Week 3 HT23 Council

Motions up for voting

## 1. NUS Disaffiliation Motion

**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 investigation led by Rebecca Tuck KC into allegations of antisemitism in the NUS found that it had failed to sufficiently challenge antisemitism and hostility to Jewish students within its organisation.

**Council Believes:**

1. Its duty is to refer the question of affiliation to the whole membership, in view of—
   1. the findings of the report, and
   2. persistent concerns as to whether the balance of advantage in campaigning for the views of members lies with affiliation in the NUS.
2. Members have the right to be properly informed in any referendum by the campaigns as to the advantages and disadvantages of affiliation, and the consequences of disaffiliation, and the consequences of disaffiliation, and, in that cause, inter alia, of—
   1. alternate arrangements, to the extent they exist, for representation of students at a national level;
   2. the extent to which it is politically feasible to address the concerns above both within and without the NUS;
   3. how resources could be used within the SU after disaffiliation; and
   4. the extent to which historical problems in the report continue.

**Council Resolves:**

1. To call a binding referendum on the SU’s continued affiliation with the NUS.

## 2. Student Project: Exhibition of Death Row Inmates’ Artwork Worldwide (Kenya, USA, Indonesia)

**The purpose of this project is to showcase the lived realities of surviving death row and raise awareness of the inhumanity and injustices surrounding capital punishment, as well as testify to the therapeutic powers of art.**

**Living in the UK, it is often easy to detach ourselves from practices such as the death penalty, forgetting that people all around the world are negatively affected by these barbaric practices. We are also cognisant of the reality that prison systems worldwide are influenced and still deeply ingrained with racism, classism, and other systemic issues that students throughout Oxford aim to challenge throughout their various disciplines. It is from this privileged position that we aim to spread awareness of the reality of capital punishment, portrayed through the eyes of those who are most affected by it.**

**Therefore, this event is two-fold in the impact we anticipate among attendees. First, it will provide education on an important human rights issue that has not been addressed in this way at Oxford University. Second, it will help humanize a forgotten and often stigmatised population whom society has failed in many ways.**

**We hope to be able to bring these cruel and inhuman practices to the forefront of discussion; by encouraging productive engagement among the students of Oxford University and the public, this event will allow us to develop collaborative networks across academic and professional fields of attendees to continue fostering important change.**

**Objectives:**

* **Display 20-30 pieces of artwork**
* **Organise an opening night event with guest speakers**
* **Raise awareness about the brutality of death penalty**
* **Gather donations to be sent to contributing artists**

**Total estimate of budget:**

**£200: necessary to buy the display materials and print the posters for advertisement purposes.**

**However, if we could have access to an additional £300, this would enable us to secure catering for the opening night, as well as the participation of all the guest speakers.**

## 3. Student Council mandates VP Liberation and Equality and VP Welfare to continue preventative work on college using NDAs

**Council Notes:**

1. On January 18 2022, Michele Donelan, Minister for Further and Higher Education in England, announced that universities must stop using NDAs for complaints about sexual harassment, bullying and other forms of misconduct. In her words, “I am determined to see this shabby practice stamped out on our campuses.”
2. From this, in collaboration with Can’t Buy My Silence, a voluntary pledge was constructed for universities to sign: “Backed by the Minister for Higher and Further Education, former Equalities Select Committee Chair Maria Miller MP and campaign group #CantBuyMySilence, we [our vice-chancellor and higher education provider] commit to not using Non-Disclosure Agreements to silence people who come forward to raise complaints of sexual harassment, abuse or misconduct, or other forms of harassment and bullying.”
3. 72 universities have currently signed up to the pledge.
4. As a result of Oxford’s collegiate system, this requires each individual college to sign the pledge, rather than being covered by the university as a whole. The university has not signed the pledge
5. The statement made by the University of Oxford was: 'Oxford University cares very deeply about the health and wellbeing of our students and staff. We condemn all forms of sexual harassment and violence, and supporting victims is a high priority for both the University and Colleges.

'We urge anyone affected by sexual harassment, assault, or violence to contact their college or the central University where they will be offered help and support, including advice on their options if they wish to make a complaint.

'The University of Oxford does not and will not use Non-Disclosure Agreements to prevent the investigation of complaints of sexual misconduct or other inappropriate behaviour, or to prevent responsible whistleblowing.'

1. Several colleges have passed an anti-NDA motion through their common rooms (JCR/MCR) but no change has been seen
2. Lady Margaret Hall, Keble and Linacre College have all signed the pledge
3. The work done by SU Campaign It Happens Here has been instrumental in achieving this result

**Council Believes**

1. NDAs should never be used in cases of misconduct, sexual harassment or bullying, especially by the university/colleges
2. NDAs fundamentally silence victims and are harmful, at times serving to retraumatise them.
3. NDAs prevent victims from accessing avenues of support, including that which family and friends provide, as well as more professional services.
4. Every college should commit to not using NDAs in cases of bullying, harassment and misconduct, either through the signing of the pledge or otherwise stated in their harassment policy.

**Council Resolves**

1. To mandate the outgoing VP Women and VP Equal Opportunities and Welfare, as well as future VP Liberation and Equality and VP Welfare to continue the work of ensuring every college puts in place measures to prevent the use of NDAs
2. To mandate the outgoing VP Women and VP Equal Opportunities and Welfare, as well as future VP Liberation and Equality and VP Welfare to organise meetings with college heads specifically on this issue
3. To mandate the outgoing VP Women and VP Equal Opportunities and Welfare, as well as future VP Liberation and Equality and VP Welfare to report on the progress of this work each term at 7th week Council.

## 4. Renewal of UCU Strikes Policy

**Council Notes**

1. Oxford UCU has voted to strike over pay and working conditions for 13 days of term (and 5 days outside term) between 1st February and 2nd March 2023.
2. The SU supported previous UCU strike action over pensions in Hilary 2018, Michaelmas 2019, Hilary 2022 and Michaelmas 2022.
3. UCU represents over 120,000 academic, academic-related, and professional staff in the UK, including researchers, postgraduate researchers, teaching staff, and permanent lecturers.
4. Previous Council policy passed in Hilary 2018, affirming Oxford SU’s support for and solidarity with strike action taken over pensions, and setting out Oxford SU’s default position on future UCU strikes. This policy was then updated again in Michaelmas 2019.
5. Many graduate students are members of both UCU and Oxford SU. UCU membership for students is free.
6. Policy passed in Trinity 2017, which states Oxford SU’s commitment to fail working conditions for graduate students who work, includes a commitment to working with UCU to best represent and support these students.

**Council Believes:**

1. That we have a responsibility to support this upcoming strike over issues of pay and working conditions.
2. The demands being made by Oxford UCU will be of benefit to graduate students who work, and who are some of the most exploited workers in the collegiate University.
3. That people should be paid enough to live decently, and that properly remunerated staff with secure and stable jobs are better placed to provide the excellence that the University of Oxford claims to promote. Fair pay and conditions for staff are non-negotiable.
4. In the principle of solidarity across unions, and that an injury to one is an injury to all.
5. Good working conditions creates good teaching conditions.

**Council Resolves:**

For future potential strikes with UCU, Oxford SU will take the following as the default

policy and action of solidarity:

1. To support the cause and organisation of the strike action and communicate this to the University.
2. To release a statement in full support of the UCU strike action.
3. To email all graduate students to encourage membership of UCU.
4. Liaise with UCU representatives.
5. To encourage students to respect the strike by not crossing the picket lines and not attending classes over this period except in the case of compulsory assessments. This could include, but is not limited to, producing materials including posters and leaflets to help explain to students what is happening and why our staff needs support.
6. To encourage students to participate in solidarity action as requested by UCU’s Oxford branch including standing on picket lines and excluding nonattendance at compulsory assessment.

## 5. SU Rule Review

**Council Notes**

1. That the SU’s rules (Bye-Laws, Regulations & Rules of Council) are vague in many areas, especially regarding External Organisations, Student Members’ Meetings and Student Council procedure.
2. That the SU’s rules and/or supporting documentation (such as footnotes) are in many cases inconsistent.
3. As a result of 2021’s review of the Articles, changes to the Bye-Laws were necessary, but did not take place.

**Council Believes**

1. Clear and consistent rules are necessary to run a fairly complex organisation such as the SU in an orderly and democratic manner.
2. The vagueness and inconsistency of the SU’s rules have limited the effective running of the SU and Council, and have detracted from students’ efforts in policy discussion and campaigning.
3. A holistic review of the SU’s rules, with special attention paid to clarity, consistency and transparency should be conducted, led by students and aiming to produce (if necessary) concrete proposals for change on a short timeframe.

**Council Resolves**

1. To establish a Working Group on SU Rules, which shall be an advisory committee of Council under Bye-Law 9.4, with the Returning Officer as Chair and membership open to all Council members, and others at the discretion of the Chair. The Group shall determine its own procedure.
2. To issue the Group with the following terms of reference:
   1. Reviewing the SU’s Bye-Laws, Regulations, Rules of Council and other subsidiary guidance or rules, with a focus on clarity, consistency and appropriate levels of prescriptiveness vs. clearly defined flexibility.
   2. Reviewing Student Council’s operation and procedure, with a focus on effective democracy and a clear delineation of the responsibilities and powers of staff and student officers.
   3. Consulting appropriately with student members, the executive, and the Board or its sub-committees on issues and recommendations.
3. To mandate the Working Group on SU Rules to report back to Council by the first meeting of Trinity Term (2023), with recommendations.

## 6. Send the motion ‘Improve Access to Educational Technology’ to NUS.

**Council Notes:**

1. The Oxford SU is entitled to send one motion to the National Union of Students conference and one for its liberation conference.
2. The SU has not submitted a motion to NUS in recent years.
3. There is an increasing disparity in access to educational resources among students.

**Council Believes:**

1. Educational resources should be accessible to all students.
2. The SU should support the efforts of campaigns within and outside of Oxford that share this goal.
3. By submitting this motion to NUS, the SU has the opportunity to raise awareness about the issue of technological disadvantage on a national level

**Council Resolves:**

1. To send the motion "Improve Access to Educational Technology" to the National Union of Students conference.
   1. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GOJ88inU-Pr2MX3TLT7i7KPaad5RAYP5B-ZCXTKky_o/edit?usp=sharing>
2. To allow the SU sabbatical officers, NUS delegates, SU campaigns and student council members to contribute to the next steps of the process.

*The proposer has written a document providing further information and resources about this motion, available on the Oxford SU website and circulated in the updated agenda email sent by the Chair.*