

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST STUDENTS' UNION

To: Members of the Students' Union Council

Dear Councillor,

Please attend a Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council, to be held on Tuesday 17 November 2015 at 6.00 p.m. in The Space, Level 1, Students' Union.

Yours sincerely,

DOMINIC DOHERTY
Clerk to the Students' Union Council

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of Previous Meetings of the Council
- 2.1 Annual Business Meeting of 6 May 2015 SUC/M/15/5
- 2.2 Inaugural Meeting of 5 November 2015 SUC/M/15/6
3. Business Arising from the Minutes.
4. Communications.
5. Bye-Elections
 - 5.1 Education and Welfare Committee (7 vacancies)
 - 5.2 Student Activities Committee (3 vacancies)
 - 5.3 Officer Review Group (2 vacancies)
 - 5.4 Academic Board (3 vacancies)*
 - 5.5 Postgraduate Forum (1 vacancy)*

(* denotes University Committee)
6. Elections

There are none.
7. Constitutional Amendments / Rule Amendments
- 7.1 **Amend: Paragraph 820 as follows, to include:**
 - 7.1.1 Queen's University Belfast Radiology Society
Proposer: Jirhe David-Okugbeni (40055586)
Seconder: Ng, Chong Yew (40054772)
 - 7.1.2 Queen's University Belfast Cycling Club
Proposer: Aymen McGonigle (40132631)
Seconder: Ben Irwin (40100998)
 - 7.1.3 Queen's University Belfast Sober Society
Proposer: Brónadh Rooney (40120244)
Seconder: Mary-Frances McCafferty (40143102)

7.1.4 Queen's University Belfast Mature Students' Society

Proposer: Jacqueline Nesbit (17930014)
Secunder: Isabella Harvey (40122283)

7.1.5 Queen's University Belfast Quiz Society

Proposer: Alex McMillan (40104210)
Secunder: Charlie Shimmins (40104294)

7.1.6 Queen's University Belfast Neurological Society

Proposer: Michael Grant (40055828)
Secunder: Caroline McCusker (40055781)

7.1.7 Queen's University Belfast Project Zambia Society (Reforming Society)

Proposer: Robert Murtagh (40130700)
Secunder: Nathan Crudden (40130689)

7.1.8 Queen's University Belfast Hellenic Society (Reforming Society)

Proposer: Spiros Pasparakis (40081720)
Secunder: Rebekah McMurray (40126625)

7.1.9 Queen's University Belfast Obstetrics and Gynaecology Society
(Reforming Society)

Proposer: Sophie Stezaker (40076803)
Secunder: Ashleigh Moore (40055911)

7.1.10 Queen's University Belfast Hong Kong Internationalisation Society

Proposer: Joey Chun Yin Tang (40098145)
Secunder: Yvonne Yee-Wai Yu (40144036)

7.1.11 Queen's University Belfast Northern Ireland University Air Squadron

Proposer: Robert Kane (40007854)
Secunder: Rebecca Campbell (40108087)

7.1.12 Queen's University Belfast American Institute of Aeronautics and
Astronautics Student Society

Proposer: Xudan Yao (40137970)
Secunder: Alexandre Portela (40119583)

7.1.13 Queen's University Belfast ¥A Life Society

Proposer: Natalie Skov Laugesen (40113385)
Secunder: Lucy Harris (40130154)

7.1.14 Queen's University Belfast GP Society

Proposer: Kerrie McConnell (40076764)
Secunder: Mary Gribbon (40098496)

7.1.15 Queen's University Belfast Airsoft Club

Proposer: Alexander Duthie (40150052)
Secunder: Ashley Scarlett (40128971)

7.1.16 Queen's University Belfast Cancer Focus Society

Proposer: Matthew Donnelly (40124498)
Secunder: Joanna Porter (40082025)

7.1.17 Queen's University Belfast swotUP Society

Proposer: Kate Mullan (40077159)
 Seconder: Hannah Gillespie (40077145)

7.1.18 Queen's University Belfast Humanist Society

Proposer: Bradley Allsop (40159985)
 Seconder: Brian Rooney (90309838)

8. Report of the Executive Management Committee and Recommendations

8.1	Report of the Union President	SUC/P/15/32
8.2	Report of the Vice President Campaigns and Communications	SUC/P/15/33
8.3	Report of the Vice President Clubs and Societies	SUC/P/15/34
8.4	Report of the Vice President Education	SUC/P/15/35
8.5	Report of the Vice President Equality and Diversity	SUC/P/15/36
8.6	Report of the Vice President Welfare	SUC/P/15/37
8.7	Report of the Vice President Community	SUC/P/15/38

9. Reports from other Union Committees and Recommendations10. Reports from University Committees11. Constitutional Questions

There are none.

12. Questions

There are none.

13. Motions

13.1 This Council recognises the importance of the institution of marriage to many people across our campus and our society. This Council further recognizes that members of the LGBT+ community are not afforded the right to Equal Marriage before the law in Northern Ireland. This is despite the fact that:

- A majority (53 to 52) of Northern Irish MLAs voted to legalise Equal Marriage.
- An Ipsos MORI poll found that 68% of people in Northern Ireland supported Equal Marriage.
- Northern Ireland is the only part of these islands not to support Equal Marriage.

This Council believes:

- that no individual should face discrimination based on their sexual orientation.
- that marrying someone you love is a human right.
- that adequate room has been made for religious freedom in existing legislation and proposed motions.

This Council therefore:

- congratulates the Republic of Ireland for the Referendum victory for Equal Marriage and recognises the campaigning efforts of the student movement to achieve this monumental outcome.
- welcomes the judicial review into the absence of Equal Marriage in Northern Ireland.
- supports the student effort to campaign for Equal Marriage to be legalised in Northern Ireland.

Proposer: Shannon Downey (LGBT+ Officer)
 Seconder: Oisín Hassan (Vice President Equality and Diversity)

13.2 **Disabled Students' Needs during Examination Periods.**

Council notes with grave concern that disabled students have been unable to have their needs assessments altered as their condition changes or worsens, primarily prior to examination periods.

Council notes that hospitalised disabled students have been unable to make requests for assignments in lieu of examinations to reflect their worsening condition and change in needs.

Council believes that the University has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students throughout their time at Queen's.

Council instructs the Disabled Students' Officer and the Equality and Diversity Officer to liaise with Disability Services to ensure that Disabled Students needs are met throughout the year, including during assessment periods and that changes can be made successfully throughout the academic year.

In addition, Council instructs the Equality and Diversity Officer to provide an update at the next meeting of Council as to the results of communication with Disability Services.

Proposer: Sarah Wright (40002922)
 Seconder: Stephen McCrystall (40109651)

13.3 **Ban on Queen's University Belfast Unpaid Internships**

Council notes with concern that unpaid internships exist at Queen's University.

Council believes that students, who already receive very little in the way of financial help from Student Finance NI, should not be forced to engage in unpaid exploitative labour.

Council believes in a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

Council notes that unpaid internships potentially exclude students from lower income backgrounds from such positions and restrict employment rights of students.

Council instructs the Campaigns and Communications Officer to investigate the extent of the use of unpaid internships in all departments, actively and visibly lobby the University against the use of unpaid internships through press releases, petitions and other action necessary.

Council instructs the Union President and Students' Union Council representative on Senate to put forward a motion to Senate in opposition to the use of unpaid internships.

Proposer: Sarah Wright (40002922)
 Seconder: Georgia Grainger (40098857)

13.4 **Examination Feedback**

Council notes that there is inconsistency across school on whether students receive feedback on examinations / essays in lieu of exams.

Council expresses concern that the onus is on students to request this information, given that it is usually worth more of their module mark and they are restricted in their ability to take constructive criticism on board and improve.

Council instructs the Education Officer to liaise with each school to discuss feedback mechanisms in place, and to advocate for automatic feedback mechanisms for all assessments.

Proposer: Sarah Wright (40002922)
 Seconder: Christopher Leneghan (40107593)

13.5 **Student Societies and Misinformation**

Council notes with concern that student Societies have been distributing literature to students which contain unsubstantiated claims and have led to students being grossly misinformed.

Council maintains the view that all student Societies at Freshers' Fairs and throughout the year should aim to have factual displays and give out factual literature.

Council believes that if a complaint regarding misinformation is lodged against a Society, said Society must provide evidence to refute such claims to the Clubs and Societies Officer who must, in turn inform Council of the complaint. Societies who have been found to breach this policy, will lose their status as a student Society and will have to reapply to the Council for ratification.

Proposer: Sarah Wright (40002922)
 Seconder: Bradley Allsop (40159985)

13.6 **Disabled Parking at the Students' Union**

Council notes that there is one designated spot for disabled drivers beside the Students' Union, along Elmwood Avenue.

Council believes that there should be increased access for Disabled Students' to the Students' Union.

Council instructs the Vice President Equality and Diversity, alongside the Disabled Students' Officer, to liaise with the Roads Service and any other authority to vastly increase the number of disabled parking spaces in Elmwood Avenue and to report to Council at the next meeting on any progress made in this regard.

Proposer: Sarah Wright (40002922)
 Seconder: Stephen McCrystall (40109651)

13.7 **Committee Meeting Transparency**

Council believes that issues discussed and decisions made in the Committees of the Students' Union and the University should be transparent.

Council asserts that all minutes from Students' Union and University meetings should be distributed to Councillors prior to a subsequent meeting of Council, alongside the agenda.

In addition, Council asserts that, where possible, minutes and outcomes of meetings should be made available on the University and Students' Union websites for all students to scrutinise.

Proposer: Sarah Wright (40002922)
 Seconder: Bradley Allsop (40159985)

13.8 **Queen's University Belfast Students' Union Autonomy**

Council notes that the University has the power to overturn democratic decisions made by the Students' Union Council, as seen by the decision to overturn the removal of the Academic Standing Rule endorsed by Council in the last academic year.

Council recognises that the relationship between Queen's University and the Students' Union is unique in comparison to the autonomous relationship between these institutions in the UK and Ireland.

Council endorses an autonomous Students' Union and instructs the Executive Management Committee to liaise with NUS-USI, MLAs and other authorities to ensure that the Students' Union become independent from the University within the next five years.

Proposer: Sarah Wright (40002922)
 Seconder: Bradley Allsop (40159985)

13.9 **Asylum Seekers and Access to Education**

This Council recognises:

1. According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "Everyone has the right to education... and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit".
2. The term refugee applies to any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.
3. An asylum seeker is someone who has lodged an application for protection on the basis of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.
4. Discretionary leave to remain (DLR) is a 3 year renewable status that may be granted to individuals on the basis of an asylum claim, including many separated children from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq.
5. Meanwhile asylum seekers are:
 - * not allowed to take out student loans;
 - * not allowed to apply for grants and bursaries;
 - * unable to study in another country;
 - * denied the right to work in the UK;
 - * sometimes required to wait like this for years while a decision is made as to whether they can stay in the UK.
 - * are given less than £5 a day in Government benefits.
6. Asylum seeker students and students with DLR are routinely charged overseas fees, yet their situation and needs are different to those of international students.
7. There is no consensus policy from UK universities on access to education for asylum seekers and individuals granted DLR on the basis of an asylum claim.
8. A number of UK universities have amended their admissions policies to allow asylum seekers and/or students granted DLR as the result of an asylum application to pay 'home' tuition fees, or have waived fees entirely. These include: Manchester University, Leeds University, Royal Holloway University of London, Salford University and many more.

9. Yet Queens continues to offer no scholarships to asylum seekers forcing them to pay international fees which in the majority of cases is impossible. **Student Action For Refugees QUB** have therefore started a campaign at **QUB** supporting equal access to university for students seeking refugee protection as part of the *Equal Access* campaign. We will ask Queens to introduce a number of fully funded scholarships for asylum seekers already residing in Northern Ireland.

10. The *Equal Access* campaign is being led by the National Union of Students and Student Action for Refugees and is supported by a range of other organisations.

11. The experiences and insights of students seeking refugee protection have the potential to greatly enrich the intellectual and social life of the university.

12. Furthermore giving asylum seekers the opportunity to study at Queens will help the University in its drive to increase its international student population by 2020.

This Council Believes:

The University should adopt a fair and equitable approach in providing access to Higher Education on the basis of merit for all, including asylum seekers or individuals granted DLR on the basis of an asylum claim.

This Union Resolves:

* To support the *Equal Access* campaign and work closely with NUS and QUB STAR to create a campaign specific to our institution/students' union.

* To lobby the University to sign the *Equal Access* Pledge and remove financial barriers preventing students seeking refugee protection from studying here. Specifically to:

- o Enable all those seeking refugee protection to be able to study as home students
- o Recognise that, like other vulnerable groups, students seeking refugee protection have additional needs and give them access to additional support, such as fee waivers, bursaries, scholarships and grants.

Proposer: Aelfrieda Seymour (40085460)
 Seconder: Oisín McKeown (40156085)

13.10 **Students' Union Council Transparency**

Council recognises that it plays an important role in the running of the Students' Union and that it exists to represent the concerns of the wider student body. However, it is also noted that the majority of students are disengaged from the democratic processes of the Union and do not understand its functions.

In order to increase student awareness, Council proposes:

- That the minutes for each Council meeting are made easier to find on the qbsu.org website, and
- That an all-student email is sent out on a monthly basis providing a Council update; including details of what was debated and the motions that were passed at the most recent meeting of Council.

Council hopes that these actions will increase the awareness, and therefore the relevance, of its work to the wider student population and instructs the Students' Union President to ensure that this is carried out.

Proposer: Conor McFall (40078816)
 Seconder: Georgia Grainger (40098857)

13.11 Freedom of Information

Council recognises the importance of Freedom of Information requests in the work of campaigners both within and outside of the student movement and their vital role in holding public institutions (including Queens University) providing information to the general population.

Council notes with concern the proposals of the Conservative Government in Westminster to introduce a charge for Freedom of Information requests, which will make gathering information more difficult for campaigners who do not have the financial backing of large political or media institutions.

Council therefore condemns these proposals and instructs the full-time student officers to lobby local politicians to oppose this restriction of information to the public.

Proposer: Conor McFall (40078816)
 Seconder: Eoin Dawson (18251048)

13.12 Examination Halls Conditions

This Council notes the importance of providing comfortable conditions in areas where students are taking examinations.

Council recognises that optimum conditions are not being met in some examination halls on campus, including the Whitla Hall, where many of the desks are either wobbly or too small and the clock is not large enough for all students in the hall to be able to see the time.

Council recognises the stressfulness of the examinations period in itself and wishes to ensure that this is not made more difficult by external factors. Therefore, Council instructs the Vice President Education to liaise with the relevant University authorities to endeavour to improve these conditions.

Proposer: Conor McFall (40078816)
 Seconder: Eoin Dawson (18251048)

13.13 Delays in Commencing Meetings of the Council

This Council notes that Statutory Meetings are advertised to start at a specific time.

Council recognises that punctuality is important for all involved, especially students who have other commitments and deadlines. Therefore, Council instructs the Union Speaker to ensure that meetings begin no later than 15 minutes after the stated starting time.

Council further notes that, during previous sessions of Council, meetings have continued for excessive periods of time. Council recognises that this can be very tiring and inaccessible for everyone, particularly for disabled students.

Council therefore instructs the Union Speaker to announce a 10 minute access break, following 90 minutes of Council business.

Proposer: Stephen McCrystall (40109651)
 Seconder: Sarah Wright (40002922)

14. Any Other Competent Business**15. Date of the next Statutory Meeting of the Students' Union Council**

Thursday 3 December 2015 at 6.00 p.m. in The Space, Level 1, Students' Union.