



# STUDENT COUNCIL



TRAINING 2025 TRAINING 2025 TRAINING 2025 TRAINING 2025



# WELCOME TO STUDENT COUNCIL

- Understand what Student Council does and why it exists
- Learn how decisions and policy take shape
- Build confidence in reading and discussing policy papers
- Know how to hold officers to account in a fair way
- Learn how chairing works and why it matters
- See how Council can create real change for students



# WHAT IS STUDENT COUNCIL FOR



- Sets the direction and priorities of the SU for the year
- Debates issues raised by students and agrees formal positions
- Guides elected officers and helps shape their campaigns
- Makes sure a range of student voices influence SU decisions
- Holds the SU to account so student needs stay at the centre



# WHY IT MATTERS

- Council decisions affect the officers, campaigns and daily student life
- Gives officers a clear mandate when challenging the university
- Opens up space for students to influence decisions they rarely see
- Helps the SU stay transparent and student led



# WHAT IS A POLICY PAPER



- A written proposal asking Council to make a decision
- Sets out the issue students are facing and why it matters
- Shows evidence, examples or feedback from students
- Describes what the SU should do if the policy passes
- Ends with clear, achievable actions that officers can take forward



# HOW TO READ ONE

- Start with the summary to understand the main point
- Check the evidence to see if the issue is clearly explained
- Ask what problem the proposal is trying to solve
- Look for actions that feel realistic and within the SU's power
- Note anything that feels unclear, missing or too broad



# TIPS FOR DISCUSSION



- Ask clarifying questions if something does not make sense
- Think about how the proposal would affect different students
- Share examples from your course, community or activities group
- Suggest amendments that make the actions clearer or more useful
- Listen to others and look for areas of agreement



# WHAT DOES ACCOUNTABILITY MEAN

- Officers explain what they have done since the last meeting
- Council checks whether work matches student priorities
- Members ask questions about progress, challenges and impact
- Ensures officers stay connected to real student experiences
- Helps keep SU activity transparent and focused





# HOW TO ASK STRONG QUESTIONS

- Ask about outcomes rather than just activities
- Request examples to show how work has helped students
- Check how officer work links to Council decisions and policy
- Be fair, balanced and constructive when challenging decisions
- Focus on improvement rather than criticism



# WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY ISN'T



- Not about personal attacks or embarrassment
- Not about questioning someone's identity or experience
- Not a barrier to officers doing their jobs
- Not about catching people out
- Not a performance review



# SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

- Everyone helps create a respectful and productive meeting
- Members read papers, turn up prepared and take part
- Councillors support each other to speak and participate
- Responsibility sits with the whole group, not just officers
- The meeting belongs to all members, not just the Chair



# COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY



- Once Council votes, the decision becomes the SU's position
- All councillors and officers support this position publicly
- Debate happens inside the meeting, unity happens outside
- Helps the SU speak with a clear voice to the university
- Prevents confusion or mixed messages among students



# WHAT THE CHAIR DOES

- Facilitates discussion so everyone gets a fair chance to speak
- Keeps the meeting focused on the agenda and decisions
- Manages time so items move at a steady pace
- Summarises points to help Council reach clear decisions
- Supports members who are less confident in speaking



# WHAT THE VICE CHAIR DOES



- Helps manage the flow of the meeting
- Supports members with questions during discussions
- Steps in if the Chair is unavailable or speaking to a paper
- Keeps track of practical details like tracking those waiting to speak or timing



# ELECTING A CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

- Roles elected at the first Council meeting
- Any councillor can nominate themselves
- Candidates give short speeches to explain their approach
- Members vote and the winners take up the roles immediately





# SKILLS OF A GOOD CHAIR

- Stay neutral so everyone trusts the process
- Keep conversation on topic and avoid side discussions
- Bring quieter voices into the conversation when needed
- Manage dominant speakers with confidence and fairness
- Summarise key points and check agreement before votes
- Guide the meeting calmly even when debate gets tense



# TOOLS THE CHAIR MIGHT USE



- Time limits to keep long debates manageable
- Clarifying questions to cut through confusion
- Breaks or short pauses if the room needs to reset
- Clear summaries before Council votes on anything



# WHY HAVING A CHAIR MATTERS

- Makes sure all students feel able to take part
- Encourages more balanced debate and better decisions
- Helps new councillors settle into the process
- Creates a trusted space where everyone is treated fairly
- Ensures student democracy feels open rather than intimidating



# WHAT POOR CHAIRING LEADS TO



- Loud voices dominating and quieter students withdrawing
- Confusion about actions and decisions
- Meeting time wasted on side issues
- Weak accountability and unclear direction for officers



# HOW COUNCIL MAKES CHANGE

- Council sets the political direction of the SU
- Officers turn policy into campaigns and projects
- Staff support officers with research, planning and delivery
- University partners respond to the SU's positions and asks
- Students see the impact through improved experiences



# YOUR ROLE IN THIS



- Bring issues from your peers into Council discussions
- Help test whether policies are realistic and grounded
- Hold officers to account through clear and fair questions
- Explain Council decisions to the students you represent
- Encourage more students to get involved in SU democracy



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You help shape what the SU does
- Good policy starts with real student experiences
- Accountability keeps work focused and honest
- Strong chairing supports fairness and inclusion
- Council decisions lead to real, visible change





# NEXT STEPS

- Read papers before the first meeting
- Speak to students you represent about their priorities
- Ask questions early if anything is unclear
- Think about standing for Chair or Vice Chair
- Contact officers or staff if you need support

