

College committee applicants made to sign YUSU pledges

By [Georgie Smith](#), Deputy News Editor (2017/18)

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Image: Dan Powell

YUSU has issued college contracts, dubbed “pledges”, that all those aspiring to committee roles in the upcoming college elections must agree to. Simply by putting their names forward for nomination, the committee hopefuls are in effect bound in compliance with the terms and conditions. However, Nouse has discovered that the new pledges do not contain any clauses which go beyond the existing committee requirements.

These are clauses that bind the college officers to duties that, while not necessarily in their mandate, they might be expected to carry out. This includes the attendance of every YUSU meeting, which may be an ambitious request for students who are juggling other commitments on top of their committee duties.

The pledges also intimate the fact that YUSU holds control over “JCRC/CSA accounts and ensures all committee organised events, and that it possesses the authority to intervene should it be deemed that there is a financial, legal, safety, and/or reputational risk”. It is unclear what a “reputational risk” might entail. The phrase seems to cover all manner of sins, including potential damage to YUSU’s reputation as a result of the actions of committees. This may well suggest that colleges committees should be wary about complaining too loudly about YUSU.

An anonymous JCRC source suggested that the contracts were “a thinly-veiled power grab by YUSU” and that the body was in danger of “overreaching its authority” without realising it. There is also scope in the contracts for colleges to enforce these terms without the consent of their committees.

YUSU President Alex Urquhart was keen to characterise the terms and conditions as a “pledge” rather than a “contract”: “The Committee pledges were developed collaboratively by YUSU and College staff and received approval from all College Committees following a consultation that had resulted in a range of edits. The aim of the document is to ensure elected officers are aware of their commitment to their college’s students — It does not propose any additional authority for YUSU, in fact quite the opposite.

“The pledge states that the College team retain responsibility for ensuring the agreement is followed and highlights the authority of the College’s Committee Constitutions and Terms of Reference. The document aims to enable elected officers to understand the expectations of their role – as outlined by the colleges – if anything it encourages more autonomy in how colleges govern themselves.”

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