

An introduction to Zone Policy

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contact NUS on 0845 521 0262 or email
events@nus.org.uk



national union of students

Contents

Purpose of this document	pg 2
Policy and the Zones	pg 3
How policy is made	pg 3
Types of policy setting	pg 4
Existing policy and policy lapse	pg 5
Liberation, Nation and Sections Policy	pg 5
Emergency Motions	pg 5
Actions for you	pg 6

Purpose of this document

This document is an introduction to the zone policy process of NUS. Reading it will help you understand how NUS makes decisions and how you can impact upon them. 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 this is the policy process for National Conference. Nation, Liberation and Sections will have their own processes.

Policy and Zones

The work that NUS does is prioritised and decided through policy. The National Union of Students produces campaigns, projects, briefings, events, training, statements, seminars, resources, materials, committees, speaker tours, lobbies, protests, conferences, consultations and probably a hundred other types of 'thing' to help students in their studies and in their lives. To help make sense of this, the work of NUS is split into 5 separate "zones" and the policy that is passed fits into one of these 5 zones.

- **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 had a committee of students elected to help direct the detail of that zone and a conference where those issues are discussed.

How Policy is made

Policy for each zone goes through a journey from the first time it is discussed through to the way it is implemented. This is outlined in the list and table below.

1. A need for work on a certain area is identified (Students can't access bursaries)
2. The area is discussed at Zone Conference to give background to the issue and help students think about it (A workshop is run on the barriers to gaining personal finance and what unions can do about it)
3. In the formal section of Zone Conference this issue is raised as a priority (a delegate asks for the Zone Committee to look into this)
4. The Zone Committee creates its **policy recommendations** for the year ahead (including a motion on 'Student finance and bursaries')
5. Unions get a chance to look at these recommendations and comment on them (a student council debates the policy)
6. Unions feedback on the policy (an **amendment** to the policy is suggested by the union)
7. Unions submit **ordinary motions** on issues not discussed in the zone recommendations.
8. National Conference votes on the policy submitted and it becomes the work plan for the zone for the year ahead.

National Conference 2012 | Intro to Zone Policy

Time	Unions	Zone Committees
August – September 2011	Students come back to unions and start debating issues	Start thinking about the issues affecting students this year that no policy exists for
October 2011	Delegates are sent to Zone Conferences with ideas from unions about what they want NUS to do this year	Zone Conferences offer a range of workshops and informal debates about student issues. It elects a committee to make recommendations and implement work.
November 2011		Zone Committees make policy recommendations on the issues discussed at Zone Conference.
December 2011	Unions receive the policy recommendations from the zones	
January – February 2012	Unions debate the policy recommendations from the zones and decide whether they want to make amendments to them or add ordinary motions to conference for discussion	
March 2012	Last deadline for amendments and ordinary motions	
April 2012	Motions and amendments debated at National Conference. If passed they become policy	Zone committees report on work done on the policy passed at last year's National Conference

Types of policy setting

There are therefore 3 ways that new policy can be added into the work of NUS

- 1) A **policy recommendation** by the Zone Committee after consulting with the membership at Zone Conference.
- 2) An **amendment** from a students' union to the Zone Committee recommendations. Amendments change the Zone Policy in some way (e.g. the Zone Committee suggests that FE elections should all happen in May, and the amendment suggests they should happen in May or October).
- 3) An **ordinary motion** suggested from a students' union. Ordinary Motions deal with issues not discussed anywhere within the Zone's recommendations.

Existing policy and policy lapse

Once set policy lasts for three years unless it is changed by a subsequent policy. This is sometimes known as a 'live policy'. Mandates from the conferences of 2009, 2010 and 2011 are currently live policy. At National Conference 2012 policy passed in 2009 will 'lapse' and no longer be the policy of NUS unless a delegate asks for it to remain. Policy due to lapse can be found on www.nusconnect.org.uk/conference.

If you are thinking of submitting policy on an issue you should check to see whether any policy currently exists on that issue.

For example, in 2010 there was no policy passed on mental health in the Welfare Zone. This was because the policies from 2008 and 2009 were believed to sufficiently direct the National Union's work.

Liberation, Sections and Nations policy

The Liberation campaigns, Student sections and Nations have their own policy processes. At each National Conference any policy passed since the last year is submitted for 'adoption' by the National union, becoming part of the whole union's policy where it does not conflict with policy passed by National Conference.

Emergency Motions

Unions can submit Emergency Motions between the 2nd March 2011 and the 5th April. Emergency motions must relate to events that have occurred since 2nd March and be of an issue so grave that NUS must debate it before the end of National Conference.

Actions for you

1. Send delegates to the Zone Conferences in October. Remember that the policy discussion and accountability sections on the second day are free to attend.
2. Make sure you are running elections for National Conference delegates unless you have applied for an exemption (normally this only applies to FE Unions). Note each union can only send one delegate 'ex officio'.
3. Read through the Live policy documents on www.nusconnect.org.uk/conference. These are the current policy of NUS and if you are happy with them then you will not need to submit alterations.
4. Watch out for the policy recommendations on 9th December 2010. These will include rules for how unions can submit amendments or ordinary motions. These usually include a limit of the words each union can use to submit.
5. Circulate the policy recommendations to relevant activists, representatives and volunteers in your union, e.g. Welfare policy to welfare reps in halls and welfare volunteers, Society & Citizenship policy to ethical and environmental volunteers.
6. Prepare some time during your student councils in January and February to debate the policy recommendations as fed in by your volunteers.
7. Send in any amendments or ordinary motions in good time for the 2nd March deadline. 2nd March is the last day you can submit text, not the only day!
8. Prepare some time in late March to debate the final proposals in your student council and with your delegates to National Conference.
9. Make sure your delegates to National Conference are reporting back to your union about how they voted and the policy passed.