

Student Idea & Policy Submissions for All Student Meeting 1

Trigger Warnings: welfare, liberation, genocide, Uyghur people, human rights, islamaphobia, inclusion, wellbeing, mental health

Item 3 - Solidarity with the Uyghur people: Stop the Genocide

Notes:

1. In East Turkestan, a region occupied and ruled by China as “Xinjiang”, the Uyghurs and other majority-Muslim indigenous peoples face genocidal persecution at the hands of the Chinese state.
2. These people face intense state surveillance; harsh repression of cultural, linguistic and religious freedoms; mass internment (at least one million have been detained in concentration camps where brainwashing, torture and sexual assault have been reported); family separation; and forced contraception and sterilisation.
3. They are also subject to forced labour in farms and factories supplying global corporate brands such as Nike, Apple, Coca-Cola and Zara.
4. Rising sinophobia in the UK, particularly since the covid pandemic, leading to bullying and harassment.
5. The University of Birmingham has ties with technology and medical development companies/institutions whose products potentially may be used to suppress and surveil the Uyghur population.
6. This is a genocide that is recognised by the UK government and the United Nations.

Believes:

1. We cannot stand silent in the face of genocide. We must stand up and campaign to end the persecution and genocide and to free the victims because this is a humanitarian issue.
2. The Uyghur people and other indigenous people of occupied East Turkestan must have the right to democratically determine their own future.
3. As workers and citizens around the world, we must challenge the global corporations profiting from forced labour and surveillance in China. As a university community in particular, we can challenge investments and other links that our university may have.

4. The Chinese state is responsible for these crimes, not the Chinese people. We stand in solidarity with hyper-exploited workers, oppressed peoples and repressed dissidents across China.
5. We are concerned that by continuing a relationship with a genocidal government, the University of Birmingham will be an institution that is compliant with the Uyghur genocide.
6. The university's ties with Chinese corporations/institutions could be at risk of violating the University of Birmingham's Responsible Investment Policy and Modern Slavery Act if any corporations/institution has any ties with the oppression of Uyghurs.

Resolves:

1. To condemn the government of China for its treatment of the Uyghurs and other indigenous people of East Turkestan, and to campaign for their freedom.
2. The Guild of Students (GOS) includes in its 'Beliefs and Commitments' stating that it opposes any form of international human rights violations including slavery, genocide, forced labour, forced sterilisations, forced marriages etc.
3. To investigate the GOS ties and the university's holdings, funds and financial instruments in companies that are complicit in this surveillance, repression and forced labour, and demand the university either divest or use its shares to demand the companies respect human rights and workers rights.
4. To work with the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign on campus and the UK-wide Uyghur Solidarity Campaign, including spreading awareness on and off campus about the genocide and promoting their campaign and events to University of Birmingham students and staff.
5. To call on the University of Birmingham China Institute to raise the profile of frontier studies incorporating East Turkestan, Tibet, Hong Kong into the academic framework
6. Send a copy of this motion to the local Chinese consulate
7. To call upon vice chancellor/director to make a public statement in support of this motion

8. To fight against the hijacking of this humanitarian crisis by racists, nationalists and cold-war-hawks to encourage international conflict and whip up sinophobic prejudice against either individuals of Chinese heritage or the people of China.
9. To raise the profile of narratives that counter the attempts of the Chinese state to deny the abuses that are taking place.
10. To demand and create safe spaces and support for students and staff impacted by state surveillance, both on campus and in programs promoted as part of the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign.
11. The GOS will lobby the University of Birmingham to prepare a long-term strategic plan to ensure that governmental, academic, or corporate partnerships with oppressive regimes and organisations do not arise in the future.
12. We can state with a great degree of certainty that if we the students can collectively follow these calls to action, numerous institutions will follow suit in solidarity. We ask that you kindly consider this proposition.

Item 4 – Regarding Islamophobia Definition

What is the issue you want to change?

The ISOC had a meeting with Wei-Lun the International students officer, as the ISOC as a whole were not happy with the definition given by the university and wanted this to be dealt with and asked for definition to be taken out the policy.

What solutions or actions do you have?

We would like the definition to be taken out and not have a definition given by the university. Also make a commitment with Muslims on campus to establish and discuss their experiences

How will you know your idea is a success?

This will make an impact as it is in the interest of the Muslims on campus and we believe the definition doesn't properly represent the whole Muslim community and what they experience with Islamophobia.

Item 5 -The University Should Offer Remote Learning For Semester 2

What is the issue that you want to change?

I received the messages in the morning at 29th that there are around 300 Chinese students want to continue to learning remotely for the next semester. The 300 students are from both undergraduate and postgraduate and are from different colleges and courses. Some students who are from Engineering College told me that they can't prepare for student Visa or find a place before arriving at 08.11., which is a week later. And there are many students are from Social Sciences College that are currently studying online said that they still don't want to go to the UK in next semester.

What solutions or actions do you have?

My idea is that the university will definitely need to reply to the students' needs on this issue.

The solution I would like to suggest is that the option should be given to the students to choose online teaching or the offline teaching based on their own conditions. It means that the university should still provide online classes and do the hybrid classes as now. Let those students who are not physically in the UK decide whether they want to be back in school before 31, January. It will not affect students who are in the UK for offline teaching since they can still go to classroom if they prefer.

I believe the reasons behind it are the ongoing pandemic and the number of cases in the UK is continually raising. Then, the NHS cannot guarantee every student's safety in the pandemic. Nobody wants to have Covid-19 just because they are studying abroad. Besides, there are travel restrictions in different areas in China because some cases were tested positive in those area. In addition, it is hard for them to find accommodations during December or January since most were rented out in September. Last but not the least, after semester 2 we will have an approximately three months summer vacation, it will be very hard for Chinese students to go back home because of the quarantine policy in China and the expensive plane tickets.

How will you know if your idea is a success?

As I have mentioned in the box above, the university should provide the right for students and let them choose online teaching or offline teaching in the epidemic

environment. Students' voice and needs should be responded. With the hybrid teaching has been carried out in semester 1, I believe the university can guarantee the quality of education in the next semester as well. As for safety, which is the foundation and priority for now, the dual track learning can reduce the risk of local outbreaks and cases in school campus. Even though there is not red list countries and more people have got vaccinated, according to the increasing number of confirmed cases, Britain is far from the place can be called safe.

In sum, continuing to have online learning provided for international students who are in need show the responsibility of the university of caring and being considerate for students' needs. It will not only help improve students' satisfaction, but also attract more students in the next academic year. If the whole Covid-19 situation can be better after next semester, I believe the students will be back on campus without being asked to do so. Before that, we need to provide students all the resources we have and make sure they can achieve their academic goals and personal goals without having to worried too much.

Item 6 - External Memberships

I would like the Guild of Students to revert to the 2018 wording of Byelaw 1.3.3., which is: "No Fees shall be payable by or for External Members."