

# NUS Reform | You said- We listened

When we launched the NUS reform process last year, unions like yours fed in ideas, proposals were then developed, and they were amended and voted on at an “Extraordinary Conference”. But then at our Annual Conference they narrowly missed the 2/3 majority necessary to pass.

So we know they weren’t perfect, which is why following conference we directly contacted all delegates, constituent members and NUS mailing lists to seek feedback on the review and to get thoughts from you on where to go next.

As a result of this process, we received over 400 written responses from student officers, formally from unions, NUS Committees and conference delegates. In addition well over 500 officers have participated in consultation meetings and many have fed back comments at those meetings or to NEC members.

We then considered the feedback received and as a result have made a host of changes. Whilst they do not alter the fundamental basis for the proposed reforms, they do address significant concerns expressed by you; they are a simplification and strengthening of the proposals, with greater accountability and safeguards at the forefront.

Full details of the changes will be available online at <http://www.officeronline.co.uk/reform/> from Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2008. Below is a summary of the key issues.

## Postgraduate Students

You said	The Result
<b><i>“You are not doing enough to address Postgraduate Representation within NUS”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have built in proposals on Postgraduate Representation to ensure this group of students is specifically recognised within the structures</li> <li>We will also now commence talks with the National Postgraduate Committee (NPC) on closer collaboration to ensure this work is properly researched and supported</li> </ul>

## The Language

You said	The Result
<b><i>“Some of the terms you used for new bodies or committees are confusing or misleading”</i></b>	<p>We want to ensure that the proposals are clear and simple to understand and that bodies “do what they say on the tin”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The “Senate” is renamed the “National Executive Council” to better reflect its role and purpose</li> <li>The “Congress” is renamed the “National Conference”</li> <li>The “Board” is renamed the “Trustee Board” to emphasize its trustee and regulatory role</li> <li>“National Office Bearers” are renamed “Full Time Officers”</li> </ul>

## Annual Conference/Congress

You said	The Result
<b><i>“Conference should still be the highest political body. And it should not become a 1 day celebration but be the place to hold real debates”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any references to Conference being a “celebration” have been removed; it will still be at least a three day event</li> </ul>
<b><i>“Cross campus ballots should remain as the way that unions elect their delegations”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The default and standard requirement for HE delegates to be elected by Cross Campus Ballot will be expressed in the core constitution.</li> <li>Exemptions will be stricter than previously; only granted on the basis that the selection method is democratic and that all students at a given union be given an equal chance to stand to attend (for example reserving places for a particular campus)</li> </ul>
<b><i>“Conference just is not accessible”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Democratic Procedures Committee will be required to structure and run conference in such a way as to guarantee the accessibility of proceedings for all delegates and will be given enhanced powers to enforce this. In addition accessibility will be fully considered by the relevant committees in the run up to any Extraordinary and the next Annual Conference</li> </ul>

## Mature, Part Time & International Students

<b><i>“We want to make sure that there is representation from both EU and non EU students- not all their issues are the same”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any student that was a UK National at the commencement of their programme of study will be prevented from standing for office for the committee or officer position.</li> <li>We will ensure that the two International Students representatives on the National Executive Council comprise of one EU Student and one non EU student.</li> </ul>
<b><i>“We want to make sure there is representation from both Part Time and Mature students- not all their issues are the same”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The “Mature and Part Time Students” student section will get two places on the National Executive Council (Senate); one for Mature Students, one for Part Time Students elected at its conference.</li> </ul>

## The Senate (now known as the National Executive Council)

<b><i>“It looks like a powerless talking shop”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NEC’s role is clarified as the representative council of NUS that holds critical executive policy powers</li> <li>We will clarify its role in interim policy making and policy interpretation</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will clarify its power to direct the Trustee Board to carry out its duties in accordance with its interpretations of policy</li> </ul>
<b><i>“It needs to better hold officers and senior staff to account on behalf of us”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will establish a power to form scrutiny committees that can question and scrutinise both Full Time Officers and Senior Staff Members on the work of NUS and issue reports on their findings to the membership</li> </ul>
<b><i>“What is the role of the Block?” “How will they live and do their job without a salary?”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will clarify the role of the “Block” members with a published role description</li> <li>They will be afforded full out of pocket expenses to visit unions, take part in unions’ and NUS’ activities/campaigns, and carry out NEC duties</li> </ul>

## Elections and Democratic Procedures

<b><i>“I don’t want to see student factions regulating elections”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Democratic Procedures Committee (DPC) no longer have a direct role in running, regulating or supervising elections</li> <li>Conference will appoint a Chief Returning Officer and three deputies to form an elections committee, who will not be ordinary (student) members, must have relevant professional experience, and will be responsible for the conduct and good administration of elections.</li> </ul>
<b><i>“I want NUS’ elections to be better regulated”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A timeline for bringing forward proposals on elections regulation should be established for the new elections committee to follow.</li> </ul>

## NUS Finances

<b><i>“Budgets are political and so Conference should set the Budget- the most important political policy there is”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Conference will set the budget that will be developed and proposed jointly by the NEC and Trustee Board</li> </ul>
<b><i>“I want to ensure there is an officer I can hold to account for Finance”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the chair of both the NEC and Trustee Board the National President will be clarified as being chiefly politically responsible for Finances</li> </ul>

## Zones and Policy Making

<b><i>“National Conference should be the only body that makes policy- it’s the most representative body”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zone Conference will not have any policy setting powers. Any policy discussions will be purely consultative/informal.</li> </ul>
<b><i>“Why can we only send one delegate?”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There will be no formal limit on the number of delegates that can attend a Zone Conference. The voting power for electing Zone Committees will however remain at one union one vote</li> </ul>
<b><i>“The role of the Zone Committee is unclear”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The role of the Zone Committee will be a volunteer with an interest in that Zone’s work, that can input ideas and views into the zone; they will also carry out a scrutiny role in relation to the work of the Full Time Officer</li> </ul>
<b><i>“How does this improve accountability?”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The VP/Zone Committee will be required to submit a report &amp; plan to the Zone Conference for discussion/accountability, and the Presidents Priorities Report and Plan will go to each Zone Conference</li> </ul>
<b><i>“The policy process looks very confusing”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have simplified and published revised proposals to achieve the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More opportunity to discuss relevant issues to students</li> <li>Opportunities for evidence based policy making</li> <li>Speed up approval of non controversial issues on National Conference floor because the current process wastes time</li> <li>Unions have greater ownership of policy generation and policy making</li> <li>Retain the opportunity for a students’ union to get their issue on National Conference’s Agenda</li> <li>Improve Accountability of Officers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## The Trustee Board

<b><i>“The board will meddle in politics”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have restricted the role of the board in the document to focus on administrative and regulatory matters</li> <li>It can be directed on policy and budget matters, and we have strengthened the reporting and accountability measures for it at National Executive Council and Congress</li> </ul>
<b><i>“The board will be able to cut spending on campaigns”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have clarified the respective roles of the NEC and Trustee Board to ensure that the power to set campaigning and other budgets lies in the hands of the elected bodies.</li> <li>In addition the budget will have to be approved by both the Board and the National Executive Council before being presented to Conference by the President</li> </ul>
<b><i>“The elected senate should be able to overturn decisions of the board”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new proposals grant power to the National Executive Council to refer back, in part or full, the report of the board at its meetings; we have also simplified and clarified the accountability procedures for the board at Annual Congress</li> </ul>
<b><i>“The way lay trustees will be selected is a total stitch up”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new proposals ensure that the nominations committee is broader and that there are proper arrangements for voting on their appointment at Conference</li> </ul>
<b><i>“The board will not be diverse enough”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is now an explicit responsibility to manage the diversity profile of the board given to the nominations committee</li> </ul>
<b><i>The board will be full of “student movement cronies”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is now a detailed clause ruling out anyone with a direct financial or legal relationship with NUS from becoming an external member of the board</li> </ul>
<b><i>“The board could veto changes to the constitution on “financial” or “legal” grounds”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new proposals reflect that the board will not have the right to veto constitutional or schedules changes</li> <li>Nor will it have any right to comment on or “veto” beliefs of the national union or any matter resolved which does not have direct practical financial or legal implications</li> </ul>
<b><i>“There should be Black Representation on the highest body of NUS”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some comments last year referred to a desire to see Liberation Officers on the Board. We have now clarified that the Board is a legal and administrative vehicle that plays no role in budget allocation or policy setting and as such could not be regarded as the “top body”</li> </ul>