

Proposed new democratic procedure

Mission Statement:

The Guild of Students is a democratic, student led organisation that's here to help you get the most out of your time at the University of Birmingham (UoB). However, you've told us the way we do democracy isn't working. Important decisions take too long to be made and they often happen with little transparency and limited student input.

Over the last year or two, we've spoken to you about the ways we could do decision making differently through a range of research and consultation processes. The new approach we're proposing seeks to open up our decision making processes to give students a much larger role in setting our direction.

We propose the following:

1. Create 4 Student Led Committees.

Each committee will:

- Discuss ideas and campaigns relevant to their specialist area
- Support and direct the Guild Officers who are members of the committee
- Provide different perspectives reflecting the wide diversity of Birmingham students and make recommendations to the Guild
- Have responsibility for funding decisions
- Be able to approve or reject decisions (by a 2/3 majority) - this seeks to balance the value of their expertise and student experience with our understanding that these students may not be totally reflective of the wider student body. Anything not approved or rejected will be taken to the 'All Student Meeting' (see part 2).

Committees will also contain a mixture of officers, elected representatives from a specific 'stakeholder group' and 'open places' that will be elected by a campus wide election, usually in Autumn Term.

These committees will meet every 4-6 weeks or so with the ability to meet for specific issues as required. It is hoped that this will make decisions much more responsive.

	Activities Committee	Education Committee	Welfare and Liberation Committee	Campaigns Committee
Officers	Activities and Employability Officer Sports Officer	Education Officer Postgraduate Officer International Officer	Welfare Officer LGBTQ Officer Disabled Students' Officer Womens' Officer	Guild President Campaigns Officer Ethical and Environmental Officer

			Ethnic Minorities Officer Trans Officer	
Members	2 Student Group Reps 2 Sports Club Reps 3 Open Places	1 'Student or PGR Rep' from each college (5) 2 Open places	2 Open Places	5 Open places
Funding	Allocates the Groups Grant	Allocates the Student Rep Fund	Allocates the 'History Month' Campaign Fund	Allocates the Student Led Campaign Fund and Officer Manifesto Campaign Fund

2. Create an 'All Student Meeting'.

The All Student Meeting will be an opportunity for interested students to have their say on the big issues that the Guild is currently dealing with. We anticipate there being around 3 meetings per year, with each considering 3-4 big issues.

Rather than advertising this as the 'All Student Meeting', we will transition to focusing on advertising the issues being discussed. For example, "Should the Guild of Students support the UCU Strikes? Come and have your say".

This meeting will have an independent chairperson, elected by the student body. It will also approve or reject ideas or decisions by $\frac{2}{3}$ majorities, in recognition of the fact that not all students will be able to attend all student meetings. Anything that is not either approved or rejected will be escalated to the All Student Vote (Part 3). The meeting will also hear updates from the committee and from the Officers, so everyone knows what they are working on.

An Emergency All Student Meeting could also be called by a vote of the Guild Officer Group or a petition of 100 students.

3. Create an 'All Student Vote'.

The biggest issues will be escalated to All Student Vote. It may well be the case that, in some years, nothing progresses as far as the All Student Vote Stage. However, it exists to ensure that in the times we're discussing major issues where student input is vital, we can gather opinion from across campus.

4. Create some flexible approaches.

Alongside our more formal structures and processes we're creating a range of tools that can be used to gain student input into a specific area. This includes:

- **Student Forums & Fact Finding Commissions:** This allows us to create a group or event to gather more feedback or evidence around a specific issue. This will most likely feed into a report on the issue in question that could be directed to staff, Officers, a committee or the All Student Meeting where appropriate. Issues that might use this process are likely to be focused around The Guild's services and commercial offering.
- **Preferendums:** Whereas a referendum asks you a Yes/No question, preferendums allow us to present you with a range of options that you can rank in order of preference. This could be used to rank the Officer teams manifesto pledges so they know what you want them to focus on or to rank a range of possible approaches we could take to tackling a big problem. For example, in the recent UCU strikes, you could have been presented with a range of approaches the Guild could take and rank them in order of preference.

5. Ensuring your ideas go to the right place

Student ideas will have a single point of entry but will be pointed to the right place for decision making by a sorting procedure. This will be a updated version of the current 'ideas' submission page, that will allow students to give as much or as little information as they would like. It could set out a very technical and detailed proposal to change a policy position, or it could simply be flagging that the way Extenuating Circumstances or Reasonable Adjustments work are unfair.

In this process the Student Voice team will engage in a 'first pass' of where they think the student submissions should be directed. This will be approved by the elected independent Chair of the All Student Meeting. This ensures a balance between getting things done quickly and ensuring students have oversight at every stage. Ideas that are highly operational (eg. more mayo in Joe's Bar) will be passed directly onto staff or officers, and Ideas which are obvious jokes or illegal (eg. 'Guild to campaign to support the Labour Party' or 'Force Fab entrants to do a shot on entry') will be filtered out at this stage too.

6. The Scrutiny Panel will be formally adopted.

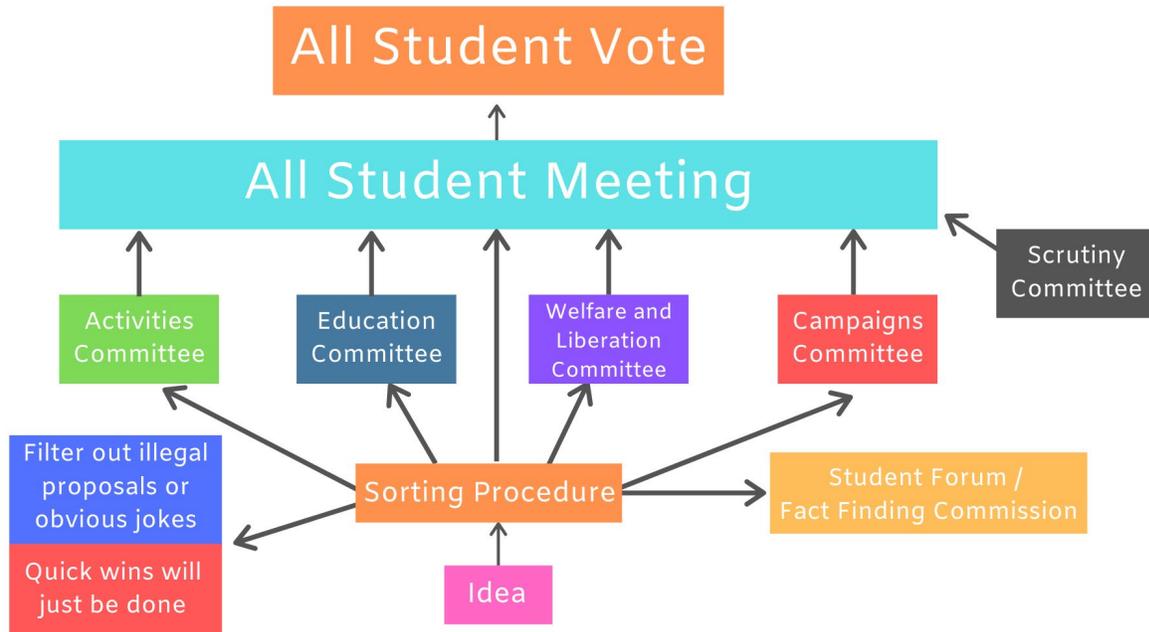
We're currently running a Scrutiny Panel as a bit of a test and it's already demonstrating its value. It involves a committee of students reviewing the work of the Officers and tracking their progress against their manifestos. It allows for a more detail oriented type of accountability that really keeps officers thinking. We are proposing to make this a permanent fixture, with the additional element that representatives from the various other committees will be able to contribute to this process and feedback on the work of the committee. The reports of the committee will be published and be empowered to propose motions of censure or no confidence to be considered at the All Student Meeting.

7. Be more transparent and accessible.

We will make sure that it's much easier for you to understand how decisions are made and who made them by publishing details of meetings and decisions in a much easier to access way and

on Social Media. We'll also make sure students who are unable to physically attend meetings are able to let us know their thoughts on the issues we're discussing.

When these components are all put together it creates a process that looks like this:



What are we going to stop?

1. Student Groups Executive (SGX) - replaced by the new Activities Committee
2. Student Equality and Diversity Committee - replaced by the new Welfare and Liberation Committee
3. Officer Question Time - replaced by the new All Student Meeting and Scrutiny Panel
4. Your Ideas voting cycles - because it's too slow and decisions will be made by students in Committees