



# ASTON STUDENTS' UNION

# BYELAWS

Registered Charity No. 1152067

Registered Company Limited No. 8497016

Aston Students' Union

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## Table of Contents

Preface – What is Aston Students’ Union? .....	3
Byelaw 1 – What being a member of Aston Students’ Union means.....	6
Byelaw 2 – Democracy and Making Change at Aston Students’ Union .....	8
Byelaw 3 – Student Leaders at Aston Students’ Union.....	15
Byelaw 4 – Elections and Referenda at Aston Students’ Union.....	21
Byelaw 5 – Student Groups at Aston Students’ Union .....	25
End of Document .....	30

## Preface – What is Aston Students’ Union?

Aston Students’ Union is a collective, self-governing organisation by, of, and for Aston University students. We are a registered charity (charity no. 1152067) that exists to support the educational interests and welfare of you, the very Members that make up the Union.

Like any charity, we have a “charitable object” that defines our purpose as an organisation. For us, this is “the advancement of education of Students at Aston University for the public benefit” through:

- a) “promoting the interests and welfare of Students at Aston University during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising Students”
- b) “being the recognised representative channel between Students and Aston University and any other external bodies”
- c) “providing social, cultural, sporting, and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of Students

Everything we do as a Union is in some way working towards this purpose – we’re literally not allowed to spend time, money, or energy on anything except supporting you! We also have a duty to always seek to:

- a) “ensure that the diversity of our Membership is recognised, and that equal access is available to all Members of whatever origin or orientation”
- b) “pursue our aims and objectives independent of any political party or religious group”
- c) “pursue equal opportunities by taking positive action within the law to facilitate participation of groups discriminated against by society

### Our Relationship with Aston University

According to the Education Act, “Aston University has a statutory duty to ensure that the Union operates in a fair and democratic manner and is held to proper account for its finances”. In practice this means the University must recognise us, and is also our primary source of funding through a grant they provide every year.

We are **not**, however, in any way a department or subsidiary of Aston University. We are an **independent** charity that exists to fulfil that charitable object: supporting, representing, and entertaining our members. Sometimes we may work with Aston University to achieve this, and at other times we may find ourselves disagreeing with them. As the “recognised representative channel” a core part of our function is to hold the University accountable to the highest possible standards.

## Strategy

Aston Students' Union has a Strategy, developed by our Trustee Board and Officer team, which sets out our Mission, Vision, and Values. This Strategy is usually refreshed every 3-4 years.

**Mission:** To be an SU for everyone. Everyone should know the SU is for them and can make a positive difference to their time at Aston.

**Vision:** Giving students an experience, they'll never forget. As we transition back into a new way of life, we want you to have the student experience you deserve.

**Values:** Enhancing student leadership and the potential to create change. Equality is core to our services and opportunities, making them diverse and inclusive for all. Empowering students' voices at the heart of everything we do. Supporting students throughout their Aston journeys.

## Trustee Board

Every year, you elect a team of 13 Officers to run the Students' Union. Working with the officers is the Board of Trustees. It's their job to ensure the long-term health of the organisation and oversee things at a strategic level. Our current Board is comprised of:

- 2-4 Independent Trustees: Callum Roberts
- 4 Officer Trustees: Atul Rana, Sana Azhar, Adora Wong, Aroubah Mazhar
- 1-2 Alumni Trustees: Katy Baker, Anton Schwarz
- 1-2 Student Trustees: Mariam Sohail, Isabella Naziwa
- 1 University Trustee: Saskia Loer Hansen (Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Engagement)
- Secretary to the Board & CEO: Max McLoughlin (secretary roles deputised to Shadab Hussein)

## What are the Byelaws?

Our Byelaws are a technical document that outlines how we are meant to operate as an organisation. It is the responsibility of Staff and Students' Union Members to ensure that the byelaws are followed, and to challenge Staff and Students' Union Members if they are not.

Byelaws are an integral part of ensuring Good Governance and Best Practice in all aspects of Students' Union life. We have 5 Byelaws, governing the following areas: Membership, Democracy, Student Officers, Elections, and Student Activities.

You also might want to read the following Governing Documents, which outline certain aspects of how we run things in finer detail:

- GD01 Code of Conduct,
- GD02 Associate Membership Types,
- GD03 Awards & Commendations,
- GD04a, b, c, d Standing Committee Terms of Reference.

*Please note that governing documents are not part of the byelaws, they are supplementary documents that help to enable the implementation of the byelaws, and help to ensure Good Governance and Best Practice.*

*Additional Governing Documents may be added over time as deemed necessary by the Students' Union Executive Committee.*

**Please note that this preface is not a formal part of the byelaws and may be subject to change.**

# Byelaw 1 – What being a member of Aston Students’ Union means

## Introduction

As an Aston Student you are a member of the Students’ Union - an amazing community which supports, represents, and entertains you. This Byelaw outlines the benefits of membership to students and others including the rights you have and how to leave membership if you wish.

## Glossary

Associate Membership	Membership with reduced rights that is usually given to non-students.
Code of Conduct	The rules that ensure members are able to engage in activities safely.
Student Membership	Main membership of the Students’ Union that gives you full rights. You are automatically a Student Member if you are on a course at Aston.

## Membership

101 All students enrolled on a course at Aston University will automatically be a Student Member of the Students Union (Student Membership). Membership cannot be transferred between students and lasts until a student is no longer enrolled on a course at the Aston University or decides to opt-out.

## Benefits of Student Membership

- 102 Student Members shall have the right to:
- a) Representation from the Union to the University and others
  - b) Participation in the Union’s democratic processes including voting on Union Council motions
  - c) Election of the student Executive Committee who represent you
  - d) Involvement in the student groups and activities of the Union
  - e) Use of the services and facilities of the Union.

## Associate Membership

103 The Trustees may on behalf of the Student Executive establish other types of membership (Associate Membership).

- 104 Associate Members shall have the right to:
- d) Use of the services and facilities of the Union
  - e) Involvement in the student groups and activities of the Union.

- 105 Associate Members may be charged additional costs to access these rights than Student Members.

### Conditions of Membership

- 106 All Members, whether Student or Associate Members will be subject to the Code of Conduct as set out by the Trustee Board and approved by you, the students, at Union Council, as well as the Articles and Byelaws of the Union. The Code of Conduct sets out how we as members expect each other to behave when engaged in union activity and events.

### Opting out of Membership

- 107 Students can opt out of Membership via email to [union.returningofficer@aston.ac.uk](mailto:union.returningofficer@aston.ac.uk). A student who has opted-out of Membership shall cease being a Member of the Students' Union for the duration of their enrolment at the University unless they write again to the Union asking to be reinstated.
- 108 A Student Member who has opted out will not have access to the benefits outlined in 102, except for 102a, above unless approved by the Trustee Board. They will not be able to vote or stand in any democratic processes including Union Council, Executive elections, and committees of student groups.
- 109 For the avoidance of doubt, students who have opted out of student membership may still be subject to the Union's Code of Conduct when accessing their services (such as a café or bar).
- 110 The University has an obligation to ensure that no student is disadvantaged in their dealings with the University if they have chosen not to be a member of the Students' Union.

# Byelaw 2 – Democracy and Making Change at Aston Students’ Union

## Introduction

Aston Students’ Union is run by students. We’re primarily a representative and campaigning organisation and it is students who tell us which views they want us to reflect to the University and others, as well as the areas for change they want us to campaign on.

## Glossary

Campaign	A project that seeks to actively change the way things work in the University or wider society
Council	The meeting that debates issues and seeks to resolve differences and seek consensus so that the Union can act on something
Delegate	Someone responsible for listening to others and then speaking and voting on their behalf at a meeting
Executive Committee Report	The report of the Student Executive’s work based on manifestos and the policy of the Union
Motion	A proposal for something the Union should do or a view it should have
Policy	A document that outlines what the Union shall do on something or what view it shall relate to others
Quorum	The number of students needed for something to happen
Student Executive	The elected officers of Aston Students’ Union
Student Members Meeting	A meeting open to all Aston students

201 There will be the following forums for students to set the direction of Aston Students’ Union:

- a) Union Council
- b) Student Members meetings
- c) Referenda (see Byelaw 4)

## Union Council purpose and membership

202 Union Council shall have the same meaning as “Student Council” in the Articles. The purpose of Union Council shall be:

- a) To discuss motions on campaigning and representative issues that impact students.
- b) As part of this discussion, to help students understand the issues and implications of any motions.

- c) To review progress against the Executive Plan and, if necessary, direct the officers how to reduce work being undertaken and reprioritise what campaigns or representation work the Union is focused on.
  - d) To hold the Student Executive to account for their work and, if necessary, call for referenda from the student body.
  - e) To receive reports from the Trustee Board, Student Executive, and the University.
  - f) Any other such work as delegated to them by the Trustees which enhances the representative or campaigning work of the Union.
- 203 For the avoidance of doubt the Union Council shall not have any of the responsibilities allocated to the Trustee Board within the Articles or any duties of the Returning Officer for elections (as outlined in Byelaw 4).
- 204 Any Student Member may attend Union Council. The following people shall be required to attend Union Council or send apologies in advance when unable to do so:
- a) The Union Chair
  - b) The Students' Union President (Vice-Chair)
  - c) The Executive Officers of the Union
  - d) Any Executive Officers who have been elected but have not yet taken up their positions
  - e) At least one Student representative who represents their whole College, from each College
  - f) The Student Activities Executive Committee
  - g) Any elected National Union of Students Conference delegates
- 205 The role of Union Council members shall be:
- a) To bring motions for debate to Union Council conscious of the members they represent.
  - b) To debate the motions at Union Council in such a way that enhances the understanding of Aston students and educates them so they can make a meaningful vote.
  - c) To actively engage in Union Council including preparing for meetings, reading documents, and considering the work of the Student Executive through the Executive Plan.
  - d) To promote the Union Council and its work and debates to students including discussing upcoming motions for debate with those that they represent.

### **Operation of Union Council**

- 206 There will be at least one Union Council every term. The meetings can take place at any location that, in the view of the Student Executive Committee, maximises engagement. This can include online.

- 207 Notice of the time, date, and place of all Union Council meetings, along with an invitation for items to be included on the agenda will be sent to all Union Council members at least 14 days before each meeting. Notice can be given by placing a prominent message on the Union's Website. The deadline for motions and additional items requested by Union Council members shall be 7 days before the meeting and such items shall be accepted at the discretion of the chair. All items shall be circulated to Union Council members at least 5 days before the meeting.
- 208 The proceedings of Union Council shall be recorded and made available on the website to enable students to vote on the business discussed.
- 209 The agenda shall be set by the Chair but shall include the following in this order:
- a) Welcome from the Chair and apologies from Members
  - b) Any elections delegated to Union Council
  - c) Approving Minutes of the last meeting and discussing Matters arising
  - d) Executive Committee Plan
  - e) Reports from other bodies
  - f) Motions for debate from the Executive Committee
  - g) Motions for debate from other Student Members
  - h) Guest speakers not related to the motions debate
  - i) Other business approved by the Chair
  - j) Business that has arisen since the 7 day deadline for items and deemed to be an emergency by the Chair.
- 210 Minutes of the discussions at each Union Council shall be made available within 7 days of the meeting and posted online.

### **Policy formation**

- 211 Policy at Aston Students' Union shall be voted on by all student members of the Union. The role of Union Council is to propose motions and encourage discussion and debate that informs students when they come to vote on them.
- 212 Motions can be proposed by the following:
- a) The Executive Committee following a vote of its members (maximum 2 motions per Union Council)
  - b) A students' union club, society or other recognised group following a vote of its committee
  - c) Any 2 student members
  - d) The Trustee Board of the Students' Union

- 213 Motions must be submitted in a format described by the Union Chair. There must be the ability for it to be formatted electronically and submission must include the student number or other identifier of the person submitting the motion.
- 214 The Union Chair will ensure that there is training on the submission of motions available for all Union Council members and supporting information for students and student groups.
- 215 The Union Chair will have sole discretion to accept the motions for debate and the order in which they are discussed. No motion will be able to enact any of the duties of the Trustees as outlined in the Articles.

### **Debate of motions**

- 216 For each motion the Chair will allocate up to 3 minutes for someone who proposed it to speak in favour of what has been presented. This may be extended for accessibility reasons.
- 217 The Chair will then ask if anyone wishes to speak against the motion or make suggestions to alter the motion, or ask points of clarification regarding the motion, for an equal amount of time as was allocated under 216.
- 218 At their discretion the Chair may allocate additional speeches for or against the motion. This will always be balanced (they must offer a speech for and against).
- 219 Once the Chair believes that enough information has been discussed to inform students and any issues and implications appropriately considered they will bring the debate to a close.
- 220 The Chair will ask the people who proposed the motion if they wish to withdraw it or make amendments to reflect the discussion that they have heard. They can do so or leave it as they intended.
- 221 The Chair will then move on to the debate of other motions.

### **Voting on motions**

- 222 The motions (as amended if required under 220) will be placed on the Union website alongside the recording of the debate with closed captions and any secondary materials that any Council member wishes to submit, subject to approval by the chair. This will be done within 2 working days of the end of the Council. The Chair shall work with others to ensure these Council proceedings are appropriately advertised to Student Members to enable them to make informed voting decisions.

- 223 All students will be able to vote on the motions via the website and the Union will facilitate a secure manner for this occur. Scrutiny of this process including the setting of quorum on an annual basis will be subject to the Union Chair.
- 224 Votes on motions must be received within 5 working days of the debates being placed on the website. The Chair may reduce this time at their discretion.
- 225 Votes shall pass with an absolute majority (>50%) of ballots cast. An indication of abstention will not be considered a ballot cast, but will contribute towards quoracy of a vote.

### **Policy**

- 226 Policy passed by Union Council shall be sent to the next Executive Committee meeting who will allocate it to a Sabbatical officer. Progress on the policy will be part of the Executive Committee Plan.
- 227 Policy shall be valid for 9 months after it was added to the Executive Committee Plan, after which time it shall be considered by Union Council, being either renewed for a further 12 months or allowed to lapse. A Policy may at any time be superseded by a motion of Council.

### **The Executive Committee Plan at Council**

- 228 The Executive Committee Plan will be sent to each Union Council. It shall be the responsibility of the President to ensure that it is updated. It will report on progress made since the start of the year on each objective and the plan for work against each objective before the end of the academic year.
- 229 Union Council members will be able to ask questions about the plan. These shall be recorded, and student members will be able to vote on the report or reject it in the same way as motions.
- 230 If a student member votes to reject the report, they will be able to offer feedback as to why they wish to do so.

### **Votes of no confidence in an Officer or Trustee**

- 231 In extreme circumstances the Union Council may recommend to the student body that an elected representative or Trustee is removed. A motion to do so must be brought in the same way as policy motions but must be received before the 7 day deadline for items has elapsed.

- 232 The speech against the motion will be the property of the person who the removal would affect. They must be informed of the motion as soon as it has been accepted by the Chair which must also be before the 7 day deadline for Council items.
- 233 For a question to remove an Officer or Trustee to be referred to the student body, no less than 66% of all Union Council Members must vote in favour of the motion. The Chair of Council will oversee the poll which will be a publicly held secret ballot, the result of which will be recorded on the website.
- 234 If Union Council members vote in favour of the motion a referendum of all students will be held.

### **Operation of an Emergency Union Council**

- 235 Where a matter is of such urgency that it requires a Council meeting in a shorter period than described in 207, an emergency Union Council can be called at the Chair's discretion or by vote of the Student Executive Committee. If called it must be held within 5 working days. An Emergency Council shall be subject to the same stipulations as an ordinary Union Council with the following exceptions:
- a) The agenda does not need to meet requirements of 209.
  - b) Notice can be given by placing a prominent message on the Students' Union's Website 3 days before the meeting. The deadline for motions and additional items requested by Union Council members shall be 2 days before the meeting and such items shall be accepted at the discretion of the chair. All items shall be circulated to Union Council members at least 1 day before the meeting.
  - c) The motions (as amended if required under 220) will be placed on the Union website alongside the recording of the debate with closed captions and any secondary materials that any Council member wishes to submit, subject to approval by the chair. This will be done within 1 working day of the end of the Council.
  - d) Votes on a motion from Emergency Council shall have a reduced quorate of 25% of the annual quorate defined in 223.
  - e) Votes on a motion from Emergency Council must be received within 2 working days of the Emergency Council being held.

### **All Student Members Meetings**

- 236 There shall be at least one All Student Members meeting each academic year at a time set in cooperation with the Trustee Board to maximise student participation. The business of the Annual Student Members Meeting shall be:
- a) Approval of the minutes of the last meeting
  - b) receiving a report of the Trustees on the Union's activities since the last All Student Members' Meeting;
  - c) receiving the accounts of the Union for the previous financial year;

- d) approving the list of affiliations of the Union;
- e) open questions to the Trustees by the Student Members;

237 Additional Student Members meetings may be called by the Board of Trustees or by petition of at least 200 Student Members who have written to the Trustee Board explaining what business they wish to discuss. A Student Members Meeting shall be called within two weeks of receipt of such a petition or motion from Union Council. The business of the Student Members Meeting shall be:

- a) Approval of the minutes of the last meeting
- b) Discussion of the business for which the meeting was held

238 There shall be no Emergency or Other Business at a Student Members Meeting

#### **All Student Members Meetings – Notice, Quorum & Chair**

239 All Student Members Meetings shall be called with at least 14 days' notice (not including the day that the meeting is held or the day on which the notice was sent). This notice can be given by placing a prominent message on the Union Website.

240 50 Student Members entitled to vote upon the business to be transacted shall be the quorum. If a quorum is not present within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting, the meeting shall stand adjourned to the same day in the next week at the same time and place or to such other day, time and place as the Trustees may determine and if at the adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting then the quorum shall be those student members present.

241 Student Members Meetings shall be chaired by the President and the Union Chair shall act as Vice-Chair. Should neither be present within 10 minutes of the start of a meeting where a quorum is present then the members present shall elect someone from among those in attendance to be the chair for the meeting.

#### **Changes to Articles and Byelaws**

242 Any proposed changes to Articles must be advertised on the Union website for at least 14 days.

243 A change to the Bye Laws is a joint process of Union Council and the Trustees in accordance with Article 61. For the avoidance of doubt, a change to the Bye Laws may be proposed by a motion at Union Council.

## Byelaw 3 – Student Leaders at Aston Students’ Union

### Introduction

Leading Aston Students’ Union on representation are the Student Executive. These are students who take your views and reflect them on to others as well as campaigning for change. This byelaw explains their role, how they work together as team and how students can monitor their work.

### Glossary

Executive Committee Report	The report of the Student Executive’s work based on manifestos and the policy of the Union
Quorum	The number of officers needed for something to happen at a meeting
Union Chair	The student responsible for the smooth running of Union Council including accountability
Sabbatical Officer	A Student Member who has been elected to take a year outside of their studies to be employed as a full time representative of and campaigner for students
Student Executive	The elected officers of Aston Students’ Union
Student Groups	Clubs, Societies & Volunteer Groups of the Students’ Union
Voluntary Officer	A Student Member who has been elected to be a representative of and campaigner for students for a year alongside their studies

301 There will be the following Student Leaders at Aston Student’s Union:

- a) Sabbatical Officers of the Student Executive
- b) Voluntary Officers of the Student Executive
- c) The Union Chair

### Purpose of the Student Executive Committee

302 The purpose of Student Executive Committee shall be:

- a) To actively engage with students to learn their views and represent these to the University and local area
- b) To encourage students to work as part of the Union, building networks and connections between students and groups
- c) To promote campaigns and projects that improve Aston Students’ lives and develop their skills and knowledge
- d) To work with other members of the Executive to achieve the Executive Committee Report
- e) To promote a positive image of the Union including its democratic structures
- f) To follow Union policy and the law

- g) To attend relevant meetings and conferences and report back to the Union
- h) To fulfil the additional duties outlined in their portfolios

303 In addition the Sabbatical Officers of the Student Executive Committee shall have the additional responsibilities:

- a) To act as a Trustee
- b) To support and engage with the Voluntary Officers
- c) To work with the Voluntary Officers and ensure they are central to decision-making on issues relevant to the Voluntary Officer portfolios.
- d) To be the lead representatives within the University and local area
- e) To be the lead connections with other students' unions and networks which support them
- f) To engage with their manifesto pledges by incorporating them into the Executive Plan, and updating Union Council on their progress
- g) Any other roles as outlined in their specific roles

### **Sabbatical Officers and roles**

304 There shall be the following Sabbatical Officers of the Union:

- a) President
- b) Vice President (Activities & Employability)
- c) Vice President (Education)
- d) Vice President (Welfare)

305 The role of the President shall be to advance education for Students at Aston Students' Union through:

- a) Being the main figurehead to the University, local community and others on issues that relate to students.
- b) To forward relevant matters to other officers where those matters fall within the specific officer's remit.
- c) Ensuring transparency to the student body by progressing work against the Executive Committee Report and updating this for Union Council
- d) To sit on the University Council
- e) To be Deputy Chair of the Trustee Board

306 The role of the Vice President (Student Activities) shall be to advance education for Students at Aston Students' Union through:

- a) Being the main representative on issues to do with student development to the University, local community, and others.
- b) Encouraging student campaigns that increase access to extra-curricular activities, particularly Student Groups.
- c) To be the main Student Executive contact for Student Group Executive Members within the Union.

- d) To promote projects that advance and support Student Groups across all students, with particular attention to those who are marginalised by society.
- 307 The role of the Vice President (Education) shall be to advance education for Students at Aston Students' Union through:
- a) Being the main representative on issues to do with academic work and assessment within the University and to national bodies.
  - b) Encouraging student campaigns that improve the academic environment for students at Aston University.
  - c) To be the main Student Executive contact for Academic representatives within the Union.
  - d) To promote projects that advance and support academic work across all students, with particular attention to those who are marginalised by society.
- 308 The role of the Vice President (Welfare) shall be to advance education for Students at Aston Students' Union through:
- a) Being the main representative on issues to do with wellbeing, health, diversity, and inclusion within the University and to national bodies.
  - b) Encouraging student campaigns that improve the living conditions for students at Aston University.
  - c) To be the main Student Executive contact for welfare representatives and volunteers within the Union.
  - d) To promote projects that advance and support student welfare across all students, with particular attention to those who are marginalised by society.
  - e) For avoidance of doubt, while the VPW role may often involve the signposting of relevant wellbeing services to students, the role of the VPW is not to act as a direct line of welfare support to students in acute need of professional support.

### **Voluntary Officers and roles**

- 309 There shall be the following Voluntary Officers of the Union:
- a) Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students
  - b) Disabled Students
  - c) International Students
  - d) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer Students
  - e) Mature Students
  - f) Part time & Commuter Students
  - g) Postgraduate Students
  - h) Women Students
- 310 Each of the Voluntary Officers shall be elected from the types of students who self-identify as belonging to the groups described in their title and their role shall be to engage with these groups and represent their views to the rest of the Executive and

to the University, and try to resolve any conflicts between the views of different groups.

## **Union Chair**

- 311 The role of the Union Chair shall be to advance Education for Students at Aston Students' Union through:
- a) Actively promoting awareness and engagement of the Unions' democratic processes including but not limited to Union Council, Student Meetings, Elections, Referenda, and the Student Executive.
  - b) To Chair Union Council and the Union Executive
  - c) To work with others to ensure the Unions processes are accessible and effective and to ensure transparency and accountability in the Union's democratic processes including but not limited to the Executive Committee Plan and the publishing of minutes
  - d) To ensure any changes to byelaws are accessible and clear

## **Executive Committee Report – formation**

- 313 The work of the Executive shall be recorded in an Executive Committee Report. Each year during the period after the election of all officers but before the start of teaching, the Executive Committee shall prepare a report of their planned work for the year. This is a joint report that they shall have collective responsibility for delivering.
- 314 The Executive Committee Report shall include:
- a) Shared priorities for the Executive Committee based on the pledges they made to students during the election
  - b) Shared priorities for the Executive Committee based on the current policies of the Union
  - c) Individual priorities that support the voices of marginalised students
- 315 There shall be no more than 12 priorities at any time. Each priority shall be allocated to an Officer and each Sabbatical Officer shall have at least 2 priorities. 12 is a maximum and in most years the report will have fewer than this. Work of the Union Chair will not be among the priorities.
- 316 Noting that each year issues will arise that cannot be foreseen, the work of the Executive Committee Report shall allow time to respond to emergent issues throughout the year.
- 317 The Executive Committee Report shall be presented to the first Union Council of each year.

## **Executive Committee Report – updating**

- 318 During the year the President will ensure that the report is updated for each Union Council with work done that has progressed the priorities.
- 319 Should new policy be set by Union Council that changes the current position of the Union the Student Executive shall change any priority areas that this relates too.
- 320 Should new policy be set by Union Council that the Executive believes should become a new priority they will change update the plan for scrutiny by students and approval by the student body. This may mean they remove one of their current priorities to enable them to have the capacity to take on the new work.

## **Administration of Executive Committee meetings**

- 321 The Executive Committee shall meet at least fortnightly. Meetings may be held in person, online or a hybrid of the two.
- 322 At the start of the year the Executive Committee shall agree such arrangements that means the members can meet regularly. These must include the following:
- a) That the Union Chair is the chair and one of the Sabbatical Officers is deputy chair
  - b) That the quorum shall be 50% of all members
  - c) That circulation of papers shall be at least 5 days before each meeting
  - d) That the chair of the meeting shall not have a vote except in the event of a tied vote, wherein they shall cast the deciding vote
- 323 The minutes of the meetings shall be made available online as well as to all Union Council members within 2 working days of the end of the meeting.
- 324 The Executive Committee shall not have any of the powers reserved for the Trustee Board outlined in the Articles.
- 325 The agenda for each meeting shall be decided by the Chair but must include:
- a) To update the Executive Committee Report
  - b) To note any issues arising within the University since the last meeting
  - c) To note any issues arising from Union Council since the last meeting
- 326 An emergency Executive Committee can be called by the Chair or by the President or any 4 other Student Executive Members by writing to the Chair. If called it must be held within 4 days. The quorum of this meeting will be 25% of the Executive Committee.

## Standing Committees of the Executive Committee

- 327 The Executive Committee will be able to set up standing committees to help advance the work outlined in Byelaw 302. Such standing committees will exist to consider these purposes for students with a shared characteristic or shared area of work for an officer(s).
- 328 Standing Committees must have a written Terms of Reference (including membership), which will be reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee each year.
- 329 The current Standing Committees are:
- a) The BAME Students Committee
  - b) The Disabled Students Committee
  - c) The LGBTQ+ Students Committee
  - d) The Welfare Committee
  - e) The Sustainability Committee
- 330 Standing Committees can be created and disbanded via a motion at Union Council provided that the motion has been brought to Council by a unanimous decision of the Executive Committee. In the case of a Committee disbanding, the motion must be brought in conjunction with the remaining membership of the Committee due to disband.

## Resignation and removal

- 331 An Executive Committee member may resign their position by writing to the Union Chair or a Sabbatical Officer. An Executive Committee member may be removed if they are no longer a student of the University, their term of office ends or they are the subject of a negative decision from a disciplinary committee of the Students' Union, or a Vote of No Confidence (see Byelaw 02).
- 332 Should a vacancy for a Sabbatical Officer role occur the Trustee Board and Executive Committee shall decide whether to hold a bye-election, seek the advice of the Returning Officer or some other action.
- 333 Should a vacancy for a Voluntary Officer or Union Chair occur before Christmas a bye-election shall be held. Should a vacancy occur after that point the Trustee Board shall decide how to proceed.

## Byelaw 4 – Elections and Referenda at Aston Students’ Union

### Introduction

Aston Students’ Union is a democratic organisation led by people you choose. This is done through a series of elections that all student members can vote in. Referenda are a chance to ask all students their view on big issues.

### Glossary

Elections	The process by which student leaders are selected
No Confidence	A motion to remove an official of the Union
Referenda	Referenda are votes which are open to the entire student body for them to decide on a specific question.
Returning Officer	The person who oversees elections and referenda
Ranked Voting	A voting method that allows students to rank candidates in order of preference rather than just their first choice.

### The Returning Officer

- 401 The Trustee Board will appoint a Returning Officer for a term of up to three years. They will not be a Student or Associate Member of the Students’ Union and may be an organisation with specialism in returning elections.
- 402 The Trustee Board will appoint someone whom they believe can be independent from the democratic processes and has sufficient experience to oversee the elections.
- 403 The duties of the Returning Officer shall be:
- Ensuring that elections are fair and that all eligible students can vote in them
  - Promoting engagement in the Students’ Unions democratic processes to ensure a wide range of candidates and offer as much voter choice as possible
  - Creating forums that allow candidates to promote themselves so that students can be informed voters
  - Overseeing referenda
  - Being the final authority on any decisions to do with referenda and elections
- 404 The Returning Officer shall have the authority to do the following:
- To have ultimate responsibility for the interpretation of all election rules for the Union and how they are carried out
  - To appoint Deputy Returning Officers
  - To set timelines for elections and referenda as well as any rules. These shall be laid out in a rulebook to be published at least 2 weeks before any election and 1 week before any referenda

- d) To ensure that all candidates in an election have a fair opportunity to promote themselves and that any platform provided by the Union is equal for all. This shall include any coverage by Union run student media
  - e) To set out the rules for any election counts and oversee the count for election to major union offices
  - f) To report to the Trustee Board and governing body of the University on any elections to major union office
  - g) To be the sole person able to disqualify candidates from an election
  - h) To approve the results of an election count or referendum
- 405 The Returning Officer may appoint one or more individuals to be deputy returning officer to oversee the administration of elections. They may not be members of the union but may be employees of the union or anyone else that the Returning Officer deems to be suitable. They shall have any duties or authority delegated to them by the Returning Officer except that they cannot disqualify candidates or approve the results of a count for major union office.

### **Election Rulebook**

- 406 The election rulebook shall include the following:
- a) Rules on nomination for election and the details that students must provide to be eligible
  - b) Timescales for nominations and campaigning
  - c) Rules concerning campaigning during the election and student group endorsements
  - d) Rules explaining how students can vote including any provision for online voting
  - e) Rules for complaints about elections and the sanctions that the Returning Officer may implement on candidates
  - f) Rules concerning candidates who wish to campaign together as a "slate"
  - g) Information about Trustee responsibilities and the requirement of eligibility to be appointed a Trustee, for candidates for the roles of Sabbatical Officers
  - h) Information relating to any requirements set by external bodies - for example NUS for their conferences
- 407 Candidates for election may be held responsible for the conduct of their campaigning team if the Returning Officer believes that the candidate was (or should have been aware) of an activity during the election period.
- 408 As well as the election rules outlined above, candidates will be subject to the general rules of the Union, the university, and national laws. Should any of these be broken by a candidate or their team then the candidate may be disqualified.
- 409 The elections shall be undertaken through a ranked vote method with the option for students to vote to Re-Open Nominations.

## Complaints during elections

- 410 Any complaints about an election must be received in writing (including email) and be received no more than 2 hours after the close of voting.
- 411 Where possible complaints should be raised within 24 hours of the issue about which a complaint has been raised.
- 412 No election count will take place until all complaints relating to that position are resolved.
- 413 The Returning Officer's judgement on elections shall be final and without an Appeal. Students may raise a concern about the Union under the 1994 Education Act if they wish.

## Referenda

- 414 A referendum to debate any issue, with the exception of a vote of no confidence in a Trustee or elected representative, shall be called by:
- a) a Secure Petition signed by 200 student members in accordance with Articles
  - b) a simple majority vote of the Trustee Board or
  - c) a simple majority vote of Union Council members
- 415 The quorum for a referendum will be at least 4% of members.
- 416 A referendum to issue a vote of no confidence in a Trustee or elected representative shall be called by either:
- a) a Secure Petition signed by 500 student members in accordance with Articles
  - b) a simple majority vote of the Trustee Board or
  - c) a simple majority vote of Union Council members

## Referenda Rules

- 417 The regulations for the Referendum shall be set by the Returning officer but shall include:
- a) A notice period of the referendum of at least 14 days (21 for a change in the Articles). The notice can be issued on the Students' Union website and should be disseminated digitally to Members.
  - b) Provision held by secret ballot outlining the process for voting including how many days it shall be open for.
  - c) The date and time where the count will take place and how the result will be publicised.
  - d) The procedure for submitting complaints and how they will be dealt with.

- 418 There will be an Appeals process concerning the outcome of the referenda and the conduct of the Returning Officer. Appeals should be submitted to the Board of Trustees no later than 5 days following receipt of a response from the Returning Officer. The Board's decision is final.

## Byelaw 5 – Student Groups at Aston Students’ Union

### Introduction

As well as their activities in the classroom, lab and lecture theatre, Aston Students can take part in activities that build skills and relationships, offer leadership opportunities and are fun! Those who run these are described as “Student Groups” and this byelaw explains what students can expect from their union to ensure they are well run.

### Glossary

Clubs	A group of students who share a common interest for a sport
Quorum	The number of students needed for something to happen at a meeting
Societies	A group of students who share a common interest
Student Activities Executive Committee	Students responsible for the support and leadership of Student Groups and report activity to the wider Union
Student Group Committees	Students who lead their Student Group
Student Group Handbook	A handbook outlining the rules each Student Group must observe and the support they can receive from the Union
Volunteering and Project Groups	Groups that have a specific role to serve the community beyond student development opportunities

500 The purpose of Student Groups at Aston Students’ Union will be to offer development for students through the activities they do, build networks of support for their students, and help gather the shared experiences and views of their members.

501 There shall be the following types of Student Groups:

- a) Student Societies
- b) Student Sports Clubs
- c) Volunteering and Project Groups

### Requirements of All Student Groups

502 Each Student Group will have a written constitution that outlines its purpose. The Chair of the Student Activities Executive Committee will ensure that a model constitution is available for Student Groups to use.

503 The model constitution (and any changes to it) must be approved by the Student Activities Executive.

- 504 All Student Members must be able to be a member of a Student Group unless the Group's constitution allows a restriction based on a protected characteristic, belief, or mode of study where such a restriction is inherently central to the nature of the group in the view of the Student Activities Executive Committee.
- 505 Each Student Group must have a Committee who are responsible for the administration and finances of the Group. There must be at least three committee members including a President and Treasurer but may otherwise have such positions as they think will help fulfil the Group's purpose. The Committee should meet as often as they need to ensure the smooth running of the Student Group.
- 506 Student Groups must have a minimum of 10 Student Members. Associate members of the Union may be allowed to join if agreed by the Student Group's Committee.
- 507 Each Student Group must hold at least one all members meeting each academic year before the end of the third term. The meeting must be advertised to all members of the Group at least 2 weeks in advance and can take place online or in person or a combination of the two. The quorum shall be at least 1/3rd of student members of the Group. The business of this meeting must include:
- a) Report on the Activities of the Student Group since the last all members meeting
  - b) Report on the Student Group's Finances
  - c) Election of new Committee members (though voting may occur remotely after the meeting), or announcing of results where Committee elections have already taken place
- 508 The names and emails of the new Committee members must be submitted to the Union.

### **Student Group Committees**

- 509 Student Group Committees have the following responsibilities:
- a) To undertake activities that fulfil the Group's purpose and develop students.
  - b) To ensure that the Group's members follow the policies and Code of Conduct of the Union, including any sustainability and equalities policies and the Student Group Handbook.
  - c) To operate within the financial regulations of the Union including keeping accurate records of the Student Group's activities and proposing a budget for the group each year and for any major expenditure.
  - d) To promote the work of the Union and ensure that the Student Group sends at least one representative to relevant Students' Union meetings.
  - e) To work with other Student Groups and build communities throughout the Union where appropriate
  - f) To attend all relevant training sessions and meetings as required

- g) To keep records of all Student Group and Committee meetings
- 510 Student Group Committee members must be elected. All student members must be eligible for election to Committee positions unless the Group's Constitution allows for positions to be reserved. All student members must be able to vote for all positions unless the Group's Constitution allows for a reserved Committee position to be voted upon by a defined section of students.
- 511 Associate Members cannot hold Committee positions or vote in them except where a position exists explicitly to support Associate Members.

### **Student Group Finances**

- 512 Student Groups must charge a membership fee of at least £2 unless their Constitution allows them not to. This provision will usually be reserved for volunteer groups. A Student Group's membership fee must be justified within its Constitution and approved by the Student Activities Executive Committee.
- 513 At least annually the Student Activities Executive Committee will publish a set of financial regulations. This will include:
  - a) The process for budget allocations
  - b) Any procedures to be observed for expenditure
  - c) Any procedures to be observed for storage of funds
  - d) The rules for working with the Raise & Give Group to fundraise for Charity
  - e) Any other financial procedures
- 514 Student Groups must operate within the financial regulations of the Union. No Student Group shall have their own bank account or keep funds. Any Student Group found to have an external bank account will be suspended with immediate effect until an investigation can take place, after which the Group may be reinstated, or the suspension upheld, or some other action taken, in accordance with the outcome of the investigation.

### **Student Group Handbook**

- 515 The Student Activities Executive Committee will publish a Student Group Handbook at least annually. This will outline the rules each Student Group must observe and the support they can receive from the Union. This can be a physical or online resource.

### **Sports Clubs**

- 516 Sports Club Members must have appropriate insurance to be able to undertake activities in accordance with the Athletic Union Code.

## Volunteer Groups

- 517 There shall be the following volunteer groups, open to all Student Members, who normally will follow the same rules as other student groups but shall have additional roles:
- a) Raise And Give Group (RAGG) which shall fundraise for good causes, providing student development opportunities through their fundraising activities
  - b) AUX Radio and Student Media – student led multimedia, including, but not limited to student radio and student reporting
- 518 These groups can, on agreement of the Vice President Student Activities on behalf of the Students' Union Executive Committee, be exempt from following particular student group rules, if the VP is satisfied the fundamental Students' Union principals of inclusivity are not compromised.

## Project Groups

- 519 There may be projects groups, open to all Student Members, who normally will follow the same rules as other student groups but may have additional regulations and procedures.
- 520 These groups can, on agreement of the Student Activities Executive Committee, be exempt from following particular student group rules, if the Student Activities Executive Committee is satisfied the fundamental Students' Union principals of inclusivity are not compromised.

## Student Activities Executive Committee

- 521 There shall be a Student Activities Executive Committee whose role shall be:
- a) To encourage good relations and a spirit of collaboration between Student Groups.
  - b) To approve a Student Group Handbook outlining the administration of student activities
  - c) To approve new Student Groups
  - d) To approve the removal of Student Groups who have less than 10 members or have not met the requirements of the Union
  - e) To approve grant requests from Student Groups
  - f) To publish a set of financial regulations at least annually
- 522 The Student Activities Executive Committee shall meet at least fortnightly. The meeting may be in person or online. The quorum of the meeting shall be half of the Committee positions currently filled including at least two members from a Society and two members from a Club. For avoidance of doubt, this means at least four members in total.

- 523 Members of the Student Activities Executive Committee shall be elected by cross-campus ballot in the Spring term, with the exception of the Accessibility Representative who shall be nominated by the Disabled Students' Committee. Any student who is a member of a club or society shall be eligible to run in this election. Where a Committee position represents clubs or societies of a given type, only students who are members of that type of club or society may run for election to that position.
- 524 The Members of the Student Activities Executive Committee shall be:
- a) The Vice President (Student Activities)
  - b) The Student Activities Executive Chair
  - c) Events & Fundraising Representative
  - d) Media & Design Representative
  - e) Welfare & Development Representative
  - f) Team Sport Club Representative
  - g) Individual Club Representative
  - h) Faith Society Representative
  - i) General Interest Society Representative
  - j) Cultural Society Representative
  - k) Academic Society Representative
  - l) RAGG Chair
  - m) Accessibility Representative
- 525 The Student Activities Executive Chair shall ensure minutes of each meeting are kept and sent to all Student Group Presidents, Student Council members, and the Student Executive, as well as published on the website.

End of Document