new constitution.

If an extraordinary conference takes place and the core constitution is passed, we will develop new bye laws and schedules to be brought to Annual Congress in Blackpool in April 2008.

NUS has to shape up or risk serious consequences for students and students’ unions alike. We are excited about the changes outlined in this paper and we believe that they go a long way to ensuring that we can meet the challenges ahead.

Now, we look forward to hearing from you.

“ We are excited about the changes... and we believe that they go a long way to ensuring that we can meet the challenges ahead ”

The Policy Cycle

July/August/September

- Term of office begins
- Implementation plans developed Inside zones
- Zone committees meet
- Senate meets to agree implementation plans and detailed budget
- Training for student officers
- Launch of campaigns and programmes

October/November

- Senate meets
- Zone committees meet
- Consultation begins on policy by zones
- Agendas for Zone conferences formed
- Advisors and externals invited
- Proposals invited from CMs

December/January/Feb

- Zone conferences
- Senate meets
- Zone committees meet

March/April

- Nations/Liberation/Social Policy conferences
- Policy reports developed and sent out for amendment and comment
- Controversial issues sent for compositing and amendment

April/May

- Annual Congress

May/June

- Zone committees meet for handover and conversion of policy statements into plans
- Reviews of programmes and campaigns completed
- Senate meets to agree broad outline of plans
- New Senate induction & training period
- New Senate meets to appoint members to bodies

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