

An introduction to Zone Committees

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national union of students

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Purpose of this document

This document is an introduction to Zone Committees within NUS. 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

Note that committees for NUS Nations, Liberation Campaigns and Sections may operate in a different manner to the Zone Committees as outlined here.

Zones

NUS' work is split into 5 policy areas.

- **Further Education** - which covers things that affect the study and development of students in Further Education
- **Higher Education** - which deals with issues that affect the study and development of students in Higher Education
- **Society and Citizenship** – this zone works on issues that affect students in wider society and the world – such as environmental issues or involvement in national democracy
- **Union Development** - which looks at supporting students' unions in their role of supporting students and providing them with services
- **Welfare** - which decides the work that supports the wellbeing of students in their institutions, their homes and their families

Each zone has

- A section of National Conference that sets the policy in this area.
- A zone conference that consults on what should be suggested for this area at National Conference and provides workshops that train and develop staff and activists.
- A vice-president, elected by National Conference, who takes the political lead on this work.
- A zone committee, elected by zone conference, who act as advisors and critical friends for the vice-president. Their role is described in more detail in this document.

The zone policy process is described in *An Introduction to Zone Policy*, available on nusconnect.org.uk.

What is the role of zone committees?

Zone committees are “co-ordinating committees” that “lead the Zone”. In practical terms it means the following tasks.

- Using the reports and consultations from delegates at zone conferences to make a number of policy suggestions to students' unions.
- Following National Conference, decide the priorities for the zone based on policy that was passed and also policy that currently exists from previous conferences.
- Create a ‘Way Forward’ document in June to outline the work of the zone over the following academic year.
- Scrutinise the work of the vice president on their work.
- Report back to National Executive Council meetings on progress of the zone's work and face scrutiny from this body. This will be done on behalf of the zone by the vice president, but zone committees should feed into this report.
- Report back to National Conference on the work done since the previous year and face scrutiny from this body.
- Make suggestions for a zone conference agenda, including topics to be discussed in plenary sessions, workshops and debates and consult the membership on these.

What can the vice president expect of the zone committee?

A vice president can expect the following

- Guidance through scrutiny of their work on what they should be concentrating on
- Support in deciding priorities
- A “sounding board” in terms of advice on decisions
- A connection with the membership – zone committee members have been elected to offer the voice of all students' unions, not just their own
- Campaigning and activism support for specific projects
- Ideas for policy suggestions to National Conference
- Meetings at least 4 times a year – including the induction

Who sits on the zone committee?

The zone committee is made up of representatives voted for by either National Conference of zone conference and usually crossing more than one education sector (e.g. Further and Higher Education).

- The NUS National President (ex officio).
- The vice president for that zone.
- Six individual members elected by the zone conference. This must include at least two members from the Further Education sector, except for the Higher Education zone committee. All of the Further Education zone committee members must be from that sector. One of these six members will also be a member of the National Executive Council as an additional representative for the zone.
- Non voting representatives of the NUS Nations, Liberation Campaigns and Student Sections as the zone committee sees fit.
- Up to three non voting members who are not students. These are usually members of staff from students' unions, but could include institution staff or experts in specific fields (the welfare zone may want to co-opt an expert in student security for example).

Zone committees, the NEC and National Conference

Zone committees are responsible for the implementation of work in their specific policy area, but are held accountable on their activities by the National Executive Council (NEC), their zone conference and National Conference.

- For the NEC they have to produce a report (through the vice president) that outlines the work done since the previous NEC meeting and specifically outlines what their priorities are.
- Zone conferences include an accountability session before the elections where the zone committee can be held to account on the work they have done.
- In December, the zone committees will have to circulate a report on their work, with a possible update in February. National Conference the zone will be asked to give a short presentation on their work and answer questions from the floor. This is usually done by the vice president.

The zone also provides members of the NEC. The vice president sits on the council and whichever ordinary zone committee member who first reaches quorum in the elections is the second representative, bringing a second zone perspective to the work of the council and representing the committee in discussions.

As a constituted committee, the zone committee can send up to three non voting delegates to the National Conference.

Running for zone committee

Being a zone committee member can be an exciting and rewarding experience. It will take up between 10 and 15 days a year (depending on your attendance at events) and allows you to have a major affect on the work of NUS. You'll be supported in terms of expenses and guidance from staff members and fellow volunteers.

Any student at a union in membership of NUS can run for election to zone committee at zone conference. To do this they should follow the procedure below.

These rules are the property of the Chief Returning Officer or their designate at any conference.

Nominations

Candidates require from a student from five different Constituent Members (CMs), CMs include student's unions, the NEC and the zone committee.

For example, you couldn't be nominated by five students from Reading University Students' Union, but you could be nominated by one student from that institution, three other students' unions and a voting student member of the zone committee. Each student can nominate up to six people for each zone committee.

A nomination form will be made available on the zone conference section of NUS Connect or from nick.smith@nus.org.uk.

Nominations close at 5pm on the first day of each zone conference. Forms should be handed to the Chief Returning Officer or their designate for that conference. Nominations forms will be displayed from 9pm on the first day and delegates will be able to challenge the validity of any candidate by 9am on the second day by submitting a challenge in writing to the Chief Returning Officer or their designate.

Publicity and Expenditure

Candidates are not able to spend any money on their campaign or hand out any publicity before or during zone conferences. They are allowed to use social media sites to advertise their campaign, but not any NUS email networks or the NUS Connect website.

Candidates will be able to submit, by 9pm on the first day of the zone conference, a one page manifesto in.pdf format to be included in a manifesto booklet. This booklet will be circulated to all delegates of the zone conference by the start of elections. There will be facilities at the conference to allow the design of this manifesto.

Each candidate will be able to give a short speech to canvas for votes on the second day of the zone conference. The length will be decided based on the number of valid candidates and publicised by 9pm on the first night of the zone conference.

Ballot

The ballot for the committee positions shall be conducted by single transferable vote. The count will take place as soon as possible after the election speeches.

Rulings

The Chief Returning Officer or their designate will make further election rulings as required.

Appendix 1

From the Articles of Governance

Zones

50. The Zones shall be the five policy sections of the National Union and they shall have day-to-day responsibility for the consultation on, proposal of and carrying out of the National Union's policy in the following areas:
 - 50.1 Higher Education;
 - 50.2 Further Education;
 - 50.3 Union Development;
 - 50.4 Welfare; and
 - 50.5 Society and Citizenship.
 - 50.6 The Zones shall stay subject to the powers of the National Conference, the Trustee Board, the National Executive Council, the Chief Returning Officer and the Democratic Procedures Committee.
51. The Zones shall report to the National Executive Council and be directed by it.
52. Each Zone shall have a committee that will lead the Zone and consist of a full time officer elected by the National Conference and any other members as are elected by that Zone at its conference. Each committee shall have the power to co-opt non student non voting advisors as it sees fit.
53. The definitions, composition and procedures of the Zones shall be further defined in the Zones Rules.

NUS RULES | ZONES

800 Zone Committees

- 801 Each zone will have a coordinating committee consisting of the following members:
 - a. The Vice President (Full Time Officer) for that Zone who will act as the Chairperson
 - b. The National President (Ex Officio)
 - c. Five individual members elected by and at the Zone Conference, where except for the FE Zone Committee and the HE Zone Committee at least two of which must be from the FE Sector. In the case of the FE and HE committees all of the individual members must be from the relevant sector.
 - d. Non voting representatives of Nations, NUS-USI, Social Policy Campaigns and Liberation Campaigns as the Zone committee sees fit. One individual member elected by and at Zone Conference, who shall also act as the NEC member for that zone.
 - e. Up to three co-opted members at the invitation of the committee who will be non voting and may not be individual student members of the National Union.
- 802 Zone committees will regulate their proceedings as they see fit save that they must meet at least 4 (four) times per year. They will report their work to the National Executive Council.

810 Zone Conferences

- 811 Each zone will hold an Annual Conference, in a period before December further determined by the Democratic Procedures Committee, which will elect the individual members of the zone's committee.
- 812 The Delegate entitlement to the zone conference for the purposes of elections will be one delegate per constituent member.
- 813 Only HE Constituent Members shall be entitled to send delegates to the HE Conference. Only FE Constituent Members shall be entitled to send delegates to the FE Conference.
- 814 The election of the individual members of the committee will be conducted in a manner approved by the Chief Returning Officer. They will take office at the close of the conference and remain in office until the end of the next conference.
- 815 Any person will be eligible for election to the post of individual committee member, if at close of nominations that person is an individual student member of the National Union, subject to Rule 801.
- 816 Members elected to the Committee will take office at the end of the Conference at which elected, and remain in office until the end of the next Conference.

820 Policy Development

- 821 Zone committees are charged with detailed policy development for their zone. They are required to consult with members and stakeholders and obtain or commission research pertaining to their zone for consideration by constituent members. They are also charged with the day to day monitoring and implementation of policy passed.

822 The Zone Committee will invite suggestions from constituent members as to the workshops or sessions that should be run at the event. The Zone Committee will then determine the agenda for the event based on these suggestions.

823 The Zone committee will also ensure that during the event a “student only” session is run that discusses potential policy recommendations and the potential content of a Zone policy report.

824 After the conference the Zone committee will compile policy recommendations based on its deliberations.

830 Accountability

831 During the Zone Conference the Zone Vice President and the National President will report on ongoing work.

832 At this time the Zone Conference delegates members may move the following motions:

- a. The reference back of a specified part of the relevant Report.
- b. A motion of censure on the Zone Vice President, Zone Committee or National President
- c. A motion to commend the Zone Vice President, Zone Committee or National President for a specific area of work.

840 No Confidence

841 The Committee will convene a Conference, to discuss a motion of ‘no confidence’ in the individual committee member(s) on receipt of a request in writing from 25 names Constituent Members.

842 The Committee will convene the Extraordinary Zone Conference within seven weeks after receipt of the request, and not less than two weeks after the day on which the notice of the Extraordinary Zone Conference would in the normal course of post be received by Constituent Members.

843 No business other than the motion of ‘no confidence’ in the individual committee member(s) will be discussed at an Extraordinary Zone Conference, and if such a motion is passed by a simple majority, the individual committee member(s) post will become vacant and will be filled by a method determined by the Democratic Procedures Committee