

## **2245 Amendment to the Bye-Laws: Support and representation for disabled students**

Proposer: Emily Cutler (Students with Disabilities Officer)

Secunder: Jack Robinson (Campaigns and Democracy Officer)

### **Union notes:**

1. The current Students with Disabilities' Officer role carries significant workload, lack of specific support, and heavy casework and university demands.
2. Occasional successful change requirements of many disabled students on campus has been as a result of union involvement, but not always specifically through representative channels, and not on a frequent basis.
3. Around 10% of UEA students define as disabled, however, as of the 07/03/18, only 572 students have self-defined on UEA(SU)'s website.
4. Disabled students make up a significant proportion of the campus population, but with many within the liberation group do not specifically identify with the term, so the figure is imagined to be higher than official numbers.
5. Two candidates ran in this year's election for students with disabilities officer, however one dropped out. This is a continuous trend: in 2017, one candidate ran; in 2016 two candidates ran; and in 2015 only one candidate ran.
6. Disabled students have faced the brunt of the cuts to government spending, through cuts to DSA, and universal credit, as well as other cuts. They also face discrimination, frequently in the form of misunderstanding disabled students' needs.
7. The union currently has no formal system of reasonable adjustments for its part-time officers.
8. The union currently lacks research and policy support for part-time officers.
9. The broad nature of how 'disability' is defined requires greater representation from within the liberation group.
10. A review of support for peer support groups took place last year but the actions and improvements are not clearly public.

### **Union believes:**

1. The union needs to ensure that students with disabilities are able to partake in union activity.
2. The union has in the past not properly supported its disabled volunteers and student leaders.
3. The resignation of previous Students with Disabilities Officers and those involved with disability peer support is incredibly disappointing, and demonstrates a lack of understanding within the SU.
4. That disabled students, due to nature by which they are oppressed, often find it incredibly difficult to organise and advocate for change.

5. There are systemic issues both within UEA and the SU that cause issues for Disabled Students not offered experienced within other liberation groups.
6. That the Student Leadership review was positive in creating significantly more leadership roles at the SU, but we must develop appropriate processes for disabled students to succeed in leadership.
7. That the levels of awareness around disablism and exclusionary behaviour on campus is unacceptable.
8. That the reliance on singular individuals to represent all strands of a liberation group is occasionally problematic and
9. That when the union considers spending union resource on the creation of new FTO roles, it should explore the circumstances behind the issues, as well as introducing more support; only when all other options are exhausted then we should consider a FTO role.

### **Union resolves:**

1. To amend the bye-laws of UEASU, to introduce two part-time Students with Disabilities Officers, with the following changes:
  - a. The Students with Disabilities Officer (Physical Disabilities Place) shall:
    - b. 4.17a.1 Be one of two officers, that represents the interests of students with disabilities and be their voice on the issues they face as students with disabilities at university;
    - c. 4.17a.2 Engage with the University and other relevant organisations to achieve improvements for students with disabilities on the issues they face as students with disabilities at university;
    - d. 4.17a.3 Co-ordinate the Union's Students with Disabilities Committee;
    - e. 4.17a.4 Liaise with the members of the relevant clubs, societies or peer support groups; and
    - f. 4.17a.5 Be the Union's delegate to the NUS Disabled Students
  - g. The Students with Disabilities Officer (Invisible Disabilities Place) shall:
    - h. 4.17b.1 Be one of two officers, that represents the interests of students with disabilities and be their voice on the issues they face as students with disabilities at university;
    - i. 4.17b.2 Engage with the University and other relevant organisations to achieve improvements for students with disabilities on the issues they face as students with disabilities at university;
    - j. 4.17b.3 Co-ordinate the Union's Students with Disabilities Committee;
    - k. 4.17b.4 Liaise with the members of the relevant clubs, societies or peer support groups; and
    - l. 4.17b.5 Be the an observer to the NUS Disabled Students Conference.

2. To increase dedicated staff support for DSO meetings to help with managing meeting expectations, diverting meeting requests, being a single point of contact for meeting support.
3. To introduce a proper framework and support system to assist with the issue of officers receiving casework issues that they aren't responsible for, or aren't capable to do so.
4. To develop proper inclusion and diversity strategies for each union department which reflects on statistical performance around membership or participation, with associated reward strategies for student groups.
5. To review the support offered to our peer support groups, and report to council and the student officer committee, on the actions resulting from the review.
6. To introduce a process of a systematic assessment of disabilities and reasonable adjustments (carried out to a professional standard) for all our part-time officers, to be agreed with the individual officers.
7. To introduce proper a process that allows part-time officers to access research and policy support.
8. To mandate the Trustee Board to introduce a section of it's monitoring around the support being offered for part-time officers, specifically the Disabled Students Officer, and to review this at each non-emergency meeting.
9. To ensure that, in the review of institutional level student representation with UEA, we clarify the expectations of all staff at UEA regarding student leaders and their remits and availability, whilst still allowing individual officers to determine their priorities and work load.
10. That the success of these policies be reviewed in the Autumn term of 2018/19 by the Student Officer Committee, Liberation, Equality and Diversity Subcommittee and Management Committee, and that following the reflections, if sufficient improvements have not started to emerge, as judged by the Student Officer Committee, then the union is therefore mandated to develop the creation of a Full-Time Disabled Students Officer, in consolation with disabled students on campus.