

NATIONAL CONFERENCE n u s 2011



Accountability at National Conference

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national union of students

Contents

Purpose of this document	pg 3
Why we need accountability	pg 3
Accountability on Zones and Priority Campaigns	pg 4
National Executive Accountability	pg 5
Reports from NUS bodies	pg 6
Adoptions	pg 6
Examples	pg 7

Purpose of this document

This document is an introduction to the different methods of accountability at National Conference.

Some of the terms may be confusing at first, but if you read through the guide from start to finish everything should be clarified.

For more explanation you can email democracy@nus.org.uk or ask DPC who are at the front of National Conference.

Note that this is the accountability process for National Conference. Nation, Liberation and Sections will have their own processes.

Why we need Accountability

National Conference includes a lot of looking to the future. It elects leaders for the year to come and sets the policy stance on key issues that matter to students. Also however it is about promises. Promises from the elected officials to NUS members to deliver on these areas and ensure the organisation runs appropriately and in line with your wishes.

You should always feel able to contact your National Executive Council members or committees to ask them questions. Outside of conference you can email democracy@nus.org.uk if you wish to do this. During National Conference however there are a number of important key points where you can hold your elected officials responsible for what they are do.

Accountability on Zones and Priority Campaigns

Most commonly delegates will want to hold the officers accountable on the way they have prioritised and responded to the policy of National Conference 2010. This is accountability on the work of the zones and the priority campaign.

National Executive Accountability

Sometimes delegates will want to hold accountable the NEC on the way they have acted in their general representative role as the executive for all member unions. This applies to all NEC members and occurs after the NEC report.

Accountability of other bodies to National Conference

As well as bodies created to implement political policy, National Conference also has a number of bodies that support the policy, financial and policy processes.

Adoptions

The politically autonomous areas of NUS send their policy to National Conference to be Adopted and mainstreamed into the policy of the National Union. They are not accountable to National Conference for their policy or its implementation.

Accountability on Zone Policy and the priority campaign

This is the process for issues relating to the implementation of policy by the officers responsible for it. Note that some areas are politically autonomous concerning the implementation of their policy.

The policy that you vote on at conference in each of the 5 Zones (Further Education, Higher Education, Society & Citizenship, Union Development and Welfare) becomes the workload of the vice-president and Zone committee. The priority campaign is decided by the NEC and the president takes the lead on that work.

They report back on this work in a number of ways;

- To each of the six National Executive Council throughout the year
- To their Zone Conference in October
- To the membership in the Zone report published in December
- To the membership in their updated Zone report published in March
- To National Conference at the start of each of the Zone debates

There are a number of actions that you can take concerning how the zones and the priority campaign interpret and implement the policy set by National Conference.

If you are unhappy with the work

1. You can refer back the work of the zone or priority campaign as a whole
2. You can refer back a section of the zone or priority campaign's work

If you want to refer back any of the work, DPC will read out the request and ask if 100 delegates want to hear the case. If they do you will be asked to perform a short speech as to why the work should be referred back. The report proposer will then speak to defend the work.

If you are really unhappy with the work and feel it represents a major failure

3. You can censure a priority campaign or zone committee member or the zone as a whole. A censure is an official rebuke from the Conference.

If you want to censure a zone or priority campaign member, DPC will read out the request and ask if 100 delegates want to hear the case. If they do you will be asked to perform a short speech as to why the individual or group should be censured. The individual or group chair will respond.

If you are unhappy and do not believe that an individual or group are fit to act to uphold the policy of the National Union

4. You can no confidence a priority campaign or zone committee member or the zone as a whole. A censure is an official rebuke from the Conference.

If you want to no confidence a zone or priority campaign member, DPC will read out the request and ask if 100 delegates want to hear the case. If they do you will be asked to perform a short speech as to why the individual or group should be declared without confidence. The individual or group chair will respond. If such a motion is passed by a simple majority, the specified person shall immediately cease to be a member of the National Executive Council.

If you want more information

5. You can ask a question of the zone's work

DPC will ask as many questions as time allows. Each Zone has 5 minutes to report and 10 minutes for questions and accountability. If your question is not asked on conference floor it will be forwarded to the head of the zone committee.

To do this you should use an accountability sheet which is available from DPC at the front of Conference, fill out the appropriate action and hand it in to DPC before the end of the report section for that Zone.

Accountability of the NEC

This is the process for issues relating to the behaviour of all NEC members in the way they interact with students' unions and students and act as representatives outside of set policy boundaries.

The NEC is accountable in different ways. The Nations, Liberation campaigns and Student Sections have political autonomy in relation to their policy. They are accountable on these issues to their committees and conferences. All NEC sit in a prominent position so that they can be seen by conference floor and the way that they vote can be considered immediately by conference.

All NEC are responsible to National Conference on their general role representing students and supporting students' unions.

They report back on this work in two ways;

- In reports to National Conference (CD7)
- Through a short presentation at National Conference itself

Example 1 an NEC member acts in a manner that is considered to be intervening in local students' union affairs. A students' union can criticise this behaviour as it is not part of their policy work and is instead about the relationship between NUS and its member unions.

Example 2 an NEC member has been invited to speak at a union event and promised to attend. They then do not turn up. This is unrelated to their policy work but is a failing of their promise to support the students' union.

A motion of censure or no confidence can be made against an individual NEC member, a group of NEC members or the NEC as a whole. It is up to the proposer who they put the motion against.

If you are unhappy with the work of the NEC (when it has met and how it has operated)

1. You can refer back the report as a whole
2. You can refer back a section of the report

If you want to refer back any of the work, DPC will read out the request and ask if 100 delegates want to hear the case. If they do you will be asked to perform a short speech as to why the work should be referred back. The report proposer will then speak to defend the work.

If you want to criticise a member of the NEC on the way they interact with students' unions and how they act as a representative outside the implementation of policy

3. You can present a motion of censure to DPC by 12 Noon on the second day of Conference. DPC will read out the request and ask if 100 delegates want to hear the case. If they do you will be asked to perform a short speech as to why the member should be censured. The member will then speak to defend themselves.

If you believe that the way a member of the NEC acts with students' unions or in their general role is so grave that you do not believe them fit to do so

4. You can present a motion of no confidence to DPC by 12 Noon on the second day of Conference. DPC will read out the request and ask if 100 delegates want to hear the case. If they do you will be asked to perform a short speech as to why the member should be censured. The member will then speak to defend themselves.

If you want more information

5. You can ask a question of the National Council Clerks

DPC will ask as many questions as time allows. If your question is not asked on conference floor it will be forwarded to the clerks of the council

To do this you should use an accountability sheet which is available from DPC at the front of Conference, fill out the appropriate action and hand it in to DPC before the end of the report section for that Zone.

Reports from NUS bodies

This is the process for issues relating to the reports of administrative and regulatory bodies of NUS – the Trustee Board, DPC, Nominations Committee and the Chief Returning Officer.

As well as bodies created to implement political policy, National Conference also has a number of bodies that support the policy, financial and policy processes.

They report back on this work in two ways;

- In reports to National Conference (CD7)
- Through a short presentation at National Conference itself

DPC will chair these sessions apart from the report of DPC which will be chaired by another member of the National Union as appointed by the President.

There are a number of actions that you can take concerning the work of the Trustee Board, Democratic Procedures Committee and Chief Returning Officer.

If you are unhappy with the work

1. You can refer back the report as a whole
2. You can refer back a section of the report

If you want to refer back any of the work, DPC will read out the request and ask if 100 delegates want to hear the case. If they do you will be asked to perform a short speech as to why the work should be referred back. The report proposer will then speak to defend the work.

If you are really unhappy with the work and feel it represents a major failure

3. You can censure an individual or the committee as a whole. A censure is an official rebuke from the Conference.

If you want to censure an individual on a committee or the committee as a whole DPC will read out the request and ask if 100 delegates want to hear the case. If they do you will be asked to perform a short speech as to why the individual or group should be censured. The individual or group chair will respond.

If you are unhappy and do not believe that an individual or group are fit to act to uphold the policy of the National Union

4. You can no confidence an individual or the committee as a whole. A censure is an official rebuke from the Conference.

If you want to no confidence an individual on a committee or the committee as a whole DPC will read out the request and ask if 100 delegates want to hear the case. If they do you will be asked to perform a short speech as to why the individual or group should be censured. The individual or group chair will respond. If such a motion is passed by a simple majority, the specified person shall immediately cease to be a member of the National Executive Council.

If you want more information

5. You can ask a question of the report proposer

DPC will ask as many questions as time allows. Each body has 5 minutes to report and 10 minutes for questions and accountability. If your question is not asked on conference floor it will be forwarded to the head of the committee.

To do this you should use an accountability sheet which is available from DPC at the front of Conference, fill out the appropriate action and hand it in to DPC before the end of the report section for that Zone.

Adoptions

During National Conference the autonomous policy areas – Nations and NUS-USI, the Liberation Campaigns and the student Sections – will present their passed policy for adoption. Adoption means that their policy is mainstreamed into National policy. These areas are not accountable for their policy work at National Conference.

Examples

Example 1 – joint policy project

Fibchester University is unhappy with the implementation of a policy on anti-racism anti-facism. This was a motion passed at both National Conference and Black Students Conference and carrying it out is the responsibility of the VP Welfare and the National Black Students' Officer.

At National Conference Fibchester can send back this section of the VP Welfare's report as the Welfare zone reports on its policy work to National Conference.

It cannot report back the Black Students' work as the Black Students' campaign is politically autonomous and it reports to their campaign conference.

Example 2 – Behaviour and policy

Coleg Fibchester believes that the NUS Wales President has been rude to their college. They have promised to attend meetings on several occasions and then not turned up, embarrassing the union. In addition they do not believe the NUS Wales Executive has fulfilled their policy on developing FE Learner Voice.

At National Conference Coleg Fibchester may censure the NUS Wales President in the NEC report as it is about their behaviour. The accountability for fulfilling their policy should be dealt with at the NUS Wales conference.

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