



Candidates for the role of Humanist Students President-Elect

Please see below for the details of **Candidate 6: Ahmed Abdelmaksoud** standing for the role of Humanist Students President-Elect. Please use the [Voting Form](#) in order to cast your vote. You are only able to vote in this election if you are a student member of Humanists UK. Each member has one vote only.

Candidate 6: Ahmed Abdelmaksoud

Biography: I was born in Egypt and came to the UK to study PPE. I, along with my exec members founded the Essex Humanist Students a year ago. Since then, with the help of Humanist Students, our events have featured renowned speakers, nuanced debate and discussion, and intelligent, open-minded individuals from across the ideological spectrum. We eventually won the New Society of the Year award at our university. This, along with a desire to exact larger scale change to the way discussions about meaning, value, politics, and science are had, motivated me to run for Humanist Students President.

Supporting statement: Coming to the UK gave me the freedom to construct an identity based less on the background or collective to which I belonged, and more on who I was as a unique individual; it was not what I had by accidental dint of birth, but the extent to which I took on the responsibility of developing my virtues and guarding against my vices, that determined my success. This difference made me realize how people could build their lives and societies upon widely disparate sets of values, how each such set would unfold according to its own internal logic, and -- most crucially-- that there would be significant qualitative differences between societies that were built on one set of values and ones built on another. What followed was an observation that many people had made before me, namely: that societies built on enlightenment values were more humane and brought more prosperity to their inhabitants, overall. And, while I did not think this uncontroversial, I did not expect the idea that enlightenment values were worthy of a defense to be so underrepresented on the political left. Worse still was the fact that, when manifest on the right, it was a sentiment unaccompanied by a sufficient level of humility – or even an acknowledgment of the horrors brought about by unscrupulous chauvinism. This state was what prompted me, along with my fellow exec' members, to create the Essex Humanist Students: a society that would come to be centered around the reassertion of enlightenment values and the promotion of scientific literacy, philosophical inquiry, and informed political debate.

Today, a year later, I was inspired to run for the presidency of Humanist Students, partially to continue this revival of enlightenment values, but, foremost, to help develop Humanist Students as a support network for students who believe in using human reason and cooperation to help us all lead better lives. In light of this, I aim to focus my presidency on three points:



Humanist Students

1. Creating a more expansive Humanist Students Network: to begin with, by providing Humanist Students societies with greater opportunity to network with influential speakers, ranging from academics to political figures as well as to meet up and learn from each other. Specifically, we will be holding at least one national event annually, with workshops as well as speaker events on a litany of topics relevant to humanism. Additionally, societies in universities proximate to one another will receive support in planning local socials; this will facilitate greater cohesion in the network by helping newer societies, allow societies to plan bigger events with bigger budgets for the benefit of more students, and add connecting to more people in your local area to the benefits of being a member of Humanist Students Societies.
2. Encouraging a more open celebration of science and scientific literacy by helping societies host more science speakers. With the rise of political polarization and dogma, it is necessary to be armed with science; understanding human nature and the evolutionary roots of tribalism, for example, goes a long way in mitigating the effects of simplistic thinking; this should, increasingly be something Humanist Students work on providing Humanist Students Societies with the opportunity to do.
3. Developing a more serious dialogue about questions of meaning, values, and ethics, in the absence of religion. This, in my view, is the most crucial to the furthering of humanism because, although many people manage fine without religion, others do not do as well, especially if they have had to transition from it. That is often because of the all too human and psychological yearnings for meaning, value, and structure that atheism or rationalism alone cannot satisfy. Instead, humanism must expand to include the development of a conversation about these needs and about the kinds of structures that can help us salvage whatever baby might be in the bath waters of religion.

The fulfillment of these three points will aid Humanist Students societies in their provision of campuses with an alternative to dogmatic discourse, religious or political, which will, in turn, help pave the way for a future in which humans take on the responsibilities of thinking for themselves and figuring out how to treat each other in the one life we know we have.
