

Reforming Council's Decision-Making Process

Proposer: Richard Cameron (Council Chair)

Seconder: Owen Heaney (Council Ordinary Member, UG Engineering)

The Union notes:

1. There have been issues recently attaining quorate meetings of the Union Council.
2. Council has the authority and mandate to consider a broad range of (often unrelated) issues.
3. In the past, the Executive Committee existed with recess powers to deal with issues in Council's absence.
4. The last reorganisation of the Union's structure significantly affected Council's relationship with other Union decision-making bodies.

The Union believes:

1. A large Council with a wide array of members is beneficial to democracy within the Union.
2. Reducing the membership of Council would necessarily curtail the representation of certain student groups/interests within the Union.
3. Not all Council members will necessarily have opinions, personally or in their Union Officer roles, relating to every issue brought to Council. Currently, this can result in non-participation.
4. Therefore, retaining a large membership in Council but not requiring an opinion or vote from Council members on all issues retains the democratic advantages of a large Council, while also facilitating easier policy-making.
5. An interim decision-making process is also needed, for when full meetings of the Union Council cannot be called.
6. The current functions of Union Council needs to be reconsidered and better aligned with the other decision-making bodies within the Union.
7. Union Council's role as an oversight body for both the Sabbatical Officers and its sub-committees should be strengthened, its strategic functions enhanced and its operational responsibilities reduced and streamlined.

The Union resolves to:

1. Adopt the Executive Committee standing orders as attached.
2. Propose to the Trustee Board the attached amendment to the Union's Bye-Laws.
3. Allow Management Group Chairs and Constituent Union Presidents to proxy their participation in the Union Council to a member of their Executive Committee, provided the chosen member does not already hold a seat on the Union Council.
4. Allow any member of the Union Council to proxy their vote to the Council Chair, to be considered as an abstention for all issues on the agenda and a no vote on any other matters.
5. Recommend to the Trustee Board that the current review of the Union's democratic structures be pursued with urgency.

Council
26 April 2016

Proposed Bye-Law amendment:

Section B. (Meetings)

- 14.1 An inquorate meeting of the Union Council (under clause 11) with more than one-third of voting members present may make decisions and policy on behalf of the Union Council, unless such decisions require a two-thirds majority vote.

- 14.2 Decisions made under clause 14.1 must be clearly communicated to absent members of the Union Council, who may object to the decision.
If sufficient objections are lodged before the next scheduled meeting of the Council that the members' presence would have overturned the vote, the matter must be reconsidered at the next meeting of Council. Otherwise, it shall be considered as though passed by a quorate meeting.