



Student Voice Member Handbook 2021-22



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What is Reading University Students' Union?

Reading University Students' Union (RUSU) is run by students for students. We are a registered charity, so any money we make goes back into improving the facilities and services we provide for students. This also means that our aims are independent from political parties, and relate to promoting the educational interests and welfare of students.

Facilities and services provided by RUSU include:

- **Outlets**
 - Restaurants, bars, a hairdresser, a post office and more!
- **Venues**
 - Our award winning nightclub, 3sixty, hosts club nights every Wednesday and Saturday, as well as other events such as sports tours, quiz nights and our annual Summer Ball.
- **Student Activities**
 - With over 200 clubs and societies to choose from, getting involved is a great way to make new friends, continue your passion or try something new.
- **Advice**
 - Students can access a free, independent and confidential Advice Service, covering academic, housing, and money matters.
- **Representation**
 - We run annual elections to fill over 1500 student representative roles who represent your views to the University and the local community. We also run Student Voice and Change It to ensure anyone can have a direct impact in shaping their university experiences.

RUSU's Vision and Mission

RUSU's ambition is to deliver what students want in order to help enhance their university experience. We aim to provide high quality representation, opportunities for personal development, and excellent services and facilities to all of our members. As a Student Voice Member, you are part of RUSU and as such are joining a huge team of students (including Course Reps, Part-time Officers, Full-time Officers and more) working to enhance the student experience.

Part of fulfilling this ambition involves amplifying student concerns to ensure that they are heard at University level. Your role is crucial in this respect, as you will have a direct impact in setting the priorities of RUSU. In doing this, you will help decide what RUSU should campaign on to advocate change for students within the University.

RUSU is committed to promoting equality and diversity throughout our work. We strive for equal opportunities for all. No individual will be treated less favourably than any other on the grounds of gender identity, sexual orientation, race or ethnic origin, disability, marital or parental status, religion and belief, age or any other reason.

Led by students for students

RUSU is led by four Full-time Officers who are voted into office by an annual online election. Student Officers listen to the views of the thousands of students on campus and represent the student voice on campus, locally, nationally and internationally.



Welfare Officer – Grace Loweth

The Welfare Officer is responsible for the development and management of welfare initiatives, as well as taking the lead on welfare campaigns. The Welfare Officer will also liaise with the RUSU Advice Service, supporting and helping to promote their services and events.



President – Ben Knowles

The President is responsible for ensuring all decisions reached by RUSU have gone through the democratic process as laid out in the Constitution and Bye-Laws, as well as promoting sustainability throughout the organisation. The President is also responsible for leading on external affairs, liaising with the National Union of Students (NUS) and will lead on RUSU's democracy initiatives such as Change It and Student Voice.



Education Officer – Bethany Nugus

The Education Officer will work closely with the Advice and Representation department to coordinate academic representation as well as leading on academic campaigns and events. The main aim of the Education Officer is to improve the academic experience and maintain strong working relationships with relevant University staff and Academic Reps.



Activities Officer – Amy Sheffield

The Activities officer is responsible for the management and development of RAG (Raising and Giving), Student Media, and all RUSU sports clubs, societies and volunteering initiatives. The main aim of the Activities Officer is to improve and support extracurricular experience and cross-campus cohesion.

These Officers also work with many other people representing students, including the Part-time Officers, Senior Reps, and Course Reps – many of whom you will meet at Student Voice!

What is Student Voice?

Student Voice is a democratic forum made up of a group of 55 representatives from different areas within Reading University Students' Union (RUSU).

Purpose of Student Voice

- to debate and vote on ideas which have been submitted by students via the Change It platform
- to receive updates and discuss progress on winning Change It campaigns and implementation of student policy
- to receive a written report and verbal updates from the five elected Full-time Student Officers and to question their reports, updates and work by holding them to account
- to debate key issues affecting students

Membership

Student Voice aims to best represent different areas of the student body. There are **55 members**, including Full-time Officers, Part-time Officers, Sports and Society Committee Representatives (Reps), Halls Committee Reps and Academic Reps. **13 positions** are reserved for directly elected Postgraduate and Undergraduate places. Elections for these positions occur in the Autumn.

Any students are welcome to attend Student Voice, but only Student Voice Members have the right to cast votes on new Change It ideas.

Frequency of Student Voice

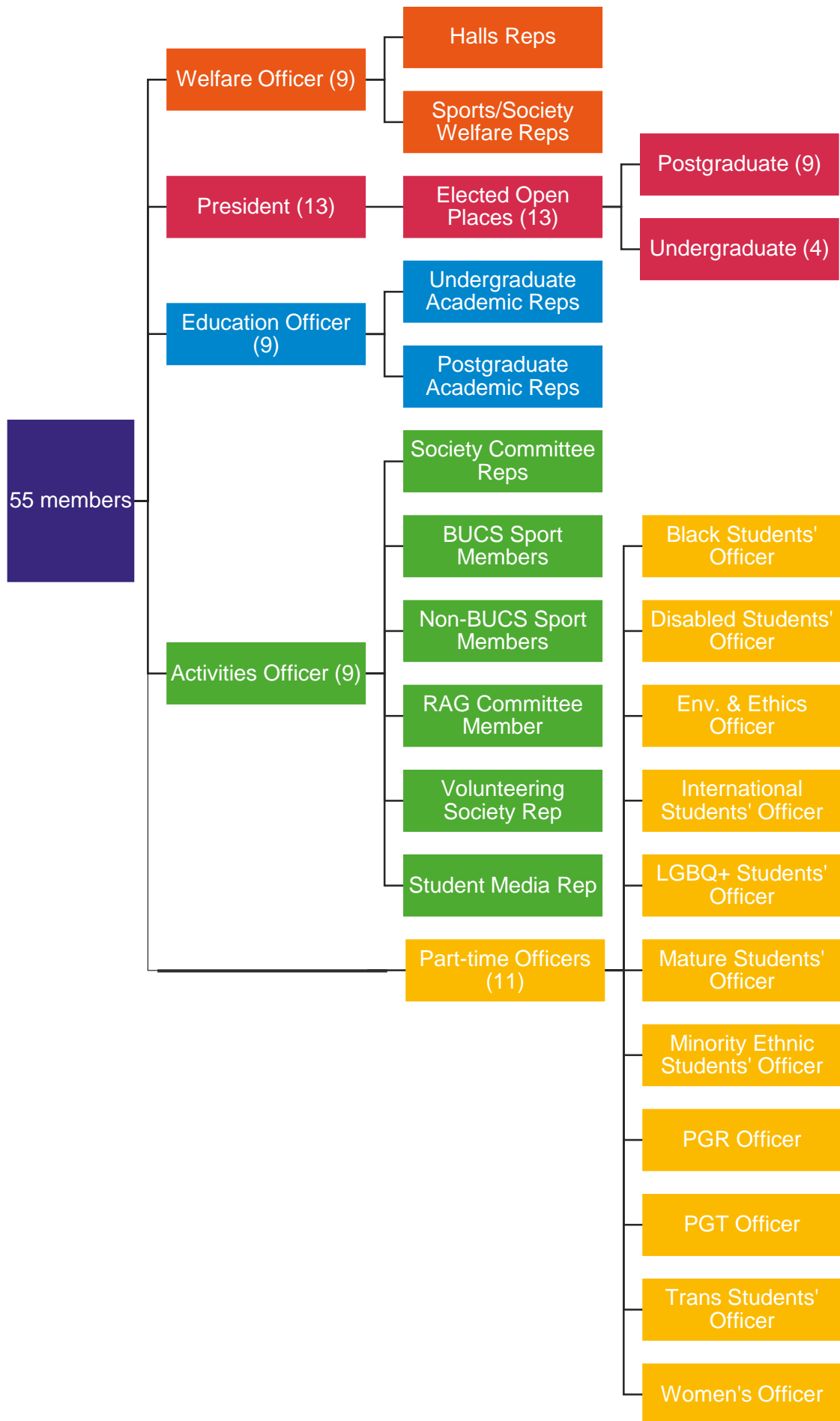
Student Voice will meet at least 3 times during the academic year. Emergency Student Voice Meetings may be called by the President as required. These dates are on page 7 with a full timeline of Student Voice on page 21.

Authority of Student Voice

Student Voice will conduct its business in accordance with the RUSU Constitution and its associated Bye-Laws.

Calling Referenda

A referendum may be called on an issue by a majority vote of Student Voice. This does not include the option to remove a trustee as noted in article 26 of The RUSU Constitution as this can only be triggered by a secure petition of no confidence signed by at least 400 student members.



Key dates for 2021/22

All Student Voice meetings will be held **6-8pm**. We are currently hoping to host all of our meetings in person in 3sixty (within the RUSU building) but this will be subject to change depending on the COVID situation going forward.

Autumn Student Voice
Tuesday 9th November 2021

Spring Student Voice
Tuesday 1st February 2022

Summer Student Voice
Tuesday 10th May 2022

Roles in Student Voice

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Chair</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ion Klitorakis studentvoice@rusu.co.uk</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>RUSU Staff</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Key Staff Contact: Bethany Brown (Senior Student Engagement Coordinator) bethany.brown@reading.ac.uk</p> <p style="text-align: center;">RUSU Management Committee</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Students</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Student Voice Members Students elected or selected to the role of SVM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Attendees Any other students who wish to attend are also welcome</p>



Roles: Chair

During Student Voice, the Chair is responsible for ensuring that Student Voice runs smoothly. They have a difficult job in balancing all the people that want to speak with making sure that the agenda is followed and that the meeting doesn't overrun.

The Chair will always be impartial and should encourage all students to feel able to speak up in discussing the issues at hand. It's also the Chair's responsibility to make sure everyone understands what's going on, including how to vote and when voting is open.

Before Student Voice:

The Chair decides which ideas are most important to discuss and which may have to go directly to voting if there are too many ideas for the available discussion time. They will list this order of ideas in the agenda, which will be distributed 3 days before Student Voice by the Secretary.

During Student Voice:

The Chair can't vote during Student Voice, but can set Chair's actions. These set clear and specific objectives to Full Time Officers if Student Voice vote to reject an Officer Report or a Change It Idea Progress Report. These will be included in the minutes along with dates for completion. The Chair may also extend sections of the meeting at their discretion if time allows and will direct guide others in fulfilling the responsibilities of their roles (e.g. voting).

After Student Voice:

Chair will approve minutes for publication on the website and distribution to Trustee Board.

Roles: RUSU Staff

Student Voice is led by you and RUSU Staff will be impartial at all times. However, some staff members have important roles in supporting Student Voice.

Secretary

The Student Voice Secretary is responsible for recording and/or minuting the meeting and are the main point of contact should you have any issues regarding attendance of any of the dates or wish to submit any amendments.

Before Student Voice, RUSU Staff will;

- Work with submitters of Change It ideas to ensure their idea best represents their viewpoint prior to discussion at Ideas Feasibility Group
- Book the venue and necessary resources for the meeting itself
- Distribute relevant documentation to Student Voice Members three days before Student Voice. This documentation includes minutes from the last meeting, the Change It: Ideas Report, the Change It: Review Report and Officer Reports.

Management Committee

RUSU Management Committee is the only exception to staff impartiality. Management Committee will make decisions on behalf of Student Voice in cases where the meeting did not have quorum (enough people able to vote were not present) or the vote falls (too many people abstain instead of casting vote).

This is an emergency contingency solution to the problem of attempting to serve student interests when not enough students are present to have their voice heard. Ideally, no decisions should be referred to Management Committee as this results in fewer students making key decisions. **To avoid this situation it is therefore really important that you attend Student Voice, find an alternate or proxy (and let us know), or failing that let us know by emailing the Secretary at studentvoice@rusu.co.uk**

Other RUSU Staff will also be present at Student Voice to help the event run smoothly. They are present to support you so don't be afraid to approach them if you have any questions at any point!

Roles: Your Role

Members

As Student Voice Members, you are representing the interests of approximately 20,000 students at the University of Reading.

On behalf of these students, you will vote on submitted Change It Ideas, review progress on current campaigns and policy that has passed through Change It, and scrutinise the Full Time Officers on their manifesto commitments.

It is therefore important that you understand the nature of your role in acting as the voice of student interests. Your role may involve low time commitment but it is of high importance.

It is therefore **essential** that you attend every Student Voice meeting, or send a proxy in your place.

Attendees

Attending Student Voice gives you a chance to be involved in the democratic processes of RUSU without holding a representative role. The main difference between members and attendees at Student Voice relates to your ability to vote (p.18). You can still vote during Officer Scrutiny and Change It: Review, but you cannot vote on Change It Ideas.

Whether you are a Member or simply attending Student Voice, you should aim to be respectful both of each other and the Chair at all times during the meeting. You should also aim to actively participate in voting (where relevant) and debate. This is a low-pressure supportive environment in which to have your voice heard and everyone should feel able to make the most of this opportunity!

Preparing for Student Voice

For **Student Voice Members**, there are three **required actions** you should undertake in order to prepare for Student Voice well.

1. Confirm your attendance

It is essential that you confirm your attendance before the event by contacting the Secretary at studentvoice@rusu.co.uk. **It's really important that you tell us as soon as possible if you are unable to come** as this may affect the ability of Student Voice to make decisions. If you cannot attend, you will be asked to send an alternate in your place or to arrange for another Student Voice Member to vote for you by proxy. Further details regarding this will be given at the time.

2. Read the reports

The Secretary will send you copies of the minutes from the last meeting, the **Change It: Ideas Report**, **Change It: Review Report** and the **Officer Reports** three days before Student Voice meets. Reading these will mean that everyone is aware of what will be discussed at the meeting, which will avoid confusion and allow you to think about anything you may wish to raise at Student Voice or questions you may wish to put to the Full Time Officers.

3. Submit any amendments

If you have any changes you wish to suggest to any submitted Change It ideas (as outlined in the Change It: Ideas Report) you should **submit your amendments before Student Voice** by requesting an Amendments Submission form from RUSU reception or by emailing the Secretary. The deadline for this is **12pm** (midday) the day before Student Voice. Any amendments submitted after Student Voice begins will only be allowed at the Chair's discretion.

If you are not a Student Voice Member but wish **to attend Student Voice**, it is perfectly fine to just turn up on the night. If you would like to read the reports beforehand, or wish to submit an amendment for discussion at Student Voice, please contact the Secretary and the relevant documents will be sent to you. These documents will also be published on the website at https://www.rusu.co.uk/democracy/change-it/student_voice/student_voice_meetings/



Don't forget that if you have any ideas for change in RUSU, the University, or beyond that you want to happen you should submit them online at www.rusu.co.uk/changeit!

What happens at Student Voice?

1. Change It: Ideas (p.14)

In this section, Student Voice Members discuss ideas submitted through Change It, any pre-submitted amendments that may be necessary, and vote for ideas they think should go to an All Student Vote.



2. Change It: Review (p.15)

Current progress on Campaign and Policy ideas that have won previous All Student Votes is reviewed







3. FTO Scrutiny (p.16)

This is your opportunity to hold your Full-time Officers to account on their manifesto commitments.



Typical Agenda

Time (mins)		
5	Chair's Welcome	
45	Change It: Ideas Section 	
	Introduction	Chair outlines debating and voting process for this section
	Campaign & Policy Ideas	Student Voice debate and vote on Campaign and Policy ideas submitted through Change It
		Chair summarises which Campaign and Policy Ideas have been deferred, rejected or sent to Management Committee
Changes to existing policy	Student Voice debate and vote on any submitted changes to existing policy, following the same process as for Campaign and Policy ideas	
30	Change It: Review Section 	
	Introduction	Chair explains scrutiny and voting process for this section of the meeting
	Progress Updates: Ideas passed since last Student Voice	Full Time Officers update Student Voice on progress relating to each campaign or policy idea passed at All Student Vote since last Student Voice
		Student Voice question Officers on their progress
		If unsatisfied, vote is requested and voting occurs
	Progress Updates: All other Campaign and Policy ideas	Other current RUSU Campaign and Policy priorities successfully passed at All Student Vote in last two years are displayed on slide(s)
		Student Voice direct any questions relating to progress on any of these ideas to the relevant Officer
If unsatisfied, vote is requested and voting occurs		
Notification of expiring campaigns and policies	Chair notifies Student Voice of RUSU Campaign and Policy priorities that will expire before next Student Voice unless resubmitted	
35	Full-time Officer Scrutiny Section 	
	Introduction	Chair explains scrutiny and voting process for this section of the meeting
	Officer Scrutiny	Officer provides verbal update to accompany Officer Report
		Student Voice question Officer and vote on Officer Report
		If vote falls, Chair sets action to relevant Officer
After this vote has taken place, Student Voice may request a motion to commend or censure the Officer in question.		
5	Any other business & Close of Meeting	
	Any other business	Any other business (time allowing to debate key issues)
		Chair confirms Change It voting period and advises date of next meeting
		Chair closes meeting

Change it: Ideas



In this section, you will discuss and vote on ideas submitted through Change It. Anyone can join the discussion, but **only Student Voice Members can vote.**

First, you will hear a speech '**For**' the proposed idea. Where possible, this will be given by the person who submitted the idea.

The Chair will then open to the floor to invite speeches **for** or **against** an idea.

If any amendments have been suggested, these will be discussed and voted on. If the vote passes, the idea will be amended accordingly.

The idea itself will then be voted on.

Next Steps: If an idea wins, it will go to an All Student Vote to enable the wider student body to have their say on their favourite campaign or policy ideas. If it fails, it cannot be resubmitted to Change It for two years. If a vote falls (because there are not enough people present or because too many people abstained from voting), the decision will be referred to RUSU Management Committee.

What is an amendment?

An amendment is a proposed **change to an idea** which improves it. It can make the idea more specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic. The amendment must keep within the general topic but can change the aim of the original idea.

If you wish to submit an amendment to an idea, you should do so **before Student Voice**. All ideas submitted before Student Voice will be considered. If you feel urgently that a significant change should be made to an idea during Student Voice, you should raise it with the Chair.

Any changes suggested during Student Voice should directly relate to the **content** of an idea rather than the wording, spelling or grammar, and will only be allowed at the Chair's discretion. For any spelling or grammar issues, please email these suggestions to the Secretary.

Change It: Review



In this section, Student Voice will receive a brief update from the relevant Student Officer(s) on progress made on winning Campaign ideas, any updates regarding the implementation of Student Policy, and any next steps planned for meeting Campaign or Policy implementation aims.

Anyone can speak or vote.

First, you will be given the opportunity to question the Full-time Officers on **ideas that have passed All Student Vote since last Student Voice.**

The Chair will then invite questions regarding any other current Campaigns or Policies. These will be displayed on the PowerPoint. If you have a question you should directly request an update as there will not be enough time to receive progress updates on every campaign or policy.

If a SVM (or any student in attendance) is **dissatisfied with progress made** or the next steps, they can request Chair to **call a vote**. If this is not specifically requested, **no vote will take place** and it will be assumed that Student Voice is satisfied with the report.

Change It: Review Report Vote

1 = Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote pass if you are satisfied with progress on this idea.
2 = Reject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote reject if you are not happy with progress and wish to see an agreed action put in place to ensure progress is made prior to the next Student Voice.
3 = Abstain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstain if you really don't feel able to vote either way.

If the vote is rejected, the Chair will set an action to the relevant officer and this will be noted in the minutes.

At the end of this section, the Chair will inform Student Voice of Campaigns or Policies that are due to expire before the next Student Voice. If anyone present feels these should continue to be campaigned on, or should continue as RUSU policy, they should resubmit the idea through Change It.

Full-time Officer Scrutiny



This is your opportunity to question the Full-time Officers on their progress towards their manifesto commitments.

Before Student Voice, you should read the Officer's Reports and think of questions to ask the Officers on behalf of students at the University. These questions should aim to ensure that the Officers are working in the best interest of students.

The Officers will present their Reports in the following order (also shown above)

1. **Welfare**
2. **President**
3. **Education**
4. **Activities**

For each Officer, the Chair will first invite the Officer to give a verbal update to accompany their Officer Report. There will then be the opportunity for Student Voice to ask the Officer any questions they may have. The Chair may also ask questions on behalf of students not present in the room.

When an Officer has presented their report and been questioned accordingly, the Chair will call a vote.

Officer Report vote

If the vote **passes**, students are satisfied with the report and no further action is taken.

If it **fails**, the Chair will set actions to the Officers for ensure progress is made before the next Student Voice.

You will always vote on Officer Reports. However, in this section there are also a number of optional votes that can be requested.

FTO Scrutiny: Optional votes

Motion to Commend

If you think that an officer has gone above and beyond in the effort they have put into their role, you can request a **motion to commend**. If this is passed, it will be noted in the minutes and reported to RUSU Trustee Board.

Vote **for** to commend the Officer in question.

Motion to Censure

If you feel strongly that an Officer is not fulfilling the remit of their role well enough, you can request a **motion to censure**. This can only be requested if a report is rejected. If this motion passes, it will be noted in the minutes and reported to Trustee Board. This sense a strong warning that the student body is unhappy with an Officer's work but is less severe than a vote of no confidence.

Vote **for** to censure the Officer in question.

Vote of No Confidence

A vote of no confidence is a formal process by which RUSU members vote to indicate that **they do not support an elected Officer**. This may lead to the Officer's removal from office.

If this vote is requested, Chair will remind Student Voice that this vote cannot be held at Student Voice, but will be able to send a petition template via email in order to trigger a vote of no confidence.

This vote cannot be held at Student Voice.

Appendix 1: Voting

SVM's can **always vote**.

Attendees **cannot vote on Change It ideas**. They can only vote during the Change It: Review and FTO Scrutiny Section.

During voting, over 50% of the people eligible to vote must **cast their vote** (this does not include the option to abstain). When the total number of votes falls below the minimum threshold, the idea will be treated as unresolved business and passed to RUSU Management Committee. If the outcome of votes is above the minimum threshold, but is tied, the vote falls.

Voting pads will be distributed to **Student Voice Members** at the registration desk 15 minutes before Student Voice starts. They will be handed out to attendees at the beginning of the Change It: Review Section.

Pass	• You agree with the proposal
Reject	• You disagree with the proposal
Abstain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You do not feel able to vote either 'pass' or 'reject' • You should only abstain if you really do not feel able to vote as this means RUSU Management Committee will make the key decisions instead.

How to use the Voting Pad

- Student Voice Chair will prompt voters when voting has opened and when it closes
- Votes are only counted when voting is open, pressing buttons outside of the voting window will not do anything.
- You will only need to use the top three buttons on your voting pad – 1, 2 and 3 (see image)
 - Press 1 to 'Pass'
 - Press 2 to 'Reject'
 - Press 3 to 'Abstain'
- If you press the button more than once, it will only count your first vote.



Please return voting pads before leaving the meeting

Appendix 2: Types of vote at Student Voice

Votes that must be requested are shaded in dark blue. Amendments are requested in advance through submission of amendment (p. 11, p. 14)

Section of Student Voice	Name	Who can vote		Outcome		Other
		Members	Attendees	Pass	Fail	
Change It: Ideas	Change It: Idea	✓	X	Idea goes to All Student Vote	Idea cannot be resubmitted through Change It for 12 months	
	Change It: Amendments	✓	X	Amendment to idea is accepted	Idea remains the same	Amendments must be submitted prior to the start of Student Voice Meeting. A template for amendments will be emailed to all Student Voice Members and will be available upon request at RUSU reception.
Change It: Review	Change It: Report	✓	✓	No further action	Chair provides action to FTO with agreed timescale for completion	
Full-time Officer Scrutiny	Officer Report	✓	✓	No further action	Chair provides action or target to FTO with agreed timescale for completion	Officer cannot vote – 27 SVMs needed to pass vote
	Motion to Censure	✓	✓	Noted in minutes that SV has passed motion to censure	Noted in minutes – motion to censure does not happen	Officer does not vote – 27 SVM's required
	Motion to Commend	✓	✓	Noted in minutes that SV has passed motion to commend – passed to Trustee Board	Noted in minutes – motion to commend does not happen	Officer does not vote – 27 SVM's required
	Vote of no confidence	-	-			A vote of confidence cannot be held at Student Voice. Chair can send a petition template via email to trigger a vote of no confidence.