

# Council Minutes

## 8<sup>th</sup> Week Michaelmas Term 2016

8th Week Extraordinary Council was at 5pm, on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at Wadham College.

- a) Welcome and introduction from the Chair
- b) Quoracy Count.
- c) Motions for debate
  - a. NUS National Ballot

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### C.) Items for Debate

#### NUS Ballot

#### Council Notes:

1. A National Union of Students (NUS) National Ballot has been called in order to consult upon the need for a risk assessment prior to the planned boycott and/or sabotage of the National Student Survey (NSS).
  - b)* A National Ballot asks each student union which is affiliated to NUS to vote on what is effectively NUS Policy outside of a National Conference. Its result is binding insofar as it has the same status as other NUS Policy. It cannot overturn Policy decided upon at National Conference.
  - c)* This National Ballot asks all student unions which are members of the NUS to respond YES or NO to the question, **Should NUS conduct and publish a risk assessment and equality impact assessment before finalising the NSS boycott / sabotage action?**
2. This has been called due to concerns that a boycott or sabotage of the NSS could disadvantage smaller institutions and devalue degrees.
3. The arguments against a risk assessment and equality impact assessment include: the consultation which has already occurred, the likely cost to NUS, and the likely delay and detrimental effect on the campaign against NSS and more widely the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).
4. The NUS motion to organise a boycott or sabotage of the NSS was passed at National Conference, and consultation with SUs on the practicalities of the campaign has been carried out.
5. OUSU Council has mandated the Sabbatical Officers to 'organise a boycott or sabotage of the NSS', and to take part in 'national actions and demonstrations linked to the NSS boycott/sabotage.' This is part of a wider strategy on opposing the TEF.
6. The result of this ballot will not impact OUSU's own commitment to a boycott or sabotage of the NSS, but will have an impact on the national campaign.

#### Council Believes:

1. OUSU's vote on whether to recommend a risk assessment and equality impact assessment must be informed by its democratic processes and the opinions of its membership.

**Council Resolves:**

1. That should this motion pass, a YES/NO ballot will be held in the room, allowing voting members to indicate their decision on the question, **Should NUS conduct and publish a risk assessment and equality impact assessment before finalising the NSS boycott / sabotage action?**
2. That prior to this ballot, Council will discuss the question and the possible impacts of either a YES or a NO vote.
3. That the result of this ballot shall bind the sabbatical officers to vote accordingly.

**Proposed:** Orla White (Brasenose)

**Seconded:** Bethany Currie (Corpus Christi)

Matt Dawe (St Hugh's) – Chair gives an introduction and explains the voting procedure.

Orla White (Brasenose) Question is whether to vote in National Ballot, and how to vote. National Ballot has not been called before – opportunity for all affiliated Student Unions to vote on a matter. This is question about whether to hold risk assessment. Arguments on both sides: may affect small institutions; may slow down process of fighting TEF. This is firstly a motion of whether we discuss this – if it is voted down, we will not record a vote; like an abstention.

Vivian Holmes (Wadham) What happens if this motion doesn't pass?

Orla White (Brasenose) – one vote for the Union. If this falls, we will not vote.

Kelli Francis-Staite (St John's) Are OUSU in the small and specialist band. Would this affect us?

Orla - we are not institutionally small, but we are specialist in a way. National Student Survey scores are way off.

Kelli Francis-Staite (St John's) – so how much would this affect us?

Orla – wouldn't affect our existing policy to boycott NSS. This only affects national campaign.

Vivian (Wadham) Is this Ballot about an NSS sabotage or boycott?

Orla – specifically about boycott.

Eden Bailey (Magdalen) – National Ballot can't overturn policy of National Conference. Conference already agreed to boycott, but this slows process.

Stella (Univ) – NUS will have to follow National Ballot. Do you have to follow what we decide here?

Orla – yes, will have to vote based on outcome of this meeting.

**Move to debate.**

Cameron Quinn (Merton) – should pass motion so we can vote on it.

Marina Lambrakis (St Johns) Gives clarification – debate we'll have now is on a) whether we should vote, and b) how we'll vote. This is space to debate both issues of whether to vote and how.

Eden Bailey (Magdalen) Speech in favour of voting No in Ballot. Explained the TEF and potential for fee increases and differentiation; NSS is one of the metric that the University will use, to get good rating and increase fees. Policy passed by both NUS National Conference and OUSU Council to boycott NSS as way for students to have their say on TEF process. Some students' unions signed call for National Ballot without understanding context. Cannot overturn policy, but risk assessment delays NUS getting message out to students. Important to vote No to keep campaign going.

Jack Hampton (St Catz) Contacted one of the leaders of Yes campaign (Richard Brooks, NUS Vice President) to ask for arguments. Wanted to offer other argument on request; not my opinion. Richard argues we will make more meaningful change by lobbying Government now, not focusing on something that will only potentially affect fees in the future. NSS provides valuable data on student satisfaction, including being broken down by demographics and departments. NSS being changed going forward; more information that can benefit students. Some students' unions have argued it will affect their work and their funding; especially affects small and specialist students' unions. May affect access and widening participation. Should do risk assessment to make these risks clear.

Ben Peacock (St Hugh's) Risk assessment (rather than not having risk assessment) will instead mean our effective strategy, via NSS boycott, will be too late.

Molly (Corpus) Employers do care where your degree is from, some classist assumptions. Issues with this, but don't think NSS boycott will have anything to do with this.

Rowan Davis (Wadham) Assumption in Richard Brooks' point that we can't lobby MP as well as undertake the NSS boycott. Need to fight for boycott to fight TEF, and to lobby MPs.

Eden (Magdalen) Committed to access – boycott is best way. Time to lobby MPs has passed; Lords still available to lobby. Have considered issue of small/specialist unions when this passed at Conference. NUS held workshop days to get views on how best to implement boycott.

Marina Lambrakis (St Johns) Legitimate arguments on both side - something to say around positive relationships. Have support from University because of cooperation so can see point.

Orla (Wadham) – NUS policy does not affect what individual Students' Unions do. Small and specialist institutions can do differently if they want.

Stella (Univ) Are there similar data to NSS?

Marina (St John's) – not across the board. Some institutions do have other surveys; we have Student Barometer.

Eden Bailey (Magdalen) Other data is available on an institution by institution basis.

Rianna (Wadham) What is the time frame on conducting a risk and equality assessment?

Eden Bailey (Magdalen) Cost may be quite high as motion states it needs to be done by a external organisation. Because an external organisation, wouldn't be quick process.

Rowan (Wadham) We've just had a referendum on NUS affiliation and one of the big arguments against was around NUS wasting money. This would be waste of NUS money.

Call for move to vote. No objections.

**Vote on whether to vote in the National Ballot. Motion passed (52 for, 0 against, 3 abstentions).**

**Vote on how to vote in the Ballot.** Yes 2, No 49, Abstain 4.

**Resolved to vote No in the National Ballot.** Meeting closed.