

**national union of south african students
nasionale unie van suid-afrikaanse studente**



TELEFOON 2-7831 TELEPHONE
KABELS NATUSAS CABLES

WOLROYHUIS 204 WOLROY HOUSE
BUITENKANTSTRAAT 37 BUITENKANT STREET
KAAPSTAD CAPE TOWN

NC/SL

January 12, 1970
P/6/70

TO: University Principals
Members University Councils
Advisory Panel
SRC Presidents
National Executive
Local Committee Chairmen

Dear Sir/Madam

This circular deals with the structure of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the relationship between the National Union and the Students' Representative Councils. It is hoped that this circular will clarify the question of affiliation of the SRCs to NUSAS.

INDEX

A.	The Concepts of a National Union	1
B.	Objects of the National Union of South African Students	1
C.	Structure of NUSAS	2
D.	Group membership	2
E.	Centre Enrolment	2
	NUSAS Branches	3
F.	Individual Membership	3
G.	Conclusion	7

Yours sincerely

NEVILLE CURTIS
PRESIDENT

HORST KLEINSCHMIDT
VICE PRESIDENT

OUR NEW ADDRESS

301 Wolroy House
37 Buitenkant Street
CAPE TOWN

A. THE CONCEPT OF A NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS

The concept of a National Union of Students is one which is hardly argued amongst South African students, and the need for a National Union is not often challenged. (Students recognise NUSAS as the only National Union in South Africa, and realise that it fulfils a desperate need. Their argument is only with aspects of the policy, particularly those dealing with political matters.)

The concept of a National Union of students is that, in every country, there is a need for students, who form a vitally important part of the community, to come together to protect, and generally represent their own interests. The concept of a National Union is therefore the same as THAT OF ANY TRADE UNION. A Union providing a platform for the expression of their members' needs and views, a group providing benefits not only for their members but for the community.

NUSAS is therefore a trade union and all trade unions allow for the maximum participation of all their members in the organisation. A group such as the Trades Union Council of South Africa is made up of a number of affiliated trade unions such as the Electrical Workers Union, Auto Workers Union and so on. Auto workers or Electrical workers are members of their own Union and, thereby, without actually being members of TUCSA, through their Unions become able to make use of the benefits of TUCSA and to have their opinions heard within TUCSA.

NUSAS operates in the same manner.

Its member unions are the SRC. All students on a campus are subject to the SRC and thereby become able to participate in the National Union. This form of enrolment is known as centre enrolment. This same principle of enrolment is applicable to many organisations of widely differing scale and with widely differing aims. A few such bodies are TUCSA, the South African Institute of Race Relations, United Nations Organisations, the World Health Organisation etc.

B. OBJECTS OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS

- (a) To represent the students of South Africa nationally and to establish and/or maintain their co-operation with the students of other countries.
- (b) To promote and defend democracy in students affairs, in the Universities and in South Africa
- (c) To maintain and further genuine co-operation, in a spirit of tolerance, good will and mutual respect, among all students.
- (d) To uphold the rights of all students to meet, assemble, and study together on a basis of full equality, and to promote the ideals of academic freedom
- (e) To promote the educational and general interests of students, and to guard their rights as students and citizens.
- (f) To encourage the interest and/or participation of students in welfare and/or educational community projects.
- (g) To perform all such other lawful acts as may be necessary to further the above objects.

C. STRUCTURE OF NUSAS

It is not widely known, but NUSAS is no LONGER AND HAS NOT SINCE 1964 BEEN AN ORGANISATION OF AUTOMATICALLY ENROLLED MEMBERS. Not, it should be noted, is it predominantly an organisation of individual members.

Its structure is threefold, being made up of

- (a) Students Representative Councils
- (b) Local branch committees
- (c) Associate members

This is defined in clause 4 (a) (i) of the constitution as follows -
"NUSAS is a Union of Students governed as a confederation of Constituent Centres".

D. I shall deal firstly with Group membership

Clause 4(b) of the Constitution states "Group membership is open by affiliation to:

- (a) Students Representative Councils of Universities, University Colleges, Teacher Training Colleges, or other institutions of higher learning".
- (b) NUSAS Branches at Universities, University Colleges, Teacher Training Colleges, or other institutions of higher learning where the Students Representative Council is not affiliated.

A Student Representative Council or NUSAS Branch is free to choose to affiliate itself to the National Union in one of two ways. These are described in the constitution in clause 5.

"(a) By a Student Council:

affiliating itself, which affiliation shall entitle any of the students at that centre to enjoy any of the facilities offered by NUSAS

"(b) At those institutions where the Student Council has not affiliated or where there is no Student Council, by a NUSAS branch consisting of at least ten student members affiliating itself".

Re: (a) - In terms of CENTRE ENROLMENT, there are no INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS of NUSAS. Through centre enrolment, the SRC affiliates itself to NUSAS and, as the elected representatives of the entire student body, represents all its students in the organisation. The fact that the student body elects the SRC entitles all members of that student body to all the facilities offered by NUSAS.

Whether a student agrees with the concept of a National Union of Students or not, or whether he accepts or rejects aspects of NUSAS policy he is still entitled and able to make use of all, or any particular benefit offered by NUSAS.

This system of enrolment is used at all of the major centres affiliated to NUSAS. These centres are UCT, Wits, Rhodes, University of Natal Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal - Durban, University of Natal - Non European, Johannesburg College of Education, Natal Training College and Cape Town Training College.

It is also the system of enrolment favoured by the NUSAS Executive as it allows for the maximum participation in the National Union without students having to enrol as members.

This system is retained only as long as the Students' Representative Council remains affiliated to the National Union. Thus, one of the first functions of a newly-elected SRC is to decide on the question of affiliation to NUSAS. Thus, while the majority of SRC members are in favour of affiliation as, for example, at UCT, the SRC remains an affiliate of NUSAS. The system's advantages, however, in our opinion, is that even those SRC members who argue with aspects of NUSAS policy may, if they wish, partake of NUSAS' benefits, but are not compelled to do so.

Centre enrolment is also the form used by ALL THE SRCS AFFILIATED TO THE AFRIKAANSE STUDENTEBOND (ASB) AND BY THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE NATIONAL UNIONS THROUGHOUT THE WESTERN WORLD. The exceptions are

- (i) Eastern Europe where all students at Universities and training colleges MUST become members of the National Union of Students if they wish to remain students. These Unions invariably work closely with the particular party in power
- (ii) In countries where the National Union is either illegal or suppressed and where optional enrolment is used. One of the few countries in which a legal National Union of Students uses this system is France. Here the National Union is a small ideologically orientated body of students (ie it is a wing of a French political party).

E. NUSAS BRANCHES (See C(b))

Clause 5(b) of the constitution states: "At those institutions where the Student Council has not affiliated or where there is no Student Council, by a NUSAS Branch consisting of at least ten individual members affiliating itself,"

Where there is no Students Representative Council or where the SRC does not wish to affiliate to NUSAS, but there are at least 10 individuals who wish to be associated with NUSAS, then these students may come together and form a local NUSAS branch and affiliate to the National Union. This is the position at Stellenbosch and Pretoria Universities. The branch only represents in NUSAS the number of paid up registered members.

It is worthwhile noting here that on two occasions at Stellenbosch and on one occasion at Pretoria, the SRC refused to recognise these NUSAS branches on the grounds that NUSAS is a non racial body and thereby not in accordance with the "customs and conventions of the community". On both these campuses, NUSAS is forced to operate off the campus.

F. I shall now deal with associate membership

Associate membership is open to any student. A student is defined in clause 2(e) as "a member of an institute of higher learning which is not a school and which awards degrees, diplomas or certificates in South Africa"

Students usually join NUSAS on an individual basis or where there is no SRC. Past students may also become associate members of NUSAS and certain students are invited by the Student Assembly (ie the policy making body of the Union which meets each July) to become Honorary Life members of the National Union.

G. CONCLUSION

I have dealt with the question of affiliation to NUSAS in great length. The cogent points can be summarised as follows:

- (1) The concept and need for a National Union of Students is not challenged on the NUSAS campuses.
- (2) NUSAS is a confederation of Students Representative Councils.
- (3) Most SRCs are affiliated in terms of centre enrolment whereby all students are able to partake of the benefits of NUSAS and participate in its activities WITHOUT ACTUALLY BECOMING MEMBERS OF NUSAS AND BEING INDIVIDUALLY ASSOCIATED.
- (4) This form of enrolment is used by all major western National Unions, and is the form favoured by the Executive as it allows for maximum participation and use of benefits, maximum control of the leadership by the students and maximum participation.