

Summary

This document has been produced by the Guild to provide information on the All Student Vote. It will provide a summary of the discussions held the All Student Meeting in relation to the motion to trigger a Vote of No Confidence in the Guild President. Information provided in this document has been provided from other relevant documents.

Please contact studentvoice@guild.bham.ac.uk with any questions.

Process

This motion was submitted as an idea through the Members Democratic Process. It was first submitted to the All Student Meeting held on Wednesday 17th May, but as that meeting wasn't quorate (not enough people attended) then this motion (and other motions) passes to an All Student Vote.

Voting Options

There are three options in which you can vote in this All Student Vote;

- **FOR** – You support the motion and want the outcomes to happen.
- **AGAINST** – You do not support the motion and don't want the outcomes to happen.
- **ABSTAIN** – You do not have a preference or you do not want to cast a For or Against vote.

The motion requires a simple majority to pass - this is 50% + 1 of all the For and Against votes. Anything below 50%+1 will mean the motion falls. Abstentions count towards the quoracy of the vote, but not the result.

The quoracy (total number of voters needed for the vote to be valid) is 1% of Full Members of the Guild of Students, calculated at the start of the Academic year. This figure is currently 416 Full Members.

Voting Outcomes

What happens if the motion is approved or falls?

If the motion is approved – more people vote for the motion than against – this will trigger a 'Vote of No Confidence Referendum' in the Guild President.

This Vote of No Confidence will be a separate vote, held later in the semester and will ask all Full Members to vote on whether they have confidence in the Guild President.

- One outcome of that referendum could mean that the student membership does not have confidence and therefore the President would be removed from their role and as such would lose their employment with the Guild;
- the other outcome would be that the membership does have confidence in the President and they would stay in their role.

The Guild Officer Discipline & Appeals Policy¹ states that if a motion calling for a Vote of No Confidence Referendum is passed, the Officer will have 14 days to write a response to the alleged unsatisfactory political performance. This information will be available to the student membership at least 5 working days before the vote opens. The earliest this could be is Monday 19th June 2023.

If the motion falls – more people vote against the motion than for it – the motion has been defeated and no further action will be taken.

Background

External Membership allows non-students to become members of the Guild of Students. External Members get access to Guild facilities and to join Student Groups, but they cannot vote in elections; take part in the Members Democratic Process or stand for Committee membership.

In February 2023, the Guild of Students Trustee Board² announced, via a statement on the Guild website³, that access to External Membership (which had initially been suspended in November 2022) would continue to be suspended for the academic year. The statement explained that External Membership would be removed as a category of membership from the Byelaws for the following academic year.

This decision was taken in response to safeguarding concerns following a number of allegations of serious misconduct made against external members. The Trustee Board were concerned that external members are not able to be held accountable for their actions in the same way that current students are through the University conduct process, when allegations are made. This was not in the interest of student safety.

In March 2023, a motion was submitted to the All Student Meeting in support of reinstating External Membership⁴. As this All Student Meeting was not quorate, the motion passed to an All Student Vote, which was held in the same month. The motion passed with 829 Full Members voting for, 186 against and 43 abstentions⁵.

In December 2021, an earlier motion regarding External Membership was debated at an All Student Meeting and voted on via an All Student Vote. This issue was specifically about the fee External Members paid for their membership. The Guild had introduced administration

¹ <https://www.guildofstudents.com/pageassets/footer/resourcespublications/Guild-Officer-Discipline-and-Appeals-Policy-2023.pdf>

² <https://www.guildofstudents.com/about/trusteeboard/>

³ <https://www.guildofstudents.com/news/article/website/Statement-regarding-External-Memberships/>

⁴ <https://www.guildofstudents.com/pageassets/representation/allstudentmeeting/Idea-Submission-External-Memberships-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.guildofstudents.com/pageassets/representation/allstudentmeeting/ASV-2-March-2023-Full-Results.pdf>

fees and the motion sought to remove these⁶. The motion was passed, with 339 votes for, 81 against and 356 abstentions⁷.

On May 16th 2023, the Trustee Board issued an updated statement⁸ regarding External Memberships, following a meeting of the Board the day before. This set out the intention to reopen external membership for four specific groups, as follows;

- students on a leave of absence,
- carers of students,
- trainers/coaches/advisors and
- University of Birmingham staff.

It also confirmed the creation of a task and finish group to explore further options which may allow membership for alumni and other external members.

The term of the Guild President ends on Friday 14th July 2023 and the incumbent has not been re-elected for the next Academic Year.

The Proposal For

Arguments that have been advanced in favour of the motion by the proposer include:

A President should represent students' interests and act in accordance with the Guild Beliefs.

Students in 2023 voted to retain External Membership. The March 2023 All Student Vote was 80% in favour of External Memberships. The President has expressed views at the All Student Meeting held on 14th March in regard to External Memberships that are inconsistent with the views of students who voted in the 17th-24th March 2023 All Student Vote.

The Guild Beliefs say: "any major changes require consultation with the wider student body, not just the Guild Officers" and the Guild Articles of Association state: "Trustees will give the utmost consideration to the views of the Members". These principles are the President's responsibility to uphold.

The abolition of External Membership, was announced on the 17th February 2023 via a statement on the Guild website. Guild societies and wider student body were not consulted on this decision before it was announced.

⁶ <https://www.guildofstudents.com/pageassets/representation/allstudentmeeting/Idea-Policy-Submissions.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.guildofstudents.com/pageassets/representation/allstudentmeeting/All-Student-Vote-Dec-2021-Results.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.guildofstudents.com/news/article/website/A-Statement-From-Your-Trustee-Board-Regarding-External-Memberships/>

The President is accountable for changes made and we as students should hold our Guild accountable. We have the right to have our say and express our disappointment in the Guild's leadership on this issue. The Guild President is accountable for ensuring that Guild policy reflects the will of members expressed through the Members' Democratic Process.

The Response Against

Arguments that have been advanced by the President against the motion include:

The President has worked hard throughout her term in office, including on the cost of living campaign and introducing a mandatory consent course. The President has dedicated significant amounts of time to engaged with students on the topic of external memberships and other issues.

It would not be reasonable to remove the President after all of the hard work that she has delivered during her term.

The Guild Trustee Board decision to abolish external memberships were considered to be reasonable by the Board based on the evidence presented. Since then the Guild has taken clear steps to reinstate external memberships, specifically for four groups of members outlined above. The Board has also established a task and finish group to explore further options which may allow for other categories of External Memberships. It should be noted that the 15th May Trustee Board Meeting was the first since the March 2023 All Student Vote.

The Guild President cannot act independently of the Trustee Board in this matter so it is wrong to single her out.

Other Relevant Documents

[Trustee Board Statement on External Memberships](#) – May 2023

[Trustee Board Minutes](#)

[All Student Meeting Minutes and Information](#)