Liberation Conference 2022

### By Darragh Briscomb (s202693), LGBTQ+ Delegate

# Pre-Conference: Prioritisation Ballot

1. Decolonise and Diversify the Medical Curriculum
2. Discriminatory assistance dog policy
3. Mental Health
4. Sexual violence on campus
5. Women’s public safety and spiking
6. Sports inclusion
7. Accessibility and Decolonisation in the… [full name unknown]

The top three were chosen for the following reasoning:

* Decolonise and Diversify the Medical Curriculum
  + Ensuring that the medical curriculum includes as much of the diverse communities we live in as possible is extremely important as medical discrimination results in loss of lives and large casualties that could otherwise be prevented
* Discriminatory assistance dog policy
  + Assistance dogs are vital to those that have them, so ensuring that university housing and university campuses don’t use discriminatory policies surrounding this is very important. In addition, this policy had the clearest outcomes and felt the most achievable of those available.
* Mental health
  + This involved improving campus mental health to ensure that it was a university wide approach and was diverse in its delivery.

The ballots that were prioritised were: Mental health, sexual violence on campus and women’s public safety and spiking. While important, it would have been nice to have more diversity in the policies discussed as the two motions were very similar.

# VP Liberation Elections

There were two options for this role, Shane Simpkin and Nehaal Bajwa.

I voted for Shane Simpkin due to their work within NUS over the last two years and their grit and determination in ensuring change at their own university.

The winner of the election was Nehaal Bajwa

# Day 1 of Conference:

After an inspiring talk from Kojo Koram about the impacts of the empire on the current UK climate and hearing from the candidates for VP Liberation, we then spent some time in our caucus groups. Here I spoke to a range of students from different universities about both our struggles and how we overcame certain ones.

Following lunch, I attended an amazing campaign workshop on tackling sexual violence on campus from Not on My Campus. This involved speaking about issues that we have faced at the university and how other universities have overcome this.

University of Leicester was highlighted as an amazing example for best practice, and this included mandatory bystander training in their induction week for all students.

# Day 2 of Conference

Day two of conference was frustrating. Instead of refining and adding amendments to the submitted policy, we instead went through a new policy creation method they are trialling where we discussed the policy, they took notes on what was spoken about, and this has now been given to the steering committee to write the policy for us which we then vote on.

The afternoon of the conference was looking at the future of liberation in NUS and revolved around their restructure. I unfortunately had to miss some of the afternoon due to their low-sensory live stream being unavailable and being too overwhelmed to go into the auditorium at the time.

# Steering and Campaign Committee Elections

* Campaign: Disabled Students Place

1. Syd King
2. Jake Livingstone
3. Dany Uyanik
4. Kir Turner

* Campaign: Trans students place

1. Leon Cambray

* Steering: Disabled students place

1. Janet Williams
2. Adam Khan
3. Edward Jones

* Steering: Open place

1. Sultan Chaudhury
2. Adam Khan

* Steering: Trans students place

1. Jamie Pugh
2. Adam Khan

* Steering: LGBTQ+ Place

1. Jack Myatt
2. Adam Khan

# Policy Votes

I elected to vote abstain on all 4 policies we were asked to vote on. The details of why are listed below.

* Mental Health Policy
  + Having been at this workshop, as explained above, it is very disheartening to see that none of the feedback has resulted in the policy being amended, despite overwhelming support for many of the amendments. Thus, this policy did not have adequate coverage to all students, nor explicit ways in which this policy would affect education provides, nor any method of accountability from NUS to provide us updates on the motion. As a result, the only option I felt was appropriate to abstain as the process was undemocratic.
* Women’s Public Safety and Spiking, Tackling Sexual Violence on Campus
  + The reason this was a vote to abstain was partially due to the undemocratic way these motions were dealt with but also due to the other groups, during feedback, saying that their session did not come to an agreement on either motion. If there is that much disagreement on how these policies should be written, and then they weren’t changed despite this, then I didn’t feel confident or knowledgeable enough to ensure that this policy followed through.
* Liberation Proposals
  + While I liked some of the concepts within the proposal, the research behind it left me without confidence in it. Having pie charts with only 9 participants when they have access to over 600 FE and HE organisations was appalling. Running the research over Christmas seemed like a rookie mistake. Thus, I abstained.

Overall, I believe that the SU can still learn from the proposals suggested even if they are not implemented as NUS level. The lessons learnt from the Not On My Campus workshop were invaluable, and the discussions from the mental health policy could easily become the basis for an SU mental health policy.