



# YOUNG LIBERALS

## ACCREDITATION SCHEME PROPOSAL

### 1. OVERVIEW

Our society data is appalling, and our engagement of societies is likewise appalling. There is a list at the end of this document of known associations according to our website that will indicate as much (Appendix A).

### 2. PROPOSAL

We create a system to give associations buy-in to Young Liberals, via accreditation.

Essentially there would be some sort of form on our website, by which the chair of an association can apply to become a “Young Liberals Accredited Association”.

These would be of two types:

1. University Society - an association affiliated with a Student Union whose membership is drawn predominantly or exclusively from students at that university
2. Local Branch - an association affiliated with a local party/multiple local parties whose membership is drawn from members of that party/those parties

When an association applies to become accredited, they can do so *ex novo* or as a pre-existing organisation. They will be approved by a vote of the executive and their details added to the website. Only accredited associations should be listed on the website.

A University Society should have far more autonomy than a Local Branch, as they have to comply primarily with Student Union regulations.

A Local Branch should have far less autonomy, and we should be able to influence their structure, social media profile(s) and activities. They should use a model constitution for a Local Branch (see Appendix B). They should be organised alongside relevant local parties, getting their data from them and sitting on their executives, as they are entitled to. Their scope and size should be regulated to some extent, perhaps encompassing unitary authorities or county councils rather than districts or parliamentary constituencies to avoid hyperfocusing, given our low membership.

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For both University Societies and Local Branches, the Young Liberals Executive most relevant to them (to which I shall return under “Problems” below) reserves the right to disaffiliate them by formal vote. The conditions for disaffiliation should be written out and clearly stated to avoid misuse. Associations can appeal disaffiliations through means outlined in appropriate amendments to Section 12 of the Young Liberals Constitution (“Appeals and Disputes”).

### A. What do they get?

In order to encourage associations to become accredited, we clearly need to offer them incentives. To this end, I propose:

1. Cheaper Freshers Packs<sup>1</sup>
2. Access to the Branch Development Fund<sup>2</sup>
3. Seats on regional/state YL executives (see “Problems”, below)
4. Access to campaigning/social media material, produced by the Campaigns/Communications Officers (Focus templates, graphics, etc.)
5. Access to a weekly strategy email from the Comms/Campaigns Officer<sup>3</sup>
6. Access to “YL Elected Leaders” Facebook group for help and advice
7. [Something to do with policy?] [Via the weekly strategy email, input into consultations on YL policy?]
8. Advice on good events to run and how to run them
9. Some sort of permanence within YL - e.g. more exciting subpages on the website, a YL email address (yeah, I know this is a pain)
10. Some sort of commitment from prominent party figures to appear at YL branch events? MPs, AMs, MSPs, MEPs, etc.

### B. What do we get?

Hopefully we should get more back from this, but provisionally:

1. More engaged pockets of activity around the country
2. More accurate data on YL capacity and engagement

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<sup>1</sup> We currently offer different prices for local parties and YL branches. I suggest scrapping this and instead having only “Accredited YL Associations” and “others”. If associations don’t want to formally affiliate, they pay more (*i.e.* the same as local parties).

<sup>2</sup> Available to pre-existing associations and *ex novo* foundations, provided they apply to become accredited in the process of their foundation

<sup>3</sup> This would essentially be a rebirth of the YL Whip that Harry created but discontinued due to Branch non-engagement

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### 3. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this scheme or any such equivalent will take a while, and I suspect will have to be written into the Constitution to make sure it doesn't die out as soon as we aren't around to run it. However, the deadline for amendments has already passed, so we will have to implement this in broadly two stages:

#### A. Stage 1

Applicability: pre-existing University societies only

1. **ASAP:** Reformat the "[Societies](#)" page of the website to prepare for this by including an "Accreditation" section, which will list the benefits of accreditation, which will be (at least initially):
  - a. Cheaper freshers packs
  - b. Access to the Branch Development Fund
  - c. Access to campaigns and social media materials
  - d. Access to "Young Liberals Elected Leaders" Facebook group
  - e. Advice on good events and how to run them
2. **ASAP:** Create an "Accreditation Application" Typeform to go up on this page, which will collect data from applicants, such as:
  - a. Name of Chair/President
  - b. Most permanent email address of the society
  - c. Date(s) of committee handover within society
  - d. Date(s) of freshers fair(s)
3. **ASAP:** Publicise this change by emailing everyone, posting it in Forum and messaging pre-existing branches about the need to accredit for cheaper freshers packs and other bonuses
4. **Mid-/Late-August:** Use Freshers to get societies to accredit
5. **September:** Host a (brief) consultation (not all three, just the most feasible):
  - a. At Activate
  - b. At Autumn Conference
  - c. Online
6. **October:** Write some form of this scheme into the Executive Regulations before handover to the next Executive
7. **October/November:** Prepare a constitutional amendment to be submitted to the next Young Liberals conference

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## B. Stage 2

Applicability: all local associations

1. Pass constitutional amendment, enshrining further rights for branches, such as:
  - a. Ability to sit on Regional/State Executives
  - b. Formalised disaffiliation procedure
  - c. Official distinction between a “Local Branch” and a “University Society”
2. Produce materials about how to found a Local Branch or University Society in line with this new scheme

## 4. PROBLEMS

Obviously this won't be easy, so here are a couple of problems I thought up while typing this out:

1. Regions/States - if we are offering seats on regional/state executives, this would require buy-in from those states too. We would also need to decide which body (region/state/federal) is responsible for:
  - a. Accreditation
  - b. Disaffiliation
  - c. Appeals
2. I'm sure there are others too I just haven't thought of them yet

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## **APPENDIX A - ACTIVE ASSOCIATIONS**

Here is a breakdown of currently “active” University Societies and Local Branches across the country:

### **University Societies**

1. Falmouth and Exeter Students
2. Plymouth University Liberal Democrats
3. Cambridge University Liberal Association
4. University of East Anglia Liberal Democrats
5. University of Essex Liberal Democrats
6. De Montfort University Liberal Democrats
7. Leicester University Liberal Democrats
8. University of Lincoln Liberal Democrats
9. University of Nottingham Liberal Democrats
10. LSE Liberal Democrats
11. UCL Liberal Democrats
12. QMU Liberal Democrats
13. KCL Liberal Democrats
14. Durham University Liberal Democrats
15. Newcastle University Liberal Democrats
16. Lancaster University Liberal Democrats
17. University of Chester Liberal Democrats
18. University of Aberdeen Liberal Democrats
19. University of Edinburgh Liberal Democrats
20. University of St Andrews Liberal Democrats
21. University of Glasgow Liberal Democrats
22. Oxford University Liberal Democrats
23. University of Southampton Liberal Democrats
24. University of Surrey Liberal Democrats
25. Royal Holloway Liberal Democrats
26. University of Sussex Liberal Democrats
27. University of Kent Liberal Democrats
28. Aberystwyth University Liberal Democrats
29. Bangor University Liberal Democrats
30. Cardiff University Liberal Democrats
31. Swansea University Liberal Democrats
32. Aston University Liberal Democrats

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33. University of Birmingham Liberal Democrats
  34. Keele University Liberal Democrats
  35. University of Warwick Liberal Democrats
  36. Bristol University Liberal Democrats
  37. Bournemouth University Liberal Democrats
  38. University of Bath Liberal Democrats
  39. University of West England Liberal Democrats
  40. University of York Liberal Democrats
  41. University of Hull Liberal Democrats
  42. University of Leeds Liberal Democrats
  43. University of Sheffield Liberal Democrats
  44. Sheffield Hallam University Liberal Democrats

## Local Branches

1. North Devon Young Liberals
2. Peterborough Young Liberals
3. North Derbyshire Young Liberals
4. East London Young Liberals
5. Sutton Young Liberals
6. Liverpool Young Liberals
7. Manchester Young Liberals
8. Wirral Young Liberals
9. Reading Young Liberals
10. Isle of Wight Young Liberals
11. Portsmouth Young Liberals
12. East Kent Coast Young Liberals
13. Brecon and Radnorshire Young Liberals
14. South Wales East Valleys Young Liberals
15. Shropshire Young Liberals
16. Mid Dorset and North Poole Young Liberals
17. Somerset Young Liberals
18. West Dorset Young Liberals
19. Weymouth and Portland Young Liberals

Clearly, our reach is better with University Societies (of c.148 universities, we have a presence at 44, thus 30% coverage) than with Local Branches, which are very sparse. This list is taken from the YL website and likely includes many defunct branches and doesn't include many active ones.

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## APPENDIX B - MODEL YOUNG LIBERALS LOCAL BRANCH CONSTITUTION

This is a draft model constitution written by Charlie Murphy, and adopted by Portsmouth and Bristol Young Liberals last year before both of those projects promptly died.

Naturally this would need heavy amendment to incorporate the Accreditation Scheme and probably fix some issues that Charlie and I overlooked at the time, but it provides a starting point:

### Constitution of [AREA] Young Liberals

Last updated 15/08/2018

#### Preamble and Primary Aims

[AREA] Young Liberals exist to bring together youth and student Liberal Democrats in the [AREA] area, to support these members in getting elected, and to represent them. [AREA] Young Liberals shall aim to assist, where possible, the local parties of its members within the wider [AREA] area. The 'wider [AREA] area' shall contain the parliamentary constituencies of [CONSTITUENCIES], as well as the [LOCAL COUNCILS].

#### Affiliation

1. [AREA] Young Liberals shall be first and foremost associated to the [AREA] Liberal Democrats locally and the Young Liberals federally.

#### Structure and Executive

1. [AREA] Young Liberals shall have an executive body headed by a Chair, and comprising of the following Youth Officers who may sit on the executive committee;
  - a. [LOCAL PARTY]
2. Youth Officers on the executive committee and the Chair may be afforded portfolios by the committee in order to help and aid the organisation, these portfolios may be but are not limited to;
  - a. Secretary
  - b. Finance
  - c. Social Secretary
  - d. Membership Development
  - e. Accessibility
3. [AREA] Young Liberals shall have an Honorary President who is a member of the Liberal Democrats but not of the Young Liberals.

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4. The executive committee may vote to co-opt any member to sit as a non-voting individual and take up a portfolio, as well as invite an individual to become Acting Honorary President should the position fall vacant outside of an AGM.
  5. The executive committee will function with 5 or more individuals at all times - if a Youth Officer is no longer active with [AREA] Young Liberals, the executive shall co-opt another individual to bring the executive to this number.
  6. The executive shall aim to operate in a collegiate manner with unanimity, however, should a vote be evenly matched, the Chair shall have a casting vote.
  7. Should the position of Chair fall vacant, the Vice Chair shall take up these duties for the remainder of the term as Acting Chair and a new Vice Chair shall be co-opted by the executive.

## Elections and AGM

1. The Chair and Vice Chair, who may also be Youth Officers, shall be directly elected by Young Liberals members from [AREA] Liberal Democrats at [AREA] Young Liberals annual general meeting (AGM).
2. The AGM may elect officers, such as Chair and Vice Chair, by alternative vote.
3. The elected officers' terms shall begin on the 1st of November.
4. The AGM may also amend this constitution by a two-thirds majority vote.
5. The AGM must vote by simple majority to invite an individual to take up the role of Honorary President, should the role fall vacant.
6. The AGM shall take place during September, unless pardon is given by the Honorary President.
7. The executive may appoint by simple majority a returning officer for the AGM who is not a member of the Young Liberals, this individual may however be the Honorary President should they be willing to do so.
8. The executive shall provide the membership with notice of the AGM no less than 3 full weeks before the event.

## Disputes and Appeals

1. Conflict over the meaning, practice, and phrasing of this constitution may be raised with and resolved by the Honorary President.
2. Appeals regarding mechanisms of this constitution should be referred to the Honorary President.
3. In extraordinary circumstances the Honorary President may pardon areas of this constitution temporarily if it is to the benefit of the group and in the interests of the members.