**Policymaking guide**

At Leicester Students’ Union, all students are able to make an impact by shaping the Union’s priorities. The priorities of the Union are determined by your thoughts and ideas, so whether you are looking to share ideas, actively campaign, or write policy, there is an avenue for you to make a lasting impact on the student community.

If you need any support with writing a policy or navigating the Ideas System, Councils, or Leicester 100, you can email the Voice team at su-voice@le.ac.uk where you can receive guidance on proposals, or you can request to meet with us.

**Where do I start?**

If you have an idea for something you would like to see at the University or Students’ Union, and you think it should be shared, you can put the idea on the [Ideas System](https://www.leicesterunion.com/voice/studentideas/rate/) where students can like or dislike the idea. The idea only needs to be brief at this stage- there will be an opportunity to go into further detail if the idea progresses.

If your idea gets over 50 likes in two weeks, the Students’ Union will invite you to bring your idea to the most relevant [Students’ Union Council](https://www.leicesterunion.com/voice/councils/) where you can discuss the idea and the Council will decide whether they want to move the idea forward with or without you. If the idea can be easily implemented, the Council will immediately action this, otherwise you will need approval from the Council to progress with the idea.

If the Council approve the idea, you will be invited to create a proposal for Leicester 100, which is a demographically-representative panel of 100 students where policy is debated and voted on. The Councils can help shape the proposal with you and share their expertise. Once you have written a policy, you can decide to bring this to Leicester 100 as an individual, or as a Council.

If you would like the Council to take responsibility, the Council needs a majority vote for taking the idea forward. If the Council do not vote to take responsibility, you will need 100 likes for the idea, because at this stage, Councils have a duty to work on these ideas as a policy (aka proposal) for Leicester 100 or a project.

**Liaising with councils**

Upon the approval of your idea on the Ideas System, you will receive an email from the Students’ Union that outlines the next steps. You will be introduced to the chair of the most relevant council and the chair will add the idea to the agenda for the next council meeting and share a form for you to provide more information about the idea. You will be invited to attend to go through your idea and receive feedback from the council.

When you meet with the Council, you should have your idea ready to present. You could create a presentation, run through your notes, or just explain the situation and why your idea is important. You can start with a neutral overview of the current situation and the problems students are facing at the University, then provide the idea as a solution. The Council will then ask questions about the idea and will determine if the idea can be implemented immediately, or if it needs to go through the policymaking process.

If the idea cannot be actioned immediately, you should outline whether you would like the Council to take this idea forward, or you seek approval from the Council to take the idea to Leicester 100 yourself. The Council will vote on the idea forward without you in the room.

Importantly, if you decide to move the idea forward alone, you can ask to meet with the Council again or you can send a draft proposal via email and receive feedback before submitting your proposal for Leicester 100.

**Taking a proposal to Leicester 100**

So, you have the opportunity to take a proposal to the next Leicester 100 meeting. The first step is to download the [policymaking template](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Caj403%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CTA746EU5%5CProposal%20or%20motion%20format.docx) and flesh out your idea.

Starting with the title, you want to summarise the idea or solution. Shorter titles are best, but make sure it clearly represents the idea.

The overview should provide more context and explain what the idea aims to achieve. You should assume people have no prior knowledge of the situation. **This should be 100-300 words**.

Facts can demonstrate the scale of the issue. You can collect data or figures from surveys to outline the problem objectively. All facts should be referenced in the document. **Up to 5 bullet points** **are recommended.**

Opinions should include what stance Leicester 100 would take on an issue. These should explain why there is an issue. **Up to 5 bullet points are recommended.**

Actions or outcomes are the clear demands you have for the University or Students’ Union. These should be clear and concise. **Up to 5 bullet points are recommended.**

**What makes a bad policy?**

* Too subjective
* Based off opinions
* Repetitive or too long
* Too informal language
* Targets the wrong people
* No clear demands outlined
* No context, detail or figures
* Suggesting something illegal
* Facts and figures are not referenced
* For self-interest rather than collective good
* Does not mention how it is relevant to students.

**What makes a good policy?**

* No jargon
* Clear demands outlined
* Objective language used
* Facts and figures referenced
* Clearly written with acronyms defined
* Includes detail on how this affects the student body at Leicester
* Recommended structure followed (Leicester 100 notes, resolves etc)
* It is not illegal and does not damage the reputation of the University/ SU if passed.

**Limits to policymaking**

Any student is able to submit a policy, but not all policies that pass can be implemented. This can be for many reasons:

* It is something the Students’ Union or University cannot control
* There are inadequate resources for implementation
* The Trustee board have overturned the policy
* The policy is, or contains parts that are, illegal.

**Writing effective policy**

If you are eager to implement an impactful and lasting policy, consider these questions:

* Does the policy explain to students what the policy is and its purpose?
* Is the policy flexible enough to stand any changes in the future?
* Does the policy provide clarity for the Executive Officers?
* What conversations are the university having currently?
* Will the policy lead to a meaningful change in position?
* Does the policy resolve a conflict or address an issue?
* What student issues are in the news e.g., AI?
* Is the policy well researched and evidenced?
* Is the policy proactive?

**Guidance for writing policy**

**Overview**

Here is an example of an overview of an idea:

*“The cost of living is having dire consequences on students. The maintenance loan for many students may not cover their accommodation costs due to increases in rent costs and the cost of living, meaning many students are looking for work to afford their basic needs, which can have an impact on their studies and mental health. I propose that the Students’ Union creates a one-off hardship fund for students from low-income backgrounds to alleviate the stress of having to work long hours whilst studying. The criteria for the funds should be decided by the Students’ Union so that it goes to students who are struggling the most.”*

You should provide sufficient detail about the situation and the impacts the issue has on students or the university, so that other people can understand:

* What the idea is
* What the issues are
* Who is affected by it most?
* What the idea aims to resolve
* Who is responsible for the issue?

**Facts**

Tips for gathering facts:

* You want to find figures from reputable sources, and if possible, local case studies that can demonstrate the relevance of the issue
* You should find research or data that is from the past couple of years to boost the validity of your idea
* Facts relating to the impact of the issue and how these consequences interlink will be useful
* Try to avoid gathering data that does not add value to your idea, and will not help convince stakeholders to look into the idea
* There are plenty of organisations, research papers, and examples of data that you can use to support your ideas
* If you are struggling for ideas, get in touch with the Voice team at su-voice@le.ac.uk.

Example of facts:

* *“Unipol and HEPI found in a study that the average student loan leaves students with just 50p to live on each week after paying rent.1”*
* *“Financial hardship is a common cause of mental health struggles, such as stress and anxiety. These struggles can result in people avoiding their basic needs, such as heating and food, to cut down on costs, which can lead to mental health problems. Having mental health problems can make it more challenging to study, or earn, manage money, and ask for support, making it a challenging spiral for students to get out of.2"*

1. HEPI (2023) Rent now swallows up virtually all of the average maintenance loan as the student accommodation market reaches ‘crisis point’. <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2023/10/26/student-rents-now-swallow-up-virtually-all-of-the-of-the-average-maintenance-loan-as-market-reaches-crisis-point-in-affordability/> [Accessed 4.9.2024].

2. Money and Mental Health (2024) Money and Mental Health Facts. <https://www.moneyandmentalhealth.org/money-and-mental-health-facts/> [Accessed 4.9.2024].

**Opinions**

The next stage is where you can state what you think about the issue. This could be where you explain the rationale for your idea, and how this would positively impact students. For example:

*“Leicester 100 believes:*

* *That there is a growing strain on students balancing their studies, looking after their health, and being able to afford the increased cost of living.*
* *Students should be able to excel at university regardless of their financial background, and measures should be put into place to help students facing unexpected financial hardship to prevent strains on mental health.*
* *A hardship fund to support students in dire financial situations would alleviate stress and allow students to focus on their studies.”*

**Actions and Outcomes**

Finally, the last stage is to outline what actions you think should be taken to resolve the issue. Make sure that you consider what the Students’ Union is able to resolve, and what falls outside of the Students’ Union’s control. You can outline a list of things you expect the Students’ Union to do. It could be as simple as reviewing the systems in place, or checking that information is up to date, and it could be a bigger ask, such as launching a specific campaign or research piece of your choice.

For example:

*“Leicester 100 resolves:*

* *The Union should develop a hardship fund for students*
* *The Union should lobby against rising rent in university accommodation*
* *The Union should lobby local MPs to improve financial support for students.”*

**Bringing your proposal to Leicester 100**

Now that you have written your proposal, you need to send it to the Campaigns and Democracy Coordinator **a week before the next Leicester 100 meeting** **at the very latest**. After this deadline, you will be unable to make any changes. If the policy is submitted after this, it will go to the next Leicester 100 meeting. The policy will be added to the agenda and Leicester 100 will be able to read it before the meeting.

You will be invited to attend Leicester 100 to propose your idea. You will be able to give:

* An overview of your idea (2-3 minutes)
* A speech for the idea (2 minutes)
* Clarification of the idea in a short Q and A.

Someone from Leicester 100 may decide to make a speech against the proposal for up to two minutes. After the Q and A, Leicester 100 will then have group discussions of the idea for up to 10 minutes, and you will be able to speak to every group to explain things further and hear their feedback. The chair of Leicester 100 will then ask each table to summarise their feedback and the chair will determine whether there is a consensus for the idea. If yes, no vote will be taken and the idea will pass unanimously.

If there are disagreements, then you would be asked to leave the room while Leicester 100 take a vote. You will be told the result, and if the policy fails, you would be able to leave.

If the policy passes (receives above 67% of the votes for the policy), Leicester 100 will have a discussion on how the idea can be implemented, and you would speak with each table again. All feedback would be noted and passed over to you and the Task and Finish group responsible for implementing the idea. The policy will then be in place for three years if the Trustee Board do not block it. The policy will be renewed at Leicester 100 in 3 years’ time to be in place for another three years. If this fails, then the policy will not exist anymore.

**Referenda**

If there is between 50-67% votes for the policy, this means that Leicester 100 will recommend that a referendum takes place to the Trustee Board. This means involving the whole student population to vote on the idea. The parameters of the referendum would be determined by the Trustee Board.

**Amendments**

During a Leicester 100 meeting, there may be disagreement with a small part of the proposal. If this happens, Leicester 100 may create an amendment, where a clause or bullet point may be added, deleted, or edited. Leicester 100 reserve the right to do this and vote to pass these amendments, meaning that your idea could slightly change. If you find that the amendments have changed the intentions for the idea, you can write to the Trustee Board to ask that your original idea is voted on. If you wish to do this, email su-voice@le.ac.uk.

**Writing an effective speech**

**Speech 1**

Firstly, your overview speech should begin with context. You could explain what the issue is, how long it has been going on for, who it impacts the most, what the impacts are, and what the idea aims to do. Detail about the idea is important, and you should assume that everyone has no prior knowledge. During this stage, the minute details of the policy are not necessary, but the principle of the idea is what students will be voting on.

**Speech 2**

This speech is where you try to persuade students to vote for your idea. There are some general features to use in these speeches to convince people that it is a good idea, such as:

* Include a personal element
* Repeat key points or phrases
* Structure your speech with a key topic for each section
* Be conversational- people will switch off if there is too much jargon
* Have a path and destination- build your case and present a solution
* Consider the potential challenges or barriers and give reasonable solutions
* Pace yourself- it's not about how much or what you say, it is how you say it
* Share emotive facts and testimonies, or ask a question to engage the audience
* Find the right tone- you will be speaking to students from a variety of backgrounds
* Condense your idea into a 15–20-word message and build the speech around this.