

Daniel Burns for UJS President

Hi, I'm Dan, a third-year student at the University of East Anglia. I am currently the Jsoc president and have also been active in Noam for a number of years. There are currently a number of important issues facing Jewish students and it is the Job of Jsocs, enabled by UJS to tackle these issues and create a safe and vibrant atmosphere for Jewish students on campus. First and foremost is how we define antisemitism, something that has divided both Jewish students and pitted them against their student unions in recent months. As your UJS president, I will work to unify Jewish students on this issue and others that affect us on campus

I would like to address what seems to be the defining issue for Jewish students on campus, definitions of antisemitism. Currently, there are two competing definitions of antisemitism, and the consensus definition, the IHRA, has come under harsh criticism. Whilst it may be the best definition we currently have it is still somewhat flawed. As UJS president I would work closely with students, academics, other Jewish community organisations, and the authors of the IHRA to refine this working document to make it more fit for purpose as a workable and clearly explained definition of antisemitism. Secondly, I will expand the support and funding that UJS provides to smaller Jsocs. Whilst a handful of Jsocs across the country have large memberships and local Jewish communities that can support them, most universities have a very small Jewish community. As UJS president I will make sure that these more isolated Jewish communities have the support and funding they need to create a vibrant Jewish life on campus, source kosher food, and run engaging socials and events throughout the academic year.

Additionally, security is of the utmost concern for Jewish students. As antisemitism rises to a level not seen in decades it is imperative that Jewish students feel safe in what otherwise may be a hostile space. As president, I will increase the already close relationship that UJS and the CST enjoy and make sure that every university and Student Union is offered regular antisemitism training so that in the case of an antisemitic incident Jewish students are able to trust their Universities and student unions to act justly. Furthermore, I will work with CST to provide basic self-defence training to as many Jewish students as possible, regardless of the number of Jewish students on any given campus

Finally, I pledge to greatly expand the interfaith efforts of UJS. It is important to have allies not just within the Jewish communities but also outside of it. Far too often we let fear drive us to be insular and to exist only within our own community. Creating strong relationships with other faith groups allows us to be more at ease on campus. We often have more in common with other faith groups than we realise and there is no reason why Jsocs cannot work closely with them, both to educate about Judaism and to learn about other faiths in order to create a healthy relationship between religious groups.