

# Policy guide



This guide outlines what policy is, how it works in the Students' Union, and how you can get involved

The Students' Union has several governance documents which explain how it works. The Union is also bound by the law.

The documents which outline the governance of the Union are:

[The Articles of Association](#) - a legal document which outlines how the Union works.

[The Rules](#) - our own document which interprets the articles and gives specific instructions for different areas of the Union.

The Rules, the Articles and the law tell us what we can and can't do; policies then guide our actions towards achieving a desired outcome. Policies are one of many sources of guidance and information that elected officers and staff use to steer the work and priorities of the Union, alongside officer manifestos, job descriptions, and through responding to student concerns and issues that arise.

The document outlines the following information (click the title to go to the relevant bits):

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# What is policy?

*'A **policy** communicates an organisation's principles, it is a type of position statement that provides a set of guiding principles to help with decision making.'* - from [Students' Union Governance, Policies and Procedures](#)

*'The Students' Union makes a variety of decisions, usually in committees or [Union Council](#). At the highest level, decisions can be put before the entire Union membership in a referendum or Members' meeting.'*

*'In the Union's governing Articles of Association, the term "**Policy**" is defined as "**representative and campaigning policy**" and **can only be created by a majority of votes cast at a meeting or referendum where at least 450 students have voted**. The term "policy" is also sometimes used to describe a decision of Union Council or a committee, especially when the decision is intended to lay down principles for decision making in future.'* - The Students' Union [rules on Policy and Decision-making](#)

*'Policy development can be seen, then, as a decision-making process that helps address identified goals, problems or concerns. At its core, policy development entails the selection of a destination or desired objective.'* - [Caledonian Institution of Social Policy](#)

Policy can be defined as a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organisation or individual.

For the Students' Union, policies exist to explain what we do, how we do it, and why we do it. There are different types of policy: while Campaigning Policy is more about *what* we do and *why* we do it, our operational policies explain *how* we do it. Policy can be reactive (e.g. upholding a stance against trident), or proactive (e.g. the Mental Health and Wellbeing policy) as a means of preventing things.

**Representative and Campaigning policies** are proposed by a member (that's you! All students are members of the Students' Union) and voted in by the student body through members meetings or referenda. They are statements which declare that the Union holds a particular belief in relation to that subject, and/or that the Union intends to campaign in support of such a belief ([see Rule 2.1](#)). Campaigning policy is developed in a decision-making process explained in a later section of this guide.

**Operational policies** outline how the Students' Union will go about its business. They influence the decisions that elected officers must take, and are used as a guide to decision-making and to make rules and procedures for staff and students to follow. There are two types of Operational Policy: **Democratic Operational Policy** originates from Campaigning Policy and reflects how that Campaigning Policy will be implemented in the Students' Union. **Governance Operational Policy** originates from legal requirement i.e. a data protection policy in line with the data protection act.

## Different types of policy in the Students' Union

Policy group	Campaigning	Operational	Operational	Operational
Policy type name	<b>Campaigning Policy</b>	<b>Democratic Operational Policy</b>	<b>Governance Operational Policy</b>	<b>Service Policy and Procedures</b>
Definition	Policy with aims and objectives which sets out to make a change to the Union, University or wider world or makes a statement to declare a particular belief and/or intention to campaign in relation to a subject	Policy which outlines how the Union operates and originates from campaigning policy	Policy which outlines how the Union operates and originates from legal requirement	Department or Team level policy which outlines how a particular service, area or team operates
Introduced via	Referenda or Members Meeting	Referenda or Members Meeting  <i>(unless it originates from/interprets a Campaigning policy, in which case Council can introduce it)</i>	Trustees	Operations Steering Group or Executive Board (company)
Originates from	Student petition, Council or Executive	A campaigning policy which requires embedding in the Union as it affects the day-to-day operations of the Union.	Legal requirement or the Risk Register	Organisational need (from relevant department/team)

		These may also originate from elected officers or student members who perceive a need for a policy mandating certain practices and procedures in the Union.		
<b>Requires policy panel for introduction or amendment?</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No
<b>Reviewed and amended by</b>	Council every three years  Will need to go to referenda again for updating between reviews	Relevant committee every 3 years or as stated in the policy  Can be amended as required by relevant committees		Operations Steering Group or Executive Board (company) usually annually
<b>Owned and implemented by</b>	<b>Council</b> (can delegate implementation to Executive)	<b>Council</b> (can delegate implementation to Executive)	<b>Trustees</b> (can delegate implementation to relevant committees)	<b>Operations Steering Group or Executive Board</b> (company) (can delegate implementation to relevant teams/departments)
<b>Examples</b>	<b>Coca-cola boycott</b>  <b>Violence Free Science</b>	<b>Ethical and Environmental Policy</b>	<b>Equality and Diversity Policy</b>  <b>Alcohol Policy</b>	<b>Support and Advocacy Confidentiality Policy</b>
<b>Current policies</b>	<a href="https://www.sussexstudent.com/democracy/policies/">https://www.sussexstudent.com/democracy/policies/</a>	<a href="https://www.sussexstudent.com/democracy/policies/">https://www.sussexstudent.com/democracy/policies/</a>	<a href="https://www.sussexstudent.com/democracy/policies/">https://www.sussexstudent.com/democracy/policies/</a>	Union Intranet
<b>Relevant progress tracker</b>	<a href="#">Campaigning Policy Tracker</a>	<a href="#">Operational Policy Tracker</a>		N/A

All policies can be viewed at [www.sussexstudent.com/democracy/policies/](http://www.sussexstudent.com/democracy/policies/)

As well as formal policies, informal and unwritten rules and policies often exist in organisations. These can be questioned and challenged by students, staff or elected officers. If these are positive, they sometimes get made into formal rules.

## What are the benefits of knowing about policy?

- Policy is about what the Union thinks and does
- It can be used to give weight to your arguments
- If you are elected to represent students, you are mandated by students to follow the Union's policies
- It gives you a clear direction and steer from students
- It's a way of making progress and setting direction on big issues
- It's a great way of being accountable and keeping the Union moving
- Policies often live on much longer than students and officers' time at Sussex, making it a great opportunity to have an impact for years to come

## When does the Students' Union need new policy?

**Campaigning Policy** should be created when the Executive or Council need steer from the student body on a particular issue which is not already covered under campaigning or operational policy, and which they have not received a mandate on via their election and manifesto, **or** where a member wishes to influence the operations and stances of the Students' Union Executive and Council.

**Democratic Operational Policy** should be created where the Students' Union and its members need guidance on how to enact an campaigning policy, **or** a member wants to influence the day-to-day running of the Students' Union.

**Governance Operational Policy** should be created when there is a legal requirement to do so.

Where a member wishes to change something which is in line with existing policy (campaigning or operational), the Executive can support them in doing that.

# How is policy developed?

There are roughly five steps to policy development, and students should be supported, consulted and involved through all of these:

- Agenda setting: selecting the desired objective
- Policy formulation: identifying the target of the objective
- Decision-making: determining the pathway to reach that objective
- Implementation: designing the specific program or measure in respect of that goal
- Evaluation: implementing the measure and assessing its impact

As such, a large part of the work of creating policy should come in forming and shaping the policy and deciding the best course of action to present to students, while working in consultation with students at every step along the way.

While policies aim to remedy a problem or resolve an organisation and individuals to do something, there are often many possible routes to a desired objective, each of which may have their own strengths and weaknesses. These must be carefully considered in determining the appropriate option. For those involved in developing new policies, assessing and weighing the possible choices is important because the final selection must be justified on several grounds once it is made. There is always a requirement to 'make the case' for and then 'sell' the selected approach to the Executive, Union Council or students voting in a referendum - as well as the students, staff and officers who will have to abide by the policy for years to come.

In setting policy, you should be thinking about:

- The context
- The aims and objectives: does this course of action actually fulfil your desired outcomes?
- The viability: what are the costs and resources needed to make it possible?
- Political factors: is it what the students want and/or need? Who will it impact? Who does it benefit? Does it exclude anyone?
- Consultation: do the affected people want this to happen?

A policy ultimately represents the end result of a decision as to how best to achieve a specific objective.

# How do you make policy and what do you do with it?

## How to create new Campaigning Policy

There are two ways to create new Campaigning Policy

1. **Members' meeting** - a meeting of 450 students all together, which happen as called and run in accordance with the Union Rules
2. **Referendum** - an all-student online vote which happens once a term, also in accordance with the Rules

[The rules](#) state that:

*2.1.2 A proposal to adopt a new item of Campaigning Policy, or to amend or delete existing Policy, can be submitted for referenda by the Executive Committee, by Union Council, or by a petition of at least 150 members presented as described below. Union Council have the responsibility for retaining or lapsing Campaigning Policy after three years.*

When a policy proposal emerges from Executive Committee, Union Council, or a petition of at least 150 members, a policy panel comprised of officers and staff is formed to:

- ensure the policy proposal has all the information needed.
- check whether the proposed actions are already in-line with Union policy (and so can be enacted without a policy change)
- check the legal, constitutional and financial/resource implications of the proposal and whether the proposal needs to first go to the Trustees due to financial or legal consideration

The policy panel is not to express a view on whether the proposal should be agreed by the Union, but only whether it is a valid proposal and where it should be considered. The policy panel will work with the proposer to establish the best course of action.

**If the policy panel and the proposer agree that the proposed policy should go to referendum or a members' meeting, the proposer will be supported by staff through that process.**

If a members' meeting is called by Council, Executive or a petition of 150 students and a student wishes to propose a motion to create new policy at the meeting, they will need to follow the same policy proposal guidelines below. They should then find another student to back the policy by signing it (a seconder) and submit the policy to the President of the Students' Union at least seven days before the meeting in order to add it to the agenda ([see the Rules on Members' Meetings](#)).

## Campaigning Policy proposal guidelines

Whether proposing Campaigning Policy through the Executive, Union Council or a petition of 150 members, the policy proposer should follow these guidelines in order to ensure the proposal is clear and the format for policy is consistent.

The template for this is as follows:

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### **Policy proposer**

*(name and email)*

### **Policy background**

*(include details about what the issue is, the impact it has on students, why a policy is needed, any research that has been undertaken etc.)*

*This should be clearly split between fact and opinion. Facts should be cited clearly e.g. by a footnote. The proposer has the chance to write an argument separate to the policy which can argue why the policy should be adopted.*

### **Policy aim**

*(A short summary of the overall aim of the policy)*

### **Policy objectives**

*(explaining what will happen if this policy is passed)*

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When this policy goes to referendum, the proposer will be able to write a 'yes' argument to show why they believe the policy is important. Members will be invited to write the opposing argument - the 'no' argument - for the referendum.

If students vote 'yes', this policy will be adopted and the Executive committee will be responsible for ensuring that the Union does what it has resolved to do. Council will hold Executive accountable for implementing the policy. Campaigning policies remain in place for three years. After three years, they are sent to Union Council which decides whether to retain, amend, or lapse the policy, or to send it back to referendum.

Any questions on creating Campaigning policy can be directed to the Policy and Research Assistant as [policyresearch@sussexstudent.com](mailto:policyresearch@sussexstudent.com)

## Sample Policy

*This is a recent policy proposed and voted for by the student body in Spring 2016, re-formatted to fit the policy proposing guidelines:*

**Policy Proposer :** A Student, [astudent@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:astudent@sussex.ac.uk)

**Policy background:** The UK currently has four Trident submarines which will begin to end their working lives some time in the late 2020s. If they are to be replaced this would need to be agreed soon to develop the new submarines in time.

The British government intends to replace Trident, its current nuclear weapons system. Estimates for the cost of a replacement over its 30 year lifespan are in excess of £100 billion. The recent economic crisis has prompted massive cuts to public spending, with tuition fees lifted to £9000 and 1 in 10 libraries closing. Meanwhile, the number of people using food banks has tripled over the past year alone.

Public opinion remains consistently against the replacement of Britain's nuclear weapons, while senior military figures say that it is 'completely useless' in modern warfare. A single Trident missile is capable of delivering a payload of 100 megatons, in excess of 5 times more powerful than the bomb that killed at least 100,000 at Hiroshima. The UK is a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); replacing the Trident system would be in direct contravention of the obligations established under it.

You can read the BBC's guide to Trident and the debates around its replacement here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-13442735>

At a time of widespread economic hardship, government spending should not prioritise a weapon of mass destruction that we cannot afford. The money intended to be spent on Trident could be put to better use, for safeguarding our NHS, reducing tuition fees, or funding the construction of new, affordable homes.

The use of nuclear weapons in any circumstance would be fundamentally wrong, since their only capability is indiscriminate killing of a civilian population and instilling terror. The UK should fulfil its obligations as a signatory to the NPT.

**Policy aim:** To demonstrate that Sussex Students Union opposes Trident, the UK's nuclear weapons system.

**Policy objectives:**

Sussex Students' Union will take a stand with other public institutions and officially express its opposition of Trident through this policy.

The Students' Union will support students on campus taking action against nuclear weapons. Through this policy, the Union will raise awareness to the student body about this terrifying issue.

## How to create new Democratic Operational Policy

There are two ways to create Democratic Operational Policy.

**New Democratic Operational Policy, which doesn't link to any current Campaigning Policy**, should be introduced in the same way as Campaigning Policy:

1. **Members' meeting** - a meeting of 450 students all together, which happen as called and run in accordance with the Union Rules
2. **Referendum** - an all-student online vote which happens once a term, also in accordance with the Rules

See above for the full process. Democratic Operational Policies can be written as a series of numbered requirements rather than in the format of Campaigning Policy. The Policy should be numbered so it can be easily referenced, and the language should be as clear as possible, especially in relation to what it asks the Union and its members to do. The Policy Panel will assess it for viability.

**Democratic Operational Policy which stems from Campaigning Policy** can be introduced by Council. A paper should be written and sent to the chair of Council at [councilchair@sussexstudent.com](mailto:councilchair@sussexstudent.com)

## How to create new Governance Operational Policy

Governance Operational Policy will usually be proposed by staff or trustees in relation to a new legislative requirement. If you think the Students' Union needs a new Governance Operational Policy, you should speak to the Chief Operating Officer who facilitates the Board of Trustees. You can email them at [james.h@sussexstudent.com](mailto:james.h@sussexstudent.com)

## What happens next?

Union Council and the Trustees are responsible for enacting current Union policies. Campaigning Policies lapse after three years unless Council vote to send them back to referenda or Members' Meeting. You can contact the chair of Council at [councilchair@sussexstudent.com](mailto:councilchair@sussexstudent.com).