

Union Stance on Student Voting in National and International Elections

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Background – The UK Local Council Elections, including those for Greater London, fall on May 24 this year. All UK students living away from their home address are eligible to vote at both their home and term-time addresses. This date coincides with the European Parliament elections, at which all EU citizens are eligible to vote. The next General Election is scheduled for 7 May 2015, in which all UK and resident Commonwealth students are eligible to vote.

No specific examples of policies affecting students are given in this paper such that it appears as non-partisan as possible.

The Union Notes:

- The Electoral Commission estimates that around 56% of UK national 18-24 year olds are registered to vote
- They estimate that the voter turnout in the 2010 General Election for the same demographic was approximately 44% of those registered to vote, or around 25% of those in the demographic as a whole
- That any campaign encouraging students to vote will be strictly non-partisan

The Union Believes:

- That the voices of the student unions carry less weight on national level issues because of the perceived lack of interest from students and younger people in politics
- That many decisions regarding the future of the Union's members are widely accepted as being taken without due consultation of the relevant age groups. This is evidenced by the lack of student representatives in the Browne report, the last major government report to discuss the future of higher education in the UK.
- That the Union should encourage students to vote in order to ensure adequate representation of the student body at a local, national and international level
- That the perceived political apathy of Imperial Students is not reflected in the attendance of political events on campus (i.e. this is would be a worthwhile campaign)
- That not being a member of the NUS allows us to encourage students to vote without any suggestion of political bias

The Union resolves to:

- Mandate the Campaigns Officer to begin a non-partisan student-led campaign, encouraging students to vote in the run up to May elections. They should liaise closely with the Deputy President (Welfare) in order to create an effective and appropriate campaign
- To mandate the president to invite speakers from all parts of the political spectrum to visit Imperial and deliver talks or debates on current affairs issues, in line with the Union's 2013 promise to do so.
- To liaise with groups like Bite the Ballot or Rock the Vote to investigate methods of encouraging student voting
- To invite one of these groups to have a stall at Freshers' fair distributing information and voter registration forms
- To ensure this policy is included in the Sabbatical handover to ensure subsequent Officers are informed of this stance