

Motion Name: Allow the mandatory committee role of Equalities Officer to be held by up to two people

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How would your motion advance the education of Bristol Students?

This would enable the Equalities Officers to take on a larger workload, for example assisting with welfare (as is the case in some societies already), improving welfare for themselves and society members. The requirement that only one person may occupy the role disadvantages disabled students - one of the marginalised groups that this role should support. This reduces the voice disabled students have on committees for improving the accessibility of their societies. Equalities is unlike President, Treasurer or Secretary, which should each be occupied by a single person in order to be accountable in the event of society misconduct.

Background:

Through attending AGMs and standing for election for network and society committees last academic year, we became aware that many of the people best suited to the role of Equalities Officer, with the ability to utilise their own experiences to improve the EDI status of their student groups, were often dissuaded due to barriers imposed by the current rule requiring the role to be held by one person only. In particular, disabled students felt that managing the workload and time commitment wasn't possible, especially when experiencing disabilities with fluctuating impacts alongside their studies. Additionally, students from low economic backgrounds were disadvantaged due to the need to work alongside their studies and society activities, and the time constraints imposed as a result of this. We feel that the benefit of having these students on our committees will improve the accessibility and inclusive environment of our societies and therefore, with no substantial reason for it to be currently classed as a 1 person only role, we wish to propose an amendment to the SU byelaws.

Purpose:

1. To allow for the inclusion of more marginalised voices on student group committees who would otherwise feel unable to take on the role due to time/energy restrictions as a result of their marginalised identity, e.g.
 - a. A disabled student with a commitment to improving accessibility within their student group, who is unable to take on a full mandatory position on their own, as a result of their disability.
 - b. A student on a low-income who needs to be in employment, so cannot commit to a committee role due to time constraints.

2. To allow for more oppressed people to represent themselves and advise on the actions of the society, especially regarding inclusion, directly rather than having to go through a proxy.
3. To allow a more diverse range of experiences to be present on committees therefore increasing the diversity of the society overall.
4. To represent more students, allowing for increased accessibility and welfare within society activities. This will lead to increased recruitment and retention of society members, therefore increasing the impacts of the society on the student body.
5. To enable increased support for marginalised identities or social statuses, as well as the welfare of all members, which improves society participation.
6. To share out the workload of the role, enabling greater time focused on matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion, therefore increasing the EDI impact of the SU as a whole.

Actions:

Bristol SU byelaw 9.10 change from “10. Mandatory committee positions can only be held by full members of the Union. A single mandatory position can be occupied by one person only. A person cannot hold more than one mandatory position within a single affiliated student group” to “10. Mandatory committee positions can only be held by full members of the Union. A single mandatory position can be occupied by one person only, with the exception of the Equalities Officer role, which can be held by up to two at the discretion of the specific group and their members. Groups are still able to add secondary positions or vice-roles to their committees through their group’s constitution. A person cannot hold more than one mandatory position within a single affiliated student group”