

Project100

Democracy and Governance: A modern redesign | September 2016

WORKING DOCUMENT FOR CONSULTATION

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Acknowledgements

NUS would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to feed into this consultation so far, and all those who will over the next six months. Your help and support is hugely appreciated.

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1.0 Background and introduction

Having been warmly received by the membership at Strategic Conversation in February 2015, the [New Settlement](#) report was discussed, considered and endorsed by the NUS UK Board. Produced by an external panel tasked with assessing the costs and benefits of NUS membership, the report recommended a “major review of governance across the NUS group”. At its meeting on 2nd June 2015 NEC received and carried a motion mandating a review of NUS governance which had been remitted from National Conference 2015 due to lack of time (see Motion 704, appendix A). On June 9th 2015 the board agreed the approach to the review, creating two ‘task and finish’ groups to drive the work forward; one made up of members of the governing boards to look at corporate governance and a larger group with both internal and external representation to look at democratic governance (see appendix B for the stakeholder composition). Owing to the substantial intersections and interdependencies of the work, these two groups have been merged.

In October 2015 Project 100 was initiated to develop a new strategic framework, including responsibility for designing a more effective corporate governance structure and a more inclusive and representative democratic governance. Based on consultation with the membership, we developed a set of 12 principles (see section 5) outlining a vision for a better democracy. In April 2016 NUS UK National Conference voted to adopt these principles. Endorsed by conference, the task at hand is now to explore and define what those principles look like in practice.

This paper outlines the timeline for the remainder of the work up to National Conference 2017. It is a working document to complement the consultation on how we could align our democracy and governance more closely with the principles. All these ideas are very much work in progress which require further discussion.

2.0 Context

2.1 Analysis of NUS Democracy

As part of the “Open look at NUS” paper, submitted to the P100 Festival in February 2016, we prepared an analysis of NUS UK National Conference and NEC in the context of Zones Conferences using the criteria for evaluating democracy in the Quality Students’ Unions model. This analytical framework was adapted from the work of Professor Graham Smith who identified what he called “democratic goods” that can be used to make a comparative evaluation of different democracies; namely inclusiveness, popular control, considered judgement and transparency. Smith also recognised two additional institutional goods: efficiency and transferability. Smith’s model was used to design the following research in order to inform the analysis:

A survey of NUS 316 conference delegates in 2014

- A survey of 457 NUS extra card holders during NUS National Conference 2014
- A survey of 284 NUS National Conference delegates in 2015
- A survey of 26 National Executive Council participants in 2015
- Interviews with NUS full-time officers and students’ union officers.

The analysis can be read in full in the [Open Look at NUS](#) report, available to download from NUS connect. The headline conclusions were:

- Inclusiveness (presence) - Overall initiatives like fair representation and reserved spaces have functioned to increase inclusiveness in our decision making, but there is still some way to go, particularly in terms of FE participation.
- Inclusiveness (voice) – the traditional, adversarial mode of debate and hostile culture are substantial barriers to ensuring our decision making is inclusive and diverse voices are heard.
- Popular control - Our model of using traditional electoral democracy limits popular control, as representatives with relatively low levels of accountability make all the decisions.
- Considered judgement - Our model of debate limits the number of views heard. Relatively little technical information is provided to inform decisions.
- Transparency (internal) - transparency amongst more seasoned members is higher than others but our most complex processes remain a mystery even to them.
- Transparency (external) – transparency beyond those directly involved in our decision making remains very low.
- Efficiency - The cost (both in time and money) of our decision making processes is substantial, as is the volume of policy they produce, some of which is never acted upon.
- Transferability - the language and processes used by NUS for its decision making are relatively alien to our members and therefore far from intuitive and engaging.

2.2 Students' attitudes towards democratic decision making

In 2014 NUS launched a democracy commission aimed at developing democratic innovation in students' unions. In order to inform the work, a survey of 2839 students from 10 different students' unions was conducted. There was a real mix of students' unions involved including Ulster, Bradford College, Durham and UEL. Despite this diversity, students' opinions didn't vary substantially, allowing us to draw some useful conclusions from the research. This produced the [Democracy is dead! Long live democracies!](#) report. The headline findings were:

- A preference for direct and deliberative democratic processes over representative democracy. Only 12% of respondents wanted elected representatives to make decisions on their behalf, compared to 50% who wanted to use a vote and 38% a debate.
- The further away from them the decision is made, the less represented students feel. 50% felt represented in their students' union and place of study, but only 35% in the area that they live and 39% nationally.
- Less than 50% feel comfortable standing in an election. There was a significant difference between how comfortable men and women felt running in elections. Twice as many women as men said that they were "not comfortable at all" running in elections. Conversely twice as many men as women said that they felt very comfortable running in elections.
- Students need to be consulted before a decision is made to feel represented. 76% of respondents said that they wanted their representative to consult them before a meeting and then speak on their behalf, compared to only 14% who were happy for representative to use their discretion to make decisions on their behalf and then be held to account for their actions.
- In order to be represented, 84% wanted to be grouped with other students according to their perspective and interests (e.g. course, activity). Students who would be likely to experience discrimination based on their characteristics, were more likely to want to be grouped according to their identity.

- Most students preferred a more unitary democracy than an adversarial one. 60% of respondents felt that students' unions should be controlled by all its members rather than a majority, and 70% favoured consensual decisions over majority rule.

Based on these findings, numerous students' unions have experimented with various democratic innovations: most notably the use of participatory budgeting, preferendums (multi-choice ballots) and student panels or juries. This broadly signifies a move away from pure representative democratic methods towards more direct and deliberative innovations. More details of these innovations and the related democratic benefits can be read in the [This is what democracies look like](#) report.

3.0 Timeline

The timeline in Figure 1 outlines different phases of the work including generating ideas, consulting with stakeholders and developing concrete proposals up to National Conference 2017. The timeline has been designed to coincide with the cycle of NUS board and NEC meetings in September, December and February. At the request of the task and finish group, in order to stretch and inspire thinking throughout the "idea generation" phase, a list of democratic innovations from outside the student movement was compiled (see appendix C).

Phase	Dates
Generating ideas around different options	October 2015 - September 15 th 2016
Consolidating ideas	September 16 th - October 3 rd 2016
Consulting on consolidation	October 4 th - November 25 th 2016
Producing proposal based on consultation	November 26 th - December 4 nd 2016
Consulting on proposal	December 5 rd 2016 - January 20 th 2017
Amending proposal and draft motion	January 20 th - January 31 st 2017
Signing off and submitting the motion to National Conference	February 1 st - March 3 rd 2017

Fig 1. Review timeline

After the meeting on September 29th to shape the first consultation, the task and finish group will meet after each consultation phase, first w/c November 28th and second w/c January 30th. The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss amending the proposals based on the feedback we've received. Inspired by Iceland's experiment in crowdsourcing their constitution, we're planning to host the proposals as open, public Google documents that members can comment on and suggest edits to.

4.0 Perceived Problems

4.1 Democratic governance

At the task and finish group meeting in June it was agreed that, although our democratic system has worked for many years, in order to get the kind of democratic governance we want we will have to make substantial changes. It must fit the changing tertiary education landscape reflected in NUS' membership, with more apprentices and larger FE colleges. Throughout the conversations since October 2015 NUS and students' union officers and staff have consistently raised the same issues with our democratic governance:

- FE and apprentices are underrepresented consistently in decision making. They face (amongst other things) major financial barriers to participation.
- Following area reviews, FE learner voice isn't guaranteed at an institutional level.
- There often isn't enough time to debate complex issues properly.
- There's not enough information to inform the debate including guidance on the potential implications of different decisions.
- That we need to move away from binary choices (for example For vs. Against, X or Y, win or lose) towards more pluralistic (for example multiple choice X, Y or Z) discussion.
- There's a hostile culture around our decision making that participants find intimidating.
- The language we use needs to be more intuitive.
- The processes we use need to be less complex.
- The "autonomous" status of liberation campaigns and nations is sometimes ambiguous.
- Decisions are too centralised and need to be further devolved to nations and regions.
- We have a lot of officers and too much policy with no way to prioritise it or hold officers to account for implementing it.
- Our methods are out-dated and more needs to be done online.
- We need to reach out to more students through students' unions and make them feel involved.

Many, if not all, of these concerns map onto the principles (see section 5) passed at National Conference in April and are also consistent with the analysis in section 2.1. Most of these issues are also articulated well by either NUS or students' union officers in [a video](#) made at this year's officer development course, Lead and Change.

4.2 Corporate governance

The steer from the task and finish group at the residential meeting in June was that the challenge of getting the kind of corporate governance we want is akin to completing a Rubik's cube - we have what we need but we need to re-arrange the parts. The NUS group is currently made up of multiple legal entities (see appendix E) many of which need not exist separately and instead be integrated to create a simpler solution.

Having a more straightforward governance arrangement would increase transparency; making it easier to understand both how money moves around the group and who has the power to make which decisions, where and why. Transparency was a key concern raised by both the task and

finish group and by the membership at the open governance meeting over the summer. This appetite for greater transparency may be the product of students' unions having shifted from a more direct form of engagement in NUS' corporate governance as shareholders to a more representative form through board and group members. Regardless, greater transparency would also help board members to more effectively holding staff to account for financial management and organisational performance against the strategic plan.

5.0 Principles

As outlined above, having passed the principles below at conference – the challenge now is to consider what democratic innovations would better align our decision making with these ideas. Two things are certain. Firstly that we will have to combine a number of different innovations to satisfy all these principles. Secondly there will likely be more than way of implementing the principles in practice. Section 6 therefore looks at what these options could be.

Vision: Democracy within NUS should take active steps to put the power in the hands of the members to make transparent decisions through informed and inclusive debate that ensures that diverse voices are heard.
1. Students' unions are the constituent members of NUS.
2. Students are members of their students' union and therefore their association with NUS is dependent upon their students' unions' membership of NUS.
3. Democratic decisions within NUS should be made by its constituent members
4. These democratic decisions are about reflecting what is in the best interests of students
5. The membership should feel that decision making processes are representative and inclusive. However once a decision is made representatives of NUS should remain conscious that not everyone will agree with the decision.
6. NUS and their elected leaders should act in the interests of students. The membership should then hold the elected leaders to account for their actions using a clear process that enables them to first question officers, and then take further action, within the democratic structures of NUS, if they are not satisfied with the answer.
7. The primary role of elected officers within NUS is to lead the movement and harness its collective power to achieve its goals. Their work should therefore focus on how to secure these demands.
8. Democratic decisions should be conducted using processes that maximise the principles of inclusiveness, popular control, transparency, considered judgement and efficiency as defined above and in Quality Students' Unions
9. The complex and diverse decisions made during the policy cycle would be best made by a complex and diverse group of our members. NUS should therefore give guidance and assistance to students' unions to be more democratic and ensure that their representatives are diverse
10. The autonomy of the Liberation campaigns should be supported so that those who define as such can determine the means via which they challenge their oppression across national borders whilst operating more centrally to make the wider movement more progressive
11. The NUS Nations lead on and achieve the movement's goals within a specific national context. The scope of their autonomous policy setting focuses on how to respond to devolved policy
12. There should be total clarity over what decisions are made where, why and who is accountable for the decision being implemented. The language used within our decision-making should be accessible and free from jargon and this language should be able to be replicated across Nations and different students' unions

6.0 Implementation options

For options around our democratic governance please use [this link](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NUSdemocracy):

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NUSdemocracy>

7.0 Appendices

A - Motion 704: A New Settlement – the next steps for delivering a fairer member relationship

Remitted by National Conference 2015 to the National Executive Council, and carried there on June 2nd

Conference Believes:

1. In September 2014, NUS asked an independent commission to assess the costs and benefits of NUS affiliation to member students' unions and make recommendations for improvement.
2. The commission conducted an in-depth consultation to gain valuable insights and understanding of the views of students' unions and what they value and how they participate in NUS.
3. In February 2015 their recommendations were published for the consideration of students' unions and NUS in their report titled 'A New Settlement'.
4. The report outlined the commission's view that a 'new settlement' is required to significantly improve NUS' approach to membership and highlighted themes such as clarity, transparency and accessibility as key areas.
5. Their recommendations included the introduction of stronger tests of member value to be applied to NUS' activities, and new approaches to both governance and the financial model.
6. NUS is the national voice of students that must make decisions based on the collective will of its members, through 600 member students' unions.
7. NUS cannot claim to be entirely representative of its membership while it has a decision making structure in place that its members perceive as inaccessible, and lacking in transparency.
8. Students and students' unions feel that NUS take decisions without their input, and without sufficient means of recourse if they disagree with the decisions NUS makes.

Conference Further Believes:

1. 'A New Settlement' provides a potential framework to help build stronger and more transparent relationships between NUS and member students' unions.
2. For many of the recommendations to be implemented in full, we would need a funding review accompanied by a full review of how NUS makes decisions.
3. Financial capability of students' unions often dictates their ability to take part in the work of NUS, and cost of accessing NUS events continues to be a barrier to participation.
4. The decision making structures we currently have in place are not suited to a diverse student body. Antiquated means of making decisions will mean that it is the same voices being heard time and time again.
5. The future of NUS is by no means guaranteed in an ever uncertain political climate. If NUS is to remain a powerful collective movement it has to create a model of democratic engagement that is; responsive to its membership, transparent, and accessible to all.

Conference Resolves:

1. For NUS to take forward a review of its governance and financial model, informed by 'A New Settlement' and further wide consultation with students' unions, and bring outline proposals to National Conference 2016.
2. NUS should commit to a governance review that has; accessibility, transparency, and effectiveness of decision making at its heart.

3. To bring a vision and an implementation plan to NUSNC16

B – Stakeholder composition of the task and finish group

NUS UK National President
NUS UK Vice President Union Development
2 members of the Charity board
2 members of the Services board
2 members of the NUS UK board
A Nations President
A member of Democratic procedures committee (DPC)
A member of elections committee
2 Students' Union officers
2 liberation officers
2 Students' Union staff
A FTO from Scotland (to ensure coordination with the NUS Scotland Governance review)

C – Democratic innovations from around the world

A key part of NUS Project 100 is about making our democracy more inclusive and representative. The first phase of this process involved identifying a set of principles that would underpin a better democracy. Having passed these principles at National Conference in April, phase two is about thinking through what they might look like in practice. In order to inform and inspire this thinking what follows is a list of examples of democratic decision making from outside the student movement and how they could be applied at NUS. Clearly it would be neither practical nor desirable for NUS to adopt all these ideas – indeed many of them are contradictory. Nevertheless, they represent a genuine appetite to think beyond the processes we currently use and explore new means of building a 21st Century democracy for NUS.

Name: Cumulative Voting

Summary: Citizens are given a number of votes that they would be able to distribute across candidates or options (on a multi-choice ballot). They can then give their votes to a single a single candidate (or option) or spread them around a number of candidates.

Potential benefit and application: It makes the voting process more sophisticated and sensitive to the different values and priorities that people hold.

Name: Compulsory Voting

Summary: There are around 30 countries in the world where some sort of compulsory voting takes place. For example, in Bolivia voting is not simply a right but a duty or responsibility that citizens must fulfill, failure to do so can result in denied public sector employment and services.

Potential benefit and application: If participating in democratic decision making was part of the responsibility of being a member of NUS it would be likely to increase participation and in turn the legitimacy of the decisions, make those participating in decision making more representative of the whole membership and raise the political awareness of more people (through their involvement in democracy)

Name: Standing citizen's panels

Summary: a large (around 1000) and statistically representative sample of citizens, often weighted for gender, age, ethnicity and occupation. Authorities in Wolverhampton and Lewisham survey a panel on a regular basis as a sounding board to test policy proposals. The UK government ran a 5000 strong People's Panel for 4 years from 1998.

Potential benefit and application: A segment of NUS extra cardholders could be established to operate as a Standing citizen's panel. Involving a relatively large number of students on a fairly regular basis that could be broken down to focus on the views of particular groups e.g. black students. Such panels are clearly insufficient as they grant no power to students to make decisions, nevertheless they may be useful in providing a broader context for the policy formation process.

Name: Petition

Summary: petitions allow citizens to raise issues directly to parliament, an executive or local authority. In the past, the Scottish Parliament has used an effective petition system, coordinated by the Public Petitions Committee to enable individuals outside the networks of power to raise issues in parliament.

Potential benefit and application: this could enable students including but far beyond sabbatical officers to engage directly with NUS. It may help alert NUS to new issues faced by students and draw people in to debate the issue.

Name: Citizens' juries/ Deliberative opinion polls

Summary: citizens' juries bring together a demographically representative (e.g. gender, ethnicity etc) random selection of between 12 to 24 citizens to debate a particular issue. Over three to four days citizens hear evidence, cross-examine experts and debate questions. At the end the citizens produce recommendations in a report. Citizen's juries were first used in the UK in the mid-1990s when a series of citizen's juries were promoted by the institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR), the King's Fund Policy Institute and the Local Government Management Board (LGMB). Deliberative opinion polling (DOP) differ from citizens' juries as they use a random sample of 250-500 citizens who are polled at the beginning of the event and then again at the end. Unlike traditional opinion polls DOPs reflect citizens considered judgements rather than 'top of their head' views.

Potential benefit and application: Evidence from the UK, US and Germany suggests that citizen take their role seriously and are willing to debate often complex and controversial issues. Citizen's juries are high in terms of inclusiveness as the selection method ensures that a demographically representative group of citizen's is involved. The obvious weakness is that only a small number of citizen's can participate. DOPs on the other hand involve more significant numbers of citizens. At NUS citizens' juries could be combined with delegations of sabbatical officers to bring officers and students to debate issues and produce recommendations e.g. a conference could be made up of two thirds officers one third students.

Name: Consensus conferences

Summary: The Danish Board of Technology has used consensus conferences since the 1980s to consult the public on new controversial scientific and technological developments that raise significant ethical concerns e.g. Genetically modified food. Citizens are selected on the basis of socio-demographic criteria from a pool of applicants who've responded to an advert inviting them to participate – so the process is more self-selecting. There are a series of pre-conference meetings where citizens learn about the issues and frame the questions for the conference.

Potential benefit and application: The pre-conference meetings allow the citizens to enter the conference with a much greater knowledge of the issues at hand and clearer about their own perspectives. As NUS has gone through a large consultative process to identify goals to achieve over the next 6 years e.g. combatting mental distress, votes for 16 year olds and closing the attainment gap, there may be an opportunity to more closely align the annual policy cycle with the long-term goals in the strategic framework.

Name: America Speaks 21st Century Town Meetings

Summary: One day events involving 500 to 5000 citizens debating local, regional or national issues e.g. "Listening to the City: Rebuilding Lower Manhattan" that took place after September 11th attracted 5000 citizens. Although these events are open to all, the organisers will usually engage in targeted outreach to attract under represented sectors of the population. The meetings attempt to combine small-scale face-to-face deliberations with large-scale collective decision-making. To this end they employ:

- Small group discussion of 10 to 12 diverse citizens with an independent facilitator
- Networked computers to collate ideas and votes from each table
- Electronic keypads for citizens to vote and provide demographic data
- Theming comments from tables to present back to the room
- Large video screens to present data, themes, and information
- Briefings from experts and stakeholders to inform the discussion

Potential benefit and application: NUS arguably needs a more 21st Century democracy, having designed the policy process for a very different membership. The scale of the meetings means that they often generate substantial interest from the media and authorities. The organisers have successfully ensured a reasonable level of participation from traditionally under-represented groups. Furthermore the sheer number of participants mean that even where there are discrepancies in the proportions of participants from certain backgrounds, voting can be broken down to reflect different characteristics and potentially weighted accordingly. NUS could hold the details of those who are willing to participate in such events.

Name: British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (BCCAER) *Case Study*

Summary: The BCCAER was set up to review the BC electoral system and recommend an alternative. The assembly was made up of 160 randomly selected citizens one man and one woman from each electoral district plus two Aboriginal members. Each member was paid \$150 per day to attend. The assembly spent a series of weekend learning about different electoral systems, then took evidence from 50 public hearings attended by 3000 citizens and finally spent time debating different systems before voting on options. A referendum was then held to approve or reject their recommendation of using an STV electoral system.

Potential benefit and application: this process benefits from using an inclusive, demographically representative group of citizens to debate an important issue in an on-going process rather than a single one-off event. By giving them the power to frame a referendum question it also enables a high level of popular control as every citizen then has the opportunity to vote on their proposal. At NUS groups of officers and or students could debate important issues and develop either a single recommendation or a number of options that could be put back out to the wider membership to vote on using either a referendum or preferendum

Name: National Issues Forums

Summary: Every year the National Issues Forums (initiated by the Kettering Foundation in the US) identifies major issues of concern and develops 'issue books'. These issue books identify three or

four options or approaches to the issue (not polar opposites). A moderator then facilitates discussions around these options. Participants are asked to agree to a set of guidelines: acceptance, listening with respect, curiosity, diversity, sincerity and brevity.

Potential benefit and application: It could be that NUS policy staff create 'issue books' ahead of deliberative events such as zones in order to frame and inform the debate. The guidelines could be adopted to guide discussion.

Name: Deliberation Day

Summary: Ackerman and Fishkin have proposed a new national holiday two weeks before major national elections for US citizens to gather in neighbourhood meetings to discuss the upcoming election. Before the meetings a balanced briefing document would be made widely available that summarised the basic positions of the candidates on selected issues. Each neighbourhood meeting would involve around 300 people who would be organised into groups of 15 people. The citizens would watch first watch a live television debate on main campaign issues. Then in small group roundtable discussions agree three questions to ask local party representatives. These questions are grouped, themed and answered before the small groups come back together to share their reactions to the responses.

Potential benefit and application: Clearly, this would give a lot more people the space and time to understand the issues at stake and identify who to vote for. The process could also be used to understand and debate policy proposals as well as elections. Simultaneous Deliberation Days could be held regionally for student officers and students to watch live stream debates between candidates for officer roles and/or debate national policy proposals before questioning local campaign supporters and voting. The votes could then be aggregated to give a national result. Providing a more regional opportunity to participate in elections and/or policy decisions would be likely to increase both the number and diversity of participants and provide more time for discussion and considered judgements.

Name: Multi-choice ballots

Summary: Benjamin Barber suggests using multi-choice ballots, replacing a simple yes/no option with a range of options:

- Yes in principle – strongly for the proposal
- Yes in principle – but not a first priority
- No in principle – strongly against the proposal
- No with respect to this formulation – but not against the proposal in principle, suggest reformulation and resubmission
- No for the time being – although not necessarily oppose in principle, suggest postponement

Potential benefit and application: Barber suggests varied choices elicit more thoughtful responses even though yes/no responses would be aggregated to give the result. Within NUS this would give us significantly more information on the voters views that would help shape the implementation of the policy

Name: Preferendum/ Consensus (De Borda) Voting

Summary: Rather than presenting a single proposal for citizens to vote for or against, a preferendum presents a number of different options for voters to number in order of preference. Unlike STV the De Borda Institute in Northern Ireland use a points system for voting which seeks to identify the most preferred result. If for example there are five options on the ballot paper voters

would be asked to give 5 pts to their most preferred options, 4 pts to their second favourite and so on. In the count all the points are added up and whichever has the highest wins.

Potential benefit and application: De Borda voting means that the most divisive option which has a significant number of 5s and 1s could have an average score of 3 and be beaten by a compromise option that attracted very few 5s but lots of 4s. It was developed in Northern Ireland to deal with particularly contentious social issues. The voting method is arguably also more inclusive as minority groups cannot be overruled by a given option having more than 50% of first preferences in the first round of an STV vote.

Name: Recall

Summary: Recall enabled citizens to remove a public official from office. By filing a petition with the required number of signatures, citizens can force a vote on an official's term in office. Recall usually requires about 25% of citizens who voted in the last election. For example Gray Davies was removed as the Governor of California before the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Potential benefit and application: The main argument for recall is that it provides for continuous accountability. NUS set up a space on NUS Connect to set up a petition, which, if signed by enough people, triggered a vote of no confidence in an officer.

Name: Electronic voting

Summary: A report by Howland, *Logged Off? How ICT Can Connect Young People and Politics* suggests that, "as a generation, young people are far more accustomed to using information technologies to perform basic functions and voting is no exception". For example the youth parliament in the Scottish Highlands where a higher percentage of students used their votes in schools using electronic online voting than those compared to those using paper ballots.

Potential benefit and application: There are multiple opportunities to apply electronic voting. From remote referendum or preferendum to the use of voting apps at events and conferences.

Name: Virtual Surgeries

Summary: Rather than meeting in person, MPs make themselves available online for a given time period to enable constituents to discuss or raise their problems or concerns online.

Potential benefit and application: NUS officers could have regular online surgeries to make themselves available and more accountable to officers and students.

Name: International Workers of the World (IWW) *Case Study*

Summary: The IWW uses multiple levels of democracy. Local branches are controlled directly by local members. Once a year these branches elect and vote on a direction for delegates to send to a general convention. At the convention the delegates debate key issues and construct referendums. These referendum questions are then mailed back out to local branches for members to vote. This annual ballot is also used to elect various union roles.

Potential benefit and application: It is easy to consider how this method could be applied to NUS. Rather than the final decision being made at national conference, it could be used to debate and construct a final referendum proposal for members to vote on. Students' unions could simply be awarded one vote each or votes could be weighted depending on the number of students at their institution. Another option (adapted from Participatory Budgeting in Brazil) is that sabbatical

officers vote is weighted in relation to the mandate they received in their election; so the higher the turn out the more power they get. This could be both highly controversial and administratively burdensome.

D – National Society of Apprentices

What NSoA want from their relationship with NUS

Members of the NSoA leadership team met with NUS FTO's to discuss what they want and expect from their relationship with NUS. The discussion was framed into what they would like to happen, what they would possibly like to happen and what they want to avoid.

What the NSoA wants from their relationship with NUS

- Autonomy over NSoA decisions
- Clarity of organisational responsibility
- More policy and campaigns integration between NSoA and NUS – An articulated collectivism
- Parity of democratic esteem – for NSoA to have voting rights within NUS
- Financial accountability
- For NSoA to play an active part in NUS liberation campaigns
- For NUS to politically support NSoA and for NSoA to be able to access the political capital of NUS
- A clear and honest relationship so both organisations know where they stand
- Clear targets for sales of the Apprentice Extra card

What the NSoA would possibly like from their relationship with NUS

- Reserved place or places on NUS NEC to access interim policy, provide diversity on NEC and to support communication between NSoA and student leaders
- A clear process for how NSoA accesses the direct advocacy of NUS and how NUS can support NSoA to advocate for themselves
- Specific places within NUS structures for NSoA representation
- Guidelines for dealing with policy disagreements between NUS and NSoA
- Some oversight for NSoA on financial accountability of the Apprentice Extra card

What the NSoA doesn't want from their relationship with NUS

- The structures and processes that NUS currently has – the NSoA like fluidity
- NUS control over NSoA – No NUS veto over NSoA work
- Democratic structures that encourage simplified and adversarial debate
- For the NSoA to take NUS for granted – the NSoA want a positive, honest and reciprocal relationship with NUS

E – The seven entities of the NUS Group

- National Union of Students United Kingdom (NUS): a company limited by guarantee. Its members are those unions affiliated to the NUS, and is the ultimate parent entity of the Group.
- NUS Holdings Limited (Holdings): a company limited by shares. It has 119,942 issued shares, all held by NUS. It owns property, and provides property management services. It owns NUS Services Limited and NUS Media Limited.

- NUS Services Limited (Services): a company limited by shares. It has A Shares and B Shares. It operates the purchasing consortium, marketing and sponsorship services and provides financial and administrative support to NUS.
- NUS Media Limited (Media): a company limited by shares. It has one issued share, owned by Holdings. It provides digital services, media advertising services, outsourcing and back office functions.
- Epona Limited (Epona): a company limited by shares. It has 308 issued shares, owned by NUS Services Limited. It is a fair trade clothing company.
- NUS Students' Union Charitable Services (Charity): a charitable company limited by guarantee. It provides training, conferences and seminars, advice and information on legal, accountancy, management and fundraising matters. It has one member: NUS.
- NUS Scotland Charitable Services (Scottish Charity): a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). It has wide charitable objects including to advance education, health, citizenship, environmental protection and to promote equality and diversity. It has two members: NUS and the Charity.

F – Definitions of popular control, transparency, considered judgement, inclusiveness

- **Inclusiveness** is assessed through measuring two forms of political equality: 'Presence' and 'Voice'. Presence is about who is in the room when decisions are made. For example, if a meeting only involved white people then, in terms of ethnicity, we could not say that there is an equality of Presence as it only involved people from one ethnic group. Whereas Presence is concerned with who is there when decisions are being made, Voice is concerned with who speaks. For example, a meeting could be attended by people from a range of different ethnic groups, but if only the white people speak then we could not say that there is an equality of Voice. So, an evaluation of inclusiveness is concerned with the question: do students have an equal opportunity (in presence and voice) to affect decisions?
- **Popular control** has its roots in the literal translation of democracy, or *Demokratia*, as *demos* "people" *kratos* "power", or "the people hold power". In other words, the will of students as expressed through their participation in decision-making must be acted upon; otherwise their participation (however inclusive) is meaningless. Students must control not only the outcome of the decision, but also how the decision is made. There are four steps in the decision-making process where students can exert power: problem definition, option analysis, option selection and implementation.
- In order to make **considered judgements** two things must be present; firstly technical information, e.g. if there is an proposal to close a students' union bookshop, then financial information would need to be provided to inform the discussion. Secondly, just as important is the opportunity to listen to and understand other people's, more subjective points of view. So with the bookshop example, if students felt really strongly that there should be a bookshop on campus, this would also be important to consider when making the decision. Professor Graham Smith refers to this process whereby deliberation enables people to consider the impact of decisions beyond their own subjective, private conditions as "enlarged thinking".
- **Transparency** has two dimensions, internal transparency and external transparency. Internally the main aim is to ensure that participants are aware of the conditions under which they are participating. This includes the long-term and short-term impact of their participation as well as understanding the decision making process itself. External transparency relates to the extent to which people "not in the room" can understand why

decisions were made and how. This dimension of transparency has clear links to accountability, as it creates a focus on the extent to which transparency enables people to scrutinise the actions of their representative(s).

ⁱ Smith G, (2009) *Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation*. Cambridge University Press