

# Liberation, Sense of Belonging and Inclusion

*Collaborative Research and Recommendations for Inclusive Student Support*



# Overview

- Background
- Student-Led Research and Recommendations on Representation
- Building Sense of Belonging

Further



# Background

## Liberation Officer Team (PTOs)

- *Disability* Liberation Officer
- *Ethnic Diversity* Liberation Officer
- *Faith and Belief* Liberation officer
- *International Students* Liberation Officer
- *LGBTQ+* Liberation Officer
- *Marginalised Genders* Liberation Officer
- *Parents, Carers and Guardians* Officer
- *Working Class Students* Liberation Officer (\*new to 24/25\*)





# Background

## Updates Since Sept 2022

- Job Description consultation
- ↓
- Student Council:
  - Job Description updated at Student Council
  - BAME Officer Change
- ↓
- Conversations - Fit for purpose
- ↓
- University funding - research project





# Student Representation Project 23-24

Investigation into the Liberation Officer  
Structure at NUSU and  
Recommendations for change

# Research Questions

1. Are the **purposes** of the current Liberation Officer structure **understood, appreciated, needed, and/or wanted** by the **student community** and **university staff**?
2. Which **groups** of current students are **under-represented** and/or **marginalised** at Newcastle University, and how would these students **like** to be represented?
3. How does the current NUSU structure relate to **other UK Student Unions**?



# STUDENT REPRESENTATION PROJECT 23-24

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Danya Appleson

*Representation Project Intern*

INCLUSIVE NEWCASTLE KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

## Representation Projects Intern – Danya Appleson

- Recent Graduate
- *University-Union-Student Collaboration*
- Student Lens and Student-Led
  
- **Research** about other institutions, history of PTOs
- Representation **Survey** for Students
- **Interviews** with:
  - Past and current PTOs
  - Other SUs
- **Focus Groups**





# Some Notes

## Current Students

- Increase in students living at home
- Increased number of students taking up paid work

## Considerations

- There are SUs that pay their PTOs
- Education Act Limitation



# Results – Main Themes

- **Incentive for Work**

- Appreciated and acknowledged
- Voluntary + COL
- Emotional Labour



- **Community building for sense of belonging**

- Societies
- Emerged from focus groups from marginalised groups and from existing research at other SUs.

- **Student Engagement with SU Politics**

- Split between engagement – impacts effectiveness of the Liberation Officers

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## Recommendations

1. Liberation Officers should be paid for **240 hours total across the year at Real Living Wage**. To adhere the Education Act, Liberation Officers shall only be allowed to hold office for **one year**.



2. Liberation Officers shall be **elected only by students who identify with each respective Liberation Community**.





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## Recommendations

3. **NUSU chairs\*** shall be elected at the **last Student Council of the year**, for the following academic year, instead of at the March student elections.

4. A **Working-Class Liberation Officer** should be implemented following a vote at Student Council.



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## Recommendations – Further Research

5. To investigate whether **The Parents, Carers and Guardians Officer** should also represent **Mature Students**.
6. To investigate whether **Marginalised Genders Officer** should be split into **Trans** and **Women's Officers**.
7. To investigate how to improve targeted promotion to **underrepresented groups**.



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## Other recommendations

8. Liberation Officers shall be coordinators of **online Student Communities**.
9. Data sharing and usage is recommended to be further evaluated to provide more tailored support for marginalised and liberation communities.





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## Limitations

- Lack of **data** shared
  - Truly representative? Sample Size
  - PG and International Students
- **Representation vs Support**
  - Different needs of different groups of students
- **Intersectionality**
- **Nuances** between students in these communities.



# Next Steps?

- **Working-Class Liberation Officer**
  - Dec 2023 Council and passed.
  - March 2024 Elections – new officer in this role

- **Training – timing + Sabbatical Officers**

- Online communities – exploratory option this year
- Continuing drop-ins
- Mindful of barriers + helping where able

- **Further research** – member of the team looking into it

- Financial situation of HE – unable to pay them (yet)

- Chairs + voting for own communities – pending Council 24/25

- **What's Next?**

Last Updated: 11 December 2023

## Working Class Liberation Officer ADDED To The Union

**Working Class Liberation Officer Position Now Open!** by Danya, Representation Project Intern

As unanimously voted for in the December council, a new Liberation Officer position will be added to the existing list of available positions for 2024—a working class officer.

This role represents and advocates on the behalf of students who feel marginalised due to socio-economic disadvantage. This can also include care experienced and estranged students.

This volunteer position is [now open](#) for nominations for the next annual elections!

Until now, there has been no official working class representation at NUSU, so we are delighted to be able to broaden the scope of student representation in this way, and acknowledge the experiences of those who face barriers due to class.

If you identify as a working class student, now is the chance to put yourself forward for the 2024 Student Elections, and tell us why you are the best candidate to represent the many Newcastle students who face social and economic disadvantage.

# Sense of Belonging





# Sense of Belonging – ideas to start

- Only **beginning**
- Importance of a plan - vacant + supporting both PTOs + students
- **One off opportunities** with/without officers present but always using officer/student feedback
  - Reducing barriers where we can
  - Have something – feedback – improving and getting closer to what students want
- Some examples:
  - Care-experienced, estranged – move-in weekend
  - Parent Meet Ups



# Ongoing project

- Need to be **flexible** to offer support in light of anything that changes year on year
- **Mindset + openness** to try new things and let it be student-led but staff-supported



# Thank you

**Any questions?**

