Against the Demilitarisation Referendum

Campaign Position: The "No" campaign urges students to vote against the policy "The Students' Union should lobby for the Demilitarisation of the University of Leicester." We believe this policy is misguided, would likely actively harm student interests, and proposes an approach that contradicts the University's values and commitments.

Argument	Core "No" Campaign Position	Supporting Evidence
Student Opportunity	The policy would create fewer opportunities and potential careers support for students in key sectors.[1]	Mandates the SU refuse to work with Careers;[2] targets sectors hiring Cybersecurity [3] & Security Studies graduates.[4]
University Values	It conflicts with the University's founding principle and public commitments.	University is a "living memorial";[5] is a signatory to the Armed Forces[6] Covenant.[7]
Impact	Its confrontational tactics are divisive and risk harming the University's reputation.	Policy requires severing cooperation; ignores lifesaving humanitarian research.[8] Ethical business statement can be had if there are fears of a loss of reputation (when not going through with a complete ban)[9]
Alternatives	Constructive ethical oversight can be more effective than blanket bans.	Advocacy should focus on transparent committees. Some universities focus resources to reassess partnerships and have a ethics community[10], overseeing who we are involved with. [11]

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[1]   https://www.baesystems.com/en/our-company

[2] https://www.leicesterunion.com/voice/referendum/

[3]   https://le.ac.uk/courses/computer-science-with-cyber-security-bsc/2026

[4]   https://le.ac.uk/politics/research/intelligence-security-and-strategic-studies

[5]   https://le.ac.uk/about/history/campus-history/great-war

[6]   https://le.ac.uk/cls/study/armed-forces

[7]

[8]   https://www.gov.uk/armed-forces-covenant-businesses/university-of-leicester

[9] https://www.hw.ac.uk/document-library/professional-services/finance/ethical-business-statement.pdf

[10] https://filelist.tudelft.nl/News/2025/06_June/Moral%20deliberation%20advice%20report%20Israel-Gaza%2023052025%20DEF_31_.pdf

[11] https://www.tudelft.nl/en/2025/tu-delft/new-collaborations-with-israel-suspended-immediately-existing-collaborations-under-reassessment

1. *The policy is likely to harm student opportunities and futures.*

- **Careers:** The policy explicitly mandates that the Student Union should refuse to work with the careers department for any future events. This would dismantle a core service students rely on for graduate employment, putting them in direct opposition to the University's employability. Which is currently at an [impressive high][12]

- It seeks to ban companies that provide crucial graduate opportunities in fields the University specialises in. For example:

    - **Cyber Security**

    - **Security Studies:** Intelligence, Security and Strategic Studies, funded by bodies like the European Research Council, examining critical global security issues.[13]

- A vote for this policy is a vote to close doors on these in-demand career paths.

2. *It Contradicts the University's Founding Principles and Public Commitments*

- The University of Leicester was founded as a living memorial to the losses of the First World War. Its very existence is tied to remembering the cost of conflict and building a better future. We recognise it can't be denied that arms production is linked to wars and fighting, but it is also vital for the protection of a country. This would be incompatible with the university values when erasing all links to national defence and security.

- The University is a proud signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant. This is a public pledge to support serving personnel, veterans, and their families, ensuring they face no disadvantages. The University has pioneered a Higher Education Pathway for Armed Forces (HEPAF)[14] to help service leavers enter healthcare careers. The referendum policy would force the SU to lobby against an institution upholding this promise.

3. *The Proposed Tactics are Confrontational and Counterproductive*

- The policy's primary is to **"refuse to work with"** University departments. This strategy of self-imposed isolation and non-cooperation is likely to create conflict between the SU and the University, damaging the student experience. It abandons constructive advocacy.

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[12] www.uscholars.in/universities/profile/university-of-leicester/opportunities#:~:text=With%20an%20impressive%2095%25%20employability,finance%2C%20engineering%2C%20and%20media.

[13] https://le.ac.uk/politics/research/intelligence-security-and-strategic-studies#:~:text=The%20Intelligence%2C%20Security%20and%20Strategic%20Studies%20(ISSS),of%20scholars%20from%20across%20the%20field%20of

[14] https://le.ac.uk/cls/study/armed-forces

- **Positive Research;** The policy's condemnation fails to distinguish between different types of work. The University's research saves lives globally, such as developing lifesaving medical kits for women in Asia. It also pioneers work on **information security** and **nuclear disarmament**.

4. There Are More Effective and Responsible Alternatives

- Instead of unworkable bans, the SU should lobby for a transparent Ethical Research and Partnerships Committee with student representation. This would allow for scrutiny and influence over university partnerships.

This policy is well-intentioned but is fundamentally flawed.

We urge you to choose **engagement over isolation, pragmatism over symbolism, and student interests over ideological gestures.**

Prepared by the 'No' Campaign Team, Referendum on the Demilitarisation of the University of Leicester.

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