

## YUSU to 'incorporate' and explore name change

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Image: Dan Powell

YUSU are set to 'incorporate' (transform from a charity to a charitable company), hold a referendum on constitutional change, and look into a potential name change.

The sweeping reforms are set to get underway during the next couple of weeks, and reach their conclusion over the summer holidays.

By incorporating, YUSU will change its legal framework to a model that protects the liability of its trustees. Under the current system, the board of trustees (of which YUSU President Millie Beach is head), are themselves liable for YUSU's finances, a situation which could deter potential trustees. Under the new system, personal financial liability would have a maximum limit of £1.

YUSU's charity number will change and staff will move their pensions and salary packages onto an incorporated structure, but there will be no major difference in practice. YUSU are also looking to update their constitution, by transforming it to a "memorandum with amendments" – a move intended to "streamline and modernise" the current constitution to make it more readable and navigable to students. Again, there will reportedly be no major practical changes. The move would see York following a trend set by other student unions, including Birmingham and KCL. Third and finally, YUSU are holding a consultation on a potential name change.

Given that all constitutional changes have to be ratified by the student population, YUSU will be holding a referendum during Week 7 to approve the changes to name and constitution. The voting will correspond with YUSU Elections.

Millie Beach explains: "YUSU would like to incorporate and become a charitable company limited by guarantee. This is a popular model for student unions because it protects member's rights with a democratic structure that respects and enshrines those rights - that's why we're asking students to approve this. It also mitigates Trustee's personal potential liabilities for the Students Union which is also positive because more than half of our board is made up of elected student officers and current students. In order to incorporate we will need to alter the Union's legal status to develop a separate legal identity for the charity, distinct from that of the Board of Trustees.

"Our main governing document will change form, a proposed Memorandum and Articles of Association will replace the existing Constitution. The new governing document has being developed in conjunction with the Charity Commission. It makes no changes to YUSU's aims as a charity, the powers of students or students' decision-making, as established in YUSU's existing Constitution, but it will mean that YUSU is more transparent and more accountable to students.

"Our consultation on a new name and the recent policy review have told us that our utmost priorities right now must be transparency of decision making, flexibility and improved digital capability and that these things are much more important to students than what we're called. As a result, when you come to vote this year for your elected officers, you'll also be asked to approve the new legal structure of incorporation as a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee. Your Union, YUSU, needs you to say 'yes' to ensure that we have the right governance framework in place to continue to improve accountability and accessibility."



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