

## **Guild of Students'** **Beliefs and Commitments**

### **1. Statement of Purpose**

The University Of Birmingham Guild Of Students is a democratic organisation in which our members set policy regarding the overall beliefs and commitments of the Guild. This document outlines the beliefs and general commitments of the Guild of Students based on policy passed at Guild Council and through referenda. Through the presentation of this document, it is the aim of the Guild to ensure that all members are able to locate and examine information on policy, as passed by Guild Council, in a simple and effective format.

### **2. Affiliations and Endorsements**

The Guild of Students is affiliated to the following organisations:

- National Union of Students
- Stop Climate Chaos
- Workers Rights Consortium

The Guild of Students endorses the following national campaigns:

- Black History Month
- Buy Right Pledge
- Disability History Month
- Enough Project's Conflict Free Pledge
- Fair Trade Fortnight
- LGBTQ History Month
- NUS' campaign against the Higher Education Cuts and Fees
- NUS campaign on Postgraduate Funding
- NUS Sound Ethical Choice Affiliation
- NUS Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment Accreditation
- STAR's Equal Access to Higher Education Campaign
- The People and Planet Tar Sands Free Campaign
- The People and Planet Going Greener Campaign
- International Women's Day
- UK Uncut
- Fossil Free UK
- Real Student Rights
- Islamophobia Awareness Month'
- Movement Against Xenophobia
- Women's History Month

### **3. Environmental Activism**

The Guild of Students has a duty to facilitate and enable students to take action on environmental issues such as climate change.

### **4. Ethical Business Practices**

The Guild of Students' believes that it and the University have an important part to play in promoting the importance of ethical behaviour amongst external organisations, and that both organisations can do this by where appropriate only working with organisations that do not have a negative impact on society.

The Guild shall where possible avoid investing in or doing business with the following types of companies:

- Those that trade in works with products meant for a military purpose
- Those that mistreat and deny union rights to their workers
- Those that damage the environment
- Those that exploit their suppliers
- Those that market their products irresponsibly
- Those that cause students financial hardship by misleading selling their products
- Those that are guilty of human rights abuses
- Venues in which staff or security discriminate against students on grounds of ethnicity, sexuality or gender
- Carnage UK, Enigma, Super Enigma, StudentNightTickets.com or any other company involved in the misappropriation of Guild of Students or student group branding
- Those that engage in extreme or demonstrative tax avoidance or evasion, or those that facilitate such tax avoidance or evasion

The Guild shall, where possible, invest or do business with the following types of companies:

- Those that support the Fair Trade Foundation
- Those that support the Rainforest Alliance
- Those that support the Marine Stewardship Council
- Those that support the Forest Stewardship Council

The Guild shall where possible avoid having any interaction with the following types of products:

- Those that have been tested on animals
- Electronics produced using minerals from war-torn countries

The Guild shall where possible choose to use the following products due to their being produced in a more ethically sound way.

- Fair Trade Products
- One Water and One Condoms
- Those accredited by the NUS Sound Ethical Choice reward scheme

The Guild of Students shall where appropriate encourage the University, relevant commercial partners and students to follow its lead on the companies that they should or should not do business with and the products they should or should not buy.

The Guild shall not advertise employment opportunities in companies which are deemed unethical or environmentally harmful according to its Ethical, Environmental and Procurement Policy.

## **5. Equality & Diversity**

The Guild of Students believes that racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and disablism in all and any forms are totally unacceptable on campus or in wider student life. The Guild of Students is committed to combating all such instances of bigotry and discrimination on campus and respecting the diversity of its membership. It shall work with the University and its commercial partners to ensure that its and their facilities and services are accessible to all students and that no student suffers discrimination from them or their staff

The Guild of Students believes that newspapers including but not limited to the Daily Star and the Daily Sport normalise sexual harassment and a culture of acceptance of statements and

action that are derogatory towards women. In accordance with the Guild of Students commitment to combating all such incidences of bigotry and discrimination on campus, the Guild of Students should not make available such publications.

The Guild of Students will ban all material, including Guild publicity and commercial advertisements, that upholds or propagates racial/gender/sexuality-related/disability-related stereotypes or binaries, or which discriminates against poorer economic classes. Any complaint raised by a student about any material in the Guild being bigoted should result in the immediate removal of that material where possible.

The Guild of Students shall work towards discouraging any form of stereotyping comments/behaviour towards students based on their membership to a particular Sports Club, Student Group or Association. The Guild of Students shall also work towards preventing all the forms of discrimination and harassment based on the protected characteristics e.g. gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc, within sports clubs, Student Groups and Associations.

## **6. Guild of Students' Communications**

The Guild of Students should promote to students the roles and work of all Guild Officers. Guild Officers shall remain accountable to students through regular communication with them and scrutiny from their elected representatives.

The Guild of Students should ensure that it effectively communicates with all Birmingham students, including those that study away from the main Edgbaston campus.

The Guild of Students should ensure that all its electronic communications are freely available to students by not using document formats that require students to purchase software rather than use freeware.

The Guild of Students should ensure that it sends all Guild Council papers via email to all its members. The Guild shall also provide students with a summary (copy/pasted from the 'Motions' paper) of the motions in a separate document.

## **7. Not hindering a peaceful settlement in Israel/Palestine**

The Guild of Students supports a peaceful settlement of the Israel/Palestine conflict in line with NUS policy and does not support either side of the conflict. The Guild shall avoid investing in companies identified by the NUS as impacting negatively on attempts to foster a peaceful settlement in the region, and will lobby the university to allow the contracts to expire and be reassessed with emphasis on not renewing the contract.

## **8. Hidden Course Costs**

The Guild of Students believes that students are faced with many hidden course costs as a result of University policies forcing students to pay for facilities and materials integral to their student experience. Such hidden courses costs place an additional financial burden on students and often that burden is aggravated by students being caught unawares. The Guild urges the University to keep course costs for students as low as possible, to not use course costs to generate revenue and at all times ensure that prospective students fully understand the true cost of studying at Birmingham.

## **9. Higher Education Funding**

The Guild of Students opposes cuts to higher education funding, believing that they will damage the education of students and the job security of university staff and diminish the UK's global standing in higher education. The Guild will work at both a local and a national level to oppose them.

The guild supports the principle of a public education system set out in "a response to the government white paper" written by the *campaign for the public university*: [http://publicuniversity.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2011/07/Response\\_to\\_White\\_Paper\\_Final.pdf](http://publicuniversity.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2011/07/Response_to_White_Paper_Final.pdf). The Guild views the white paper as a double attack on this generation of students who will be faced by the twin burdens of record public and private debt.

The Guild believes it has the duty to back NUS supported demonstrations and protests, and believes it has the duty to play a significant part in the mobilisation for aforementioned demonstrations and protests.

In cutting funding to university departments the Guild of Students rejects the following premises completely; short term fluctuation in funding and fitting a department to the university's research profile. We believe this, as academic work, requires a stable base and it is absolutely inappropriate to close a department that would take a generation to re-create, on the basis of short term funding changes. Further we believe trying to rationalise the University to keep only those departments that are now considered to be currently 'successful' is clearly very short-sighted and this is detrimental to both the academic community and to its wider goal and impact of knowledge creation. The University is a community made up of diverse disciplines as well as different activities of teaching, research and external collaborations.

## **10. Mental Health**

The Guild of Students is committed to working with the University and other stakeholders to support the mental health of students. It shall work to improve and promote the services on offer to those who suffer from mental health problems.

## **11. No Platform**

The Guild of Students has a moral responsibility to ensure that all its members are able to use its services and be involved in its activities free from the fear of attack, discrimination or threats due to their ethnicity, sexuality, disability or any other factor. Because of this duty, it shall provide no platform to groups that pose a threat to the Guild of Students being a safe space for all students. This shall include barring such groups from using the Guild's services and engaging in its activities, and also barring Guild Officers, Student Groups and Guild Committees from sharing a platform with such groups in their official Guild capacity.

In addition, the Guild will give no platform to the following groups:

- British National Party
- Hizb ut-Tahrir
- National Front
- English Defence League

## **12. Opposing Balloon Releases**

The Guild should not be used as the launching ground for deliberate release of balloons, nor should it finance or support such activities for fear of damaging the atmosphere or wildlife, and so as to reduce the amount of unnecessary pollution we cause.

## **13. Postgraduate Education**

The Guild of Students believes that access to postgraduate education should be based on the ability to attend, rather than the ability to pay for the course. It is committed to exposing the access problems within postgraduate education and how this inaccessibility is due to the system relying on private financing.

It will work with the University to ensure that Postgraduate courses offer value to students and urges the Government to ensure that all regulations concerning the dissemination of course information to prospective students apply equally to undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

#### **14. Student Access To Healthcare**

The Guild of Students believes that all students, at Birmingham and beyond, have the right to free, accessible and local health services. This healthcare should be provided in a way that is fully accessible to any student, regardless of background.

#### **15. Students Accommodation**

The Guild of Students believes that students should live in good quality, affordable and safe accommodation and will work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that this is the case. The Guild is committed to providing advice and guidance to students about accommodation issues.

#### **16. Students as Active Participants in Democracy**

The Guild of Students believes that as many students as possible should be involved in the democratic process and is committed to encouraging its members to take part in all national elections and referendums.

#### **17. Students in the Community**

The Guild of Students believes that for many students living independently in the community is an important part of their university experience and that students have a significant positive influence in the local community, and in the city and region as a whole.

#### **18. Student Protests**

The Guild supports peaceful direct action and protest, within the law of the land and in line with Guild policy.

The Guild of Students believes in individuals' rights to carry out peaceful direct action. The guild will not distance itself from legal non-violent protest, although it may not in all cases explicitly condone it. The Guild shall do all it can to protect its activists from being subjected to violence and intimidation, and provide guidance to them about their rights in protest situations and how to diffuse potentially violent situations.

#### **19. Supporting Students Giving Blood**

The Guild of Students believes that the National Blood Service's ban on gay and bisexual men giving blood is homophobic and discriminatory. It shall, however, still encourage and facilitate students who can give blood. Therefore it shall the National Blood Service to use Guild facilities for its donation drives although the Guild shall use such occasions to highlight its campaign for the National Blood Service to drop its homophobic policies.

## **20. Supporting Students Living Sustainably**

The Guild shall encourage and where possible support students to live in a way that is environmentally sustainable and so benefits themselves, their community and the environment.

## **21. Students Working Part-Time**

The Guild of Students believes that students should normally work no more than sixteen hours but that when regulating the part time work of students both it and the University need to be flexible and properly recognise that many students can or need to work longer hours. The Guild of Students is committed to working with the University to make it as simple as possible for students to apply for temporary jobs on campus.

## **22. The Student Movement**

The Guild is part of the student movement and recognises that an attack on students or students' unions anywhere is an attack on them everywhere. A stronger national movement directly helps Birmingham students because it makes university management and other organisations less likely to attack our interests.

The national demonstration called at Sussex University in March 2013 as a part of their campaign against privatisation, strengthens the student movement because it shows people that if necessary we can mobilize strong action. The guild will support any such demonstrations and endeavour to send students along to them.

We note with concern the increasing trend of University management interfering with their students' unions. University interference in unions such as Bolton, London Met, Glasgow College, and the University of London Union is unacceptable and the Guild should stand against it.

The Guild believes it has the duty to back NUS supported demonstrations and protests, if they are in line with Guild Policy, and believes it has the duty to play a significant part in the mobilisation for aforementioned demonstrations and protests.

## **23. University Industrial Relations**

The Guild of Students believes that the University has a responsibility to maintain good industrial relations on campus and ensure that the education of students is not negatively affected by strike action. Where it cannot meet this responsibility the University should compensate students accordingly. The Guild of Students believes in the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with campus unions and believes that the mistreatment of staff by the university management damages the interests of its members. The Guild will support staff strikes unless otherwise instructed by Guild Council or referendum, shall offer a room for staff to use as a base whilst taking industrial action, and shall support and mobilise students in taking supplementary action to support staff.

## **24. University Services and Facilities**

The Guild of Students' believes that the University has a responsibility to provide the services that students have paid for and that it's important that the University of Birmingham has high-quality facilities and services which are accessible to all students. The Guild of Students' is committed to lobbying the University to improve any facility or service that students are dissatisfied with.

The Guild of Students also recognises that one of the most attractive features of the University to Students is the beauty and atmosphere of its Campuses and Redbrick architecture. As such, the Guild of Students is committed to lobbying the University to do its utmost to preserve such heritage when considering the architectural development and construction of its campuses.

## **25. Widening Participation In Higher Education**

The Guild of Students believes that higher education should be accessible to anybody who has the ability to attend University and that widening participation in Higher Education is vital in securing social justice and increase the UK's economic competitiveness. The Guild of Students is committed to making it easier for students from non-traditional backgrounds to attend university and shall work with the University and the NUS to ensure that widening participation is at the top of both organisations' agenda.

## **26. Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment**

The Guild of Students is committed to ensuring that its members are able to attend any of its events and engage in our activities without the risk or fear of being subjected to any form of sexual harassment or sexually violent behaviour.

## **27. Active Opposition to Racism and Fascism**

The Guild currently has a no platform policy towards the English Defence League and other racist/fascist groups and is committed to combating all such instances of bigotry and discrimination. However there is still much more that can be done to build a student movement against racism/fascism. Last October the English Defence League held a demonstration in Birmingham City Centre yet the counter-demonstration was poorly attended, and there was no meaningful student organising to oppose their marching in our city. The Guild should use its resources to build a strong anti-racism/fascism campaign on campus and in the wider community.

## **28. Community Business Practices**

The Guild believes, where possible, it should own and run new business ventures or work with businesses in the local community. If a national or multinational company is to be invited to operate out of the Guild of Students, the Memberships' judgement should be consulted through the Guilds democratic structures and taken into account when making decisions.

## **29. Major Course Changes**

We believe that the Guild should be consulted at least a month in advance of any consultation (or action) representing major alterations to academic provision.

We believe that strategic incompatibility, on its own, is not an acceptable basis on which to close otherwise popular and financially viable academic programmes.

## **30. Consultation on Changes in Elections**

Major Changes in the way that elections work need wide consultation in the student body and must pass through Guild Council. Software that matches voters to candidates is very controversial and needs serious debate and thought before it can be implemented.

## **31. Parking Schemes**



The Guild of Students actively opposes the implementation any sort of parking restriction scheme in student areas if they (a) increase the cost of living for students in that area, (b) will restrict the number of cars that can belong to student households, or (c) will operate in such a way that will prejudice or disadvantage students in some way that an ordinary household would be less likely to experience.

### 32. External Student Services

The Guild of Students has a duty to protect its students from external service providers who offer a service that is poor value or poor quality. Therefore, the Guild will not engage in business with companies that are deemed by students to offer a service that is poor value or poor quality. Moreover, the Guild will make an asserted effort to raise awareness of any complaints that have been made about these companies or problems that they have caused students, taking into account whether the problem only affects certain students based on age, location or any other trait.

The companies currently falling under this list are:

- Glide Utilities (3<sup>rd</sup> party bills & utilities manager)
- Payday lending companies such as Wonga
- Britannia Property Services (Lettings Agency & Estate Agent)

Companies on a probationary period are;

- Virgin Media (broadband internet provider)

### 33. Gender Neutral Toilets

The Guild believes that all students have the right to live without fear of discrimination or judgement, and as such shall ensure the Guild is an inclusive, safe space, by ensuring gender-neutral toilets are available in the Guild building.

### 34. Stewarding At Guild Events

In line with guild policy passed by guild council on the 14th June 2011 the guild believes:

1. Students have a long standing tradition of providing high quality stewarding for all guild events.
2. Student safety on all guild events is a paramount importance.
3. Paid staff are not necessarily any better than volunteers in terms of stewarding.
4. The Student Development figure of **A MINIMUM** of one steward per 30 participants is the official policy of the guild of students for Fresher's Fest along with any event alcoholic event that involves a bus and a pre-bar (the ratio should be no higher, i.e 1 to 50).
5. That effort should be made to provide volunteers with an incentive for giving up their time.

### 35. Countering Extremism on Campus

The Guild of Students opposes the "Prevent" strategy and believes it reinforces crude stereotypes of Muslims that will only feed prejudice and discrimination, leading to isolation and stigmatisation which will only prevent their continued engagement and contribution.

Whilst the Guild does not believe "radicalisation" to be a widespread problem it recognises that it may take place on some occasions, and that it has a responsibility to ensure the safety of all students. Universities are places where extremist views can be challenged effectively through dialogue, open forums and debates and this is the most appropriate way to combat these problems. The Guild opposes spying on any students and will not pass on information about members' religious or political opinions or society members lists to the police, university authorities or any other third party.



### **36. Response to Reviews**

In recent years every department that has been put under review has either been significantly cut or closed. The review process does not independently review the department, it goes out to try and find reasons to cut or close a department that university management have deemed undesirable. The Guild of Students should not wait for the review process to end before starting out a campaign to defend the department, from the moment a review starts the Guild of Students will support public campaigns to defend the department.

### **37. Distinction between liberation and representation associations and student groups**

The Guild believes that Liberation Associations have a role in the Guild of Students that is wider and distinct from student groups, being political associations seeking equality, accessibility and empowerment for marginalised groups within the student population and society as a whole; disabled people, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ\* people and women. As such, they are fundamental to the Guild being a truly representative institution and becoming a safe place for all students.

The Guild believes that representation associations have a role in the Guild of Students that is wider and distinct from student groups, being political associations seeking equality, accessibility, and empowerment for marginalised groups within the student population such as Student Parents and Carers, Postgraduate and Mature Students, Home Students, International Students and Students of Faith (Interfaith Associations).

Representation Associations are prevented from dissolution and we are necessary for the creation of a truly representative Guild.

### **38. Academic Numbers and Stress Levels**

The Guild of Students believes that academics are the primary determinant of the quality of university education and that the proportion of money spent on academics at this university is too low. This causes a high student faculty ratio which has a direct negative impact on the quality of education. We further believe that the high levels of stress among academics at this university are a serious problem and that this is also damaging the quality of provision.

The university should, as a priority, create strategies to:

- Increase the proportion of money spent on staff
- Decrease the student faculty ratio.
- Get into the top 150 universities in the world for the QS faculty student ratio
- Get into the top half of universities in the UCU academic stress survey
- Immediately cease to make compulsory redundancies and pledge not to do so in future

The guild supports campaigns by students either to defend staff in their department from redundancy or to increase the number of staff in their department. The guild should look to help and support these campaigns.

### **39. Living Wage**

The Guild supports the Living Wage Campaign, and will make every practical effort to support its implementation, including its implementation across campus.

### **40. RAG raids are not alcoholic**

The Guild believes that RAG raids, as a fundraising activity, are non-alcoholic fundraising events.

#### **41. Guild Student Media**

Student Media is a valuable resource to the Guild. It not only acts to develop student's abilities in various media skills which no course at this University currently offers. But it also serves as a vital engagement tool, allowing more students to be aware of Union activities, discussions and events.

Therefore, the Guild should always strive to display, publish and support in every available way media content produced by its Media groups, but also all student groups as well. This includes allowing this content to go out around the Guild of Students building in all of its social areas. And also to take this content further afield, on main campus, satellite sites and beyond.'

#### **42. Renewable Energy**

The Guild of Students believes the challenge of bridging the 20GW (27% of total UK) power gap in the UK by 2020 requires a step-change in the production and consumption of energy; with the problems of resource scarcity and climate change, it is vital that renewable energy is utilised to its maximum effect. The Guild of Students also understands it needs to be a leader in cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 34% by 2020 and 80% by 2050 (with 1990 as a baseline year) – as is enshrined into UK law (Climate Change Act 2008). We believe, by 2020, the Guild of Students should run entirely on renewable energy in order to protect itself from increased oil price shocks, which cause volatility and lack of confidence in the market; as a part of this, the 'negawatts' (decreased energy demand, mainly as a result of heating and cooling loads) should be instituted through capital investment in *real* energy-saving measures, by retrofitting the Guild of Students' buildings where possible. The Guild of Students believes energy efficiency savings are important, but also recognises the vital role decreasing overall energy use is, in order to make the transition to a low-carbon economy easier.

#### **43. Healthy Eating/Active Lifestyle**

It is important members of the Guild of Student are fully aware of the advantages to their health and wellbeing of consuming a balanced diets and taking part in the recommended weekly levels of exercise (when fit to do so).

The dangers of ignoring the huge risks of neglecting a balanced diet and regular exercise are all too often not taken into consideration by students because they are simply unaware or forget. This can be catastrophic in later life and sometimes in the short term future.

Therefore, the Guild of Students should always, where possible, seek to make students generally aware of issues relating to their diet and the physical and mental benefits of exercise and promote events that help this such nation scheme 'parkrun'

#### **44. Article Four Direction**

The Guild of Students' believe that any legislation attempting to restrict where vulnerable tenants or certain groups such as students, young people or migrant workers can live is not acceptable.

We believe that good management, improved living standards and better partnership working are more important in addressing any issues that arise in our City.

#### **45. Students choose their representatives not University management**

The Guild of Students believes that as a matter of principle only students have the right to choose their representatives. If the university refuses to allow officers to attend meetings relevant to their role without reasonable grounds then this undermines this principle. In the case that this occurs no other officer shall attend the meeting in their place, except to make a complaint and then immediately withdraw from the meeting.

#### **46. Housing**

The Guild of Students believes that the student housing its members live in should be priced reasonably, and should be of a high quality. It believes that students shouldn't be extorted by landlords or letting agencies. Living in a property where the landlord or letting agencies don't deal properly with maintenance or structural problems detracts from student welfare and the Guild should seek to pre-emptively minimize instances of mistreatment by Landlords.

The Guild should actively support financially viable solutions to improving and stabilising rent rates and housing conditions in housing stock across Selly Oak, the Bournbrook area.

The Guild recognises that housing cooperatives could solve the above problems and has full support for housing cooperatives. The Guild will advertise cooperative accommodation through channels such as SHAC and housing fairs to students and will also provide relevant contact details to those who have set up successful cooperatives in order to aid creation of these entities where possible.

#### **47. Against Hunting With Dogs**

The Guild of Students supports the Hunting Act 2004 and stands against hunting with dogs believing it to be a needless act of animal cruelty. The Guild of Students does not in any way consider any form of hunting as a 'sport', rather as a heavily outdated tradition.

#### **48. Opposing Birmingham City Council cuts**

The Guild of Students believes that the £600million cuts being made to Birmingham City Council by 2017 will be harmful to students and detrimental to the city as a whole. The Guild has a responsibility to actively resist these cuts where possible, via campaigns, petitioning, raising awareness, protesting, applying pressure on politicians, among other things.

#### **49. Expansion of Student Properties**

The Guild of Students believes that the local area, particularly Bournbrook, is becoming saturated with big houses, of six or more bedrooms.

In light of the changing market, and the continued insistence of landlords to expand properties, the guild supports local residents and councillors in lobbying landlords to cease these unnecessary expansions for the benefit of students seeking smaller homes and the continued existence of a local, thriving community.

#### **50. Trustee Boards**

The Guild believes that Trustee Boards are undemocratic and, other things being equal, undesirable. However due to the legal context with regards to charity and company law and the 1994 education act; it is unfortunately necessary to have one in order to maintain the tax benefits that come from our status as an incorporated charity. Members of the Trustee board should note that in an ideal world they would not be in place, and thus should act with according restraint.

## 51. Action

In the context of this University's systematic attack on education detailed in other beliefs direct action by students is likely to take place. The Guild's role is never to manage and control, or condemn student dissent or action, rather it should use it and the pressure it applies to achieve change. Possible action could include:

- Disrupting distinguished lecture series
- Disrupting University open days
- Drawing attention to their attacks in the press
- Occupations
- Walkouts or student strikes

The Guild will attempt to develop forms of direct action that can be used while maintaining other responsibilities. It will not condemn protestors for taking this action, or claim that it is illegitimate. However Guild Student Media Groups (given their position within the Guild), are free to comment or condemn 'action' as defined in this motion, under fair comment and freedom of the press.

## 52. Student Group Performances

The Guild believes that every effort should be made to accommodate the bookings of rooms within the Guild of Students for the purpose of student productions, performances and rehearsals by its own Student Groups. It is therefore understood that the Guild's Venues department also wishing to book rooms/spaces in areas other than the 'Venues Spaces' (Beorma, Underground) i.e. The Debating Hall, should work around the requests from ALL Student Groups and only seek to make bookings in these spaces once availability has been made available following this by the Room Bookings Co-ordinator.

## 53. Women's Self Defence Classes

The Guild of Students believes that Womens' self-defence classes should be offered for free at the University of Birmingham. These should be offered by the University, and, failing that, should be offered by the Guild. These should be available permanently, and should aim to cater for as many self-defining women as possible.

## 54. Liberation Emergency Motions

The Guild believes that Liberation and Representation Associations should have autonomy over decisions which may affect them and also that these decisions should be accessible for Liberation and Representation Associations. We believe that oppression and issues faced by these groups are different to those of the general student population and as such motions concerning them should be treated in that way.

The Guild believes that we cannot always have foresight of oppression which may arise after the motion deadline has passed. For example, an act of violence or harassment which has affected a liberation and representation group and of which it is of utmost importance to make policy upon. As such, in these exceptional circumstances, Liberation and Representation Associations should be allowed to submit emergency motions after the deadline has passed up to the start of Guild Council.

Guild Council also believes, as these motions will be of vital importance to the safety and wellbeing of members of the student populace, they should also be moved to the top of the agenda. In order to have full discussion upon the issue and make sure it is resolved upon the night. However, motions concerning disabled students liberation should still be at the top of the agenda if they are raised, so accessibility is not infringed upon.

If an emergency motion is submitted too later for paperwork/notice to be given to Guild Councillors, the emergency motion will receive sufficient time in Guild Council to be properly explained by the proposer or their nominee.

## **55. Education for Sustainable Development**

The Guild of Students believes that the University should aim to incorporate ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) into the curriculum. This should be done through embedding ESD into the curricula for existing subjects and by providing additional MOMDs – as appropriate.

According to the UNESCO definition ESD covers four main areas: social and economic justice, cultural diversity, human rights of future generations and the protection and restoration of the Earth's ecosystems.

As part of its wider agenda, ESD asks how our disciplines address some or all of the following:

- A strong, stable and viable economy
- A healthy and just society
- Diversity
- Effective and participative governance
- Environmental limits and ecological wellbeing
- Quality of life
- Cultural heritage
- The rural and the urban (conflict and balance)
- Preparing for the imagined future
- Ethical questions

ESD will ensure students reflect upon the values implicit in their disciplines and their impact, expose students to sustainability conversations, and the role of their own and other disciplines in developing sustainable futures.

## **56. The University as a Community**

The Guild believes that the University is more than just a collection of buildings where students pay to receive a degree. University is a community which envelops both students and staff in a partnership, making the university what it is. Support staff are essential to the functioning of the University and the quality of students' educational environment. The University has a duty to provide adequate pay and working conditions to all its staff and the Guild opposes measures which are to the detriment of the lives of support staff such as annualized hours and any 5 out of 7 days contracts.

## **57. The Guild and the University in the community**

The Guild should recognise that their economic influence and contribution to the Community although good has a lot more potential. The Guild, where possible should offer work experience and apprenticeships to local young people and should lobby for the university to follow suit and offer apprenticeships and more work experience placements for local young people.

## **58. G4S**

The Guild of Students opposes collaboration or contract with G4S due to the latter's reported widespread complicity in a series of human rights abuses.

The Guild will work to end its own relations (be it 3<sup>rd</sup> party services or Guild run services) as well as actively pursue the University to end relations with the company.

## 59. Postgraduates who teach

The Guild believes that many postgraduates who teach already face severe job insecurity and economic hardship, and that this has a detrimental impact on wellbeing of postgraduates themselves and the quality of the classes they teach. We feel that the University is, in this way, failing to support and nurture the next generation of academic staff. The Guild opposes the idea that postgraduate small group teachers should conduct marking during their "preparation and follow up hour" for seminars, including those that are repeated. All postgraduates who are expected to mark should be paid separately for this task. The Guild will campaign against proposals which will lead to postgraduates losing pay and for pay increases which keep pace or exceed the current rate of inflation (RPI) and will work with and support BUCU and the PGMSA in achieving these goals

## 60. Ideals

The Guild believes that the following seven ideals should be implemented by the University of Birmingham, because they are in the interests of Guild members, University staff, and Higher Education in general. The Guild should endeavour to work with the University to implement these ideals.

- That David Eastwood, and by extension the University of Birmingham, should reconsider their position that University fees should be increased, in favour of lobbying the Government to increase central funding for Higher Education so that students should not have to shoulder the burden.
- That the University of Birmingham ought to publically oppose the current, and any potential future, privatisation of student loans. The consequences of such policy being potentially catastrophic for current and future students.<sup>[1]</sup>
- That all staff working for the University of Birmingham – including those employed in-house, by external contractors and those employed from the student body – should be paid a living wage.
- That the pay ratio between the highest and lowest paid staff in the University should be significantly reduced.
- That a body should be set up, comprising elected students, academic and support staff, to oversee, and advise the University upon, restructuring of departments, University investment decisions, and its lobbying positions.
- That the University publishes an 'Ethical Investment and Procurement Policy'. This policy ought to be reported on annually, with opportunity for engagement with staff, students and other key stakeholders of the University.
- That the Nursing course should face no loss of investment and no redundancies.

## 61. Student Rights and Islamophobia

The Guild of Students regards the 'Student Rights' organisation as an illegitimate voice on 'anti-extremism' and unrepresentative of the student body it claims to work on behalf of; and believes its activity to negatively affect students' welfare, campus cohesion and freedom of speech on campus.

The Guild endorses the student-run 'Real Student Rights' campaign and will defend any student/society attacked unfairly by Student Rights, against infringement on their freedom of expression and the Guild's political autonomy.

## 62. International Students

The Guild recognises that international students are an integral part of the University, and the UK as a whole; helping enrich the cultures, perspectives and diversity of higher education in a way that should not be quantified only in terms of economic benefit.



International students are also subject to heavy surveillance, restrictions and targeted xenophobia by the government, UKVI and their institutions, which creates a very hostile environment for them here and can adversely affect their educational experience and welfare immensely, whilst also impinging on their ability to self-organise and defend their rights.

In the case of non-EU and BME international students, this is exacerbated by the outright racism of the British political establishment, and the extra level of attacks they face reinforces the precarious nature of their student status.

All this threatens international students and the benefit they can bring to education and university communities like our own, whilst also perpetuating discrimination and repression that conflicts with the Guild's values; the attacks that affect international students across the UK HE sector are attacks that affect our members.

The Guild stands in support of international students' right to study and live without fear of institutional discrimination or intimidation and against any measures negatively affecting their ability to do so.

The Guild will proactively support its international student members to be aware of their rights and services available to cater to their specific needs, and also defend/campaign for international students subject to attacks due to the increasing xenophobia, racism and neoliberalisation of academia.

### **63. Movement Against Xenophobia**

The University of Birmingham Guild of Students believes that the pressure on people's income and on public services is not a result of immigrants, who are net contributors to the welfare state, but of employers' attacks on wages and conditions, and cuts being introduced as a result of the austerity drive.

The Guild of Students believes that pandering to anti-immigrant arguments does not undermine racism, but instead normalises it, helping fuel the growth of right-wing political forces such as UKIP and far-right organisations such as the Britain First and English Defence League.

The Guild of Students is committed to campaign against the scapegoating of international students, and one way of doing that is by being part of the Movement Against Xenophobia network.

### **64. Zero Tolerance Policy**

The Guild hold that no member should violate the Zero Tolerance Policy.

### **65. The European Union**

The Guild believes that the European Economic Area via our membership of the European Union brings considerable advantages to the Student Body including but not limited to the Erasmus exchange scheme, European Research funding and the freedom of movement for students and workers.

The Guild further believes that it is in the interest of the student body for the UK to keep these rights.

The Guild will resolve in the case of any referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union to register students to vote. It will also seek clarity from the government



about what the consequences of any renegotiated deal with the European Union will mean in terms of the rights laid out above, and what a vote to leave would entail in practice. Should any outcome threaten these rights, the Guild will campaign in the referendum on that basis.

The Guild will also campaign for the rights of EU students to vote in the referendum on a similar basis to their Commonwealth counterparts. It will make sure the immigration rights of non-EU students don't get lost in the debate, for example by backing the reintroduction of the post-study work visa.

## **66. Puppy Day**

The Guild of Students strongly believes that Puppies and kittens are beautiful and magical creatures as well as a great way of allowing members to relief stress. It is noted that in ideal world every member should have a puppy or kitten (on opt out basis) for cuddles, hugs and de-stress purposes. The Guild therefore should endeavour to hold at least one Ultimate Puppy and Kitten Day during winter and summer exam period for students to attend. In addition, every day in the Guild of Students shall be an Honorary Puppy & Kitten Day (no puppies or kittens needed) where love for puppies and kittens encouraged shall be shared among members.