

# ARU Students' Union

Democracy Review 2022-23



(Image source: The New Yorker)

# Context

Our Democracy Review focusses on representation across our core Chelmsford and Cambridge campuses.

We are seeking to ensure that:

- Students and Staff will have confidence in their Reps
- Students will engage with electing their Reps
- Our democratic structures & roles will reflect the needs of students
- Our Reps are accountable for their work



## Cambridge

Our campus is a stone's throw from the centre of Cambridge, often described as the perfect student city.



## Chelmsford

In Chelmsford, you'll find our striking, modern campus in the city's University and Innovation Quarter.

# Timeline

November 2022

- Alterline undertake student consultation based on agreed objectives

January 2023

- Review of findings and identification of key areas for change

15<sup>th</sup> March 2023

- Proposals submitted to Student Members meeting for approval as policy

October 2023

- New Executive Committee & Rep roles recruited / elected as agreed.

December 2022

- Alterline present research findings to ARU SU.

February 2023

- Vision visits / consultation with other HE providers
- Drafting of broad proposals for consideration by ARU SU stakeholders

April – May 2023

- Changes to bye-laws in line with agreed policy for Executive Committee roles and elections

# Alterline research findings:

- Officer Visibility -  
Students want to understand and engage with our Officers better
- Course Reps -  
Staff and students understand these roles, their purpose and their impact
- Understanding of Roles -  
Students want to know more about what our other Rep roles involve and how they are accountable
- Executive Committee -  
Understanding of, and engagement with the Executive Committee is poor
- Faculty Reps –  
There is some understanding and value placed on these roles by both staff and students
- Campaign Reps -  
These reps are the least well understood in both role expectations and impact



- Accountability -  
Part time reps are not made accountable within their roles and are currently unpaid
- Accessibility – Elections were viewed in general as accessible but information about specific roles was noted as a possible improvement

# Current: Executive Committee

## Purpose (as defined in Articles)

- To appoint Student & Lay Trustees
- Shall include representation, campaigning & implementation of policy work
- Jointly (with Trustee Board) make Bye-Laws

## Purpose (as defined in Bye-Laws)

- Oversee use of campaigns budget
- Ensure EDI in Union work
- To elect a Deputy President

## Composition:

- President & 5 Vice Presidents
- Faculty Reps (10)
- Campaign Reps (14)

## Challenges:

- Poor understanding of & engagement with Exec by students
- Poor engagement in meetings from reps
- Poor attendance in meetings from reps
- Patchy campaign/project work by campaign reps
- Lack of accountability for reps



# Proposal

To support student-led societies to elect campaign reps as part of their committee and provide specific support for them to campaign on issues relating to that society.

**To help campaigns be more connected to the communities they are campaigning for by connecting roles to societies.**

**To provide specific additional resource and support for campaign reps that relate to groups of students discriminated against by wider society (as stated in our Articles).**

**To remove bureaucratic burden of attending Executive Committee and give more time & space to delivering impactful campaigns.**

**To be dynamic in the campaign roles that exist based on annual student interest & demand.**

Starter Question:

Will this model help campaign reps be engaged and active?



# Proposal

To focus the purpose, membership and scope of the Executive Committee to its core responsibilities, as outlined in our Articles

**To focus of the membership of the Executive Committee to be the President, Vice-Presidents and Faculty Reps of our core campuses**

**To focus the responsibilities of the Executive Committee to be only what is defined in the Articles:**

- **To appoint student and lay trustees**
- **To include representation and campaigning work and the implementation of Policy**

Starter Question:

- Is this a good idea to help free up time for reps to focus on representing their students and campaigning?



# Proposal

To support accountability, engagement and scrutiny of elected roles through better communication of the work of the elected reps and informal opportunities to ask questions about this work



**To provide specific support to elected students to better communicate who they are, what they are doing and what they have achieved for students.**

**To provide more informal channels for student to hold their elected reps to account for their work, in addition to the Student Summit**

Starter Question:

- How can reps communicate with the student body more effectively?

