Constitution of the WSU Widening Participation Network

Please modify all points highlighted in red as your Network sees fit. This document should be submitted in its finalised form, (i.e. without any red font). It should be completed so as to be relevant to the Network in years to come (i.e. Do not include names/dates specific to this year). If you have any questions, please contact j.wali@worc.ac.uk. (note this text should be deleted when the document is completed).

This constitution sets out the rules and regulations of the Network. It is subordinate to the Constitution and Bye Laws of Worcester Students’ Union. It will be made available to all members via the Network’s webpage.

## Key Terms

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| The Union | Worcester Students’ Union |
| The Committee | The Network’s committee that is elected to coordinate the activities of the Network |
| Network Constitution | A document that sets out the rules and regulations for a Student Network. |
| Members (of the Union) | All Worcester students automatically become **full members** of the Union (for free) when they join the University unless they choose to opt-out of membership. Alumni, and University staff and students, registered at a partner institution but studying a University of Worcester accredited can apply and pay for associate membership of the Union.  |
| Executive Committee (of the Union) | The three Full Time Officers of the Union. It oversees the representation and campaigning work of the Union, as well as the implementation of Policy passed by Student Council and the Ideas Forum process. |
| Officer Trustee | One of the elected Full Time Officers of the Union – they are also Trustees of the Union |
| Open Meeting | A meeting open to all members of a Network. These are held a minimum of once per semester. |
| Hustings | A meeting at which candidates in an election can meet students and answer questions from potential voters. |
| Quorum/Quoracy  | The minimum number of people needed at a meeting to be able to conduct business (carry out votes etc.). |
| Policy | An idea that student/s, submit to Student Council, which they believe will improve the student experience. Once passed by Student Council, policies are binding for three years so the Union must ensure they are progressed during that time, often by working with the University to effect a change somewhere Students may submit relevant policy motions (a proposal for a policy) to Network Open Meetings for them to discuss and vote on. If the Network approves the policy, it will then be sent to Student Council for discussion and approval.  |
| Consensus Decision Making | Consensus decision-making is a group decision-making process in which group members agree to support a particular decision or course of action which they feel to be in the best interests of the whole group or in order to achieve a common goal. The decision is one that can be supported or acceptable to all even if it is not the most preferred course of action for every individual. |
| Vote of No Confidence | A vote on whether a person in a position of responsibility (e.g. a Committee Member) is no longer deemed fit to hold that position, perhaps because they are deemed to be failing to carry out the role effectively, or are making decisions that others feel are detrimental. |

## Name

The name of the group shall be the Worcester Students’ Union Widening Participation Network, referred to as the “Network”

## Aims

1. The aims of the Network shall be:
	1. To create a strong community of students who are from a disadvantaged background, first generation, single and co-habiting parents, providing networking opportunities for students.
	2. To represent the Widening Participation’s opinions on the issue to the Students’ Union, University of Worcester and the wider community. This includes representing the Network and its members at the Union’s Student Council and Welfare and Inclusion Council.
	3. To take action and campaign on the issues that matter to their members.
	4. To be the balance and checker that all other networks and opportunities are accessible to Widening Participation Members.
	5. To make the university a less financially intimidating institution.
	6. To ensure the university is child / parent friendly, providing breast feeding rooms, quiet rooms and prayer rooms.
	7. To lobby the university to keep the nursery open until lectures end – not simply 16:00 pm to ensure accessibility.
	8. To provide specialised employment access training for students.
	9. To provide networking opportunities.
	10. To create outreach in the local community for more opportunities for disadvantaged peoples to go to university.

## Membership

1. Membership of the Network will be open to all full members of the Union who defines as a widening participation student including those from low socio-economic backgrounds, or who are first in family as well as those groups, represented by other networks, such as BAME, Disabled, Mature and LGBTQ+ students who face barriers to accessing higher education in accordance with Bye Law 5 (Student Networks).
2. Only Associate Members who define as above and are students studying on a University of Worcester accredited course at a partner institution, but are not University of Worcester registered students, may join a Network. These members shall have the same privileges as full members, *except* the privilege of voting in meetings, to be committee members of the Network, to vote in elections or to represent the Network in any competition the Network takes part in.
3. All Network members must act in accordance with the Union’s [Code of Conduct](https://www.worcsu.com/pageassets/yourunion/aboutwsu/documents/WSU-Code-of-Conduct-28-05-2020.pdf).
4. At no point shall the proportion of associate members be more than 15% of the total membership of the Network.
5. The Network may agree to allow Allies to attend their activities. Allies do not have any voting rights.
6. In accordance with Point 8 of Bye Law 5 (Student Networks) the Union reserves the right to deny membership of the Network to any member of the Union. That member may have the right of appeal in accordance with the Union’s Code of Conduct, which is available on the Union’s website.
7. The Network will operate on a basis of inclusion; therefore, no member will be discriminated against.

## Affiliation

1. The Network is fully a part of Worcester Students’ Union and is subject to the Union’s governing documents, as well as to rulings of the Executive Committee, Student Council, Referenda, and the Board of Trustees.
2. The Network can affiliate to relevant external organisations as laid out at such a point as appropriate as of this constitution. The Network cannot affiliate to any organisation whose aims and objectives conflict with those of the Union or its policies.

## Membership Fees and Finance

1. There is no fee to join the Network. There will never be a fee to join this network and every effort will be made to ensure that all social events are as affordable as possible.
2. All fees must be agreed by the Union’s President. Any change of fee that sees an increase of more than 25% must be approved by members at an Open Meeting.
3. If the committee wishes to change the fee during an academic year they must seek support from the Union’s President or the relevant member of Union staff before any changes are proposed.
4. It is the Committee’s responsibility to ensure that social membership fees have been paid via the online membership system or at the Union’s Welcome Desk.
5. Networks have two income streams:
	1. A Network Account that holds all money raised through membership, fundraising and sponsorship. The Network is not able to hold its own bank account.
	2. A small budget to fund the representative and campaign functions of the Network
6. All accounts are run by the Union on behalf of the Network. All financial procedures are outlined in Points 55-67 of Bye Law 5 (Student Networks).
7. All Network expenditure will be authorised by one of the designated signatories (Chair or Vice Chair). Final authorisation will be by the Union’s budget holder and no expenditure over £100 should be undertaken without prior consent from the relevant member of Union staff.
8. The Network cannot be run for private profit of any of its Members or the Union.
9. Network members shall receive no direct or indirect payment, except for legitimate expenses incurred in connection with Network business.

## Sponsorship and Affiliations with External Organisations

1. Before seeking sponsorship the Network committee will ensure that it contacts the Union President and that it complies with the regulations laid out in Points 68-72 of Bye Law 5 (Student Networks).
2. The Network may only become an affiliate of an external organisation if:
	1. The aims of that organisation are in line with those of the Network;
	2. The Members get a direct benefit from the affiliation;
	3. No Policy of the Students’ Union is breached by the affiliation;
	4. A vote to affiliate is passed by the Members in a General Meeting.
3. The Group’s affiliation to an external organisation shall immediately end:
	1. If the affiliation is not reapproved at the Open Meeting in the second semester.
	2. Or if members vote to end the affiliation at an Open Meeting.
4. All external affiliations and disaffiliations must be reported to the Union’s President or relevant Union staff member within seven days. All new affiliations must be approved by the Union’s Executive Committee.
5. For the avoidance of doubt, the Students’ Union is not an external organisation.

## The Committee

1. The Committee is responsible for the day to day running of the Network in accordance with the aims and objectives stated above. This committee shall not operate autonomously. Planning activities, buying equipment and administering other Network matters must satisfy the majority of members.
2. The Network committee is responsible for:
	1. The running of the Network, ensuring it works towards its aims and objectives.
	2. Undertaking the representative function of the Network, ensuring that a representative attends Student Council and Welfare and Inclusion Council.
	3. Promoting the Network to attract new membership.
	4. The smooth running of any social events and activities.
	5. The organisation of the Networks’ open meetings and committee meetings.
	6. Working with relevant Union staff members to ensure the Network remains financially solvent
	7. Writing and circulating minutes of these meetings.
	8. Updating Student Council on the Network’s activities
	9. Seeking help and support from staff within the Union if they have concerns about their Network or any of its members.
	10. Attend progress meetings with Union staff at least once a semester or as requested, to ensure you have support and sustainable plans.
	11. Upholding the Worcester Students’ Union policies and procedures including:
		1. The Union’s Property Regulations outlined in Points 81-88 of Bye Law 6 (Societies, Sports Clubs and Student Led Services).
		2. The Union’s Health and Safety Regulations outlined in Points 89-94 of Bye Law 6 (Societies, Sports Clubs and Student Led Services).
		3. The Union’s Data Protection regulations which the can be found on the Union’s website.
3. It is mandatory for at least two attend the Union’s All Student Meeting. It is also the responsibility of the committee to encourage its members to attend the Union’s All Student Meeting.
4. Members attending meetings as representatives of the [insert name] Network shall do so for only the [insert name] Network and cannot represent another Network, Sports Club, Student Network or Student-Led Service (e.g. RAG).
5. If committee members are unable to attend a required Union meeting, a written apology must be given to the Union President.
6. The Committee will consist of the following officers who shall be full members of the Union:
	1. Chair
	2. Vice Chair
	3. Secretary
7. The Committee shall take office on the 1st June and sit until the 31st May in the following year.

## Elections

1. Network committees shall be democratically elected as outlined in Points 23-28 of Bye Law 5 (Student Networks).
2. All full members of the Network are eligible to stand, provided that they are eligible for membership for the whole of their term in office.
3. Voting in Network committee elections will be limited to the full membership of the Network, and will require a quorum of 20% of paid full members to vote for the result to be valid. If quoracy is not reached the Network will be permitted to an additional election in order to elect a committee.
4. If the Network fails to elect a committee the Union will support the running of the Network until such time as a committee can be elected.
5. If the Network fails to elect a committee for a whole semester, the Network will be suspended, and a motion will be taken to Student Council to consider the removal of the Network from the Union’s structures. In this instance Student Council will be able to make one of the following decisions:
	1. The Network is of material importance to the student body and the President should be mandated to develop an action plan to restart the Network.
	2. The Network should be disbanded and removed from the Union’s structures.
6. All elections will be by secret ballot using the Union’s online system or in person at a General Meeting, under the supervision of a Union staff member or Officer Trustee.
7. Voting shall be by the Single Transferable Vote (STV) method.
8. Re-open nominations (RON) shall be a candidate for all positions.
9. The Results of Network elections conducted online will be provided to the committee and should be announced within 48 hours of receipt. For elections conducted at an AGM will be counted by the Union staff member or Officer present and announced at the meeting.
10. The new Committee shall serve alongside the old Committee (without voting rights) for the remainder of the academic year to promote the effective hand-over of the Network and to provide a period of apprenticeship for the new Committee, overseen by the existing committee.

## Removal of Committee Members

1. Full guidance on regulations regarding the removal of Committee Members by a Vote of No Confidence can be found in the Points 57 to 63 of the Union’s Code of Conduct and Points 36 to 39 of Bye Law 5 (Student Networks).
2. The Union may also remove Committee Members in line with Points 31 and Points 33-34 of Bye Law 5 (Student Networks)

## Committee Meetings

1. Committee Meetings will be held regularly during term time and can be held virtually or in person.
2. Quorum for Committee Meetings will be two thirds of the Committee or two committee members, whichever is greater.
3. Minute of Committee Meetings should be kept and made available to members and the Union on request.

## Duties of the Committee

1. The roles and duties of the Committee are as follows:
2. **The Chair** shall oversee the organisation and management of the network and the Committee as a whole; ensure the committee’s accountability to Members and the Students’ Union; and represent the group to all external interests. They ensure that the network represents its members, attend (or send a nominee) to key Students’ Union meetings like Welfare and Inclusion council and are the main spokesperson for the network. The Chair ensures that the committee functions properly, that there is full participation at meetings, that all relevant matters are discussed, and effective decisions taken, communicated and enacted. They are a co-signatory for the Network’s accounts (which are held by the Union).
3. **The Vice Chair** supports the Chair in their role and acts as a deputy in their absence. They also act as the network’s finance manager and have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the network’s financial matters run smoothly. The Vice Chair is responsible for ensuring all active members have formally joined the Network. They are a co-signatory for the Network’s accounts (which are held by the Union).
4. **The Secretary** shall oversee the administration of the network take minutes at meetings and monitor memberships. They are the key information and reference point for the chair, committee members and members..
5. Full role descriptions for core roles can be found on the Union’s website. The Committee will agree and keep a record of non-core role descriptions with the SU for additional roles)

## Open Meetings of Networks and Procedures for Forming Policy

1. The Network must hold open meetings at least once a semester and advertise them publicly.
2. The purpose of Open Meetings is to discuss issues of relevance to the Network and where appropriate approve policy to be taken to Student Council on behalf of the Network.
3. Decision making at an open meeting will, as far as possible, be consensus based. Where consensus is not possible, decisions can be agreed by a simple majority vote.
4. Open meetings will be chaired by the Network’s Chair or their nominee.
5. Minutes for all open meetings will be made available on the Network’s webpage and submitting to the President within two weeks of the meeting.
6. The Networks may invite the Union’s Officer Trustees (Full-Time Officers) to attend. Officer Trustees will be observers to the meeting unless they are members of the Network.
7. The Network may invite guest speakers and Union staff to attend open meetings, as the Chair feels appropriate. The Networks is subject to the Union’s guest speaker policy which can be found on the Union’s website.
8. The Network must hold its second Open Meeting before the Easter break each academic year. This meeting will include the Elections for the committee for the following year or if held online a Hustings as part of the election process.
9. The dates for Open Meetings should be set at the beginning of each year. Network members must receive an invite at least two weeks before the meeting is due to take place. The committee should set a deadline at least three days before the meeting for members to submit policy motions. If elections are happening the invitation should include all the details on how students can stand and vote in the election.
10. Extraordinary Open Meetings (EOM) to discuss a pressing issue or to hold a committee by-election can be held at any time of the year.
11. Only full members of the Network may vote in an Open Meeting.
12. Quorum for open meetings is 20% of full members.
13. Should any open meeting fail to meet the above quorum then the meeting shall be reconvened within ten days and this second meeting shall be automatically quorate. However, the quorum will remain for any elections to be held.

## Interpretation

1. If there is a dispute over the interpretation of the Network Constitution, the decision of the Union President will be required.

## Amendments

1. Before any amendment is proposed the Committee should consult with the Union President or relevant member of Union staff to ensure any amendment does not contradict the Unions governing documents or policies and procedures.
2. Any proposed amendment to this constitution must be passed by a majority at the Network’s Open Meeting or as an online Network referendum. Such votes will be overseen by a member of Union staff or an Officer Trustee
3. The Students’ Union shall be informed immediately of any alterations or amendments to the constitution.
4. The Constitution & Bye Laws of the Union will always override a Network’s constitution.

## Discipline of Members

1. When handling complaints, disciplinary actions and appeals, the Network shall follow the Union’s Code of Conduct, which can be found at <https://www.worcsu.com/yourunion/aboutwsu/documents/>. The Disciplinary and Appeals procedure can be found in in Points 35-47 of the Code of Conduct.

##  Dissolution

1. Should the Networkreach a point where it is no longer able to carry out its mission and as such cease to operate/dissolve, all assets will revert back to the Union.