Guild Democracy

What is Democracy?

The Guild is a **"democratic"** organisation.

The word "democratic" is the adjective (describing word) for the word **"democracy"** (which is a noun/naming word).

Democracy basically means people being able to have their say on things that they want to change, and being able to have their say in who they want representing them. So as the Guild is a democratic organisation, democracy at the Guild means UoB students being able to provide their thoughts, feedback and ideas to the Guild, and vote on who they want to represent them at the Guild and University.

For example:
- UoB students are represented at the Guild and University 7 Full-Time Officers and 7 Part-Time Officers, who are elected by UoB students every year
- Students (and Officers!) are able to submit ideas for things that they want to change in the Guild, University and local community
- All of the Officers and Decision-Making Committee members help to make decisions on ideas, Guild policy, campaigns and funding on behalf of UoB students
- All UoB students are able to vote and make decisions in All Student Meetings and All Student Votes, on ideas, policy proposals and campaigns that need more student input

The Guild should be representative and inclusive of ALL UoB students, and all UoB students should have the chance to help to make decisions at the Guild!
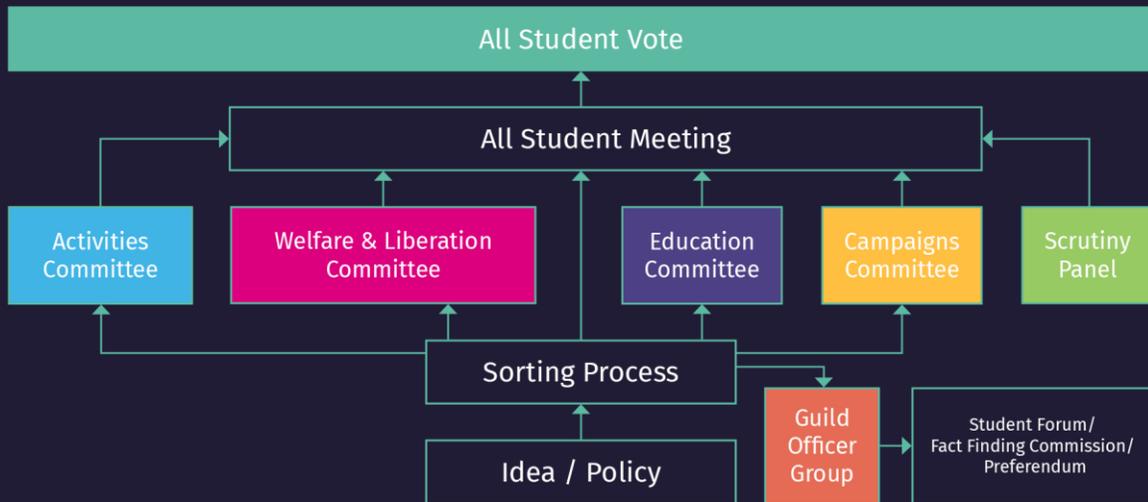
What is the Guild's Democratic System?

There is a specific democratic system in the Guild, which involves all of the democratic and decision-making processes. This democratic system was new this academic year (2020/21), and was passed by UoB students in an all-student referendum during Officer Elections 2020.
You can find a diagram of this system below:

The diagram can be split into 5 main parts, outlined below:

1) Idea & Policy Submissions

All UoB students, including Officers, can submit ideas and policy proposals related to things that they would like to see change in the Guild, University and local community, by completing this submission form: https://www.guildofstudents.com/representation/submissionform/

Students can also submit campaign proposals, although there is also a campaigns submission form for this too. There is some guidance on what students can and cannot submit, which we definitely recommend students (and Officers) reading before they make a submission! *(N.B. please note that this guidance is currently under review)* .

Once the ideas, policy proposals and campaign proposals have been submitted, they will go to the next stage of the system - the Sorting Process, which you may also hear referred to as the 'Allocations Procedure'..

2) The Sorting Process

All submitted ideas, policy proposals and campaign proposals are sorted. Ideas will be filtered out if they are illegal or can't be discussed in the democratic process, but the submitter will be emailed with an explanation of why their idea has been filtered. The ideas would otherwise be allocated to:

- *1 of the 4 decision-making committees* - if they fit the theme of 1 of these committees (see Section 3).
- *The All Student Meeting* - if it's a big idea or policy that will affect a large number of students (see Section 4)
- *Guild Officer Group (Officer Team)* - who may call for a Preferendum, Fact-Finding Commission or Student Forum to gather more insight into the idea, or to just agree on a response to or support for the idea submitter (see section 7)
- *Core staff* - if the idea is operational (e.g. putting GOG minutes on the Guild website)
- *All Student Vote* - if it's submitted in the summer (i.e. when there are no elected committees and Chair of All Student Meeting - see Section 5)

Wherever an idea, policy proposal or campaign proposal is allocated, the submitters will receive notification and regular updates about where their idea is at. Updates will also be added to the Committee Action Tracker on the Guild website, that all UoB students can view *(N.B. work is currently being done on this)*.

3) Decision-Making Committees

There are 4 decision-making committees: Activities, Campaigns, Education, and Welfare & Liberation. These committees are administered by core staff, and chaired by the relevant Officers. All other Officers are automatically part of at least one committee too. Student members are elected in Autumn Elections in October. Decisions on ideas have to be made using consensus decision-making, and meetings have to be quorate - a certain number of students have to attend for decisions to be made on ideas and policy proposals (see glossary section).

Committee	Theme & Responsibilities	Officer(s) on Committee
Activities	● Makes decisions on ideas and policy relating to student groups, volunteering, sports clubs, student-led activities and Student Groups policy ● Oversees Student Groups policy, student group constitutions and Student Groups grants ● Makes decisions on the Guild's position on activities and development issues ● Helps the Activities & Employability Officer and Sports Officers to achieve their written statement (manifesto) aims.	Activities & Employability Officer (Chair) Sports Officer (co-chair) Education Officer

Campaigns	● Oversees Guild's campaigns (apart from Liberation Campaigns) ● Overseeing, allocating and reviewing the Guild's Student Campaigns Fund. ● Support the development and provide oversight of the Guild's major campaigning activity. ● Support the President and the Campaigns Officer to achieve their manifesto pledges and mandates.	President (Chair) Campaigns Officer Ethical & Environmental Officer
Education	● Overseeing ideas and policy related to academic issues ● Discussing ongoing academic policy issues and developments, recommending actions as appropriate ● Overseeing, allocating and reviewing the Guild's Student Rep Fund. ● Support the Education Officer, Postgraduate Officer, and International Officer to achieve their manifesto pledges and mandates.	Education Officer (Chair) Postgraduate Officer International Officer
Welfare & Liberation	● Overseeing ideas and policy relating to welfare, wellbeing, equality and diversity, and liberation issues. ● Overseeing, allocating and reviewing relevant Guild campaign expenditure. ● Make recommendations on The Guild's position on welfare and liberation issues. ● Support the delivery of History Month campaigns and activities. ● Support the Welfare & Community Officer and Liberation Part Time Officers to achieve their manifesto pledges and mandates.	Welfare & Community Officer Liberation Part-Time Officers

4) All Student Meeting

The All Student Meeting is a meeting that takes place 3x a year, and it's where ALL Officers and UoB students come together to discuss and collectively make decisions on the big student ideas and policy proposals. Ideas and policy proposals that the decision-making committees cannot make a decision on, and items related to the Guild's aims as a charity may also be discussed at this meeting. The All Student Meeting also has to be "quorate". The quorum for All Student Meeting is 1% of the student population (approx. 370 students). The meeting is chaired by the Chair of All Student Meeting, and Officers may also take the lead on some items.
You can find out more here:
https://www.guildofstudents.com/representation/allstudentmeeting/

https://www.guildofstudents.com/ents/event/5652/
https://www.guildofstudents.com/representation/howitworks/

5) All Student Vote

If the All Student Meeting is not quorate, ideas and policies will be referred to an online All-Student Vote. This usually takes place online, and also has to be quorate (370 students need to vote for the votes to be valid). Students can vote "Yes", "No" or "Abstain", and can leave comments. Anonymous comments from students on liberation concerns can be forwarded by the Liberation Part-Time Officers. Ideas and policy proposals can also be allocated to the All Student Vote if the All Student Meeting is quorate, but students and Officers cannot come to a decision, or they feel that more student input is needed. You can find out more about the last All Student Vote here: https://www.guildofstudents.com/representation/allstudentvote/

6) Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Panel is a little separate from the main democracy structure. The Panel is made up of 5 recruited UoB students, who provide positive and constructive feedback to the Officer Team on their progress, projects, written statement (manifesto) aims, campaigns and other work, based on reports that each member of the Officer Team writes. The feedback is provided at meetings with the Officers and Panel, and the meetings take place 4 times a year. The Panel also provide a short report at the All Student Meeting.

7) Preferendums, Fact Finding Commissions & Student Forums

- Preferendum - where students can vote on an idea and/or policy proposal, but instead of a "yes"/"no" vote, students can vote for several options on how the idea/policy can be taken forward, and rank these order

- Fact-finding commission - involves additional research and information gathering on ideas, policy and/or topics. Officers will form a steering group, which will publish their findings, and make recommendations via a report or idea submission.

- Student forums - provide students with an opportunity to provide input into the running and configuration of Guild services. The scope of these will be agreed by the Officers.

Ideas
Thoughts and suggestions for change in the Guild, University and/or local community, that UoB students submit on the Guild of Students website.

Policy Proposals
Thoughts and suggestions for a stance and/or belief that UoB students want the Guild to support (e.g. supporting action against climate change, supporting decolonisation).
You can find out more here:
https://www.guildofstudents.com/representation/submissionform/
https://www.guildofstudents.com/pageassets/representation/campaigns/useful-documents/Beliefs-and-Commitments-May-2019.pdf

Quorum *(Noun/Naming Word)*
The number of people needed for decisions and votes at committee meetings, All Student Meeting and the All Student Vote to be counted and valid. The quorum is 1% of all current UoB students, which, for the 2020/21 academic year, was 370 students. The quorum is calculated at the start of each academic year, as the number of students (370) might change each year, according to the number of students there are.

Quorate *(Adjective/Describing Word)*
Quorate is when there are enough people to reach quorum (or enough votes needed for votes to be counted/be valid).
For example:
- The All Student Vote needs to reach the quorum of 370 UoB students (370 UoB students to vote) for the vote to be quorate.
- The All Student Meeting needs to reach the quorum of 370 UoB students (370 UoB students attending) to be quorate.
- As only 2 committee members were able to come to the Education Committee meeting, and the quorum is 7, the meeting was not quorate.

Liberation
Liberation refers to equality, diversity and inclusion of minority groups and underrepresented groups. The Guild should be representative and inclusive of all students.

Consensus Decision-Making
An approach to decision-making used in meetings for the decision-making committees and All Student Meeting, which involves taking into account all of the possible issues that could arise from an idea, policy proposal, campaign or topic, instead of just having a "yes"/"no" vote.
For example, if a vote were to take place for a campaign for banning plastic straws on campus to increase sustainability, and the majority of UoB students voted yes (agree), that would exclude a minority of disabled students who have to use plastic straws for accessibility reasons. Therefore, if this decision was made by consensus, both the issues of sustainability and accessibility can be taken into account.

Byelaws

Rules that govern different areas of the Guild (e.g. elections, democracy, student groups, Officers). There are 10 sections in the byelaws, and you can read them here: Guild-Byelaws-July-2020-CLEAN.pdf (guildofstudents.com)

You can read Byelaws 5 & 6 for the All Student Vote, All Student Meeting, ideas and policy proposals, and democracy at the Guild in general. There is a glossary in Byelaw 1, which may be useful to you.

Democracy FAQs

Will I receive training for the decision-making committees?

Yes, you will receive training after Autumn Elections. Officer Chairs will also receive separate Chair training.

How many votes would be needed for an idea and/or policy proposal to pass at the All Student Meeting, and in the All Student Vote?

If 370 students voted,186 students would need to vote "Yes" (agree) for the idea to pass (50% of the votes cast + 1).

How is the "quorum" calculated?

The "quorum" for both All Student Meeting and All Student Vote is calculated at the start of the academic year.

What happens if the All Student Vote is not quorate?

The idea(s)/policy(ies) being voted on are not actioned.

What happens to ideas/policy(ies) after voting for the All Student Vote has ended?

The Guild will count the votes. If the idea has passed, your Officer Team will decide how they will take the idea forward. If the idea does not pass, no further action will be taken.

Where can I find out more information about Guild democracy in general?

(Please note that these pages are currently under construction)
- How Do You Change Things?: https://www.guildofstudents.com/representation/
- How It All Works: https://www.guildofstudents.com/representation/howitworks/
- Decision-Making Committees Hub: https://www.guildofstudents.com/representation/committeehub/
- Guild of Students Byelaws: Guild-Byelaws-July-2020-CLEAN.pdf (guildofstudents.com)
- Guild of Students Beliefs & Commitments: Beliefs-and-Commitments-May-2019.pdf (guildofstudents.com)

(for the All Student Vote and All Student Meeting, please refer to Byelaws 5 & 6. There is also a glossary in Byelaw 1, which you may find useful)

You can also talk to Mikey Brown (Guild President - m.brown@guild.bham.ac.uk), and the elections team (who also oversee democracy) - elections@guild.bham.ac.uk