

# YUSU REFERENDUM REPORT, JANUARY, 2019.



## BACKGROUND

Students can submit ideas for what would improve the Union, University and wider society for students at York. Ideas are sent out for consultation by a student-led group called the Policy Review Group (PRG), which looks at student feedback. In the Autumn 2018 policy cycle, PRG decided there was no clear consensus on a student's proposed idea relating to Brexit. They decided to put the idea to a campus-wide referendum and let students decide.

## WHAT DID THE POLICY IDEA SAY?

The policy idea calls for YUSU to be mandated to campaign and devote publicity towards students taking political action in favour of a vote on the terms of the UK's departure from the European Union - which must include a 'Remain' option. It highlights the particular impact on students and the importance of their voice on this matter. The idea can be found [here](#).

## WHAT IS A CAMPUS REFERENDUM?

A campus referendum is where every student at York is given a vote on whether a policy idea should be passed. It is called when student feedback on a specific idea does not come to a clear consensus in favour or against an idea. Students were asked to vote 'Yes' or 'No' in response to a question agreed upon by the campaign teams on both sides of the referendum:

***Should YUSU support a referendum on the final deal of the UK's departure from the European Union, with an option to remain?***

## WHAT WAS YUSU'S POSITION?

The Students' Union remains neutral in campus referenda. YUSU's priority was to ensure a fair and robust debate, rooted in factual information, in which every York student that wishes to participate is able to do so. Student members, including elected officers, were free to participate individually, but they could not represent an official YUSU view on the debate.



## **CAMPUS REFERENDUM TIMELINE**

Monday 14th January (Week 2) - Referendum Announced.

Thursday 17th January (Week 2) - Campaign Team Briefing.

Wednesday 23rd January (Week 3) - Referendum Debate Held.

Wednesday 23rd January (Week 3) - Voting Opened once the debate was concluded.

Wednesday 30th January (Week 4) - Voting Closed at 17:00 pm.

Thursday 31st January (Week 4) - Referendum Results Announced.

## **HOW DID CAMPAIGNING HAPPEN?**

The 'YES' Campaign Coordinator was Monta 'M' Drozdova.

Read the statement of the 'Yes' Campaign [here](#).

The 'NO' Campaign Coordinator was Daniel Clark.

Read the statement of the 'No' Campaign [here](#).

Campaign Coordinators were recruited before the campaign began. Both were briefed on the rules before the debate and the launch of campaigning, and were responsible for gathering the information of members of their campaign teams. Each campaign team was given a budget of £60, with £60 of that reimbursable. The debate between both sides took place on the Wednesday 23rd of January. It was live streamed on YUSU's facebook page for students that were not able to attend, to be able to watch online.

Online campaigning, physical campaigning and voting all opened when the debate was concluded on Wednesday 23rd of January. The Union promoted the referendum by publishing webpage which contained key information including referendum rules, the timeline, contact details for campaigners and the returning officers etc. In addition to the website, YUSU promoted social media, advertising the referendum and question and graphics to promote taking part in the referendum. Voting was held entirely online at [yusu.org/vote](http://yusu.org/vote). It closed at 5pm on Wednesday 30th January.

## RESULTS & TURNOUT



Students were asked to vote on the following question:

***Should YUSU support a referendum on the final deal of the UK's departure from the European Union, with an option to remain?***

They were given the options; **Yes**, **No** and **Abstain**. The results are as follows:

Total Votes Cast	Turnout (%)	Total 'Yes' Votes	Total 'No' Votes	Total Abstentions
1236	6.2%*	768	413	55

For a referendum result to be binding, the constitution requires it must reach a turnout quoracy of 5% of the 19,968 members of the student body eligible to vote - which equates to 999 votes. This number of votes was reached, which means this vote is quorate.

\*(This figure was rounded up from 6.189903846153847%)

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Since a majority of students voted in favour of this idea, it becomes active Union policy. This mandates Officers and staff to work with students on implementing the idea. A meeting will be held with the Yes campaign to discuss next steps.

## COMPLAINTS

The Deputy Returning Officer received one formal complaint and some informal communications from campaigners regarding campaign materials being removed and the veracity of certain campaign messages. These were all resolved to the satisfaction of the DRO and the students concerned. The DRO, Nick Glover, said:

*“At a time when the conduct of our national political leaders leaves a bit to be desired, it was reassuring to see our campaign teams conduct themselves so admirably. They were constructive in the way they raised issues and they demonstrated high levels of respect for*

*each other. Unfortunately, a feature of the campaign was the removal of posters by University Estates colleagues and potentially other students.*



*There was no suggestion that either of the campaign teams were involved, but it will be valuable to meet with both Campaign Coordinators to explore how we address this issue. Well done to both campaigns!"*