# **Let’s Disarm Bristol! Lobby the University to End Ties with Arms Trade Companies**

*Proposer:* Isobel Russell

*Seconder:* Saranya Thambirajah

## Background:

1. There is a national movement – Campaign Against Arms Trade – that provides resources on ties between universities and arms trade companies. These ties often only benefit upper management in universities and are an opportunity for these companies to get PR exposure to graduates, without any focus on the ethical impacts of it.
2. The Campaign Against Arms Trade lists companies such as BAE Systems, GKN, Aselsan and Leonardo – companies which coincidentally carry out joint research in the University of Bristol. The Faculty of Engineering at the university proudly displays arms trade companies as their partners, including GKN Aerospace and BAE Systems.
3. The Turkish military has an ongoing cross-border operation near northern Syria. The conflict currently takes place in areas that were home to 2.2 million people, with 1.3 million of them requiring humanitarian aid (United Nations, 2019). This conflict is fueled by Aselsan – a Turkish Armed Forces Foundation company. Aselsan currently works with the University of Bristol, particularly the Engineering Faculty, to deliver research.
4. Arms companies have given universities more than £40 million in research and partnerships – all while funding in other areas dry up.
5. Despite the university’s ties with arms trade companies, the University of Bristol is one of the major universities that does not have an active anti-arms trade movement on campus. This is even though anti-arms trade student movements have been successful, such as in Leeds, Sheffield and SOAS London.
6. The Student Union at UCL also currently has active policy to lobby UCL to cut research with companies whose weapons have been used in alleged human rights abuses.

Purpose:

1. To increase education and awareness of Bristol students on world conflict and the presence of conflict within universities.
2. To promote support for students from backgrounds where they could be affected by armed conflict.
3. To ensure that Bristol SU’s role as a student campaigning body is inclusive of international students who may not come from privileged backgrounds, including refugees and immigrant students.

## Action:

1. To write a letter from the Student Union – including all its sabbatical officers – to the university management and Vice Chancellor asking the university to divest from arms trade companies linked to alleged human rights abuses.
2. To publish information on the university’s ties with arms trade companies on the Student Union website. This should also include information on how much the university makes from its ties to arms trade companies via a Freedom of Information request.
   1. To also publish information on ongoing conflicts that are fuelled by university-linked arms companies, such as the 2019 conflict at the Turkey-Syria border.
3. To lobby the university management on creating a progressive plan to divest from arms trade companies linked to alleged human rights abuses.
   1. To update all students on any progress with lobbying the university to create this plan via newsletters and the website.
   2. To consult relevant student groups that campaign for humanitarian issues throughout the process