



Monday February 20th 2023, 6-8pm

ABERYSTWYTH STUDENT'S UNION

BIG MEETING 2023





Agenda:

- Welcome and Opening Remarks
- Decide order of debate
- Ratification of previous meetings - no minutes to ratify
- Receive report of trustees - (full report is included in the [draft annual accounts here](#))
- Receive the annual accounts ([draft annual accounts here](#))
- Appointment of the auditors:
 - FRANCIS GRAY CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS Chartered accountants & statutory auditor,
32 Queens Road
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 2H
- Approving the list of affiliations (affiliations for July 2023-2024):
 - NUS Charity =£4115 (2023-24) *Please note that AGM is not being asked to approve affiliation to NUS UK as this is being discussed elsewhere in the agenda
 - British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) - £6338 (2022-23) (plus team entries of BUCS Affiliation 22/23 £6337.65 / BUCS Affiliation 21/22 £5994.00 plus BUCS transport costs)
 - Advice UK = Membership 21/22 £263.00
 - Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) = User Licence 21/22 £683.00
 - Real Living Wage: £150
 - Free affiliations or schemes joined:
 - Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)= don't pay currently
 - HALO
 - Mindful employer
 - Tourettes Friendly Employer and Organisation (Tourette's Action)
- Officer's Report
- Constitutional Amendments
 - Should the Student's Union should make the proposed changes to the constitution?
 - Should AberSU appoint its Student Trustees (instead of electing them) and change the composition of Appointments Committee?
- NUS Disaffiliation
- Your Ideas
- Any Other Business
- Save the Date

The Student's Union should make the proposed changes to the constitution

Officer Responsible: Union President

Submitted by: Aisleen Sturrock

Question: Should the Student's Union should make the proposed changes to the constitution?

Details:

The Student's Union constitution is looked at every few years to ensure it is up to date and accurate. Below, the proposed changes are laid out, and their reasoning:

Gender Neutralisation

Purpose: to make the constitution more inclusive for those who do not utilise male nor female pronouns.

- Change *'his or her'* to *'their'* in points 16.1, 61.6, and 93

Removal of the Executive Committee

Purpose: In practice, Senedd has long fulfilled much of the role of the Union Executive Committee (made up of the full Officer team). This change brings the constitution in line with current operations.

- Change all mentions of the *'Union Executive Committee'* in point 20, 22, 65 to *'Senedd'*
- In point 28 removal of *'or AUSU Executive Committee'*.
- Remove the section entitled *'The Union Executive Committee'* encompassing clauses 112 and 113.
- Remove 44.2

Constitutionally enabling Virtual and Hybrid Senedds

Purpose: to constitutionally enable virtual and hybrid meetings of AGM, Special general Meetings, and Senedd.

- Replace point 31 with *'Meetings may be carried physically and/or online as long as all participants are able to simultaneously interact with each other. Where meetings are neither fully physical, nor fully online, participants must indicate by majority vote that they are satisfied with the set-up and technology'*.

Clarifying 'Meeting'

Purpose: to ensure it is clear when the constitution means trustee meeting or an Annual General Meeting, Special General Meeting or Senedd.

- Point 12.1 – *'as defined by Clause 24'* to be replaced by *'Senedd, Annual General Meeting, or Special General Meeting'*

- Point 6, 14, 32, 43, 44.1, 47, 73, 81 insert (Senedd, Annual General Meeting, or Special General Meeting) following Meeting. In Clause 99 to insert (Senedd, Annual General Meeting, or Special General Meeting) following 'Meetings of AUSU'
- In point 54, 58, 73, 106, and 116.27 replace '*Meeting*' with '*Senedd Meeting, Annual General Meeting, Special General Meeting*'
- In point 96 insert 'trustee' prior to meeting
- Replace 'Attendance at Meetings' with 'Attendance at Senedd, Annual General Meetings, and Special General Meetings'
- Point 37 replace meeting with 'Senedd, Annual General Meeting, or Special General Meeting'

Clarifying Chair

Purpose: to ensure it is clear when the constitution means Trustee Chair or Union Chairperson

- Point 32.1 and 39, replace 'chair' with 'Union Chairperson'

Clarifying method to call an All Student Vote and Special General Meeting

Purpose: Clarifying how an ordinary member of the Student's Union would go about calling an all Student Vote or Special General Meeting

- Remove 44.2
- In point 44.3, replace '*any ordinary member*' with '*a secure petition of 250 ordinary members (including student number) submitted to the Chair of Trustees*'. This would be the same needed to call an all student vote regarding the removal of an external trustee.
- In point 62 insert '*(including student number)*' following '*250 ordinary members*'
- In point 27 replace 'one tenth of the membership, whichever is greater' with 'a secure petition of 250 ordinary members (including student number).'

Other – minor edits:

- Change point 27 ; 12.2 amended; Change point 28
- Point 40 – replace 'from time to time and from place to place' to '(to move time or place)'
- Change point 35 –
- Point 41 – change Smedd to Senedd
- Point 48.1, 48.2, 48.3
- Point 28 remove the word Assembly
- Point 35 – insert '%' following '50'
- 55, 68 – change election to appointment

- Change point 116.25 from 'Part Time Officers' to 'Volunteer Officers'
- 84 – remove 'and the Chief Executive at the request of the two Trustees shall'
- Point 7 remove S after AUSU.

Aberystwyth Student's Union should appoint Student Trustees and change the composition of Appointments Committee

Appointments Committee should be made up of the Student's Union President, one other Officer Trustee, and an External Trustee

Officer Responsible: Union President

Submitted by: Aisleen Sturrock

Question: Should AberSU appoint its Student Trustees (instead of electing them) and change the composition of Appointments Committee?

Details:

Aberystwyth Student's Union (AberSU) is overseen by a Trustee Board of 12 members: the five Sabbatical Officers, five External Trustees, and two Student Trustees (*one undergraduate, one postgraduate*).

What does the Trustee Board do?

The Trustees of the Union are responsible for the strategy, governance and finances for the organisation. The Board hold meetings four times a year, where they receive updates on what activities the Union staff and officers are doing, consider key documents such as financial accounts and strategic and operational plans and discuss and debate key issues affecting the Union.

Broader context

When the Charities Act 2005 was introduced in England and Wales, most Student's Unions had to form a "trustee board" rather than merely rely on their executive committee of elected officers to act as the main legal controlling body.

NUS documents at the time recommended that there be three categories of trustee – elected sabbatical officers, usually the "main union office holders" as per the Education Act 1994; lay or external trustees appointed on the basis of their skills, knowledge and diversity; and student trustees.

Whilst initially, three-quarters of Students' Unions (SUs) chose to directly elect student Trustees, since then, there has been a gradual move away from electing Student Trustees.

At the last count in 2018, Aberystwyth was one of less than 20 SUs in England and Wales still electing student trustees (*Jim Dickinson, 2019*).

Why appoint?

Unfortunately, AberSU Student Trustee elections have consistently had a very low turnout, with few candidates standing. In Autumn 2021, the last time we held an election for our student trustees, only 94 students voted in our Undergraduate ballot. In the ballot for a Postgraduate Trustee, only 83 students voted.

After our Undergraduate Student Trustee Role was deemed vacant following three missed meetings without communication, in Autumn 2022, we encouraged students to put themselves up for election for the post. Sadly no one put their names forward.

Poor levels of candidate involvement and student turnout are reflected across other SUs who also elect Student Trustees, especially where the election is staged separately to the main sabbatical election.

Low turnout limits any democratic legitimacy elected Student Trustees may have. Further, in the trustee role, individuals do not have direct accountability to the electorate – the board as a whole holds that role, so it might seem inappropriate to frame the role in manifesto commitment and personal accountability terms (*Jim Dickinson, 2019*).

Whilst avoiding the issues associated with electing Student Trustees, Appointment of Trustees would enable the Union to:

- Ensure that the union can better manage the skills, knowledge and diversity on the board.
- Better reach out to non-traditional students and marginalised students who would find it intimidating or difficult to engage in elections.

This can be evidenced by the experiences SUs who have already switched to the appointment of Student Trustees: they have *'tended to find that they are better able to manage the SK&D profile of their board and have attached a much broader and diverse set of candidates'* (*Jim Dickinson, 2019*).

Amendments to Constitution

This proposal would amend the constitution:

- Replace clause 54 with the following: *'Subject to Clause 55 below, up to two Student Trustees, one Undergraduate and one Postgraduate, shall be appointed by a simple majority vote of the Trustee Appointments Committee. But such an appointment shall not have effect unless ratified by a simple majority vote of a Senedd, Annual General Meeting, or Special General Meeting'*
- In clause 55, change *'election'* to *'appointment'*.

Changing Appointments Committee

Currently the Student's Union has an Appointments Committee that serves to appoint External Trustees of the SU. The Committee is made up of the *'President, one other Officer Trustee, one Student Trustee, the Chief Executive, and a person nominated by Aberystwyth University'*.

The SU Chief executive, nor University Staff, should not have direct involvement in selecting SU trustees.

Amendments to Constitution

This proposal would amend the constitution:

- In clause 116.5 of the Aberystwyth Student's Union Constitution, the word '*Trustee*' should be added before 'appointments committee'.
- In clause 116.5, replace '*one Student Trustee, the Chief Executive, and a person nominated by Aberystwyth University*' with '*and one External trustee*'.

Strength and Conditioning support

The Student's Union trials a weekly Strength and Conditioning session run by an instructor for clubs to be able to make use of.

Officer Responsible: Student Opportunities Officer

Submitted by: Chris Thomas. Bayanda Vundamina to speak on his behalf.

Question: Should the Student's Union trial a weekly Strength and Conditioning session run by an instructor for clubs to be able to make use of.

Details:

What is Strength and Conditioning?

Strength and Conditioning (S&C) is the selection and development of dynamic /static exercises used to improve physical performance. Whilst it originally benefited athletes it is now widely used in both the sporting world and more generally.

Strength and Conditioning at Aberystwyth University

Currently a variety of AberSU sports clubs, including Men's Rugby and Women's netball, do utilise strength and conditioning sessions at their own cost. Currently, an hour long session at the sports centre, led by a trained instructor, costs £50.

Proposal

The Student's Union trials a weekly Strength and Conditioning session run by an instructor for clubs to be able to make use of. These sessions should either be provided free or for a nominal charge. They should be open to all but priority given to BUCS sports clubs.

If successful, the Student's Union should investigate continuing to provide the sessions beyond the trial period.

We should host an annual SHAG Week

Officer Responsible: Wellbeing Officer

Submitted by: Aisleen Sturrock

Question: Should the Union hold an annual SHAG Week?

Details:

This year we held a SHAG week as one of the Presidents Priorities. There was some great turn outs to all the events and we received amazing feedback. We did however receive some negative feedback with some students not being happy that we held this week.

The week is all about having a healthy relationship towards sex for if you want to have it or don't and to stay safe when doing it or trying new things.

Due to this negative feedback we want the students' opinions. We want to know if this is something students found helpful and fun and would like to see year on year, developing it more each time, or if this should be a one-time thing that only happened in this year

Find out more about SHAG week 2022 here: [SHAG Week \(abersu.co.uk\)](https://abersu.co.uk)

NUS UK Disaffiliation

Officer Responsible: Union President

Submitted by: Aisleen Sturrock

Question: Should the Union stop affiliating with NUS UK?

Details:

The NUS (National Union of Students) was once exactly what students and SU's needed them to be. They were political, made change and gave students great discounts. In the last few years, NUS have broken off into smaller sections, with NUS UK, NUS Charity, and NUS Totem.

There are defiantly pros and cons to be affiliated with NUS UK, but due to how much it is, it would be great to see student's opinions. We chose to affiliate with them each year so if we end up thinking it would be best to affiliate with them after disaffiliating, we can join them again."

We affiliate every year to both NUS UK and NUS Charity costing us over £20,000.

NUS Charity is where we access all of our political help as officers as well as training. This is also where officers network with other Student Unions, allowing us to make connections and so share ideas to make each Union better. We pay £4,000 to NUS for these.

NUS UK is our national voice. This is where our voices can be heard on a national level (e.g. via NUS UK Conference, Liberation Conference, NUS Wales Conference). We pay at least £16,000 for this each year (non-inclusive of attendance at NUS UK Conferences).

Although NUS UK has its perks, allowing us to have a national voice, the Students Union benefits significantly more from just NUS Charity hence £16,000 a year seems an inefficient use of resources. I believe we would be able to use that money to benefit our students so much more.

Many other Student Unions have disaffiliated including Cardiff Met.

There are defiantly pros and cons to be affiliated with NUS UK, but due to how much it is, it would be great to see student's opinions. We chose to affiliate with them each year so if we end up thinking it would be best to affiliate with them after disaffiliating, we can join them again."

The SU should commit to the Green Impact Students' Unions (GISU) programme and lobby the University to become more sustainable

The SU should commit to the Green Impact Students' Unions (GISU) programme (the sustainability support package and awards programme for the student movement) help it become more sustainable. It should also lobby the University to become more sustainable too.

Officer Responsible: Union President

Submitted by: Hector Duncan

Question: Should the SU commit to the Green Impact Students' Unions (GISU) programme and lobby the University to become more sustainable

Details:

We are in the midst of a climate and ecological crisis. This is an issue which is bound to impact everyone within Aberystwyth: students, staff and local community, in the years to come as the social, economic and physical impacts become increasingly more profound. Within the People & Planet University League Table 2022, Aberystwyth ranked 111st out of 153 Universities. We must do better than this.

As the SU and as a university, we must show leadership within our community in enabling a more sustainable collective future. To act on climate change and biodiversity loss, a collective effort from every level of governance, local to national, working in co-ordination is needed. This is why the SU and the University as a key part of the Aberystwyth community must play an influential role. I was drawn to Aberystwyth University due to its innovative climate change degree schemes, we must also strive to be leaders within the university sector when it comes to innovative sustainability strategies, policies and practices.

Over the past year, the Student's Union has undertaken lots of positive activity to tackle the climate crisis, from lobbying the University to divest from fossil fuels, actively gaining student feedback on sustainability, to organising a Green Week (*taking place at the end of February 2023*). These actions have been guided by Green Impact for Students' Unions: a United Nations award-winning programme designed to strategically support environmentally and socially sustainable practice in Student's Unions.

The University and AberSU should suspend their banking with fossil fuel investment banks and switch to a more ethical, green bank instead

Officer Responsible: Union President

Submitted by: Luzie Volckers

Question: Should the University and AberSU suspend their banking with fossil fuel investment banks and switch to a more ethical, green bank instead?

Details:

Aberystwyth University and AberSU need to stop banking with Barclays, HSBC or any other banks which are affiliated with fossil fuel extracting corporations, and, as soon as possible, transfer all funds to a bank which has clearly laid out terms of ethical and sustainable investments.

The University and SU have ownership of substantial sums of money, including tuition paid by (or on behalf of) every student. These sums are currently placed with and controlled by Barclays and HSBC, two of the largest banks in the UK. Barclays, the nationally most used bank with administration of 16% of all UK current accounts, is Europe's largest investor in fossil fuels, and has financed the fossil fuel industry with an estimate of \$20bn. It has also faced severe scrutiny over affiliations with companies which sell weapons to Israel.

Meanwhile, HSBC, which also invests in fossil fuel corporations, has made declarations of discontinuing any finances to deforestation-linked businesses, but has failed to adhere to its promises. Instead, HSBC was estimated to receive over \$20mio in 2021 from deforestation-linked businesses. This shows that while the climate impacts of banking are less visible, they are among the most significant. Considering the industries which are supported by the University's and SU's finances is a necessary step in the development towards becoming a greener University. As a University which prides itself on its ecology- and environment-based research and courses offered, it is inappropriate for Aberystwyth University and AberSU to be even indirectly affiliated with the fossil fuel industry. We therefore demand that, past expiration of Aberystwyth University's contract with Barclays in April 2024, Aberystwyth University as well as AberSU transfer their funds to a bank which has declared clear terms negating affiliations with any unethical or fossil fuel extracting corporations, such as Co-op.

Gaining the SU's support in this request would significantly increase our chances of implementing this with the University and encourage a powerful step towards becoming a more sustainable University.

The SU should endorse and back the UCU within their current strike action.

Officer Responsible: Academic Affairs Officer

Submitted by: Harry Marsh & Hector Duncan

Question: Should the SU support the UCU Strikes?

Details:

I want the SU to adopt the stance of supporting the current UCU strike action. It is important that we show solidarity with our university staff who have been compelled to strike due to multiple issues including falling pay, worsening working conditions and cuts to their pensions as well as the long term future of the university sector. Their working environment is our learning environment. These are our lecturers, librarians, researchers, support staff who are all at heart of who we are as a university.

The SU as a key pillar of the University community must show that we value our educators and all staff within the university through declaring our support for their strike action. Many I have spoken to have mentioned their reluctance to take this action due to the impacts it will have on students but it is an option of last resort as their working conditions are no longer sustainable.

I want as quick of a resolution to this dispute as possible to minimise the disruption faced to students. This will only happen if we listen to and address striking university staff members concerns. The faster we endorse and mobilise students in aid of the university's staff cause the shorter this dispute hopefully will be. The SU are a charity who work in the interest of us the students. It is within our interest to ensure that our university staff have good working conditions. It is also within our interest as many may go on to pursue careers in academia.

Finally, it is the right thing to do, our university staff work so hard to provide the best educational experience they can. It's time they got the respect they deserve and we show our appreciation for that.

Should AberSU reduce the number of Faculty Officers?

By having one only on faculty officer per faculty it should mean all students are represented as posts wouldn't be unfilled

Officer Responsible: Academic Affairs Officer

Submitted by: Zoe Hayne

Question: Should AberSU reduce the number of Faculty Officers?

There are currently 6 Faculty Officer Positions, FELS UG, FELS PG, FASS UG, FASS PG, FBAPS UG and FBAPS PG. I propose to combine the roles into 3 and have only one officer represent each faculty.

For the academic years 19/20, 20/21, 21/22, 22/23 there has not been a time where all 6 posts have been filled. In only 1 of these 4 periods was there a PG and UG representative for 1 faculty. Having unfilled roles doesn't look great and it can also mean that some students don't feel represented as they don't have a Faculty Officer. There have been times when a UG faculty officer has chosen to represent PG when that post is not filled, by combining the roles into one the representative would have the means, resources and support to represent all efficiently

