

MOTIONS

UNION COUNCIL PLENARY

November 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Ordinary Motions

Anti-racism and the refugee crisis	1
War in Syria and the Paris attacks	3
Library Collection and Photocopying Charges	5
UCL Air Conditioning	6
Better Accommodation options for International and Mature students	7
Lift the Age Cap on Taught Masters	8
Anti-racism and Anti-fascism Officer to include Anti-anarchism	9
Solar panels to fund a Birkbeck SU scholarship	10
Improving the Careers Service	11
Inclusive politics	12
Alcohol at events	13
EU Referendum	14
International students	15
Mature students	16
Guidance Notes	17

ANTI-RACISM AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS

Anti-racism and the refugee crisis

COUNCIL BELIEVES

1. The refugee crisis today is the most serious since the Second World War, with millions travelling to Europe to escape civil and imperialist war.
2. Thousands of people have died as part of this process, whether drowning in the Mediterranean, subject to the horrors of refugee camps or up against the borders of 'Fortress Europe'.
3. A series of horrific shootings and suicide bombings saw at least 130 people killed in six sites around the French capital, Paris, on 13/11/15. There has also been attacks in other cities across the world.
4. As well as refugees, Muslims are being targeted as a threat to 'British values', with attacks on them increasing by 70% over the last year in London alone.

COUNCIL FURTHER BELIEVES

1. That the rhetoric employed by Western leaders regarding refugees is nothing short of racist, and is – as said by UN Human Rights Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein – **reminiscent of pre-Holocaust attitudes towards European Jews.**
2. There has been a racist backlash towards Muslims and refugees who are wrongly being blamed for the attacks in Paris and labelled as terrorists.
3. The Prevent agenda is racist and seeks to use attacks, like the ones in Paris, to justify greater surveillance of the Muslim community – effectively branding them as the problem in British society.
4. **The Conservative Government decision to allow 20,000 Syrians into Britain over the next 5 years, exclusively from refugee camps in the region surrounding Syria, is far short of what is necessary and shirks the responsibility Britain has to refugees in a region destroyed by our wars.**
5. Far from being full, Britain's land is only 1% developed, and 600,000 homes are empty.
6. Scholarship schemes represent a way in which refugees can safely travel to Europe, and engage in an education denied by war.
7. Stand Up To Racism has been central in fighting for solidarity with refugees and against the scapegoating of Muslims.

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. To lobby the government to allow *significantly* more refugees into Britain.
2. To issue a letter condemning the racist rhetoric employed by David Cameron and Home Secretary Theresa May.
3. To call upon our university to create at least ten scholarships for refugees.
4. Support the NUS day of action against Prevent on December 7th called by NUS, NUS Black Students Campaign, Defend the Right to Protest, The Federation of Student Islamic Societies and The #StudentsnotSuspects Tour.
5. To support Stand Up to Racism and the UN anti-racism day of action demonstration in London on March 19th.

ANTI-RACISM AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS

6. Anti-fascist organisation Unite against Fascism (UAF) will be hosting their annual conference on February 6th 2016, part of the discussion there will consider both PREVENT and the refugee crisis. Birkbeck SU will send at least five some people to the conference to participate in the discussion.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

1. This is an ordinary motion that proposes a policy stance and can be agreed by a simple majority vote of the Council.
2. The motion can be amended: in advance, substantive amendments can be submitted by Thursday 26 November at 5pm; manuscript amendments may be accepted on the day at the meeting at the discretion of the chair. All amendments require one propose and one seconder.
3. Debate on the motion and any amendments is subject to Standing Orders.

WAR IN SYRIA AND THE PARIS ATTACKS

War in Syria and the Paris attacks

COUNCIL BELIEVES

1. Following the uprisings which swept the region in 2011 for the last four years, there has been a bloody, multi-faceted civil war.
2. More than half of all Syrians are now refugees. Out of a population of 23 million before the war, more than four million fled to neighbouring countries by July of this year, and almost eight million had been displaced within Syria. An estimated 200,000 have made their way to Europe.
3. At the time of writing the United States, France and Russia are the only countries bombing in Syria.
4. In 2013, public pressure on MPs, and the memory of the Iraq war, led to the unprecedented vote in parliament against David Cameron's plan to bomb Syria.
5. The US has been bombing Isis targets for over a year and made no progress. In that time Isis have captured large sections of Iraq and Syria.
6. A series of horrific shootings and suicide bombings saw at least 130 people killed in six sites around the French capital, Paris, on 13/11/15. There has also been attacks in other cities across the world.
7. These attacks were carried out by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) – who have grown from the conflict in Syria and the destruction of infrastructure, occupation and entrenchment of sectarian division by the West in Iraq.

COUNCIL FURTHER BELIEVES

1. Muslims are not to blame for the actions of ISIS.
2. Isis is a reactionary and counter-revolutionary movement. But it is a product of the destruction wreaked in Iraq by the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation and of the defeat of the Arab Spring. The ultimate responsibility for its rise therefore lies with the Western imperialist powers and their local clients.
3. More bombing will simply fuel the fire which Isis grows from and kill/ displace millions more innocent civilians. We have already seen this from the airstrikes carried out by France in the past week. However President Francois Hollande promised, "We are going to lead a war which will be pitiless" - thereby disregarding the fact that France has been bombing Syria prior to the Paris attacks.
4. Isis wants a war with the West to justify their position.
5. Following the Paris attacks there has been a racist backlash targeting Muslims and refugees as terrorists across Europe.
6. We must reject the racist offensive, which David Cameron will use to justify his bloodthirsty demand for war and weaken our solidarity with those fleeing from western bombs.

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. Demand the British government does not use military intervention in Syria and to pull out of other invasions/occupations in the Middle East.
2. Affiliate to the Stop the War Coalition (£50 affiliation fee), and support any Stop the War Coalition protest against intervention in Syria.

WAR IN SYRIA AND THE PARIS ATTACKS

SECRETARY'S NOTE

4. This is an ordinary motion that proposes a policy stance and can be agreed by a simple majority vote of the Council.
5. The motion also proposes an "affiliation" to an external body. Under the procedures of the Regulations on Affiliations (see Note 1 below), this follows Regulation 4.
6. The motion can be amended: in advance, substantive amendments can be submitted by Thursday 26 November at 5pm; manuscript amendments may be accepted on the day at the meeting at the discretion of the chair. All amendments require one proposer and one seconder.
7. Debate on the motion and any amendments is subject to Standing Orders.

NOTE 1 – Regulations Governing Affiliations:

1. A student or group of students (including clubs and societies) wishing to affiliate their group (and by extension the SU) or the SU as a whole, makes an application in writing to the Executive Committee;
2. The Executive Committee investigates the proposed affiliation, and specifically investigates:
 - a. Cost and commitment/liability
 - b. The wider benefit to the SU and its members
 - c. Establishes the charitable benefit 'to further the education' of Birkbeck students
 - d. Procedures for disaffiliation and any constitutional commitments beyond the current financial year
 - e. Appropriateness
3. An affiliation may be approved by the Trustee Board, on recommendation of the Executive if:
 - a. There are funds to cover the cost of affiliation
 - b. The present work of, or the near future work of the Students' Union is enhanced by such an affiliation, and
 - c. There is a charitable benefit that can be clearly evidenced and communicated to members and stakeholders
4. Additionally, the Council may pass a resolution (with proper notice of motion given), affiliate to or disaffiliate from any affiliation (save that if the affiliation has been approved by Referendum or a disaffiliation is caused by a Referendum, the Council resolution is void)
5. For clubs and societies, the Executive Officer responsible for clubs and societies, shall have delegated authority to approve any necessary affiliation, provided that such an affiliation is required for the work and further the objects of that society, and, there is sufficient budget to pay for the affiliation.
6. Where no budget has been allocated to cover the costs of any affiliation, the matter shall only be resolved by the Trustee Board.
7. Annually, or more frequently, a resolution shall be put to the members at a General Meeting (usually the AGM) listing the current ongoing affiliations and the cost of affiliation. If an affiliation is declined or not 'renewed' at the General Meeting, the Council shall make a determination whether to call a Referendum to reverse the issue (or alternatively, member can submit a valid requisition as set down in the Articles for a secret ballot of members).
8. A list of affiliations, the cost of affiliation, and the main website/contact details for such affiliations, shall be kept on the website.

LIBRARY COLLECTION AND PHOTOCOPYING CHARGES

Library Collection and Photocopying Charges

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. Student Union must pressure the library for a better collection of resources and books - we don't have enough computing books; usually they are all booked out and most are literally decades out of date which is disgraceful in the fast moving industry of computing.
2. Student Union must fight for reduced print and copy charges at the library.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

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2. The motion can be amended: in advance, substantive amendments can be submitted by Thursday 26 November at 5pm; manuscript amendments may be accepted on the day at the meeting at the discretion of the chair. All amendments require one proposer and one seconder.
3. Debate on the motion and any amendments is subject to Standing Orders.

UCL Air Conditioning

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. Student Union must fight the lack of air-conditioning in UCL rooms where MSc students attend lectures - the sauna like atmosphere is not conducive to concentration required for study for mentally stimulating subjects.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

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BETTER ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL AND MATURE STUDENTS

Better Accommodation options for International and Mature students

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. The Student Union must push for better accommodation options for international and mature students.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

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LIFT THE AGE CAP ON TAUGHT MASTERS

Lift the Age Cap on Taught Masters

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. Student Union representatives to NUS must fight for Masters students of all ages to have access to a student loan for their first Master's degree, in similar style to the government support for Bachelor's students.
2. This is a worthy taxpayers expense - a person from any background can be intelligent, determined and responsible, and hence on receipt of such education, a real asset to the country.

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ANTI-RACISM AND ANTI-FASCISM OFFICER TO INCLUDE ANTI-ANARCHISM

Anti-racism and Anti-fascism Officer to include Anti-anarchism

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. Anti-fascism/Anti-racism Officer title targets one aspect of political extremism but not all - it should be rephrased to also include anti-anarchism.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

1. This is an ordinary motion that proposes a policy stance and can be agreed by a simple majority vote of the Council.
2. The motion, if passed, would put a mandate down to bring to the next meeting a motion to amend the rules concerning the name of the Anti-racism and Anti-fascism Officer, and this motion would require a two-thirds majority vote.
3. The motion can be amended: in advance, substantive amendments can be submitted by Thursday 26 November at 5pm (please note that no rule changes can be brought at the amendments stage on this motion); manuscript amendments may be accepted on the day at the meeting at the discretion of the chair. All amendments require one proposer and one seconder.
4. Debate on the motion and any amendments is subject to Standing Orders.

SOLAR PANELS TO FUND A BIRKBECK SU SCHOLARSHIP

Solar panels to fund a Birkbeck SU scholarship

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. Investigate the feasibility of utilising roof space for solar panels - any extra money made can go towards a scholarship. The Birkbeck SU scholarship..

SECRETARY'S NOTE

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3. Debate on the motion and any amendments is subject to Standing Orders.

Improving the Careers Service

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. This Council calls for an improvement to good quality careers advice with a view to maximising employment opportunities for graduates and current college members.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

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Inclusive politics

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. While societies specific to a political party such as the Birkbeck Conservatives or Birkbeck Labour may support a party line neither other student societies the liberation groups the Student Council nor the Student Union executive committee should ever show a bias.
2. For the sake of democracy and to allow students to make an informed decision we should tolerate and be inclusive of all mainstream political parties whether we agree with them or not that being those accepted by the BBC TV debates for the general election in 2015 e.g. those partaking in the debate in England, of which London is a city are: LibDems, Tories, Labour, UKIP and Greens.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

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3. Debate on the motion and any amendments is subject to Standing Orders.

Alcohol at events

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. Student Union should allow reasonable drinking of alcohol at events, such as conferences on campus, and reasonable expenditure by societies.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

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EU Referendum

COUNCIL BELIEVES

1. A referendum is coming up on the EU where people are permitted by the government to vote for and against.

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. While we may have strong viewpoints in both the referendum on Scotland and that on the EU the potential of succession from a union in both are legal valid stances and we should show neither in speech or printing any bias or pressure students towards one side but tolerate speakers both for and against.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

1. This is an ordinary motion that proposes a policy stance and can be agreed by a simple majority vote of the Council.
2. The motion can be amended: in advance, substantive amendments can be submitted by Thursday 26 November at 5pm; manuscript amendments may be accepted on the day at the meeting at the discretion of the chair. All amendments require one proposer and one seconder.
3. Debate on the motion and any amendments is subject to Standing Orders.
4. It should be noted that we have sought guidance from the Charity Commission on the scope of our charitable activity – both in the run-up to the proposed referendum and during the restricted period under the 2001 Act.

International students

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. Student Union to fund and support an International Students Convention.
2. The International Students Society should be chaired by the International Students Officer.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

1. This is an ordinary motion that proposes a policy stance and can be agreed by a simple majority vote of the Council.
2. The motion can be amended: in advance, substantive amendments can be submitted by Thursday 26 November at 5pm; manuscript amendments may be accepted on the day at the meeting at the discretion of the chair. All amendments require one propose and one seconder.
3. Debate on the motion and any amendments is subject to Standing Orders.

Mature students

COUNCIL RESOLVES

1. Student Union to fund and support an Mature Students Convention.
2. By end of 2016 prior to summer holiday a Mature Students Society should have been launched chaired by the Mature Students Officer.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

1. This is an ordinary motion that proposes a policy stance and can be agreed by a simple majority vote of the Council.
2. The motion can be amended: in advance, substantive amendments can be submitted by Thursday 26 November at 5pm; manuscript amendments may be accepted on the day at the meeting at the discretion of the chair. All amendments require one propose and one seconder.
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Guidance Notes

AMENDMENTS

1. A “substantive” amendment is one which contradicts or substantially changes the proposed motion, whilst still being within the topic under discussion.
2. A “manuscript” amendment is one which seeks to add additional information or sculpt policy, without changing the scope of the original motion.
3. Stand alone “delete” amendments can be proposed at the meeting, provided that their purpose is not academic or vexatious (where either opposing the motion as read is better)
4. Motions and amendments to motion are subject to the Parts Procedure, where if agreed by the Council under Standing Orders, the motion/amendment is broken up in to smaller ‘parts’, debated separately, and voted on.
5. Any substantive amendments must be emailed to council@birkbeckunion.org not later than close of business on Thursday 26 November 2015.

SECRETARY’S NOTE

1. Pursuant to the Standing Orders, and in line with the Memorandum of Association, the motions submitted have been considered in terms of our own policies and procedures, including our Staff Protocol and the bye-laws relating to the Council.
2. The motions have been considered in line with the charitable objects of the Union and in line with the current guidance from the Charity Commission. It should be noted that it is never clear cut whether something is “charitable” or not, it is though required that the trustees consider all actions of the Union and satisfy themselves through an appropriate policy that actions and work is charitable.
3. There is noting that stands out as being incompatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

By order of the Council



24 November 2015 – Secretary to Council

R J Park