

Bye-Law (9): Creating policy

This Bye-Law sets out the main way in which members can have their suggestion for the Union acted upon: by submitting an Idea. Ideas are a statement of what the member would like to happen, which may or may not include supporting facts or opinions. If it proposes changing the Union's stance on something, or influencing Officers' actions in broader matters, an idea may become a Policy.

Ideas

1. The Union is led by its members and every member has the right to suggest a course of action, a belief or a response to any other organisation's policy – this shall be known as an Idea.
2. Any full member or recognised student group of the Union can contribute an Idea for the Union at any time.
3. It is the responsibility of Full-Time Officer Group, working with a staff member responsible for developing policy, to gather Ideas from the membership.
4. They will be expected to do so actively, seeking out new Ideas from members they have not previously met, engaging in discourse with a variety of students and student groups;
5. Full-Time Officers will be committed to approaching a minimum of 15 students or student groups per week, to discuss the role of the Union and gather Ideas from them.
6. The staff responsible for developing policy and for developing research will work with the Full-Time Officer Group to keep structured records of this contact and identify key student groups to approach with a view to gathering Ideas from those who our research and Officers' personal experience suggest may currently be less involved with the Union as a democratic body.
7. Members will also be able to submit Ideas themselves to the Union through a number of means including, but not limited to:
 - An online Idea submission system, which collects the York username of the contributor as well as their Idea;
 - Direct contact with an Officer either in person or online by email, Facebook, twitter or any other means
 - Direct contact with any online Union presence.
8. An accessible, and clear, version of the Policy Process as a whole will be made available on the YUSU website.
9. Full-Time Officer Committee and the staff member responsible for developing democracy within the Union will be expected to ensure that the means by which members can contribute Ideas are broad enough, cover enough formats and are clearly publicised to members.

10. Ideas with substantial overlap, proposing essentially the same action, belief or policy response will be composited together, so long as this *does not* contradict the content of any Idea.

Student groups

11. The following student groups may submit Ideas to the Union and will do so through the Full-Time Officer with responsibility for their coordination and development:

11.1. Campaign Networks, as defined in Bye-Law [CAMPAIGN NETWORKS]

11.2. College Student Associations

11.3. RAG and all other groups considered student groups in Bye-Law [STUDENT ACTIVITIES]

12. All such submissions must be accompanied by evidence of consultation within that group, which will be reviewed by the Policy & Review Group to ensure fairness to those represented.

Policy

13. Ideas that propose, replace or substantially amend active policy within the Union shall be clearly identified as Policy Motions by Full-Time Officer Group, who shall consult with any members who contributed relevant Ideas on the content of the Policy Motion.

14. All Policy Motions will go through the Policy Process, apart from those which may pose substantial financial and/or legal responsibility for the Union, which must first be approved by the Trustee Board.

The Policy Process

15. The Policy Process within the Union consists of three steps:

- **INFORM**
- **CONSULT**
- **INVOLVE**

16. The Union President takes overall responsibility for running the Policy Process fairly and in such a way as to broaden involvement and ensure those most affected have a say and the opportunity to design how they participate.

17. The Policy Coordinator takes overall responsibility for reviewing the Policy Process and shall be considered the main spokesperson as to its fairness, responsible for communicating feedback and criticism of it to members and to the media.

18. There are three main types of consultative group:

- College Student Associations
- Campaign Networks

- Interest groups (represented by the Full-Time Officers)
19. Each consultative group has a representative responsible for leading consultation within that group as outlined in their respective Bye-Laws and in Clause 34, who shall be referred to as a Consultation Leader for the purposes of this Bye-Law.
 20. The Policy Coordinator and Union President will jointly agree an appropriate timetable for each Policy Motion, taking into account the nature and impact of the Policy Motion in question, the timeliness of the Policy Motion and the workload the Policy Process is currently putting on Consultation Leaders.
 21. The realisation of each step is flexible, but must involve at least:
 - A blog post from a Full-Time Officer informing members of each step;
 - A visit to every meeting of a consultative group by a Full-Time Officer to discuss the Policy Motion;
 - A copy of the briefing for each Policy Motion and how to contribute to the consultation made available online on the YUSU website
 22. Full-Time Officers will work with staff responsible for policy and for research in any areas covered by a Policy Motion to produce an accessible yet informative briefing which makes students aware of the *full* details of the Policy Motion and any possible alternatives; how it affects students
 23. Where the details of a Policy Motion are complex, such as in the case of response to national policy on Higher Education, it is expected that these briefings will endeavour to provide and comprehensibly explain as much and as broad information as possible so as to promote and further students' ability to engage with the debate in an informed way.

INFORM

24. The aim at this stage is to provide students with balanced, objective information which, where relevant, challenges their understanding and preconceptions to assist them in understanding and responding to the Policy Motion and any possible alternatives.
25. A briefing will be circulated to all consultative groups which gives this information and conveys main points of concern or contention on which Full-time Officers would particularly like to receive feedback and student opinion.
26. Consultation Leaders, who choose to respond to the Policy Motion, will make those they represent aware of this information and how they can contribute to the consultation.
27. They must then make the Policy Coordinator aware in writing of how they intend to consult their members or that they have chosen not to object if that is the case.

CONSULT

28. The aim at this stage is to obtain deep feedback and analysis on the Policy Motion from all

consultative groups, involving a large sample and a broad range of students.

29. Each Consultation Leader responsible for consulting the students or issue and interest groups they represent however they feel most likely to involve more students in a way that is relevant and meaningful to them and remains open, accessible and participative.
30. This consultation should substantially comprise outreach and involve actively opening up dialogue with students who may be affected.
31. All Consultation Leaders must prepare a consultation plan and keep structured evidence of their consultation process, which Policy & Review Group will approve before accepting evidence from their consultation.
32. All Consultation Leaders may choose not to consult their members or interest groups at their own discretion, however in doing so accept that a lack of objection to an Idea will be taken as approval.
 - 32.1. Consultation Leaders must justify any decision not to consult their members to Policy & Review Group, who may demand the Consultation Leader justify the decision to their members to the satisfaction of Policy & Review group before they accept a choice not to object.
33. Furthermore Policy & Review Group will publish all evidence received for each consultation, so that members who were not consulted on an issue important to them may hold the Consultation Leader responsible for doing so to account.
34. In the case of College Student Associations and Campaign Networks, College Presidents and Part-Time Officers, respectively, will act as Consultation Leaders as outlined in Bye-Law[CAMPAIGN NETWORKS];
35. Further interest groups will be consulted by the Full-Time Officers who must consult & support to consult the groups who represent the interests or issues within their own portfolio:
 - 35.1. Academic Officer
 - Academic representatives (e.g. Course Reps, Senate Reps etc.)
 - 35.2. Activities Officer
 - RAG
 - Volunteering
 - Societies & Societies Committee
 - 35.3. Community & Well-Being Officer
 - College Off-Campus Reps
 - College Welfare Reps
 - Supporting Campaign Networks to consult effectively
 - 35.4. York Sport President

- Sports clubs
- College sport teams
- York Sport Committee

35.5. Union President

- External affiliates who represent York students (e.g. GSA)
- Supporting anyone consulting with a target group to reach them effectively
- 5-a-day (consulting five students they've not previously met each day during the consultation period)

36. Policy & Review Group will meet within five working days of the close of consultation to receive consultation reports from the each Consultation Leader.
37. In the case that they find a consultation has not been done in such a way as to fairly reflect the views of a consultative groups' members, feedback from the relevant Consultation Leader will be initially rejected pending broader consultation following the Policy & Review Group's guidance, which should take no more than seven days.
38. Once Policy & Review Group have received and approved a choice not to object or a consultation plan and report from each Consultation Leader, they will meet to review the evidence and find consensus.
39. If there is a clear consensus, they will composite together the most mutually agreeable wording, and it will become Active Policy and added to the record of Active Policy in the case that students approve of the Policy Motion, or rejected in the case that students have rejected the Policy Motion by consensus.
40. If there is no clear consensus, the most mutually agreeable wording for the Policy Motion will be referred to the soonest Referendum and approved as outline in Bye-Law [REFERENDUM].
41. Policy & Review Group will publish a short report including the final policy and a summary of evidence received written in such a manner as to ensure it is comprehensible, interesting and accessible to the broadest range of students, and make it available digitally to all students
42. They will append to this summary a report including all evidence received and Consultation Leaders who chose not to object, along with complete consultation plans and reports for students to scrutinise fully.

INVOLVE

43. The aim at this stage is to involve students directly or indirectly in all actions Officers take to realise the goals students have outlined in the consultation stage.
44. Where students can be involved directly, such as in campaigning activity or other collective action, Full-Time Officer Group will invite those most affected by and most strongly interested in the policy to lead such activity with resources and guidance from the Union.
45. Where such direct involvement is not possible, all Officers will work to ensure students feel

involved with the actions Officers take to realise the policy and demonstrate to members that their contributions are directly reflected in the outcomes of the Policy Process.

46. This will consist of at least:

46.1. Minutes from meetings where Officers have discussed goals set in Active Policy;

46.2. Blogs and posts on social media published by Full-Time Officers when opening fresh dialogue relating to Active Policy;

46.3. Honesty about success and failure to achieve goals set in Active Policy and clarity about compromises reached.

47. The duration of Active Policy is at Full-Time Officers' discretion, but shall be no longer than three years.

48. Full-Time Officers are expected to involve students fully – particularly those most affected by or interested in the policy – with decisions to end activity on any policy

Active Policy

49. All Active Policy shall be recorded in one central document.

50. As the final step of the Policy Process, new active policy should be added to the publically available documents in physical and digital formats as described in By Law [ACCOUNTABILITY]

51. No policy shall last more than three years and will be removed from the record of Active Policy at the discretion of Full-Time Officers as outline in Clause 52.

52. All policy removed from the record of Active Policy shall be kept in a log of Expired Policy.

53. No Policy Motion of substantively similar content to any current Active Policy may be referred to the Policy Process within one academic term of that policy's being added to the record of Active Policy.

54. If an Idea is submitted which substantially contradicts the content of any Active Policy, it will be referred to the Policy Process with areas of contention highlighted to ensure feedback is received on any contradictions.