



THE DEMOCRACY REVIEW PROPOSALS

Introduction

CUSU began the Democracy Review to assess its current democratic procedures, particularly CUSU Council and the Part-Time Executive. This was to address engagement with both aspects of CUSU democracy, as well as a way to ensure that CUSU remains relevant and accountable to students.

We conducted research based on activity in other Students' Unions and student consultation. Our primary research was an all-student consultation which ran from November to January, which received 122 responses. The results of this consultation indicated that many students did not feel properly represented by Council and felt distant from its functioning. The top three things students felt that CUSU Council should focus on were: academic issues (83%); college life issues (80%); and the role of students and the University in society (52%).

From our research and feedback from students, we developed some ideas which were then circulated to CUSU Council for final consultation. This was responded to by 31 constituencies (1 Liberation Campaign, CUSU's Ethical Affairs Campaign, 1 PTE member, 1 Schools Rep and 27 college JCRs and MCRs). Responses to ideas relating to CUSU Council were split, therefore, we developed two main proposals regarding the future of CUSU Council for it to consider. The proposals outlined below are a response to our findings and have been led by student feedback at all stages.

There are a few changes which are consistent across both proposals (but are still to be discussed and voted on by Council):

- NUS Delegates would no longer have a vote on CUSU Council. This reflects the fact that only 19% of students said that they feel represented by NUS Delegates and that 70% felt that they should not have a vote on CUSU Council.
- Equal representation for JCRs and MCRs is a core part of both proposals, which is not currently the case. This is in the interests of fairness and reflects the fact that there are now nearly as many postgraduates in the University as undergraduates.
- The Union Development and Ethical Affairs Part-time Executive roles will be removed.
 - The core work of UD will be replaced by a Democracy Steering Group, made up of the CUSU President, CUSU Council Chair and Elections Committee Chair.

- Ethical Affairs will move to being a CUSU Campaign, but unlike liberation-focused campaigns, will remain accountable to CUSU and may take responsibility for relevant policy items.
- Members of the Part-Time Executive will be elected alongside sabbatical roles in Lent Term, in order to maximise the time where they are able to work as a team.
- CUSU Liberation Campaigns and Ethical Affairs will come under the umbrella of CUSU Campaigns and the capacity will be created for the addition of new portfolio campaigns to be added under CUSU's name.

PROPOSAL A: A DEVOLVED COUNCIL

In order to ensure that academic and college level issues are properly addressed, CUSU Council would devolve the main responsibility for discussion of college and faculty-level issues to two separate bodies- College Forum and Academic Forum. Within the current model of CUSU Council we consistently find that, despite our best efforts, it is very rare for college or academic related motions to be brought to Council. In part this is because many of these types of issues are better resolved by informal discussion than by passing a motion. Academic Forum and College Forum would therefore be informal spaces for discussions and CUSU Council would remain a legislative body.

This does not prevent academic or college level issues from being discussed by Council as updates from the forums would be provided at every Council and both Forums would be able to bring motions to Council where appropriate. The two forums would be structured as follows:

- **College Forum**
 - This would be a relatively informal body comprised of JCR and MCR Presidents (approx 60 members) and sabbatical officers.
 - It would meet fortnightly on alternate weeks to CUSU Council and its location would rotate between colleges.
 - Its primary focus would be college level issues. Presidents would be able to bring discussion items about any issues they are facing within their college to discuss with other Presidents.
 - It would not itself be a legislative body. However, the College Forum as a collective could submit motions to CUSU Council. College Forum would be expected to provide updates at Council which would be presented by the President of the College who had hosted the last College Forum.
- **Academic Forum**
 - Academic Forum would be composed of all Student Academic Representatives and sabbatical officers. This would include all School, Faculty and Department undergraduate and postgraduate representatives.
 - It would meet regularly during term-time.
 - The primary focus would be academic issues, with representatives being able to bring issues they face in their department, faculty or school for discussion.
 - The Education Officer would also bring issues relating to university-wide or national policy for consultation and feedback.
 - It would not be able to set policy by itself, however it would be expected to bring policy to Council for ratification. It would also present updates to Council.

As a result of devolving, CUSU Council itself would decrease slightly in size so as to ensure: the effective functioning of all three bodies; that representatives are not overburdened with meetings; that representatives are able to focus their energy on issues they care about.

A core motivation for this change is that we believe that it is necessary that issues pertaining to the running of CUSU, CUSU accountability and national HE policy are still able to be discussed, responded to and worked upon within CUSU's democratic structures. However by streamlining CUSU Council to focus primarily on these issues, we would create opportunities for more in-depth discussion of college life and academic issues elsewhere, which are the issues students want to see prioritised.

Composition of CUSU Council:

- 1 representative per Common Room (approx. 60 college representatives)
- 1 Undergraduate and 1 Postgraduate representative per School, accountable to Faculty Forum (12)
- 2 per CUSU Campaign (12)
- Part-Time Executive (9)
- Sabbatical Officers (6)
- Total Size: approx. 100 members
- Quorum: $\frac{1}{3}$ of eligible voting members

Common Rooms (CRs) would be free to choose for themselves how they select representatives to CUSU Council, however, it should be the role of the same person at each Council. Proxies would be allowed and encouraged if voting members are not able to attend a specific Council to ensure every CRs always has a representative. However, if proxies are being regularly used by a Council member, their CR may wish to recommend that a different person is selected to sit on CUSU Council.

Training would be provided to Council members to ensure that they understand how Council functions and that they are able to effectively represent the views of their constituency. As part of their role Council members would be expected to consult with students before attending CUSU Council and to report back to their constituency on their voting record.

PROPOSAL B: AN EXTENDED COUNCIL

An alternative way to encourage the discussion of academic issues is to give Faculty Representatives a seat on CUSU Council. This would increase academic representation and therefore increase the likelihood of academic issues being brought to Council. These changes would be implemented alongside the Faculty Rep review which is designed to improve the accountability and effectiveness of Faculty Reps.

Composition of CUSU Council:

- 2 representatives per Common Room (approx. 120 representatives)
- Faculty Representatives (approx. 80)
- Part-Time Executive (9)
- 2 per CUSU Campaign (12)
- Sabbatical Officers (6)
- Total Size: approx. 230 voting members
- Quorum: 20% of eligible voting members

Training would be provided to Council members to ensure that they understand how Council functions and that they are able to effectively represent the views of their constituency. As part of their role Council members would be expected to consult with students before attending CUSU Council and to report back to their constituency on their voting record.

The main standing orders changes emerging for both proposals A and B can be found in Article D of the standing orders.

Elements of both proposals

CUSU CAMPAIGNS

CUSU proposes classifying the following as 'CUSU Campaigns', which will include the CUSU Liberation Campaigns:

- CUSU BME Campaign
- CUSU Class Act
- CUSU Disabled Students' Campaign
- CUSU Ethical Affairs
- iCUSU
- CUSU LGBT+ Campaign
- CUSU Women's Campaign

At present, the structure of CUSU Ethical Affairs is inconsistent with that of other campaigns run by CUSU, and as such, they do not receive the same support as Liberation Campaigns. To provide consistency and ensure that they are properly supported by CUSU, it is proposed that they would move towards the same structure that the other campaigns have. For 2018/19, two CUSU Ethical Affairs Officers would be elected alongside Sabbatical Officers in Lent term who would then be in charge of running elections for a CUSU Ethical Affairs committee, as opposed to a part-time executive, who would support them into the transition of becoming a CUSU Campaign. By establishing the category of 'CUSU Campaigns' this will allow us to have a clear structure to follow if CUSU wishes to establish any more campaigns in the future and would therefore improve the overall effectiveness of CUSU's campaigning work.

The main standing orders changes emerging from these proposals can be found in Article L.

PART- TIME EXECUTIVE (PTE)

The Democracy Review highlighted that many students were unsure what the Part-Time Executive do and this is reflected in consistently low voter turnout in PTE elections. As such CUSU proposes moving the elections for Part-Time Executive roles to Lent alongside the sabbatical officer elections. This would increase attention given to these elections, increase voter turnout and also knowledge about the part-time roles. As they would be elected alongside the sabbatical officers it would also mean that the PTE would work alongside their respective sabbatical officer for the whole year, allowing them to achieve more.

CUSU also proposes replacing the Union Development PTE with a Democracy Steering Group. The Democracy Steering Group's role would be to ensure that CUSU works to become more democratic and accountable to its students. It would support the CUSU President in improving CUSU democracy, ensure reforms are carried out, and ensure action is taken on any motions passed at CUSU Council. It would be comprised on the CUSU President, CUSU Council Chair and the CUSU Returning Officer.

If all the proposals are accepted then the Part-Time Executive positions would therefore be:

- 2 x Education Part-Time Executive Officers
- 2 x Access & Funding Part-Time Executive Officers
- 2 x Welfare & Rights Part-Time Executive Officers
- 3 x Portfolio Officers (Mature Students, Part-Time Students, Student Parents) included in Welfare & Rights Team

As these changes, if agreed, would not be ratified in time for the 2019 Lent Elections, the 2019 PTE elections would occur in Easter Term and then the 2020 PTE elections would then occur in Lent alongside the sabbatical officer elections.

The main standing orders changes emerging from these proposals can be found in Article D.