

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX
STUDENTS* UNION

Policy Book – June 2022

Policy	Page
Love and support for students with disabilities and mental health conditions	2
Liberation budgets for community officers	3
Information sharing with Student Media	4
Deck Chairs	6
Student's Union Strike Policy	7
Supporting our students with a Child friendly space	8
BDS motion	10
Plastic Policy	13
Islamophobia policy	16
Email Responses Time Policy	18
Reduce terminology, Drop Barriers and Improve accessibility Policy	19
Equitable Exam Policy	21
Marketisation of Higher Education	22

Love and support for students with disabilities and mental health conditions

Submitted By: Nathan Casteler

Union Notes:

- 1) That on the 10th of February 2017 Masud Abdulkadir was elected to the position of VP Welfare & Community.
- 2) That the VP Welfare & Community-Elect made on several occasions in his manifesto and during his campaign claims regarding medication and mental health conditions, namely
 - a. that “research on the effect of exercise on depression and other mental and physical illness show how BENEFICIAL exercise can be on the human body and mind”.
 - b. that ending the provision of free sports would lead to fewer students “engage[ing] in sports and physical exercise, and instead reach[ing] for the easier MORE ACCESSIBLE option, and for all we know CHEAPER alternative using PILLS which we are now GROWING IMMUNE to, that does nothing but HARM US in the long term” (sic).
 - c. that students indulge “in cannabis, coffee, cigarettes, alcohol and other non-prescription drugs”, concluding that drug education is needed to expose the effects of drugs “some of which may lead to harms such as overdose, injury, infectious disease and mental illness... Even those ‘designed’ to help you”.

- 3) That such claims were supported by uncited research and evidence concerning antibiotics and analgesics.
- 4) That the VP Welfare & Community made little or no mention in his manifesto and during his campaign of SU Advice, Student Support, Residence Life, the Health Centre, Nightline, and other services on campus within and without his competence as VP Welfare which can assist students with disabilities and mental health conditions.

Union Believes:

- 1) That ambiguous and vague statements conflating prescription and non-prescription drugs, supported by uncited sources, are unhelpful and irresponsible.
- 2) That focusing only on the provision of sports to treat mental health amounts to negligence towards disabled students or students suffering from physical conditions for whom sports is not readily available.
- 3) That judgmental statements towards drug users and students suffering from mental conditions are not helpful or constructive, and may in the long term be harmful where such claims lead to students disregarding medical advice.
- 4) That treatment and recovery in mental health conditions does not come in a ‘one-size-fits-all’ form, and that lifestyle changes (including but not limited to physical exercise), medical treatment and talk therapy are known to help patients suffering from mental illnesses.
- 5) That stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health conditions can be caused or worsened by academic failure, financial worries and administrative problems.

- 6) That the VP Welfare & Community ought to work with other relevant officers and representatives to tackle mental health conditions across the board.

Union resolves:

- 1) To treat all students, no matter their mental health conditions or disabilities, with dignity and respect.
- 2) To encourage the all Sabbatical Officers to work with Liberation Officers and reflect on how their work can improve the experience of students with disabilities and mental health conditions.
- 3) To support and empower them to make healthy lifestyle choices and to follow professional medical advice.
- 4) To help and assist students through their Studies by way of the administrative support and correct signposting to support services within and outside of the Students' Union.

Policy Lapses – March 27, 2020

Policy renewed – 8th Dec 2020

Policy Lapses – 8th Dec 2023

Policy: Liberation Budgets for Community Officers

Aims of the policy:

This policy aims to ensure that our community officers should have a guaranteed, ring-fenced budget for their campaigns throughout the academic year.

Relevant information:

The community officers that should be included within this policy, are Black Officer, Asian Officer, Women's Officer, Students with Disabilities Officer, LGBTQ+ Officer, Trans Officer, Mature Officer, Student parent and Carers officer and Loughton's Person of Colour Officer. Colchester campus' community officers should receive at least £600, per community officer, per academic year and community officers for liberation groups in Southend and Loughton campuses should receive at least £400, per community officer, per academic year.

At the start of each academic year, the amount should be decided by the respective community officer and signed off by the SU president.

Why this is needed:

- This is needed so there is a set budget that is ring-fenced which should not be spent on any activities other than Liberation events that will be organised by the community officers (which have been mentioned above).
- A ring-fenced budget is needed so there would be no conflicting funding, as these campaigns raise awareness

and support marginalised and minorities on all three campuses

Actions to take:

- Increase the budget for community officers in Colchester campus to at least £600 each per academic year
- Increase the budget for community officers in Southend and Loughton campuses to at least £400 each per academic year
- Replace the old Liberation Budgets Policy with Liberation Budgets for Community Officers Policy

Amended 8th Dec 2020
Policy lapses 8th Dec 2023

Information sharing with Student Media

Submitted By: James Potter

The University of Essex Students' Union is committed to sharing requested information with the University of Essex Students' Union Student Media team wherever possible. Any request for information made by Student Media must be dealt with by the Students' Union within 10 working days.

Information will not be shared when it would place the Students' Union in conflict with the law or where the Trustee Board of the Students' Union has rejected a request. The grounds of rejection could include, but not limited to, confidential information and information regarding Students' Union staff.

In the case of a request being rejected the Chair of the Trustee Board must provide a written explanation as to why the request has been declined to the relevant Student Media team.

Policy Lapsed – September 30, 2019

Reapproved – 27th November 2019

Policy Lapses – 27th November 2022

Proposer : Jan Laska

Deck Chairs

Aims of policy :

- To ensure that the Students' Union makes available deck chairs for students

Important information relevant to this policy:

- Colchester Student Parliament passed this policy back into the policy book
- A policy passed at that Parliament in November that had not been amended to meet the requirements of the new policy aimed to improve accessibility
- During summer months, these deck chairs can be hired for a small fee by people who want to relax by the lakes
- During the winter months, when the lakes are less popular, the deck chairs could be made available in other areas such as the secret garden or square 3

Why this policy is needed

- It allows for students to enjoy the beautiful vistas of Colchester campus in a positive way
- Ensures that the SU is providing opportunities for students to spend time with others outside while not actively exercising

Actionable items that will effect change or proposed solutions (resolves):

- The Students' Union to make Deck Chairs available for hire by students and other visitors to our beautiful Colchester campus, especially the lakes
- The hiring to be paid by a refundable deposit paid by the user of the deckchairs

Policy lapses June 2020

Policy lapses Nov 2023

Students' Union Strike policy

Original Proposer : Jake Painter

Amended by: Mark Kiley Feb 2021

Amended by : Raya el Sabbagh March 2022

Amended by Raya el Sabbagh May 2002

This policy covers both strikes and actions short of strike from the UCU

Aims of policy:

- Explain and define the SU's support for the UCU strikes
- Support students' needs during times of strikes
- Ensure all students can support the strikes and know how to do this
- Pressure the University to listen to strike concerns
- Support the academic staff of the University
- Important information relevant to this policy (notes):
- The University and College Union (UCU) is a trade union responsible for representing those in further and higher education.
- The UCU represents the vast majority of teaching staff at the University of Essex
- UCU Essex Branch have recently did an indicative ballot if the University proceeded with the plan to return to face to face teaching as part of the blended approach once the national lockdown ends
- This ballot reached the legal threshold and had 71% respondents saying they would be willing to partake in strike action.

- In early 2020, the UCU went on strike on "the four fights", this dispute was paused because of COVID-19.
- The UCU four fights are: pay inequality, job insecurity, rising workloads, and pay devaluation
- International Students regularly have Tier 4 Visas, and these can be affected by attendance at University.
- Following the last strike, the University put money saved from striking lecturers into the Hardship Fund
- The strikes that occurred in academic year 2019-20 led to weeks of lost teaching opportunities at Essex and in other Universities across the UK.
- The Union currently has a policy on striking lecturers, but this policy has only ever applied to one strike and has not been able to be applied since this strike occurred due to wording. This policy is now due to lapse.

Why this policy is needed in your opinion (believes):

- The Union is responsible for protecting the academic interests of students; both long-term and short-term and as such staff working conditions are of interest to students.
- Staff are currently concerned about their safety when teaching face to face.
- University teaching and support staff are an integral part of the University community and ensuring they are fairly rewarded for their contribution to education at Essex is vital.
- The strikes are designed to lead to improved teaching, and thus better learning, conditions and so is the interest of students, and thus their Union, to support these aims

- Fair working conditions are necessary for all workers, this includes in education
- International students should also be able to be in solidarity with striking lecturers and not have to worry about any risk to their visa.
- If strikes are successful, staff working conditions will improve and student learning environments improve
- The current policy is not broad enough, fails to cover any UCU strike that fell after the specific strike the policy was written for, fails to put any provisions in to protect international students, fails to pressure the University outside of the SU supporting any acts of solidarity
- The SU parliament needs to retain the right to temporarily withdraw support for strikes should strike action become excessive.

Actionable items that will effect change (resolves):

- Not renew/revoke “For the University of Essex Students’ Union to actively support the upcoming UCU strike” policy
- As long as the UCU strikes are about the four fights as outlined or in response to staff safety and wellbeing concerns, the Union will support, and be in solidarity with, the strike and striking staff and the Sabbatical Officers will do the following actions:
- Pressure the University to ensure that all students with Tier 4 visas are protected by suspending attendance monitoring in full for all departments for every strike period

- Pressure the University to continue to put the money saved into the Hardship Fund to support staff and students who are struggling financially
- Pressure the university to offer refunds to affected students on a pro-rata basis
- Release a statement in support of the strike, explaining what the strike is about, information about the strike, and how students can support the strike
- Communicate to students how the Students’ Union will be supporting students through the strike as soon as possible once strikes have been confirmed
- Coordinate and liaise with Essex UCU as to how the SU can best support the strike
- The Students’ Union, wherever possible, should pressure the University to improve job security, pay equality, workloads, and the proper valuation of pay across less senior members of University staff
- Continue to support students as mentioned above but withdraw support for the UCU strikes if a vote of parliament is passed calling for temporary withdrawal of support on the basis that the strikes become excessive – The withdrawal of support can be for a specific strike or a period of time and would be set out in the parliamentary vote.

In the Case of a Vote to withdraw support:

The SU parliament needs to retain the right to temporarily withdraw support for strikes should strike action become excessive

As a union we support the causes of the strike and lecturers right to strike but we also reserve the right to withdraw support when it is affecting students.

Excessive can mean (but is not limited to): the amount of strike actions throughout the year, duration, its effects on students and whether strike action is taking place in key times for students (e.g., exam season).

The term "excessive" is a subjective term and we need to acknowledge the fact that this conclusion might result from reasoning mentioned above as well as a cumulative effect of different factors.

When an individual or group brings forward an explanation as to why that specific striking period is excessive; it needs to include individual and cumulative student feedback across different departments which explains that.

Withdrawing support could include (based on the specific strike action and student needs at the time):

- not using our platforms to share or advertise anything regarding the strike action
- publicly sharing what we requested from the university in order to support students during that period of time
- sharing a statement from the sabbatical officers including the reasoning why parliament voted to not support the specific strike action and actions to result from that
- having revision sessions organised with the SU throughout the strike period with the help of peer mentors, student representatives and students that register interest and offer certificates acknowledging their help in teaching others and covering the specific material
- having sessions where students work with each other to cover the materials they would miss during the strike period

- holding sessions in departmental common rooms
- holding campaigns for peer-for-peer support and help
- speak with course reps and convenors in order to understand what students need to catch-up on following the strike

The UCU announces strike action two weeks before the action is to begin which means that sometimes strike action will happen in between parliament meetings. When this happens, representatives can still send a proposal through (same as they would for a parliament meeting) and the union chair will decide whether a vote will take place via email, through an extraordinary parliament or in another way. When this is the case, this proposal suggests to include more information than ever in the proposal so representatives can make an educated vote if it takes place via email.

- **Policy lapses Feb 2024**

Supporting our Student Parents with a Child Friendly Space (Replacing previous Child friendly space Policy that lapsed Nov 2020)

Aims of policy:

- Provide a safe space for student parents to study effectively on campus while having children with them
- Ensure student parents are not excluded from essential academic, support, and wellbeing services that all students are entitled to

Important information relevant to this policy:

- Union policy includes a child friendly space policy that is due to lapse on November 26th
- The Union recently introduced a new SCO role for Student Parents and Carers
- Student parents have been affected massively by COVID-19 and are already juggling many responsibilities as well as studying
- A Goldsmiths SU report found that there needs to be more leniency for student parents with regards to mitigating (extenuating) circumstances. "With kids at home, sometimes you don't need a major event to completely upset time management for your studies"
- Student Parents will almost always be expected to fit the mould of the average student where their needs are extraordinarily different due to their care commitments¹

¹Supporting Student Parents in Higher Education: A policy analysis. Final Report. Dr Marie-Pierre Moreau (IRED) & Charlotte Kerner (ISPAR), University of Bedfordshire. October 2012

- University policies compound difficulties that student parents face¹
- There will be increased study space available to the University in the upcoming AYs due to the finished construction of CTC.
- Student parents may find it difficult to learn with their children distracting them

Why this policy is needed:

- The current policy is not fit for purpose and has failed to deliver
- Student parents and their needs have been ignored by the University for too long
- Student parents are disproportionately affected by a lack of leniency due to their caring commitments for their children
- All students should have access to facilities and services that the University provides
- Study space can be effectively provided for all students without increased University expenditure including space specifically for certain students

Actionable items that will effect change:

- Revoke Child Friendly Space policy, replace with this policy
- Lobby the University to provide study space specifically for student parents where children can remain entertained while student parents can get work done and ensure that this space has baby-changing facilities

<https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Moreau%20Student%20Parent%20report%20-%20Full%20report%20October%202012.pdf>

and pamphlets with key links and guides for online library repository, FASER, Moodle, and LEAP, as well as contact details for IT helpdesk. This could include underutilised spaces such as computer labs on floor 1.

- Lobby the University to ensure that student parents are not unfairly affected by University policy around extenuating circumstances and call for the University to review extenuating circumstances with involvement in the process from student parents.
- Student Parents Representatives and/or Student Parent and Carer Officer to be involved in any conversations with the University regarding the creation of a child-friendly space and improvement around extenuating circumstances

Lapses Nov 2023

“Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Motion”

Submitted by: Tamer Baransi, Gabriel Valenzuela

Amended by: Yusr Al-Salman

Reaffirmed by: SRF on Feb 26, 2015

Further amended by: Masa Melhem

Union Notes:

- 1) That the call to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) came in 2005 from over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations and is fully representative of Palestinian civil society in its call to the international community to hold Israel accountable.
- 2) That there is (an inter)national campaign to boycott Israeli goods in other academic institutions with motions passed to boycott Israeli products and/or terminate contracts with companies that profit from the violation of Palestinian human rights (such as the campaign against G4S in King's College London (KCL), SOAS, Kent and the University of Southampton).
- 3) That the National Union of Students' Executive Council voted to join the call of the BDS movement (August 2014).
- 4) That the NUS Black Students' Conference has endorsed BDS (August 2014)
- 5) That the NUS supported the BDS call during Apartheid South Africa and has passed a motion calling for freedom for Palestine and an end to the siege on Gaza.
- 6) That Israel in its complete disregard of the human rights of the Palestinians and in its illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank is in breach of over 30 UN resolutions as well as in complete violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

7) That Israel's continuing oppression of the Palestinians both inside Israel proper and the Occupied Territories has been compared by South African trade unionists and activists to the Apartheid Regime; nowhere is this more visible than in the construction of the illegal Apartheid Wall.

8) That Israel has denied the right of return for Palestinian refugees recognized under The United Nations UN General Assembly Resolution 194 which was passed on December 11, 1948. Now, there are more than five million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA, more than one million of them are stateless.

9) That Palestinians living within Israel proper and the Occupied Territories are treated as second-class citizens with no equal rights confirming that Israel is not a democratic state for all its people.

10) That BDS movement has had several victories in the past year and has helped in bringing the end of the occupation and colonisation of Palestinian lands closer. For example : Dutch pension fund PGGM divesting from Israeli banks, the divestment of both the Bill Gates Foundation and of the US Methodist Church from G4S, which has led to G4S' yet-to-be-implemented decision to pull out of Israel.

Union Believes:

1) That under the UN definition of Apartheid, Israel is an Apartheid state. The UN definition of Apartheid from 1973 is as follows:

Denial to a member or members of a racial group or groups of the right to life and liberty of person

- (i) By murder of members of a racial group or groups;

(ii) By the infliction upon the members of a racial group or groups of serious bodily or mental harm, by the infringement of their freedom or dignity, or by subjecting them to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

(iii) By arbitrary arrest and illegal imprisonment of the members of a racial group or groups;

(iv) (b) Deliberate imposition on a racial group or groups of living conditions calculated to cause its or their physical destruction in whole or in part;

(v) II(c): Any legislative measures and other measures calculated to prevent a racial group or groups from participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country and the deliberate creation of conditions preventing the full development of such a group or groups, in particular by denying to members of a racial group or groups basic human rights and freedoms, including the right to work, the right to form recognized trade unions, the right to education, the right to leave and to return to their country, the right to a nationality, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association

2) That boycotting campaigns against South Africa was an important part of the resistance bringing down Apartheid and that the same means can help bring down Apartheid again.

3) That in light of the Apartheid policies inflicted on all Palestinians by the State of Israel, it is not adequate to separate between settlement products and Israeli products. Instead, it is necessary to highlight the State's role and its full

complicity in the occupation and Apartheid by applying pressure through the Boycott.

Union Further Believes:

1) That on these grounds Essex University Student Union should continue to Boycott Israeli products and settlement products on campus.

2) That we should help build and join the movement to boycott Israeli goods and urge the university to do the same.

3) That the BDS movement opposes anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and any form of racism as strongly as it opposes the oppression of the Palestinian people.

Union Resolves:

1) To boycott Israeli and settlement goods from being sold on Student Union premises.

2) To terminate contracts with companies that profit from the violation of Palestinian human rights (such as but not limited to companies that provide technical and logistical support for the occupation).

3) To pressure the University of Essex to boycott Israeli and settlement goods from being sold on the University of Essex premises and to terminate contracts with companies that profit from the violation of Palestinian human rights.

4) To ensure that information is distributed around the university so that students are made aware of the reasons for the boycott.

5) To work with the University of Essex Palestinian Solidarity Society (PalSoc) to determine how the University is cooperating with companies and institutions that provide support for the maintenance of the Israeli

apartheid regime, and implement strategies to help spread awareness on campus.

Policy renewed ; 23rd March 2021

Policy Lapses: March 2024

PLASTICS POLICY JUNE 2018

PROPOSER: TANCREDE CHARTIER
Amended: Daniel Seorici

INTRODUCTION

The SU promotes the recycling and reuse of plastics. We endeavour to create operating models that prevent plastics from ending up in water bodies and elsewhere in the environment and promise to always look for alternatives that are efficient and cost effective.

PLASTICS POLICY

1.Reducing usage

- SU stores only provide plastic bags on request and charges 5p per bag.
- The SU also provides alternatives for plastic bags in its Everything Essex store: such as cotton tote bags•Paper bags are used in the Kitchen
- Small micro plastic particles pass through wastewater treatment plants into water bodies risking ending up in food chains and household drinking water. The SU removed the products containing such particles from our shop shelves
- Plastic straws are being removed from the SU bar, Sub Zero and SU Lounge, and the Kitchen and Starbucks are looking at how to reduce their straw usage and alternatives are being investigated
- The SU is not always able to control the packaging products come in from suppliers but the SU are

challenging suppliers to come up with alternatives that are cost effective

- The Kitchen already provides wooden stirrers rather than plastic and provides discounts to those bringing own mug
- The SU Lounge will introduce bring your own cups or containers for take away food/drink
- The SU Lounge sells travel mugs and offer 5p off hot drinks when this or their own cup is used.
- Southend -Plastics cups are currently supplied at the water dispenser. These will not be reordered when stock runs out and will encourage students and staff to bring their own water bottles.
- The SU will only use recyclable or biodegradable balloons and ensure that they are disposed of in an appropriate manner
- To eliminate the use of single use plastic cups, Sub Zero and SU Bar will switch to serving beverages in durable, re-usable cups. The SU encourages its customers to dispose of the re-usable cups by placing them in designated containers installed around the venues, from which they can be collected and washed.

2. Collection and recycling; recovery of plastic waste

- The SU encourages its customers to reduce and recycle plastic waste and provide customers with suitable facilities in all our venues, in addition to the recycling bins that the university has provided on all the squares. In Southend there are two recycling bins in the SU Lounge and one recycling bin in the SU office.

- The SU provides reusable water bottles and hot drink cups to buy.
- The Kitchen and SU Longue provides discounts to customers using the above items to encourage usage as much as possible.
- The university has installed water fountains throughout the campus. The SU will work with the university towards installing more water fountains around the campus. The SU will also work towards highlighting the presence of these water fountains by installing signs pinpointing their location.
- The plastic waste from stores and venues is directed to reuse.
- SU staff are trained and know the correct way to recycle all products.

We have established staff policies, protocol and training (i.e. always ask customers, "Is this for here or to-go? Did you bring your own mug or container? Do you know about the discounts?)

Policy Lapses May 2024

Policy Proposal by the SU Asian Student Network “Definition of Islamophobia” Policy

February 2020

Aim

The goal of this policy proposal is to:

- Help the Students' Union identify what Islamophobia is and improve the experience of the Muslim communities on campus by pressuring the University to adopt the same policy, and other recommendations
- Help students know what they can identify as Islamophobic
- Give students confidence in their Students' Union when it comes to taking Islamophobia seriously on campus and the University at large

We are aware of the issue of legitimate criticism of religion and actual cases of Islamophobia, this policy proposal aims to:

- Clarify the difference for all parties.
- Implement a greater role of the Students' Union in tackling Islamophobia on campus by way of awareness

Proposal

1. This Student Parliament moves to help the Islamic Society in promoting their events during Islamophobia Awareness Month, which takes place every November. The Students' Union will do this by recognising, endorsing, distributing material, raising awareness for, and educating about Islamophobia Awareness Month. The Students' Union itself will not hold events or be responsible for events during this month but will just support and facilitate the Islamic Society's efforts and help in promoting and raising awareness.

The Students' Union will hold a vigil during this month as an official Students' Union event, to mark the deaths of all those Muslims who have died because of Islamophobia (such as in the Christchurch terrorist attack, and the Finsbury Mosque attack).

2. This Student Parliament moves to develop and implement effective training to educate Students' Union staff in relation to this policy and train them accordingly, as well as working to ensure the security team is made aware of this policy and moves to pressure the University to adopt this policy in full and assist them in developing and implementing effective training in order to educate staff and security personnel in relation to this policy. Also, to make society executives aware of this policy, and ensure their activities do not conflict with this policy.

3. This Student Parliament moves to initiate a root and branch review of the effectiveness of existing reporting mechanisms and processes in order to identify failings that will allow the development and implementation of a robust and accessible reporting framework.

4. This Student Parliament moves to pressure/support the University in recognising and accommodating religious festivals and religious observance on campus (such as fasting during Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr, and Eid-ul-Adha) especially in relation to coordinating exams around Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr where possible.

5. This Student Parliament moves to pressure the University in tackling all forms of discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention,

and promotion. This will ensure that university staff are reflective of the experiences of their students and are able to approach situations with nuanced understandings and sensitivities, but also allows students of minority identities to have role models that are meaningful to their experiences.

6. This Student Parliament moves to work with the existing reporting system to make it more inclusive, making them aware of the definition that has been adopted, and working with them to ensure interpretation of potential cases of Islamophobia are in accordance with the definition of Islamophobia and accompanying guidelines outlined below, whilst being cognisant that these guidelines are non-exhaustive and that cases should be assessed in line with the spirit and context in which these guidelines have been developed. Such considerations should be applied to all potential cases, including micro-aggressions, wherein a single instance may not present an obvious case of Islamophobia, but through a holistic understanding of context it would be reasonable to conclude that the cumulative consequences of such occurrences serve to nullify or impair the ability of the recipient to access opportunities to engage with socio-political and economic structures on an equal footing with other members of society.

7. The Student Parliament moves to officially adopt the following working definition of Islamophobia and the guidelines and examples provided, recognising they are non-exhaustive:

Policy Lapses: Feb 2023

Definition:

“Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.”

Guidelines:

- Islamophobia (in line with anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia, sexism and other forms of hatred and discrimination) is a tool used to gain and maintain power.
- It is inextricably linked with socio-economic factors, and frequently reflects the underlying inequalities within society.
- Is a prejudice, aversion, hostility, or hatred towards Muslims and encompasses any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference against Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.
- Islamophobia is demonstrated in, and articulated through, speech, writing, behaviours, structures, policies, legislation or activities that work to control, regulate or exclude Muslim participation within social, civic, economic and political life, or which embody hatred, vilification, stereotyping, abuse or violence directed at Muslims.

E-Mail Response Time Policy

Proposed by: Julia Heimann, PGR SCO 2020

Aims of the policy:

- Provide a basic framework of expectations for e-mail response time for full-time elected officers (henceforth: FTO)
- Create a measurement for holding FTO accountable
- Improve FTO awareness of their duties
- Create transparency across the SU
- Bringing students closer to our organisation
- Increase the SU's reputation by decreasing response times

Relevant information

Why this is needed:

- It is the duty of the members of parliament to hold FTO into account over their (in)activity.
- However, it is difficult to hold into account a course of action without a certain standard to which these actions, or inactions, can be measured against

Actions to take:

- The number of active working days (this excludes days of annual leave) a student may wait for an e-mail reply from an FTO is not to exceed full five working days. This means that if a student has submitted a request during, or after working hours on Monday, a reply is due on the Tuesday of the following week, so long as the FTO has not undertaken annual leave within this time. If annual leave was undertaken, the due date is

extended by the number of days claimed as part of annual leave.

- If the request by the student cannot be answered, or fulfilled, to satisfaction at the current point in time, the responsible FTO must state this and provide a reasonable time frame in which the student can expect a reply from them.
- If the member has failed to reply to a request within five active working days, the affected student may raise this issue with the parliament where the officer must justify the reasons for failing to respond in time.
- An FTO should be reasonably expected to respond to any email that asks a direct question, or poses a problem that it is clear to the FTO needs to be fixed
- Where possible, before coming to Parliament, the member should, where practicable and possible, follow up with the FTO first at least once to rectify the situation.

Policy lapses Nov 2023

Policy: Reduce Terminology, Drop Barriers, Improve Accessibility

Proposed by: Mark Kiley

Nov 2020

Aims of policy:

- To improve accessibility of Union policy
- Increase understanding of policy by students
- Provide students with support so they can make effective change
- Reduce use of terminology that makes the Union inaccessible for some students
- Make officer published reports accessible to all

Important information relevant to this policy (Notes):

- (Almost all) students are members of the Union
- Union policy contains a mix of different formats depending on the writer
- Union policy can be difficult to execute depending on how it has been written
- Union policy can be inaccessible, especially depending on how it has been written
- Many students do not know what Union policies are, what the specific policies are, and what they do
- Many members do not know how to change Union policies or write policy
- Use of exclusive or bombastic language can stop members from taking part in the Union
- Not everyone can see pictures, some students use screen readers for example

Why this policy is needed (believes):

- Reading policy can be difficult, or impossible, due to the different formatting of different policy
- Executing policy can be near impossible to due to different interpretations that result in different policy outcomes
- Union policy should be accessible, to those executing policy, to those considering writing policy, and to all students examining what their Union is doing
- Members should know what Union policies are and what they do
- Members should know how to change Union policies
- Members should know how to write policy
- Policy should be accessible so that members can be effective decision makers
- The Union should do all possible to reduce barriers to access
- The Union should always be accessible to its members

Actionable items that will effect change (resolves):

- Ensure all policy is written using the template (appendix)
- Ensure that policies that are renewed, are rewritten with the template prior to being approved
- Ensure that template is readily accessible for all students via the Students' Union website
- Union to examine use of terminology that may exclude students and remove difficult terminology where possible
- Ensure that experienced policy writers are available to support students in writing policy

- Student Ideas submission to be changed to new template (appendix)
- Parliament Reps and Officer training to include jargon busting for some jargon and accessibility training that ensures reports published by officers are readable by all
- Policy training once a term open for all students
- Make plain text descriptions for all imagery across the SU

Policy Lapses Nov 2023

Equitable Exams Policy

Proposed by : Charlie Cooke (Students with Disabilities Officer, Phoenix Chilvers (LGBQ+ SCO), Daniel Seorici (Services SCO), Towaha (PGT SCO)

Approved: Feb 2021

Aims of policy:

- To make online exams more equitable.
- Ensure that no student is actively disadvantaged.
- Give all students their best shot at the first attempt.
- That the uncapped, unpaid reassessment should still be a last resort, and not just there to be used by all when it could have been prevented.

Important information relevant to this policy (notes):

- Some departments have announced set time exams (e.g., 2-hour exams) including: Economics, Life Sciences, CSEE and Language and Linguistics
- For example, in Life Sciences – BSc Biological Sciences they have written final year exams so that a 24-hour exam can assess their learning outcomes – but all second year exams are 2 hour exams, the disparity within departments is not acceptable.
- Last year students who had set time exams (below 24 hours in time), frequently experiences issues with feeling able to produce quality work in the time set, with the circumstances we currently face.
- That the SU has already petitioned the University and has achieved:
 - i) Online exams by default,

- ii) Open book exams by default going forward,
- iii) A 3-pronged no detriment policy – uncapped and unpaid reassessment of failed modules, uncapped and unpaid reassessment of modules passed where ECs are submitted and monitoring module cohorts grades against previous years,
- iv) Flexibility in submission of ECs and late submission requests, to meet a diverse range of students needs

Why this policy is needed (in your opinion) (believes):

- To protect all students: (including but not limited to):
 - i) International students – who may be in a different time zone.
 - ii) Student Parent and Carers – who can not dictate when their caring needs will be needed, especially in the current situation where accessing childcare or other care is not easy.
 - iii) Students with an unstable Wi-Fi connection.
 - iv) Students who share a device with other members of their household.
- The University has a duty to consider all students and support them in their learning and “provide a transformational education”.

Actionable items that will effect change (resolves):

- Petition the University that all online exams for academic year 20/21 and beyond, which are not MCQ or with PSRB requirements to be 24 hours in length.

- That the SU liaises with the university including, all departments which hold MCQ exams or with PSRB requirements to be flexible in their exams (e.g., 2 hours out of 24 not a set 2 hours) – to not disadvantage students.

Policy Lapses Feb 2024

Students' Union Marketisation of Education policy

Proposer : Mark Kiley & Molly Purcell

Aims of policy:

- Explain and define the SU's stance on the marketisation of education
- To support and represent students' needs in terms of tuition fees and further support
- Ensure the University and the Government are held to account with tuition fee and student experience concerns
- To hold sabbatical officers to account on this ongoing work

Important information relevant to this policy (notes):

- **Historical context:**
 - a. The latter half of the 20th saw HE (Higher Education) in the UK 'transform from an elite system into a mass participation system'; participation rate rose from 6% to 43% between 1962 and 2002. In the 90s, the idea that beneficiaries of HE should pay for some of the costs gained support across politicians, where the Student Loan Company was introduced in 1989.
 - b. Tuition fees were first paid by students in September 1998 of £1,125 annually, where students' parents who earned over £32,000 paid; those with lower family incomes were liable for reductions or were exempt; this created divide within the Labour Party who were in power at the time.
 - c. The HE Bill, presented in Dec 2003, set out the govt's plans for introducing top up fees. This passed into law as the Higher Education Act in 2004. In September 2006 it was agreed that universities could

charge up to £3000 a year in fees whilst giving an undertaking not to review the £3000 cap until 2009.

d. In 2010, the newly elected Conservative/Lib Dem coalition govt followed recommendations of the Browne Review from 2009, and tripled the tuition fee cap to £9000 a year, despite Nick Clegg, Vince Cable and Sir Menzies Campbell signing the NUS 'Vote For Students' pledge against increases in fees. (Source: politics.co.uk)

e. In 2016, the cap rose to £9,250 for the 17/18 academic year under Theresa May.

- This has hence created HE as a competitive marketplace and views students as consumers.
- Universities are responsible for setting their own tuition fees; however, the cap is mandated by Government requirement of £9,250 for UK students and variable for international students (source: UCAS).
- In a written statement on 23 June 2020, Universities Minister Michelle Donelan announced that from August 2021 EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals will no longer be eligible for home fee status undergraduate, postgraduate, and advanced learner financial support from Student Finance England for courses starting in academic year 2021/22 (source: UCAS) – a direct result of Brexit.
- In December 2020, Essex students called for a Students' Union referendum on tuition fees based on the effect COVID has had on learning and experience. The question was asked: "*We believe this term the university experience has failed to meet our expectations and tuition fees should be reduced to reflect this*". 4,247 of SU members cast their votes, with 98% voting to agree with the statement.

- The SU President and the VP Education worked on the outcome of this and conjured a five-point plan, consisting of:

1. Approach the University with a view to get student tuition fees refunded for term 1, or reduced for term 2
2. Contact other Students' Unions in the UK to establish a national campaign around tuition fee refunds
3. Write to Members of Parliament to pressure the UK Government on the nationwide issue of university tuition fees during COVID-19, and the feeling that students are not getting what they were promised
4. Contact the Office for Students (OfS) and the Department for Education (DfE) with the aim to further support students nationally with financial and emotional challenges that students are facing across the UK and the world
5. Raise awareness nationally about this problem and the impact it has on our members, through the media

- The SU President and VP Education worked their way through this plan, finding that the University could not offer refunds, and received no response from central Government and other institutions, despite mobilising 45 other Students' Unions in the UK on the matter.
- They continue to find other areas to progress on, such as working with other student campaign groups and lobbying the University to provide extra resource

Why this policy is needed (believes):

- The Union is responsible for representing the academic interests of students and consequently, the quality of learning and the student experience
- The University experience overall has been completely diminished throughout COVID-19, and so the value of tuition fees is not representative of the student experience

- International/EU/EAA students face even more longstanding issues, by having to pay higher fees in general, less governmental support and facing geographical restraints
- Due to the political nature of tuition fees it is highly unlikely that the University themselves will reduce/refund fees themselves, though this must still be challenged
- The student voice on this matter is extremely prevalent/strong
- Whilst it is expected that the student experience will return as soon as it is safe to do so pending government guidance, the competitive marketplace of HE is still inherently problematic by treating students as consumers as opposed to human beings: which affects many things such as mental health provision/support, the competitive nature of courses, the increasingly competitive job market upon graduation, and the attainment of a holistic education.
- Whilst sabbatical officers are central to this ongoing work, it must be recognised that they are political campaigners in the capacity of their positions and not decision-makers, and so should utilise their lobbying power to mobilise change within this capacity

Actionable items that will effect change (resolves):

- To formally adapt the Students' Union's position as opposing the marketisation of Higher Education
- The Sabbatical Officer team/Students' Union to continue with the ongoing work of opposing the marketisation of education and to be held accountable to Student Parliament through this work, namely the SU President and the VP Education. This work will be formally handed over to the future sabbatical teams at

the time of the term in office changes (June/July each year)

- i. Student Parliament to propose work and suggestions to the officers
 - ii. The officers to work with the SU Education team, student reps and online channels to gauge the direction of the work
- The Union/Officers to create a strong/clear yet critical working relationship on this ongoing work with the University's Senior Leadership Team (SLT), namely the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor Education and the Registrar & Secretary, for best results from actionable items/projects
 - Create meaningful and strong working relationships with other Students' Unions and their respective officers on this work through relevant channels and connections as a national issue
 - Look to create long-standing and meaningful partnerships with other Students' Unions and national campaigning bodies in order to build a national coalition to oppose the marketisation of Higher Education
 - Continue to challenge/lobby the Government and their HE policies, directly, and through channels such as the OfS and DfE.

Policy Lapses May 2024

