

Union Council Motion

Motion Title: In solidarity with Disabled Students at Aston

Proposed by: Paddy Crosby, Belle Linford, Kate Ranson, Daniel Everitt, Lizzie Iles

Sponsored by the following Alumni: Rebecca Boot, Emma Dobson, Lucia Mellado, Lucie Bissierier, Lydia Harper.

Edited by: Ryan Narewal

Motion Passes into Policy on: 12th July 2021

Policy due to lapse by: 12th July 2025

Preamble

The union supports disabled students in their ongoing struggle to achieve full accessibility justice.

The union remains committed to the policy of believing victims and in keeping with this, accepts the testimonies and evidence given today.

Union Council Notes

1. The union acknowledges that successive Disabled Students Officers (DSOs) have worked extensively to raise awareness of ableism present in the University, and have, over the years, lobbied the University executive body for rectification.
2. The union notes that, despite explicit requests made repeatedly by successive DSOs, the University buildings remain architecturally hostile to disabled people. For example, despite significant efforts made by last year's DSO, Emma Dobson, much of the Main Building is still without more than roughly two automatic doors.
3. The Union recognises that disabilities have a wide range of conditions that must be met and that the existence of this diversity within the disabled community means that there is a lot of issues to be covered.
4. The Union recognises that, consequently, not one disabled student possesses the experience necessary to understand the needs of, and therefore represent or advocate on behalf of, all disabled students.

Union Council Believes

1. That at the Union level, to advocate for people with varied and different disabilities effectively, disabled student representation must be cross-disability and self-advocating in nature. The Union recognises that this means the participation of people with physical, mental, and sensory disabilities who want their voices heard.
2. That the University has a legal obligation to provide parity of experience for disabled students.
3. That the University has so far failed to fulfil this obligation.

Union Council Resolves

1. At this session: To declare that the University is institutionally ableist.
2. To commission the creation of a Disabilities Committee.
 - a. The Disabilities Committee shall be the foremost advisor to the Union on issues regarding disability, including but not limited to the rights of disabled students, reasonable adjustments, and the correct ways of thinking about disability.
 - b. The Disabilities Committee shall be responsible for:
 - i. Liaising with the Union and University on all disability-related issues.
 - ii. Providing support to all members regarding disability-related issues.
 - c. The Disabilities Committee shall elect committee members at a time to allow elected members to undergo a handover period during the summer term before approval at the next meeting of Union Council.
 - d. The democratic nature, duties and constitution of this committee will be in keeping with other liberation committees.
3. That the DSO shall be charged with the responsibility of carrying out this commission; however, they should enlist interested disabled students as co-founders.
4. That an election shall be held as soon as possible to elect members of this committee including but not limited to a co-chair.

- a. The franchise for this election shall be exclusively limited to disabled students. A student will be recognised as disabled in the event of self-identification.

5. That the current DSO shall have the opportunity to accept the position of appointed co-chair of this committee and shall have bestowed upon them the relevant duties and the power to execute these duties. If the DSO does not wish to accept the position of co-chair, the Committee shall be considered an independent advisory board, and whilst there will be no *official* obligation to collaborate, the DSO will be highly encouraged to work in partnership with the Committee. The DSO will be encouraged to consult the committee on any issues which a member or members of the committee have experienced or on which a member or members are likely to be more knowledgeable.

6. The Commission shall be considered finished when the following tasks are completed:
 - a. The writing of a constitution in keeping with union by-laws
 - i. The adoption of said constitution through a vote of disabled students (this will need to be remote and be maximally accessible - e.g., have multiple methods of voting - on the day via message in the video call if it's a remote meeting, voting before the meeting for those who know their view but cannot physically attend, vote by proxy (for those who wanted to attend but have flaring conditions and thus cannot on the day)).

 - b. The election of a committee

7. These tasks and the conditions of their execution shall be written out in greater detail in a commission document.