

# POLICY PROPOSAL

TITLE: DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

Student engagement in elections is always low, leading to student voices being diluted in political spheres. Whilst HEPI research shows that students who register to vote have higher turnout rates than the general population, many students remain unregistered, and many international students from the EU don't know that they are eligible to vote in the upcoming metro mayoral election.

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## REASON FOR CHANGE

1. HEPI research shows an 8% reduction in voter registration rates in Bath constituency from 2013 to 2014.
2. Student voices are diluted in elections generally, leading to policy outcomes that take less account of student issues and student interests, with one candidate for the mayoralty of the West of England claiming that student votes are 'irrelevant'.
3. The ongoing parliamentary constituency boundary review and upcoming local authority boundary review base their recommendations on numbers of registered voters rather than total population, so under-registered groups such as students will end up being under-represented in both local and national government unless the SU improves student voter registration in Bath, particularly amongst students living in private accommodation in the city.
4. Whilst the new metro mayor's brief will include both transport and housing, two issues very relevant to Bath students, many students still don't know anything about the regional devolution arrangement, and many more are hazy on the details.

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## THE PROPOSAL

1. Bath SU commits to a voter registration drive, with a target of 80% of students registered ahead of the April 13<sup>th</sup> deadline for the metro mayoral election.
2. Bath SU will promote the metro mayoral election, making sure that the student body are informed and aware of the role, the candidates and the date of the election.
3. Bath SU will run a nonpartisan get-out-the-vote operation, sending volunteers and SU Officers door to door to encourage students to vote on the day of the election, and running adverts on SU monitors encouraging participation.
4. Bath SU will send an email one week ahead of the metro mayoral election to all its members, providing information about the metro mayoral candidates and role, and on

election day itself will send four emails, counting down the time until polls close, starting at 09:00 and ending at 20:00.

5. Bath SU will review the effectiveness of these methods after the metro mayoral election, and will write and publish a plan to increase turnout and engagement with the 2019 council elections and the next general election, based on what measures were most effective during the metro mayoral election.

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