

Council Minutes

7th Week Hilary Term 2015

7th Week Council took place at 5:30pm, on Wednesday 4th March 2015, at Merton College, TS Eliot Theatre.

If you have any questions about OUSU Council, please feel free to contact the Chair, Nick Cooper, at chair@ousu.ox.ac.uk.

- a. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- b. Matters Arising from the Minutes
- c. Ratifications in Council
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- e. Passage of Motions without discussion
- f. Motions of No Confidence or Censure
- g. Emergency Motions
 - 1. Extraordinary Council
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 - 2. Bye-Laws Second Reading Motion
- i. National Union of Students (NUS) Conference Mandates
 - 3. Opposition to any Motion Aligned with Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions at NUS Conference
 - 4. NUS Conference Amendment to Campaign to Change the 1994 Education Act
 - 5. NUS Conference Motion to Support Open Access to Academic Journals
 - 6. Democratic Student Unions NUS amendment
 - 7. Society and Citizenship Zone Motion
- j. Other Motions
 - 8. Referendum on moving the Statutory Elections
 - 9. Sub Fusc Referendum and Elections for Divisional Board Representatives
 - 10. Reading Weeks
 - 11. Continuing Education Framework
 - 12. Access to College Nurses
 - 13. General Election Manifesto – Postgraduate Funding
- k. Any Other Business

a. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes currently unavailable and will be available online shortly.

b. Matters Arising from the Minutes

No matters arising from the minutes.

c. Ratifications in Council

None.

d. Elections in Council

Graduate Welfare Officer – Danny Zajarias-Fainsod (Wadham) and Rita Nissim (St John's) nominated.

Hust requested.

Rita – Introduced herself as a third year DPhil student at St John's. Stated that she would firstly would like to go through the results of the research compiled by the previous Graduate Welfare Officer, so she has a knowledge of what students would like her to focus on, that she would secondly work with the relevant executive members to support them in changing policy regarding suspended status students, and thirdly, work with the VP Women to implement the First Responder system into as many MCR policies as possible, having seen how well it works first hand as a social secretary and trained first responder.

Danny – Informed that in his roles as both MCR President and Chair of Graduate PresCom, he has been involved in a number of welfare issues and sees that there is still a lot of work to be done. Added that he has been working with a lot of people at both University level and college level, as well as with OUSU for a number of years. Explained that he also has an interest in working on suspended status students, in addition to a particular aim to enable graduate part time students to transfer to full time students and vice versa, as is convenient for them. Explained that this is a key welfare issues which he has been speaking to the counselling services about.

Rita – 68
Danny – 53
RON – 2
SBV – 7

Rita Nissim was elected.

Mature Students' Officer – Leonie Davidson (Harris Manchester) nominated.

No hust requested.

Leonie – 115
RON – 12
SBV – 13

Leonie Davidson was elected.

2 Positions for Steering Committee – Matthew Collyer (New) nominated.

No hust requested.

Matthew – 114
RON – 3
SBV – 13

Matthew Collyer was elected.

2 Positions for Internal Affairs Committee – Sebastian Bates (Keble) nominated.

No hust requested.

Sebastian – 114

RON – 3

SBV – 13

Sebastian Bates was elected.

3 Positions for Complaints Committee – Thomas Hunter (Keble), Joseph Sowerby Thomas (Regent's) and Jacob Page (St Catherine's) nominated.

No hust requested.

Thomas – 13

Joseph – 41

Jacob – 38

RON – 9

SBV – 29

Thomas Hunter, Joseph Sowerby Thomas and Jacob Page were elected.

Hossein Sharafi (Keble) – Proposed a motion to move motion 3 to the bottom of the agenda.

Opposed.

Hossein – Explained that as an OUSU reo he has received a lot of comments that students have not had sufficient time to discuss this motion, and if it were moved to the bottom of the agenda, it would be likely to take place in an extraordinary council, therefore allowing colleges more time for discussion.

Adam Dayan (Magdalen) – Informed council that he considered the BDS motion to be causing a very divisive debate, and the longer it goes on the more it impacts upon the welfare of students. Explained that he has spoken to a number of students who found their college debate this very uncomfortable or unpleasant.

Vote on moving the motion down the agenda:

For – 13

Against – 112

Abstain – 17

Procedural motion falls.

e. Passage of Motions without Discussion

5. NUS Conference Motion to Support Open Access to Academic Journals

Council Notes:

1. NUS conference is taking place over the Easter vacation, and OUSU is sending 7 delegates (and one observer).
2. That any motion or amendment at NUS conference brought by OUSU delegates must pass through OUSU council first.

Council Believes:

1. Open access to academic journals will improve access to knowledge and education.
2. The NUS, as a national lobbying organisation, are best placed to lobby for open access to academic journals.

Council Resolves:

1. To endorse the submission of Motion 'open access to online journals' to NUS Conference (Appendix 4).
2. To mandate all NUS delegates to vote in favour of the motion.

Proposed: Louis Trup (Brasenose)

Seconded: Ruth Meredith (Brasenose)

Motion passed without discussion.

11. Continuing Education Framework

Council Notes:

1. That the Department for Continuing Education sits alongside the 4 academic divisions of the University as a means for providing distance and part time courses, both award-bearing and not.
2. That the University Education Committee is currently consulting divisions, colleges and OUSU on a new draft framework for the work of Continuing Education.

Council Resolves:

1. To endorse the attached response (Appendix 7) as OUSU's submission to the consultation.

Proposed: James Blythe (Brasenose)

Seconded: Henna Shah (Regent's Park)

Motion passed without discussion.

12. Access to College Nurses

Council Notes:

1. That most students at the University of Oxford have access to a college nurse.
2. That college nurses provide drop in sessions for all students in their college where they can seek confidential advice, treatment, emergency contraception, repeat prescriptions and doctor's appointments.
3. That not all colleges and Permanent Private Halls (PPH's) provide a college nurse for their students.
4. That these students thus do not have access to a college nurse.

Council Believes:

1. That college nurses are beneficial to the health, welfare and well-being of students in Oxford.
2. That it is unfair that students at colleges and PPH's that cannot afford a nurse are unable to access this service.
3. That all students no matter what college or PPH they belong to should have access to a college nurse.

Council Resolves:

1. To make Believes 1 to 3 OUSU Policy.
2. To mandate the Vice-President for Welfare and Equal Opportunities to support colleges and PPH's in trying to access a college nurse.

Proposed: Isobel Wilson (Regent's Park)

Seconded: Luke Charters-Reid (Mansfield)

Motion passed without discussion.

13. General Election Manifesto – Postgraduate Funding

Council Notes:

1. The motion passed in MT14 to create a general election manifesto outlining Oxford students' views on issues to be discussed in the course of the general election.
2. That funding for postgraduate courses, particularly taught Master's courses, has been hit very hard by cuts in research council budgets.
3. That a postgraduate course of study is a significant financial commitment.

Council Believes:

1. That postgraduate study and research is incredibly valuable, both to students themselves and to the wider UK economy.
2. That further cuts to postgraduate funding will prevent access to higher education for many less advantaged students, and will result in postgraduate study becoming a preserve of those who can afford to self-fund.

Council Resolves:

1. To include opposition to cuts in postgraduate funding in the OUSU general election manifesto.
2. To support and lobby for an increase in postgraduate funding as part of the general election manifesto.
3. To mandate the Executive committee to ensure that the intent of the policy stance is reflected in the wording of the manifesto.

Proposed: Marina Lambrakis (St John's)

Seconded: Nick Cooper (St John's)

Motion passed without discussion.

Will Obeney (Regent's) – Confirmed that motion 7 had been withdrawn prior to the meeting.

f. Motions of No Confidence or Censure

None.

g. Emergency Motions

1. Extraordinary Council

Council Notes:

1. That many motions have been submitted to be considered at this meeting of Council.
2. That the next Ordinary Meeting of Council is on Wednesday 29th April.
3. That a meeting of Council is closed where it lacks quorum, where Council votes to close it, or where all business has been conducted.

Council Believes:

1. That the motions brought to this meeting of Council cover important topics that deserve full and proper debate, and that the debate and voting should be resolved this term.

Council Resolves:

1. To hold an Extraordinary Meeting of Council on Monday 9th March at 5:30pm (venue TBC) if, and only if, this meeting of Council is closed before all motions on the agenda either have been voted on or have passed without discussion.
2. That the agenda for the Extraordinary Meeting will comprise all motions which have not been voted on or passed without discussion at the time that this Meeting of Council is closed, and no other business.

Proposed: Chris Pike (St Edmund)

Seconded: James Blythe (Brasenose)

Chris Pike (St Edmund) – Stated that there is a lot to do on the agenda so he has proposed an extraordinary council for next Monday in the event that we do not complete all of the business. Clarified that no new business can be discussed at an extraordinary meeting, and it will take place only if we do not make it through the agenda. Reminded council that we don't want to lose out on motions.

Student – Asked when council closes.

Chris – Responded that it closes either when we lose quorum or when the chair decides.

Anna Bradshaw (Wadham) – Asked if there are any motions on the agenda today that have relevant deadlines between now and the proposed extraordinary council.

Chris – Answered that any motion that asks OUSU to propose a motion to NUS must be passed by Friday, as that is the NUS motion deadline.

Louis Trup (Brasenose) – Added that this would affect motions 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Kristina (St John's) – Asked if any of the motions have deadlines before next term.

Joe Smith (Somerville) – Answered that the referenda motions do.

Ruth Meredith (Brasenose) – Stated that it would be useful for the General Election motions to go through prior to the hustings, which OUSU is holding.

Motion passed with no opposition.

h. Motions to amend Bye-Laws, General Regulations or Election Regulations

2. Bye-Laws Second Reading Motion

Council Notes:

1. Appendix 1 after this motion written by Internal Affairs Committee to summarise the proposed amendments.
2. The mandate on the current sabbatical team to undertake a campaigns governance review.
3. The ongoing Quinquennial Review of OUSU's top level of governance, the Articles of Association, which these amendments lead towards.
4. The rolling governance review conducted over the past 2 years.
5. That there will be consequential amendments to the General Regulations and Election Regulations that will need to be made in Trinity Term.

Council Believes:

1. That the proposed amendments are good, as they are more reflective of the way in

which OUSU works, and as they ensure that:

- a) Bye-Laws are clearer and easier to read, and provide more direct delegation of governance to more students (such as for Campaigns).
- b) Council has slightly more freedom to change the timings of Statutory Elections, if that is what students want.
- c) Postgraduate Strategy Summit is changed from a formal body that is not clear or productive, to a newer, less restrictive forum for graduate discussion (details at a later Council).
- d) Sabbatical Officers-elect have a week's break at the end of Trinity Term before starting their terms of office.
- e) The current "Budget (Sub-) Committee" is distinct from the Trustee Board, reflecting its purpose as an advisory group.
- f) The Trustee Board must make reasonable efforts to ensure at least one woman is on every one of its committees.
- g) Complaints Committee is independent from the Trustee Board, but otherwise continues its current existence.
- h) OUSU's campaigns have a clear structure, with their own constitutions and elected executive, while remaining accountable to Council and so students in general.
- i) Raise and Give (RAG) is clearly separated from other OUSU Campaigns, allowing it to continue with its good work.
- j) Media services remain independent of OUSU Policy and be governed also by people with experience of media.

Council Resolves:

1. To give a Second Reading to the changes to the Bye-Laws outlined in Appendix 2.

Proposed: Louis Trup (Brasenose)

Seconded: Alys Key (Somerville)

Louis Trup – Stated that this the second reading of improvements to the Bye-Laws.

Motion passed with no opposition.

i. National Union of Students (NUS) Conference Mandates

Will Obeney (Regent's) – Informed Council that he wanted to set out a few rules before discussion on motion 3 began. Urged people to speak loudly and clearly throughout. Stated that there was to be no clapping, no recording and no unruly behaviour. Reminded people that he can call for their expulsion from council at any point. Issued a content note that the motion discussion could contain references to Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism. Asked council to issue a trigger warning if they think that what they are about to say could be triggering. Reminded council that every speaker is entitled to silence and stated that they must not speak over each other and requested that when people speak, it is to raise new points, that fit in to the development of the debate.

3. Opposition to any motion aligned with Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions at NUS Conference

Council Notes:

1. The upcoming NUS Conference may feature a motion about whether or not the NUS should be aligned with the “Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions” (BDS) movement against Israel
2. The last time common rooms were extensively consulted on this issue in 2013, the result was that OUSU Council voted strongly against aligning with the BDS movement (69 votes to 10).

Council Believes:

1. The BDS movement includes a commitment to a full academic and cultural boycott of Israel. It indiscriminately targets all Israelis regardless of their political position, rather than targeting action against those involved in the illegal occupation of the West Bank (such as Israeli settlements)
2. A wholesale boycott of Israel by the NUS puts at risk any British student relationships with *all* Israeli organisations, including those promoting an anti-occupation and/or pro-peace agenda
3. The BDS movement alienates moderate Israelis and strengthens the right-wing ultra-nationalist narrative in Israel – which is damaging for those wishing to see a peaceful resolution of the conflict.
4. The policy positions of the BDS movement (and the rhetoric of many of their leaders) entail opposition to the two-state solution – which is internationally recognized, including by the Palestinian Authority, as the only viable solution to the conflict that respects the wish of both sides to have a sovereign state.

Council Resolves:

1. To mandate OUSU’s NUS delegates to vote against any motion aligning the NUS with the BDS movement at the NUS national conference
2. To mandate OUSU’s NUS delegates to vote for any motion rejecting the BDS movement at the NUS national conference

Proposed: Ben Goldstein (Lincoln)

Seconded: Adam Dayan (Magdalen)

Proposed Amendment:

OUSU Council resolves:

1. To mandate its NUS delegates to vote against any motion aligning the NUS with the BDS movement at the NUS national conference. **This means:**
 - a. **Any motion affiliating the NUS with the official BDS movement**
 - b. **Any motion calling for or supporting a cultural and/or academic boycott of Israel**

c. Any motion calling for or supporting a complete and untargeted boycott of the Israeli economy

2. To mandate its NUS delegates ~~to vote for~~ **not to vote against** any motion rejecting the BDS movement at the NUS national conference

Proposed: Ben Goldstein (Lincoln)

Seconded: Adam Dayan (Magdalen)

Proposed Amendment:

To replace both "vote against" in Resolves 1, and "vote for" in Resolves 2, with "abstain on".

Proposed: Nick Cooper (St John's)

Seconded: Marina Lambrakis (St John's)

Ben Goldstein – Stated that he had three things that he wanted to cover and began by explaining that his amendment was include for clarity. Noted that many were not clear what BDS was so included the expansion on this in his amendment. Also added that this makes clear that it is a broad motion, not intending to deal with the targeting of specific companies. Continued that resolves 2 had been amended following conversations that delegates otherwise may be obliged to vote for motions that contained BDS references but had other problematic issues included. Moved on from the amendment to discuss the motion as a whole, beginning with the fact that there are a number of student unions around the country already that support the full BDS movement, and as none of our delegates included BDS in their manifestos, and have no particular mandate on the issue, they could vote in line with this. Informed council that the second reason they have brought this motion is that there was a National Executive Council meeting of the NUS, consisting of less than 50 people, and one of the provisions of their motions was to provide support and provisions to student unions who wanted to bring BDS motions against companies who support Israel 'materially, economically, militarily' which is a very wide and slippery definition. Explained that this motion can be included as a part of all motions decided on at that same NEC meeting with less than 50 people in the room. Stated that it is likely to be waved through at NUS without us sending a delegate who can call for a debate on what is clearly an important issue. Concluded by informing Council why they are against BDS, explaining that the BDS movement includes a full academic and cultural boycott of Israel, regardless of where those institutions stand on political issues and if they are political in the first place. Academic freedom is a really important value which students at Oxford generally agree with, think that the BDS has been involved in some dodgy things, including the disruption of cultural events, including Israeli and Palestinian cooperation because it is accused of white-washing, targeting of Israeli cultural events.

Louis Trup (Brasenose) – Raised two points of information. Stated that he has an email from Meg, Policy and Democracy Coordinator at NUS who said that policy that has been passed by the National Executive Council is put forward for adoption at National

Conference, and unless an objection is raised to the Democratic Procedures Committee, all policy is put forward to a single adoption vote, that anyone on conference floor at NUS can raise an objection to. Continued that the objection can be for one or more policies, which will then have speeches in proposition and opposition. Stated that his second point of information related to the Michaelmas hustings for the current NUS delegates, and read out a question that was put to the candidates – ‘Do you support Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of Israel’. Read from the record that Shano Caro responded with ‘No, I do not’, Annie Teriba said ‘I do, but if OUSU Council wants to mandate me otherwise they are welcome to do that’ and Robert Walmsley said ‘Likewise with Annie, but when it is to do with arms, I do support BDS’.

Will Obeney (Regents) – Informed council that we would be discussing the amendment brought by the proposers of the motion first.

Martine Wauben (Pembroke) – Asked if ‘not to vote against’ was intended to include abstentions, and if so, questioned if that made the second amendment obsolete.

Ben – Confirmed that it was intended to enable delegates to abstain on the kind of motions that are in that clause, however claimed he could not comment on the intention of the following amendment.

Balliol Student – Asked what was meant by affiliation to the BDS movement, given that but no official movement as such exists.

Ben – Replied that in his understanding, there is a BDS national committee, explaining that speaking to people, they have confirmed there is a full BDS movement, which aligns itself with the cultural, academic, military and economic boycott of Israel.

Opposition received to the amendment.

Ross Speer (Queen’s) – Stated that there is more than a semantic distinction portrayed here which is how the proposer portrayed it. Explained that when he discussed the policy with members of his MCR, there was a lot of people that take issue with taking this or that position with the official BDS movement, but might support some sort of looser cultural/academic boycott aimed at Israel. Argued that the amendment is an attempt to shift ground very late in the day, not allowing time to take it to common rooms and discuss. Claimed that the amendment is undemocratic.

Chris Rawlinson (Harris Manchester) – Reported that it had been discussed in his JCR and MCR and argued that it is very cynical to change the terms of the motion so significantly in a late amendment. Urged council to vote down the amendment.

Henrique Laitenberger (Trinity) – Introduced himself as an ardent opponent of BDS and spoke of a motion which passed in favour of BDS at King’s College when he had been

there, creating welfare concerns and a poisonous atmosphere in the college. Argued that MCRs and JCRs have not had time to discuss this sufficiently, and stated that he also believed the decisions at conference should be left to a vote of conscience by our elected NUS Delegates.

Adam Dayan (Magdalen) – Explained that they brought this amendment, as following many discussion with students, we discovered that BDS can be a very nebulous term which we wanted to clarify. Added that with the amendment, the motion specifies exactly what we are against, and gives our NUS delegates a very clear mandate of what they can and cannot do.

Move to vote on amendment.

Opposed.

Nick Cooper (St John's) – Argued that there is still a lot to get through with the motion as a whole, in addition to the remainder of the agenda. Suggested that people will already be clear on how they will vote on the amendment.

Barnaby Raine (Wadham) – Informed council that he spoke to the proposers the previous evening and had asked them to clarify their motion, but then went on today to speak to his SU president, along with members of other common rooms who have been mandated to vote in a particular way. Stressed that this is problematic as the amendment actually significantly changes the motion, and that Council needs to hear more about how it changes the motion.

Vote on move to vote:

For – 67

Against – 57

Abstain – 12

Fell – debate continued.

Lucy Halton (Wadham) – Clarified that this is entirely undemocratic for anyone here who is voting on a mandate to vote on a significantly amended motion.

Brian (Pembroke) – Explained that Pembroke held a special extended MCR meeting to discuss the motion, and would consider it to be a complete overthrow of the effort that his and other common rooms have put in, if we passed the amendment.

Kristina (St John's) – Stated that she chaired the JCR meeting on this at John's and confirmed that none of the issues that the amendment is intended to clarify actually came up.

Aisha Simon (Balliol) – Reported that in her meeting they had the opposite issue, and had a long extended debate on BDS in their common room. Stated that their ability to vote in accordance to their mandate has been compromised, and it is disrespectful to pass this, following the amount of time that common rooms have put into their discussions.

Omar Rana (St Edmund) – Argued that the debate has been so confusing because there is such a split of two separate issues within BDS, one being the point of academic and cultural boycott, and one being the policy of divestment surrounding arms companies. Argued that the initial motion was unfair as it did not clarify this and different students may well be mandated in different ways, depending on how they interpreted the motion. Argued that the amendment makes this further problematic, as this is not at all what people have been mandated to vote on.

Move to vote.

Opposed.

Anna Bazley (St Peter's) – Stated that we have now heard a number of people repeat the fact that they have mandates from their common rooms and this amendment would change the motion too much for these mandates to apply. Agreed that this is valid but argued we had received sufficient proof of that fact now.

Ben – Stated that we have heard a lot of negative feedback but it would be useful to hear from people who support the amendment,

Vote on move to vote:

For – 115
Against – 4
Abstain – 5

Vote on amendment:

For – 25
Against – 78
Abstain - 25

Amendment falls.

Will Obeney (Regent's) – Called for council to move to discuss the second proposed amendment and invited the proposer to speak.

Nick Cooper (St John's) – Explained that he proposed this with the intention of offering

common rooms an alternative to the two options that were originally on the table which are to mandate delegates to vote against or allow the delegates to vote as they please. Added that this would mandate the delegates to abstain on all motions relating to BDS, an option he wanted to suggest, as it is a very contentious issue, which has split the opinion of common rooms. Explained that he wanted to give the delegates a mandate, but one that could swing in either direction.

Opposed.

Daniel Young (Balliol) – Argued that this amendment doesn't solve the central issue with the motion, which is that we are mandating our delegates at all, without sufficient time to discuss it in common rooms. Explained that in Balliol for example, 5 days notice is required for a meeting, so they literally have not had time to discuss it. Continued the other common rooms, despite having discussions, have been very rushed and many have divided opinions.

Nikhil Venkatesh (Corpus) – Stated that he does not believe the amendment to solve the problems with the motion, as it mandates the delegates to abstain on any motion that even included BDS. Argued that we cannot know what else the motion will include, such as homophobia or racism, and we should not put our delegates in a position where we they are unable to vote against such things.

Christ Church Student - Stated that he was in agreement with Nikhil's point. Argued that throwing around the terms democratic and anti-democratic casually should be avoided.

Move to vote on amendment:

For – 13
Against – 100
Abstain – 14

Amendment fell.

Will Obeney (Regent's) – Announced that council would now go straight into debate on the full motion.

Louise Revell (Christ Church) – Asked if we could ask everyone who had a vote to raise their hands, and then ask those who are mandated to keep their hands up.

Helena Dollimore (St Hilda's) – Asked if we need to distinguish between JCRs, MCRs Exec etc.

Will Obeney - Stated that it is up to Council if and how they want to do a straw poll.

Chris Pike (St Edmund) – Suggested that Exec do not participate as they cannot be mandated.

Anya Metzger (Wadham) – Responded that it should be everyone with a vote, so that it is clear how many people are in the room are still liable to be swayed.

Student questioned if this would take away legitimacy as we are here to debate regardless of certain people being mandated to vote in a certain way.

Will Obeney – Asked council to raise their hands if they have a vote, and then asked those who are not mandated to put their hands down. Approximately half of those with a vote put their hands down.

Will Neaverson (Christ Church) – Reminded council that some of the delegates have expressed their opinions on BDS and argued that voting against this motion is essentially voting in support of BDS. Insisted that this is a binary debate, and that voting against the motion will not not make the outcome at NUS unclear. Reiterated that a vote against this motion would be a vote in support of BDS in the broadest sense, as set out in the resolves.

Christ Church Student – Stated that he would never dream of using the student body to push his own politics through, particularly on a contentious issue that so clearly divides students. Stated that NUS cannot represent a view on this that is reflective of the view of UK students on a whole, and that OUSU should stop pretending that they are the UN Security Council. Added that he would find it very unfortunate if the NUS voted to support a BDS motion at a time when anti-Semitism in Europe and the UK is at a peak and when more and more Jewish people around the globe feel unsafe.

Annie Teriba (Wadham) – Raised a point of information, that as it stands, to the best of her knowledge, two of the delegates going to conference are pro-BDS, two are explicitly anti-BDS and two are yet to make up there mind, so it is not clear cut how the vote from OUSU delegates would go.

St Cross Student – Stated that we have heard from both members of Council and the proposers of the motion themselves that this motion is unclear and questioned why we would consider passing a motion that is unclear.

Aliya Yule (Wadham) – Agreed that when even the proposers have made clear that the motion is unclear and very broad, and therefore our delegates could be tied into voting against a number of problematic motions. Insisted that we cannot pass an unclear motion.

Move to vote.

Opposed.

Annie Teriba (Wadham) – Stated that it is not ideal to drag out the debate when it is clear that people know how they want to vote.

Josh Platt (Hertford) – Responded that in fact most of the room do not know how they are going to vote, which was seen in the straw poll. Reminded council that we've been discussing procedural issues and as a result have barely touched upon the actual debate surrounding BDS.

Vote on move to vote:

For – 83

Against – 29

Abstain – 10

Adam Dayan (Magdalen) – Stated that we have heard from Annie that only two people are going to vote for BDS and that it is unclear how others are going to vote. Argued that this is a little disingenuous, considering Rob and Ella were on the same slate as James, Barnaby and Annie, who are deeply for BDS, and would not have chosen these people if they were not in favour of the same policies. Added that it is important to note that the motion that we are hearing at NEC has been described as a moderate one, but as Ben explained, it is exceptionally broad. Argued that the best case scenario is that the NEC motion could be interpreted as full academic and cultural boycott, and moreover the person who proposed that motion has stated that she will be pushing for full implementation of that policy.

Barnaby Raine ((Wadham) – Stated that he and Annie will vote for BDS but he certainly cannot claim to know how the other two members of his slate will vote. Reminded council that two other delegates will vote against BDS, and informed them that he has just spoken to the Louis Trup who has said he will vote against the current BDS policy. Urged council to reject this motion as the proposers themselves have admitted that it is really unclear, and as a delegate, he does not know what it means. Added that Resolves 2 mandates all delegates to vote for any motion rejecting the BDS movement, which could also be a motion that is racist or homophobic. Asked council how the press will react if we vote for such a motion.

Vote on motion:

For – 30

Against – 72

Abstain – 28

Motion fell.

4. NUS Conference Amendment to Campaign to Change the 1994 Education Act

Council Notes:

1. NUS conference is taking place over the Easter vacation, and OUSU is sending 7 delegates (and one observer).
2. That any motion or amendment at NUS conference brought by OUSU delegates must pass through OUSU council first.

Council Believes:

1. That 'major union office holders' (the leaders of student unions) should be able to be elected from a limited franchise.

Council Resolves:

1. To endorse the submission of amendment 'major union office holders' to NUS Conference (Appendix 3).
2. To mandate all NUS delegates to vote in favour of the motion.

Proposed: Anna Bradshaw (Wadham)

Seconded: Ella Richards (Exeter)

Anna Bradshaw (Wadham) – Stated that this motion is to amend a bigger motion that is going to NUS Conference and explained that the motion is about lobbying to change the 1994 Education Act in a number of ways. Informed council that she wants to add to this motion that the Education Act should allow for Major Union Office Holders to be elected from restricted franchises, as the current situation would mean that those officers either must be elected from a full franchise, or must come to an agreement with their University in what ways they are not Major Union Office Holders. Highlighted that although this does not affect her day to day job in terms of hours, trusteeship, pay etc., it does mean, that as Vice President Women she is not as important on paper as some other officers. Argued that a clear statement needs to be made that for liberation positions, this needs to be changed.

Martine Wauben (Pembroke) – Asked who would be the Major Union Office Holders within OUSU under the proposed change.

Anna – Answered that if this passed, it would go to NUS, and if it passed at NUS and they were subsequently successful in their lobbying, hopefully what would happen is that the delegation of Major Union Office Holders would change, meaning liberation officers would be considered to have this role, even if elected on a limited franchise.

Martine – Asked if for OUSU that means sabbatical officers.

Anna – Answered that almost everywhere, the only way that you can be a Major Union Office Holder is to be a sabbatical officer.

Marina Lambrakis (St John's) – Asked what the case would be for VP Graduates.

Anna – Responded that the case of the Graduates Officer is a different one, and that she is here to discuss liberation officers, as she sees the issues around opening up franchises on liberation to be more problematic.

Louis Trup (Brasenose) – Clarified that the motion to NUS asks for anyone elected on a restricted franchise to be seen as a Major Union Office Holder, so that would positively impact VP Graduates, allowing them to also take up this role.

Hossein Sharafi (Keble) – Asked what the term Major Union Office Holder implies in general with the Education Act.

Anna – Answered that whether or not someone is a Major Union Office Holder is decided by each educational institution and their terms of reference, however in practise it tends to be a sabbatical officer, who is a trustee, has regular contact with the University and sits on high level committees or decision making bodies.

Motion passed with no opposition.

6. Democratic Student Unions NUS amendment

Council Notes:

1. NUS conference is taking place over the Easter vacation from 21-23 April 2015, and OUSU is sending 7 delegates (and one observer).
2. That any motion or amendment at NUS conference brought by OUSU delegates must pass through OUSU council first.
3. Student protests against the drawing of a Taser and the use of CS spray against student protesters at Warwick University in December 2014
4. The abolition of the University of London Union (ULU) in July 2014

Council Believes:

1. SUs should exist to democratically represent and campaign on behalf of students
2. SUs are there to help students set up meetings, protests and campaigns on campus
3. SUs can only work for students when representatives are elected, information is accessible to SU members and meetings are accessible, regular and allow meaningful debate
4. All important decisions should be made by students and their elected representatives
5. Attempts to close SUs or call police and security to disperse peaceful protests should be condemned

Council Resolves:

1. To endorse the submission of the Amendment to 201 'For democratic, campaigning student unions' to NUS Conference (Appendix 5).
2. To mandate all NUS delegates to vote in favour of the motion.

Proposed: Robert Walmsley (Balliol)

Seconded: James Elliott (St Edmund's Hall)

Robert Walmsley (Balliol) – Introduced himself as one of OUSU’s NUS Delegates and explained that likewise with the previous motion, this aims to amend a motion which will be going to NUS Conference. Informed council that the motion is about how the NUS should be helping Student Unions and where they should be supporting them, and that the purpose of this amendment to the motion is two-fold: to ensure that the NUS is promoting good democratic processes in SUs nationally, and to reassert the right to protest in SUs against governing bodies in Universities. Informed council that the University of London Students Union was shut down in July as a result of the University changing structure and NUS should be lobbying against these types of practises.

Trinity student – Stated that at University of London Student Union, over the last five years, the mandate of the president rarely exceeded 1% and on average was around 0.65% and there was a broad movement in favour amongst students to abolish a Union that was no longer representative of them.

Robert – Responded that he considers it a good thing to try and build up student unions rather than abolish them, so in spite of the low participation, work should be done to improve this and support should have been provided to the student union.

James Elliott (St Edmund) – Pointed out that what actually happened at the University of London Student Union, is that one day the University senate announced that they would be abolishing what was Europe’s largest student union, which was also the home of Europe’s largest student paper, without consulting a single student, including the elected president. Added that in a referendum, 87% on London students voted to keep the union, and it was still shut down.

John Rose (Exeter) – Asked if the amendment contains guidance on the conduct of peaceful demonstrations, as he was in the middle of the protest at ULU and witnessed it being hijacked by anarchists throwing things at police officers.

Robert – Responded that there is not anything about this but explained that it is explicit in conference resolves 4 it only invites peaceful protests and police have the right to intervene when there is violence.

Motion passed with no opposition.

j. Other Motions

8. Referendum on moving the Statutory Elections

Council Notes:

1. That the Election and Referendum Review Group has met several times to discuss potential changes to the Regulations for elections and referenda;
2. That the issue of whether or not to move the Statutory Elections (i.e. the Elections for Sabbatical Officers, Part-Time Executive, NUS Delegates and Student Trustees) to Hilary Term has come up every year for several years;
3. That a move of the Statutory Elections would have profound effects on the structure of work for Sabbatical Officers, OUSU staff, and the OUSU Executive in general;
4. That the Joint Sub-Committee of Education Committee with Student Members has stated that it would not approve the Statutory Elections held after 4th week Hilary, meaning any move of the Elections would have to be within those confines.

Council Believes:

1. That major changes to OUSU's democracy should be taken with utmost care for student consultation and input;
2. That Referenda are an appropriate method to consult the general student population on this issue.

Council Resolves:

1. To hold a Referendum in Trinity Term 2015 to set the student view on the preferred timing of the Statutory Elections;
2. To recommend the following question to the Trinity Term 2015 Returning Officer: 'Should OUSU's Statutory Elections be held in Hilary Term, instead of Michaelmas Term?';
3. To mandate the Returning Officer for Trinity Term 2015 to set out further provisions in accordance with the Regulations and Bye-Laws;
4. To recommend that, should there be more than one referendum in this term, they should be organised to take place at the same time.

Proposed: Martine Wauben (Pembroke)

Seconded: Louis Trup (Brasenose)

Martine Wauben (Pembroke) – Introduced herself as the previous Returning Officer of OUSU who ran the Michaelmas statutory elections and explained that there has since been an electoral review group taking place. Informed council that a recurring issue raised at these reviews groups over recent years is the timing of OUSU statutory elections, and the debate over whether they should move to Hilary Term. Added that the decision to propose a referendum on this issue was due to the previous split opinion in council, the on-going discussions, the relatively small size of the review group, and the subsequent need to gain a larger student opinion on this.

John Rose (Exeter) – Asked what the cost of the referendum would be.

Martine - Answered that it would be £50.

Leonie Hoffmann (Somerville) – Noted that the following motion also proposes a referendum and asked if they would be held at the same time if they both pass.

Joe Smith (Somerville) – Answered that he intended to run them together if they both pass.

Motion passed with no opposition.

9. Sub Fusc Referendum and Elections for Divisional Board Representatives

Council Notes:

1. The referendum held in 2006 to consider whether students should continue to have to wear sub fusc to exams.
2. That it is likely there will be substantial discussions over the next two terms in the University on this issue, for the first time in many years.

Council Believes:

1. That it is plausible that the student view on this issue could well have changed in nearly 10 years.
2. That the will of the student body, expressed in a referendum, should not normally be changed except by a referendum.

Council Resolves:

1. To hold a referendum to set the student view on the future of sub fusc in Trinity Term 2015.
2. To recommend the following question to the Returning Officer: ‘Should students at Oxford continue to be required to wear sub fusc clothing with gowns and mortar boards to University examinations?’.
3. To, if it possible within the data provided by the University, combine that referendum with cross-campus elections for divisional board representatives.
4. To mandate the Returning Officer for Trinity Term 2015 to write guidelines and publish a timetable for the cross-campus elections for divisional board representatives, to be circulated to the Vice President (Access and Academic Affairs) and on the OUSU website by noon on Friday of 9th Week, Hilary Term.

Proposed: James Blythe (Brasenose)

Seconded: Lindsay Lee (Wadham)

Nick Cooper (St John’s) – Explained that this suggestion has come out of a meeting attended by James Blythe in his capacity as VP Access and Academic Affairs, where there was a discussion about whether staff present at examinations should have to wear sub fusc. Reported then when James questioned if this should also be an option for students, they responded that this had already been decided on in a previous referendum. Informed council that this referendum actually took place in 2006, so this motion would mandate the Returning Officer to hold one so we can have the current student view. Reminded council that this would not affect the wearing of gowns, which are not part of sub-fusc, and that even if the referendum passed, it would not automatically remove sub fusc, but would mean that we would negotiate with the University for this to happen.

Merton student – Asked if sub fusc for matriculation would move to a rent system like graduation, or if would still be paying the same amount but getting less use.

Nick – Answered that he suspected that we could barter for a change on matriculation if we changed exams.

Kristina (St John's) – Asked for the 2006 referendum results.

Nick – Answered that it was 80% in favour of keeping sub fusc.

- Stated that he understood that you had to wear sub fusc to exams but could remove it once you were inside and asked if this was the case.

Nick – Responded that you can within reason.

Aliya Yule (Wadham) – Informed council that this is less about the gown and is actually about what you have to wear under the gown. Added that sub fusc is now gender neutral and asked people to respect that and point it out to examiners if they see them questioning students on those grounds.

Barnaby Raine (Wadham) – Questioned that if this referendum is intended to be purely on the clothing that is worn under the gown, is there any chance that we can have a referendum on the gowns as well?

Louis – Clarified that the University have defined the discussion as being only about the sub fusc and not the gowns on top, however we can, if we chose to, bring this into the debate.

Amendment received:

To change Resolves 2 to:

To recommend to the Returning Officer ask two questions, the first asking about gowns and mortar boards and the second asking about the sub fusc clothing beneath the gowns.

Proposed: Aliya Yule (Wadham)

Seconded: Lucy Halton (Wadham)

Nick – Took the amendment as unfriendly as he was not the proposer of the motion so wanted the opinion of the room.

Jenny Walker (Wadham) – Stated that she would prefer two questions as many people do not understand what sub fusc is and this would add clarity on that point.

Chris Pike (St Edmund) – Suggested one question with 3 options.

Joe Smith (Somerville) – Stated that it would not be possible within OUSU's regulations.

No opposition to amendment – motion amended.

Opposition to motion received.

St John's student – explained that he has been mandated to vote no on the motion so wanted to see if anyone else had the same mandate.

Move to vote

For – 58

Against – 10

Abstain - 1

Motion passed as amended.

10. Reading Weeks

Council Notes:

1. The on-going debate in the student body both at Oxford and at Cambridge about the possibility of adding a reading week in the middle of term, creating two 4 week half terms.
2. The on-going process of creating the OUSU Education Vision, due to report to Council in 1st week Trinity.

Council Believes:

1. That a reading week would be one way to mitigate the impact on student mental health of an Oxford degree.
2. That a reading week would enable students to read more diverse and enriching texts to support their academic development.

Council Resolves:

1. To mandate the Vice-President (Access & Academic Affairs) to include support for a reading week in the OUSU Education Vision when it is brought to Council for approval.

Proposed: James Blythe (Brasenose)

Seconded: Nick Cooper (St John's)

Amendment:

To replace 'mental health' in Believes 1 with 'mental wellbeing'.

Proposed: James Blythe (Brasenose)

Seconded: Chris Pike (St Edmund)

Nick Cooper (St John's) – Stated that the amendment already submitted is taken as friendly. Explained that the prospect of introducing reading weeks has been a frequently discussed topic recently, and this motion is to find out if we should be including it in the Education Vision, a document which will set out OUSU's priorities regarding Oxford education. Stated that the specifics of a reading week would have to be worked out over time, but guess that it would take place after 4 weeks, and be followed by a further 4 weeks of term. Added that he and James felt strongly that if reading weeks were to be introduced, it should be in a way which is cost neutral to students. Commented that this is a big issue for mental health, and although it would be a long process, it would be an aspiration to work towards.

Henrique Laitenberger (Trinity) – Asked if there would be a way to ensure that this change would not cause a clash with interviewees arriving.

Nick – Answered that he doubted the University would move this so would have to look into a way to work around this, perhaps starting a week earlier, rather than finishing a week later.

John Rose (Exeter) – Asked if the possible consequences have been considered of students using reading week to go on holiday etc.?

Nick – Answered that firstly, he believed that if people wanted to use their reading week in this way that is not necessarily a bad thing, but agreed that the University are likely to use arguments like this. Suggested that we focus on the serious issues caused by the lack of a reading week in our arguments to the University.

Evie Ioannidi (Regent's Park) – Stated that she has had reading weeks before which has led to tutors actually piling on more work as they realise that you have more spare time. Asked if there is a way to make tutors consider the impact that this would have on mental well being.

Nick – Agreed that this is a very serious point and hoped that having this issue brought to attention means people will become more aware of the stress that is placed on students during term time.

Luke (Mansfield) – Stated that he has a friend at Cambridge where they are having a similar discussion. Informed council that some students at Cambridge object to the week being called a reading week, as it would not be intended to be fully comprised of work.

Nick – Answered that these are all discussions that can be had with the University further down the line but stated he would be in favour of keeping the name as it is.

Rowan Davis (Wadham) – Asked if not defining a reading week was on purpose, and if it wasn't, asked the definition of a reading week.

Nick – Answered that it is intentionally vague, as the details will have to be ironed out with the University over a long period of time.

Somerville student – Asked how this would affect the 9-month masters students.

Nick – Answered that this motion is very undergrad centered and fits best with that model but that it could be organised in such a way that it could work.

Amendment received:

To add to resolves 1:

‘...provided that any changes can be cost-neutral for students, including in terms of accommodation and living costs.’

Proposed: Martine Wauben (Pembroke)

Seconded: Vicky Firth (Pembroke)

No opposition to the amendment – motion amended.

Amendment received:

To add to believes 1:

‘That a reading week...as defined at the very least as a week without deadlines or contact time’.

Proposed: Rowan Davis (Wadham)

Seconded: Hamish Forbes (Merton)

Objection to amendment received.

Exeter student – Stated that some students may want to use this time to see tutors, and this amendment would remove that possibility.

Hamish Forbes – Stated that this referred only to mandatory contact time, and that if you agree with your tutor it is more appropriate to take time off at a different point, you could organise that between yourselves.

Exeter student – suggested that we change the amendment to include ‘mandatory’ contact time.

Martine - Reminded council that tutors do not get paid for extra tutoring hours as referred to.

Hamish – Perhaps this would refer more to graduate mentors who often meet in this capacity if the tutor is generous to do so.

Amendment passed. – motion amended.

Move to vote.

Opposed.

Gail Braybrook (Worcester) – Stated that we have gone though a lot with the various amendments and people are on the verge of leaving. Reminded council that this would put

the motion to extraordinary of that happened and we don't want an extra meeting for five minutes.

Chris Pike (St Edmund) – Reported that both he and the Mind Your Head campaign have concerns about a reading week and he would like an opportunity to raise these.

Vote on move to vote.

For – 18

Against – 30

Abstain – 4

Debate continued.

Chris Pike – Expressed that he and Mind Your Head have two key oppositions to a reading week, the first being that they do not consider it the best method of alleviating stress, and that there are much better things we can campaign on, such as the reduction of workload or the extension of term. Added that tutors are likely to put lots of deadlines towards the start of 6th week, and would still be allowed under the terms of this motion. Continued that their second concern is that they don't like the way that this has been framed in mental health terms, as mental health can affect people in a variety of different ways, and in framing this as the key issue to fight on, a number of mental health issues are missed out.

Jen (New) – Stated that she had a reading week at undergraduate level and certainly did not consider it a positive thing, rather an excuse for tutors to hugely increase reading expectations, as well as setting deadlines for the first day after reading week.

Rowan Davis (Wadham) – Stated that Chris's point is not a reason to vote this down, but rather it is a reason to fight further, and urged that reading weeks are an incredibly important as one way to alleviate stress. Agreed that there are other things we need to fight on at the same time, but argued that we can do this.

Aliya Yule (Wadham) – Agreed that this is really important, and that it is highly unusual that at Oxford we normalise 5th week blues, effectively normalising ill mental health.

Amendment received:

To add resolves 2:

'To mandate the VP Access and Academic Affairs to highlight the effects of current Oxford workload on mental well being more generally, and to include the importance of this in the OUSU Education Vision.'

Proposed: Nick Cooper (St John's)

Seconded: Rowan Davis (Wadham)

Amendment passed with no opposition – motion amended.

Chris Pike (St Edmund) – Raised a point of information that only two of the liberation campaigns have had specific meetings relating to the Education Vision, and that these are

WomCam and CRAE. Added that the LGBTQ Campaign and the OSDC Campaign are yet to be consulted.

Ruth Meredith (Brasenose) – Added a point of information that James had done a consultation with disabled students.

Jessica (Mansfield) – Agreed with others that reading weeks are a good thing in terms of welfare and added that those students who do not feel it is necessary to have a reading week for their well being will be able to use it as time to think about careers and internships.

Amendment received:

To add resolves 3:

‘to mandate the VP Access and Academic Affairs to make clear when arguing for a reading week that said reading week means a break from work completely, and is not an excuse to increase workload before or after the week.’

Proposed: Jack Hampton (St Catherine’s)

Seconded: Sian Kelly (St Catherine’s)

Student asked how we can prevent tutors still accounting for a reading week and providing extra work but doing so at the start of term for example.

Jack Hampton – Answered that he just wanted it to be clear in the motion that when we are asking for a reading week, we are asking for a break.

Amendment passed with no opposition – motion amended.

Move to vote.

Opposed.

Chris Pike (St Edmund) – Stated that this has been discussed for a long time, and everyone is likely to already know how they are going to vote.

Joanna (St Hilda’s) – Informed council that she had a point which she would still like to make.

Vote on move to vote.

For – 40

Against – 9

Abstain - 2

Joanna – Urged council to consider that when they are discussing enabling students to go home, for some students, home is very far away. Stated that it should not cut into Easter or Christmas, but should mean that the terms would begin earlier.

Chris – Accepted that the amendments have made the motion much better but still think that there are many other mental health priorities that should be focussed on over this.

Vote.

For – 41

Against – 14

Abstain – 5

Motion passed as amended.

k. AOB

Joe Smith (Somerville) – Congratulated Will on finishing his term as chair of council and wished him the best of luck with his finals.