Give Edinburgh students a voice: integrate voter registration and enrolment

What will we do?
1. Lobby the university to integrate voter registration and enrolment, so that students can choose to submit information via an online form for both matriculation and voter registration
2. Follow the ‘Sheffield Model’ implemented at other institutions and outlined in this document, where the university has an agreement with the council that allows it to collect data for voter registration via its existing online system for matriculation

What is the background?
1. Students register to vote in chronically low numbers; when students do register, they often do not do so at their term-time address
2. The move to individual voter registration in 2014 meant that many students who were previously registered dropped off the electoral register; an estimated 800,000 people in total were lost from the electoral register following the change
3. Chronically low turnout among young people has meant that governments have often failed to act in students’ interests, for example by raising tuition fees
4. Recent elections and referendums have shown a disconnect between the views of students and those of the majority of voters. While students and young people voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU referendum, the national result did not reflect this
5. Voter registration has been integrated with enrolment at other comparable institutions across the country, including the University of Sheffield and University of Birmingham
6. At Birmingham, where this policy has been introduced, 2040 students had registered to vote during enrolment as of 1 September 2016

What beliefs motivate the actions you propose?
1. Students’ voices matter in deciding our future and should be heard. When students vote in lower numbers, it diminishes our influence and our say over how our country is governed
2. The low turnout of young voters in the EU referendum is not a reflection of students and young people caring less, but of a systematic failure to involve young people in the political process
3. Student participation in democracy and the electoral process is a good thing and should be encouraged
4. Integrating voter registration with enrolment will lead to greater numbers of students at the university registering to vote

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures