# **NUS-USI logo 2013**

# **Motions Guide for NUS-USI conference 18**

At the heart of the NUS–USI decision-making process is its democracy. Each year around April, Conference is held to debate the policy of NUS-USI for the coming year, to hold the Regional Executive Committee to account, and to elect the new committee. Conference is composed of delegates from each affiliated university and college in Northern Ireland. As an affiliated students’ association, you can also put forward motions that you would like to see become the policy of NUS–USI. More information on writing and submitting motions is included in the next few pages.

**Role of Steering Committee before and during Conference**

Steering Committee is an independent committee of NUS-USI, elected at NUS-USI Conference. The role of the Steering Committee in the motions process is to ensure that the constitution of NUS-USI is upheld at all times and to rule on whether policy submitted is suitable for debate in line with the regulations within the NUS-USI Constitution.

After the closing date for submission of motions, the Steering Committee meets to rule the submitted motions in or out of order. Possible reasons for a motion being ruled out of order could be that it exceeds the word limit, or that it breaks the NUS-USI Staff Protocol, or that it was submitted past the deadline. Once Steering Committee has met, the motions document will be posted out to students’ unions.

# **Constitutional Amendments (CA)**

These will take priority over motions and be debated first at conference

These motions would change constitution if passed: the CAs will take affect following the end of Conference 2017.

Require a 2/3 majority to pass (*this means 2/3 of the delegates registered for conference)*

# **Submitting Constitutional Amendments (CA)**

Each NUS-USI Constituent Member (CM) can submit any number of CAs to NUS-USI Conference, each of which must be submitted under a separate heading.

* CAs will be reviewed by Steering Committee and advice will be provided on them if needed. CM can decide to ignore this advice however conference will be made aware of this.
* CAs must be signed by the appropriate Executive Officer of the students’ union, usually the President or the Chair of your students’ council
* CAs must be submitted by the deadline set by Steering Committee
* CAs submitted must have been agreed by a senior decision-making body within your own union, as set out in your union’s constitution.

Amendments cannot be made to CAs. If you disagree with a CA you can speak against it and vote against it at Conference.

If a CM has any questions regarding CAs we encourage them to contact the NUS-USI president who will contact Steering Committee who will provide advice regarding them. Steering committee is always happy to assist with these and happy to provide advice.

Steering encourages all delegates to be well briefed on the CAs to allow adequate debate.

# **Motions**

The motions process can be quite a confusing one. The aim of the next few pages is to set out clearly how to go about writing and submitting motions, but also what happens after a motion has been submitted. This basic set of guidelines relates to the submission of policy to NUS-USI Conference or Council.

# **Submitting Motions**

Each NUS-USI Constituent Member can submit up to fifteen motions to each meeting of NUS-USI, each of which must be submitted under a separate heading.

* Motions must not exceed 1,000 words in length
* Motions must be signed by the appropriate Executive Officer of the students’ association, usually the President or the Chair of your students’ council
* Motions must be submitted by the deadline set by Steering Committee
* Motions submitted must have been agreed by a senior decision-making body within your own association, as set out in your association’s Constitution.

# **Amendments to Motions**

After the motions document is circulated, students’ associations have the option to make amendments to any of the motions submitted. This could be additional text that goes further than the original motion or could remove some text from the motion. Each constituent member may submit six amendments, each with a three hundred word limit that must be submitted under a separate heading and signed by the appropriate Executive Officer of the Constituent Member. The amendment must interlink with the motion it is amending – they cannot be about two separate subjects. The purpose of an amendment is to change the motion to make it acceptable to your view, not to oppose or defeat the motion. Should you wish to see a motion rejected, you can speak and vote against the motion at conference. After the deadline for submission of amendments, the Steering Committee will meet to decide if the amendments submitted are suitable for debate. The amendments pro-forma will be sent out with the motions document, and each amendment must be accompanied by this pro-forma and must be submitted to the Steering Committee by the specified date.

# **The Motions Process**

The motions process is governed by the NUS-USI Steering Committee through the NUS-USI Constitution and follows a strict timetable.

Notice of Conference sent out to all affiliated colleges.



Colleges submit motions to NUS-USI Steering Committee.



These motions are then circulated to all affiliated students’ associations after the motions deadline.

  
Steering Committee assesses the suitability of amendments and students’ unions are notified of the result.



The final motions document, including motions and amendments, printed is circulated to students’ unions.



Motions are debated at Conference and, if passed, become the policy of NUS-USI for the next five years.

# **How to Write a Motion**

Motions that are debated and passed form the **POLICY** on which NUS-USI will work for the coming years. Engaging fully with the motions process is therefore your opportunity to shape and direct NUS-USI, making it work for you and the students you represent.

#### NUS-USI motions usually follow the format below:

**Motion Title**

**Conference Notes**



This is what the author believes to be fact.

Eg “Most students owe money in the form of student loans”



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**Conference Believes**



This is much more opinion-based, and if passed, will become the policy of NUS-USI.

Eg “Student debt is not a good thing”



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**Conference Resolves**

This is the main thrust of the motion and gives the practical mandate to NUS-USI.

Eg “For NUS-USI to campaign against student debt”



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# What should your motion(s) be about?

But what should you be writing a motion about? The first thing to do is to establish the **ISSUE** you want NUS-USI to campaign on. Think about what the current issues are facing the students in your college or university.

* What kinds of things are being debated at your executive or student council?
* What kind of issues are your class reps bringing up in meetings?
* What things are you campaigning on currently within your institution?

Some issues may be specific only to your university or college but some may be issues facing students across Northern Ireland. Writing a motion to shape NUS-USI work will benefit not only students in your own institution but also other students across Northern Ireland.

Another way to get ideas for a motion is to hold a b*rainstorming session*. This is a good method of unlocking creativity and really getting some ideas for campaigns to run. Brainstorming, by one definition, is a collective problem solving process that brings people together and encourages them to spark ideas off one another. Getting all your executive, council or class reps together in this way will ensure you hear about the issues facing them. A good brainstorm however has to follow certain formal structures in order to be effective. You will need a few key ingredients:–

* **Participants**

This can be any number of people, but you have to think of who is most appropriate. For issues you are facing within your students union perhaps the best group of people would be your executive or student council members. For institution-based issues, your class reps may be the best source of information.

* **A Leader or Facilitator**

You need someone to lead the brainstorming session. This should be someone who knows what it is the brainstorming session should have produced by the end, for example, in the case of motions the end point would be the establishment of an issue to write a motion on and what it is you want NUS-USI to do. The facilitator may also need to be the person who is recording the ideas as they are generated.

* **A Time Limit and a Time table**

A brainstorming session can be almost any length as long as it is properly structured and tackling the right problem.

* **A Clear Statement of the Problem at Hand**

Or even three or four alternative statements of it, so if ideas dry up participants can move on to tackle another.

* **A Way to Capture the ideas**

The easiest way to do this is to use a few sheets of flip chart and pens. A good idea is to put these sheets up around the room so that participants can still see them – hopefully to spark off more ideas when they come back to them.

Using these basic guidelines, you can run an effective brainstorming session that will hopefully generate lots of good ideas and issues that you can then take away to write motions on for NUS-USI.

# **Emergency Motions**

## Submitted after the initial deadline because events occurred after this date which warranted discussion at conference, these follow the same guidelines of motions format and the Chair of Steering Committee will have the decision and power to decide:

* whether the motion is an emergency motion and should be debated
* draft amendments to the motion if needed
* the order for motions to be debated within the allocated time period and will notify members in writing before conference to make them aware of their decision.

If Members disagree with Chair of Steering Committee’s ruling on the above points, they can offer to sustain it following the first speech against the motion, this will require 2/3 majority to pass (Standing Orders 11. Emergency Motions in NUS-USI Constitution 2016)

# **Policy Lapse**

# Policy lasts for 5 years. All policies lapse unless an objection is made. The following procedure takes place:

## Policy due to lapse will be contained in your conference pack.

## Unless an objection is raised these policies shall lapse at the end of the last session of conference.

## Objections to lapse can be delivered to a member of Steering before 1pm on second day of conference.

These will be debated as the last session of conference and will be debated in an order decided by Chair of Steering Committee. The process is for this debate is one round of speeches – 1 for and 1 against – then for a vote. There will not be any extra rounds of speeches as these motions were debated at a Conference in which they were passed.

## **Making a speech**

## The way in which motions are debated is set down in the standing orders. Each policy debate consists of a main motion and a number of amendments. Whenever you make a speech speak slowly and clearly. Preface your speech by saying your name and college.

# **Free Speeches**

## At the COMPOSITE MEETING some of the speeches for either the main motion or the amendments will be allocated to those colleges that submitted them.

## Some speeches will be **left free and are called FREE SPEECHES**.

Also, from time to time a students' union may choose not to take an allocated speech. They announce that they are **WAIVING** their speech which then either becomes a **FREE SPEECH** or can be passed onto a named individual.

If you do not have an allocated speech, **listen** for a free speech and try to attract the Chair’s attention. The Chair will always announce when a free speech is available. Remember they won’t always give a speech to the most vocal people or the first person they see. Their decision is final. The Chair will always tell you how long you have to speak (usually three minutes – proposing speeches are slightly longer).

# **Quorum**

For all sessions to begin at conference there must be quorum – at least 4 member students' unions present on conference floor.

Unions should be represented at all sessions and make sure they attend promptly.

***Finally, please enjoy conference and take part in all aspects of it. If you have any questions at Conference, please contact Steering Committee or a member of the Regional Executive Committee.***

Thanks,

NUS-USI Steering Committee 2017-18