

**Why are we democratic  
and are we democratic?**

## Tedious introduction slide

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- Charity, SU and University sector background
- Qualified Company Secretary (woohoo!)
- Trainer
- Boardgame and cooking enthusiast

## Today's session aimed at

- New folks in the SU sector (welcome)
- Folks who don't work in democracy who want to understand it a bit more
- Others welcome though

## Covering today

- Is your students' union democratic?
- Why are we democratic?
- How can democracy manifest itself – spotlight on officers
- End of day 1 exhaustion

Chat among yourselves

**What are the different  
ways your SU is  
democratic?**

# Feedback

## Common examples of democracy

- Officer Elections
- Referenda
- Student members meetings
- Student councils
- Policy zones
- Accountability mechanisms
- Student group elections
- Student group meetings
- Student group budget allocations

# History



## Why are we democratic

- Democratic involvement of students - Bologna
- When small based on working men's clubs
- Trades union expectations and affiliation
- Universities get bigger
- Students' unions get more complicated
  - “Services” and “representation”

## 1994 Education Act

- 1994 Education Act did not achieve its aim - closure of students' unions
- Protection from a malicious leadership
- Not (widely) considered in relation to later legislation
- In some areas is very specific. In others not...
- Creates a duty on **institutions** not SUs

## 1994 Education Act

“The governing body of every establishment to which this Part applies shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that any students’ union for students at the establishment operates in a fair and democratic manner...”

# 1994 Education Act

Board of Governors?

University / College

“The governing body of every establishment to which this Part applies shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that any students’ union for students at the establishment operates in a fair and democratic manner...”

Never tested in Court so who knows?

## 1994 Education Act – what is clear

- (d) appointment to major union offices should be by election in a secret ballot in which all members are entitled to vote;
- (e) the governing body should satisfy themselves that the elections are fairly and properly conducted;
- (f) a person should not hold sabbatical union office, or paid elected union office, for more than two years in total at the establishment

## 1994 Education Act – what is clear

- financial reports of the union should be published annually or more frequently, and should be made available to the governing body and to all students...
- the procedure for allocating resources to groups or clubs should be fair and should be set down in writing and freely accessible to all students;

# 1994 Education Act – what is implied

- Referenda
- Members meetings..?
- Affiliation processes

# Why are we democratic

- History
- Education Act Legislation
- Morally right thing to do



**Are we democratic?**

## Are we democratic – in groups

Thinking about your officers

- How do students direct their work?
- How do students hold them to account?
- How does staff work change as a result of the officers / student direction?

# Feedback

# Types of Officers

- Benign dictators
- “Voice for Students”
- Social Media Influencers
- Mini Managers
- Activity Facilitators

# Shameless Plug



- Introduction to democratic principles course
- Come and chat to me after

## Covered today

- Is your students' union democratic?
- Why are we democratic?
- How can democracy manifest itself – spotlight on officers

# Thank you -my socials

