**1st Week Hilary Term 2023 Student Council**

**TIME: 17:30**

**DATE: Tuesday 17th January 2023**

**LOCATION: Hybrid**

If you have any questions about Student Council, please feel free to contact the
Chair of Student Council on **chair@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk**or the Democratic Support Officer on[**studentengagement@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk**](https://unioxfordnexus.sharepoint.com/sites/OUSU-StudentUnion/Shared%20Documents/.Oxford%20SU/Student%20Engagement/Student%20Council/Student%20Council%20Meeting%20Archive/Student%20Council%202020-21/Student%20Council%20MT20/1st%20Week%20MT20/studentengagement%40oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk)**.**

**Please Note:** Student Council will be recorded to increase the transparency of the meeting. If you are not happy to be recorded or would like to remain out of the footage please contact the Student engagement team: [**studentengagement@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk**](file:///C%3A/Users/ousu0041/Nexus365/Oxford%20SU%20-%20Student%20Engagement%20and%20Communications/Student%20Council/Student%20Council%20Meeting%20Archive/Student%20Council%202020-21/Student%20Council%20MT20/1st%20Week%20MT20/studentengagement%40oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk)

**Explanatory Notes** on procedure have been provided by Steering Committee, below motion F2.

**Trigger Warning:**

Item F2: Antisemitism

Item G2: Racism

**Contents:**

**A.** Minutes of the previous meeting

Chair opened the floor to questions and comments regarding the minutes of the previous meeting and any matters arising from the minutes.

Chair: Let’s discuss this, anyone have any comments?

No comments were raised

**B**. Matters arising from the minutes

No matters risen

**C.** Reports from and questions to Sabbatical Trustees

**Chair** informed members that full officer written reports can be accessed on [student council website](https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/student-council/22ht5w/).

**Chair** informs that Micheal will be coming later – and you can find his report on the website or email him any questions

**Chair** informs of a similar situation with Jade.

**VP for charities, Anna-Tina**: My report is online. She says she is pushing hard on colleges. She is making the demand to get the colleges in line with the central system of the University. E&A rep from colleges can help by sending an email to their colleges. She is also pushing hard on some investments. Now she is planning social action fair – this saturday, 11-3, she has brought loads of posters here – local organizations are going to be there, in collaboration with the Oxford Hub – this is going to be an opportunity for campaigns in and beyond the University.

**Chair** comments that this meeting is recorded just for everyone’s information

**Chair** asks if there are any questions for her?

No questions raised.

**VP Graduates Elect, Shreya Dua** begins and states that her report will be up soon.

In week 3 I will release a hardship fund survey for all graduate students. As a part of research degree panel am editing those to construct a policy. Then we have DPhil drinks events and planning a club night for MSts and MPhils. I am also working on having a mock survey for in-person exams this term. Then working on feedback for education policies with the Social Sciences Division. This will be an attempt towards revamping the Student Experience policy and to train faculty to better understand student representation. Beyond this, the Postgraduate consultation group is now on shortlisting stage.

**Chair** opens the floor for questions

No questions were raised.

**VP Welfare and Equal Opportunities Elect: Grace Olusola** presents her report

There is nice stuff happening in week 7 and communication will be out soon. The Welfare Training societies 1st draft will be done by TT ’23. I am working on signposting and welfare students had a meeting with the Master of St Catz – we discussed policy and support that could be offered to students. Rest in my report that can be found online.

**Chair** opens the floor for questions

**Question-** a policy on suspension of students was passed earlier – is there any progress?

**Answer** – We will get back on that, as Michael sits on the conference of colleges so he can answer.

No more questions were raised.

**D.** Reports from and questions to Disabilities Campaign and LGBTQ+ Campaign

**Disabilities Campaign leader – Theo**

This is my last term in this role and what we had pledged last time to understand communication of SU advice service, we are working on that. They are there to show students what the policy is because there is a gap at the moment. It may be not necessary that we are doing this just for disabled students, since we also pledged to improve Instagram services – we have a new officer now to look into this.

There is also the campaign to reduce stigma about disabilities. I am working with the Department of English and Philosophy to help reform their policies – working on lecture recordings for all regardless of disability.

Our pledge for next term – have a better handover, and be more present on committiess and build better communications. And lecture recording campaign – even if that object is beyond my degree I will ensure its completion.

Thanks to all.

No questions were risen.

**Report from LGBTQA+ campaign:**

My final term as chair for campaign is this one. Our freshers week plan went well and LGBTQA+ history month is this term. We carried out community events and had good turn out and trans students could change their names for free. We saw turnout by students and staff alike. The turnout was of 40 people at one of the events. We got the backing from LGBTQA+ network on definitions. Apart from that, trans-week was pretty successful – we had 9 speakers – and it went well.

Targets for this term:

We are working towards LGBTQA+ history month and in collaboration with other groups we will help in the University Arts Week.

We will organize an exhibit with the Bodleian Library for history month. We will work on ‘transphobia’ definition further and the work on central health droppings for sexual health of LGBTQA+ will continue. Further focus is on the handover process and advertisement of roles.

Overall, its been a successful term.

No questions were raised.

**E.** Reports from and questions to PG and UG Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Graduate Report

**Chair** asks if their representative are here.

**VP Graduates** replies that she shall get in touch with them

**F**. Items for resolution

1. Suspended Students’ Campaign Constitution Amendments

Proposed by **Gabriel**

We are probably going to write a report for the next council. For now, we just had to update the constitution. So we added 3 stipulations:

1) one co-chair has to have had an experience of suspension.

2) if all the roles are filled by undergrads, then a grad role is to be created.

3) you are not limited to your role – as you are expected to help other members

No questions were raised.

1. On the SU’s affiliation to NUS UK

Proposed Amendment Item: **Joshua** who proposed the amendment states that costs to remain within NUS outweigh beneifits. I think its not reasonable to remain affiliated to such an organization which has been found to be anti-semetic. We need answers to these things. So what are the problems now – historically NUS delegates have acted in anti semetoc ways. I propose that we should disaffiliate right now, Karen might have a full case, if there are people undecided, that’s unfair as we should leave the question of referendum as that would delay justice.

**Chair** informs that this amendment has voting being done online right now and will close tomorrow.

**Chair** opens the floor for discussion-

**Michael** asks how can we have impact without being associated with NUS?

**Questioner 1** - I oppose the ammendements, as Joshua has raised, this is an issue of faith – Should we have faith that NUS will implement change at all? That faith has been betrayed many times, they say that the root cause is the dominance of Palestine issues which has led the Jewish students to notice anti-semetic issues.

**Questioner 2** in chat – in the report it is stated that theres a discussion of this … inaudible…

**Questioner 3** – I need clarifications, with the motion and the amendment – Would the referendum be just a vote and nothing else? I wanted clarificarion as I don’t know much about this.

**Chair**:

A lot of the decisions around referendums don’t lie with me. The outcome will be essentially prescribed as there will be 2 campaigns – one for yes or no. However, there will always be discussions over this.

**Questioner**- Is there a minimun turnout requirement for ref to happen?

**Micheal** – 5 percent

**Chair** – not sure

**Questioner**: When will ref be?

**Chair** – within 8 term time weeks of being called. Actual disaffiliation will take some time based on legal requirements.

**Questioner 3**- is there any other national organization for students apart from NUS?

**Micheal** – no organization can compete with the NUS in terms of history and collectivism. Oxford SUhas unique benefits, since eltism here creates networks with influential key figures, and we collaborate with the Russel Group.

**Questioner**: Are there other schools disaffiliating?

**Michael**: We wouldn’t bealone as three other have already disaffiliated.

**LGBTQA+ Campaigner** – I have never seen a practical benefit of being part of the NUS – its too much money and we can have better campaigns without them. We have also faced phobic attitudes from them, and we complained, but they havenot done anything about it. Having said that, the issue of National Repn is important as this governemnet is quite Anti Student anyway. I do think disaffiliating for some time would be better. How hard is it going to be to re-affiliate w them?

**Chair** – council is not allowed to advice on this. After a period of a year though we can run a motion to reaffiliate

**Questioner 4**: I am trying to represent jewish students here – it would be helpful if we get some clarification as we are very disturbed. Do you want to leave the NUS because its not good for the SU to be a part of? If this is main reason then the timing is not good since the debate is about anti-Semitism, and we cannot extend out support in that case.

If your concern is anti-semetic attitudes then we can appreciate your move

We only can support it if your intention can be clarified. I want to know the primary motivation.

**Ciaron** – not here to answer

**Questioner 5** - rule 10.2 states we can defer if people voted to defer this motion to this meeting.

**Another Questioner** states: if we move this to the next meeting, then when your amendment passes it will be seen against anti-semitism cause and have an impact on jews in oxford. My concern is that we should speak to groups who are being impacted – if we delay it will be a national cause anyway . I propose to move this to an extraordinary meeting and involve stakeholders so when motion comes back, it is done in a better way.

Response by another **Questioner**:

 I suggest that we will be better off drafting a different motion altogether, this current motion should be redone.

**Chair**: Since Ciaron is not here, we have 2 options – delay referendum, or call a meeting

Break for 10 minutes

**Ciaron, on call**:

Agrees to withdraw referendum, cites reasons to reach a consensus which is not potentially divisive

Chair requests it in writing.

***-------***

***Sameyia Syed (Chair)
Yeah. OK. So.***

***2:38:0.60 --> 2:39:20.980
Sameyia Syed (Chair)
(Member) Obviously there's a lot of concerns about this motion in general. Like it's not even just for people who might oppose it. Just I think generally in the room, most people who have spoken have said they support the idea of a referendum. It's just the concerns about how it's written/details now, since so***

***(Chair) Can I just jump just for a second? Ciaran, can you hear me?***

***(Ciaran) Yep, I can hear you.***

***2:38:21.830 --> 2:38:52.520
Sameyia Syed(Chair)
(Chair) Sorry as chair, another option if there is potential issue around quoracy is that Ciaran, if you agree to withdraw it…***

***(Member) that's what I’m...***

***(Chair) Oh, okay,***

***(Member) that's what it's gonna ask.***

***(Chair) Yeah. So if you agree to withdraw it and as Chair, I can permit that to occur, then, you know, the concerns raised here could be raised and reworded and remodeled. The issue with an extraordinary meeting just for clarification is that it will be around this motion in the exact wording and if you have issues with the wording then that won't actually deal with the problem so I think, Ciaran if you are comfortable,***

***2:38:52.630 --> 2:39:9.740
Sameyia Syed (Chair)
(chair) Here, and if you a comfortable, it sounds like the general consensus of this room to withdraw it for this meeting and to raise it in future meeting after relevant consensus with Members and perhaps also the Jewish community at Oxford.***

***2:39:11.310 --> 2:39:13.900
Sameyia Syed (Chair)
(Ciaron) Yeah, I’ll withdraw.***

***2:39:14.790 --> 2:39:29.110
Sameyia Syed (Chair)
(Chair)All right. Is there anything that you***

***(Michael-A) Ciaran, could you clarify your reasons for withdrawing and just for the record, please?***

***(Ciaran) Yeah. So to get a popular version, you know that is reaching the best consensus without that being potentially divisive.***

***2:39:30.970 --> 2:39:37.880
Sameyia Syed (Chair)
(Michael-A) Again, and there were some factual questions asked as well, we just***

***(Joe) Could I request that in writing, like e-mail.***

***2:39:41.540 --> 2:39:44.660
Sameyia Syed (Chair)
(Michael-A) Yeah, that's true. Can technically, this is not Ciaran’s inaudible.***

Video: https://youtu.be/\_twJNvdvEVo

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1. Keep Campsfield Closed

Proposed by Haja, present on Teams call.

**Haja:**

 I want to share my screen, but since its not possible, I hope I will be able to send an email to chairs who will be sharing the slide through chat for easier access.

We propose this motion to keep Campsfield closed. The purpose of this presentation is that the motion is complicated because people may not know of motion detention. The immigration detention and proposed opening of Campsfield should be prevented in Kidlington – these sites are widely condemned by even UNHCSR. People have been shut here for years struggling for long, and they are vulnerable to self harm and suicide.

Chair gives a trigger warning for mental health.

Haja resumes: the UK govt recognized this in 2016 after a report and made a commitment to reduce immigration detention drastically, so they closed this and many centres – they then ran alternatives like action-access for asylum-seekers which was much better for their mental health and their life and it was also cheaper than detention. However, now government has backtracked completely andnow detainment has begun in Durham too, detainees fall at risk to deportation to Rwanda. This action has also been condemened by Oxfordhsire Council, UN and others.

Now they plan to open Campsfield and expand it from 200 to 400 detainies. There are so many concerns about space, hygiene, heating – lot of protests also by our MP. What can we do about this? This is what the motion is about? There are groups from Oxfordshire who are raising awareness about this issue – its an opportunity for SU to get involved since a great number of students can get impacted. It is vital for students as it is local as well and we have to realize that detention is not the answer.

We offer a two-part mandate

- educational activity could be done by VPS – they could create involvement and information – and sending that represemtation to monthly meetings etc

- suggestion for SU itself to establish its position on this issue and call on local government to voice concerns and write an open letter to the authorities.

- may/may not based on NUS affiliation – SU can also raise this issue on national level and participate in mailing list, meetings and protests

They are just suggestions, and we just need SU’ backing for greater legitimacy – specifics of it can be worked out, as long as we accept immi det is not the answer.

**Questioner 1**- just to confirm the motion that we are putting forward to is simply about keeping the facility closed and not an endorsement of the alternatives?

**Answer**: Yes it is basically only to keep this site closed, alternatives are another part of the discourse.

**Questioner 2** – You said “viable alternatives should continue to be explored” that means the motion advocates detention of other forms? On the slide about beliefs.

**Answer** – I am not sure about the usual route of these motions – if this is something that SU is not comfortable w endorsing but we are open to amend

No more were raised

Chair ends this discussion

Chair informs that an amendment issued to a motion ahead of that time and parts of it not accepted. The voting will be open from now until 9:30 tomorrow morning. The main motion discussed now will open only tomorrow and close voting on Thursday.

**G.** Items for discussion

1. This motion calls for the Oxford Student Union to send a request to the National Union of Students (NUS) to advocate for increased government investment in technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in education

The advocate- basically this is just an idea I am passionate about and this has been my main campaign in NUS. Because of large sizes of classes we didn’t have resources or help in my life and this website of AI targets areas helps students learn in different ways and they promise if you don’t get an A, they give your money back. But it is expensive as it costs 500 gbp for a year – although they give scholarship programmes and I got a scholarship without which I wouldn’t reach Oxford.

It seems that the government has no plans to bring this technology to anyone. Its not something new, but just unaffordable – we should advocate something like this as it is Oxford and we have the privilege to speak for it.

Nus has not discussed anything related to this yet.

Chair opens the floor to questions.

**Questioner**- I think I agree but it seems too broad as it both includes something about giving computer access to technology and incorporating AI in classroom.

**A** – these websites are avl on online – 24/7 – it doesn’t focus on ai use within class room – it is outside. Uplearn – private schools that use them

**VP Graduates, Shreya**: If NUS pathway is eliminated then we can do it at Oxford’s internal level, because this is a general proposal to give to NUS as it might not make senese from education policy perspective

**A** – I am open to making the proposal better as I don’t remember any NUS member mentioning any private firms. Happy to discuss this with anyone.

1. Condemnation of Oxford Professor Nick Bostrom’s email and apology response

Chair gives a trigger warning for racism.

Chair wanted to contribute to the discussion, so VP Graduates is made Chair for this discussion.

**Grace** is the proposer

Grace: This is basically just to create a space where people can talk, feel free to speak from a place of allyship. So the context is that a Swedish born philosopher Nick Bostrom published an email forewarning in 1996 and the content of the email is on the website. It is very much like not acceptable as he talks of eugenics etc. and his apology is the main issue. He condemns what he had said, expressed apology for that, but he doesn’t necessarily refute the basis for that email so we are concerned about his position of power. I think we can demand more transparency, I think what we can do:

* I can set up meeting with the Philosophy Department or Chief of Diversity Officer.
* Its good to get more consensus on faculty’s lack of response
* If this consultation should not give enough response, we can discuss any collective action like a protest or an open letter.

**Yasmin** – he is an influecntial figure in AI, he came up with the popular idea of longtermism. OU should not tolerate this as it creates harm for POC in this space, I’ve also seen their website oh their institute, future of humanities, there’s nothing related to equality, diversity, racism etc. and OU has claimed they are issuing an investigation.

**Questioner** – I think that the broad approach you mentioned its quite good, I also think when it comes to the organization piece you are talking of – what screeing happens during hiring policies?

**Grace** – he was the founder, so we do not know about the hiring process.

**Questioner 2**: Is he overseeing any students in their studies? Having to deal with that person could impact them, and this needs to be looked into. What he did was extremely obvious, maybe they are just waiting for it to die down.

**Questioner 3**- the work of the FHI is related to AI– it’s a small think tank like, in terms of work of the FHI– I don’t think its sinister but it just doesn’t focus on edi. It would be unwise to make it simple for administrators to fire people immediately – what the procedure should be decided carefully.

**Yasmin** – if its worthwhile to ensure FHI is involved in EDI. Since it they work closely with AI which impact POC so much – that is the conern - even if it mathematical, there is a lot of to be discussed around EDI.

**Questioner 3**: He has also written on bio-ethics, the extent to which this condemnation is horrible. I think is the issue with apology too?

**Yasmin** – we should condemn both, because apology is opaque on racism, he is not challenging his old claims at all.

**Grace** – thanks for your comments – there are 2 strands – individual tutor constructs, other side general edi policies for academic conduct – need time to sit down and start approaching that.

No more questions were raised.

**H.** **Any other business**

None

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**
2. **Matters arising from the minutes**

**C. Reports from and questions to Sabbatical Trustees**

**D. Reports from and questions to Disabilities and LGBTQ+ Campaign**

**E. Reports from and questions to PG and UG Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences**

**F. Items for Resolution**

**1. Suspended Students’ Campaign Constitution Amendments**

Council Notes:

1. The Suspended Students Campaign Constitution is in need for updating.

Council Believes:

Council Belives:

1. The new constitution provides a more accurate, effective, and representative doctrine and committee make-up to achieve the campaign’s goals.

Council Resolves:

1. To adopt the new constitution to better reflect the views of the campaign.

Proposer: Gabriel Lazar, Mansfield College

Seconder: Connie Hammond, Mansfield College

RESULTS:

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| 1st Week HT 2023 Student Council | Suspended Students’ Campaign Constitution Amendments |
| **Method** | **Votes** | **Quorum** |
| Use simple majority: Yes | 22 | 35 |
| **Choice** | **Vote** |  |
| For | 17 |  |
| Against | 0 |  |
| Abstain | 5 |  |

THIS MOTION HAS PASSED

**2. On the SU’s affiliation to NUS UK**

**Council Notes:**

1. The SU is currently affiliated with the National Union of Students (NUS) and has been for many years.
2. Oxford SU contributes £4,095.60 to NUS Charity and £20,478 to NUS UK in membership fees
3. The SU is required to consult its members on affiliations annually. This affiliation motion constitutes that consultation.
4. The report of the independent inquiry within the NUS by Rebecca Tuck KC has been published.

**Council Believes:**

1. That the SU should disaffiliate with the NUS. Primarily as the Student Union serves the interest of Oxford students more, but also due to the horrendous issues the NUS has continually been associated with, not least those highlighted by the report but also numerous robust reasons including financial cost.
2. That the current NUS delegates saw first hand the value of the NUS this year. The fact the Proposer and Seconder both were such delegates testifies to the fact of their commitment to Student Union representation and to advancing the Student Union in a positive manner for all students.
3. That in light of the aforementioned issues, and the independent inquiry’s report, the SU should disaffiliate from the NUS for a period of a year.

**Council Resolves:**

1. To call a binding referendum on the SU’s continued affiliation with the NUS, with a view to disaffiliating from the NUS.

Proposer: Ciaron Tobin, Magdalen College

Seconder: Mundher Ba-Shammakh, Pembroke College

**2a. Proposed Amendment to the motion**

* to replace points 1-3 under ‘Believes’ with—
“[that] in light of anti-semitic conduct in the NUS and the findings of the report, the question of continued affiliation should be put to the membership”
* To strike from point 1 under ‘Resolves’, the text “, with a view to disaffiliating from the NUS”.

Proposer: Joshua Loo, Oriel College

***Explanatory Note:*** *The SU is currently affiliated with NUS UK. In order to disaffiliate, a referendum on the issue must be held.*

*The amendment proposed above shall, in accordance with the Rules of Council, be decided prior to voting for the main motion. If passed by a simple majority or unopposed, the amendment will be applied to the main motion.*

**4. Keep Campsfield Closed**

**Council Notes:**

1. The government plans to reopen Campsfield House detention centre adjacent to Oxford University Science Park, Kidlington, contravening the commitment made by the Conservative government in 2016 to detain fewer people under immigration law for shorter periods and to pursue alternatives to detention.
2. That Campsfield House, along with three other detention centres, was closed down in the years following 2016. Pilot ‘alternatives to detention’ were run.
3. That the planned reopening of Campsfield House forms part of the government's plans to expand detention facilities, contradicting its 2016 commitment as above.

These include:

1. the use of military barracks to house asylum seekers;
2. the opening of the 80-bed women-only Hassockfield/Derwentside detention centre in Durham in November 2021;
3. the expansion of short-term holding facilities (STHFs) at Manston, Kent to detain asylum seekers and other migrants;
4. deportation flights to Rwanda (currently suspended);
5. the 2022 Nationality and Borders Act further criminalising people seeking asylum.
6. That the plans to reopen Campsfield have already met with significant political and civil opposition in the local area, including from Layla Moran MP; Oxford City Council; the Coalition to Keep Campsfield Closed.
7. That immigration detention has been widely condemned by reputable organisations as extremely damaging in terms of mental health, human rights and re-traumatisation.
8. That the site plans recently shared by the Home Office show a significant expansion of the site from its 2018 footprint with accommodation for 400 detainees.

**Council Believes:**

1. That it is vital for students at Oxford University to engage with sociopolitical events taking place locally in Oxfordshire, and for student bodies to facilitate such community engagement.
2. That such engagement is necessary to recognise Oxford as a city where immense privilege and deprivation exist side-by-side.
3. That expanding the immigration detention estate, both locally and nationally, is not the answer to either regular or irregular migration, and that viable alternatives should continue to be explored.

**Council Resolves:**

1. To mandate the relevant full-time officer(s) to actively work with student groups affiliated with the campaign to ensure that Union work is linked up with grassroots campaigners. This includes, but is not limited to: a. facilitating educational activity around the issues raised in this motion amongst students. b. sending a Union representative to the monthly meetings of the Coalition to Keep Campsfield closed.
2. To call on local and national government to reverse the decision to reopen Campsfield House detention centre. This includes, but is not limited to:
3. disseminating an open letter addressed to the government, through Oxford University networks in collaboration with other local student groups.
4. supporting and publicising public protests and petitions against the planned reopening.
5. To raise the demands in this motion with the NUS national executive and ask that these be added to their agenda.
6. To become a named member organisation of the Coalition to Keep Campsfield Closed.

**Proposer:** Hajar Zainuddin, University College

**Seconder:** Juliet Van Gyseghem, Christ Church College

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| 1st Week HT 2023 Student Council | Keep Campsfield Closed |
| **Method** | **Votes** | **Quorum** |
| Use simple majority: Yes | 22 | 35 |
| **Choice** | **Vote** |  |
| For | 18 |  |
| Against | 2 |  |
| Abstain | 2 |  |

THIS MOTION HAS PASSED

**H. Items for discussion**

**Title:** National Union of Students (NUS) to advocate for increased government investment in technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in education

**Council Notes:**

**Title:** This motion calls for the Oxford Student Union to send a request to the National Union of Students (NUS) to advocate for increased government investment in technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in education.

The motion argues that technology and AI have the potential to greatly improve the quality of education and level the playing field for disadvantaged students, but access to these resources is currently limited, particularly for disadvantaged and low-income students. The motion calls for the government to invest in developing and implementing technology-based learning resources and programs, including providing every child with access to a computer or laptop and incorporating technology into the curriculum.

**Council Notes:**

The motion also calls for these resources to be made available to all students for free, recognizing that while there may be initial fixed costs, the long-term cost savings and improved outcomes will offset these costs. The motion also calls for the NUS to prioritize technology and AI in education to improve academic outcomes, reduce inequality, and prepare students for the future by giving them the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

**Proposer:** Anas Dayeh, St John's College

**Title:** Condemnation of Oxford Professor Nick Bostrom’s email and apology response

**Council Notes**

Nick Bostrom is Swedish-born philosopher and a professor at the University of Oxford. He is also the founding director of the Future of Humanity Institute. On the 9th of January 2023, he issued an apology for an email he wrote for an unmoderated mailing list forum called ‘The Extropians’ in 1996. This email stated that 'blacks are more stupid than whites', followed by 'I like that sentence and think it is true.' He also said that ‘black people have a lower average IQ than mankind in general’ and his email included the n-slur. The full contents of this email and his apology are included in

the appendix of the agenda. In his apology, he apologised for his statement but also did not fully backtrack from his claims about race and IQ. His apology states ‘Are there any genetic contributors to differences between groups in cognitive abilities? It is not my area of expertise, and I don’t have any particular interest in the question. I would leave to others, who have more relevant knowledge, to debate whether or not in addition to environmental factors, epigenetic or genetic factors play any role.’ A University of Oxford spokesperson told MailOnline: 'The University and Faculty of Philosophy is currently investigating the matter but condemns in the strongest terms possible the views this particular academic expressed in his communications.’ For context, the Future of Humanity Institute is a multidisciplinary tool that ‘bring[s] the tools of mathematics, philosophy and social sciences to bear on big-picture questions about humanity and its prospects.’ It should be noted that none of these areas focus on equity, including racial equity, despite concerning the ‘future of humanity’. There is nothing published on the website on diversity/equality.

**Council Notes**

The comments have impacted the student community with statements and comments reported on in the press and media. The Student Union exists to ensure that all studnet feel comfortable in Oxford and actions This item for discussion will involve possible routes of action the Oxford SU should take to address these comments and advocate for the student body. Possible courses of action involve:

* set up a meeting with the philosophy dept/ future of humanity institute (including asking questions about their ‘multidisciplinary’ approach)
* set up a meeting with the university’s new chief diversity officer
* decide what we want from these conversations; posing questions about Bostrom as an individual, the faculty’s lack of specificity in response, or whether this is more about the institute moving forward
* if we don’t get an adequate response (which we probably also need to define), what sort of collective action we may want to take

Proposer: Grace Olusola, VP Welfare and Equal Opportunities

**I. Any other business**