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| #AntisocialMedia: students taking back the internet |
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| A briefing for Students’ Unions The internet has transformed education, but social media can threaten our freedom to learn and become a breeding-ground for bullies. It’s time to tackle the trolls. |

**What’s the problem?**

A number of high-profile incidents involving students’ unions officers have increased the need to tackle online bullying and harassment. But this is an issue that affects everyone. Students are often finding that new platforms can target them on campus, with anonymous posts that create a culture of fear and intimidation.

A recent NUS survey showed that almost half of students (48%) agree that internet trolling is getting worse. Online shaming, threats and abuse are now considered a norm within the daily routine of social media posts and messages.

The issue is becoming increasingly widespread. Within political debate and online accountability in particular we’re seeing less interest in persuading or influencing, and more in attacking and abusing those with different views or interests.

We want to ensure that the statistics in primary and secondary education, where bullying and harassment are damaging children’s’ education are not repeated at university or college.

**Consequences of trolling & cyberbullying**

The internet has made it easier to create small communities which encourage group think and a lack of challenge to views or considered facts. But the issue is also extremely personal with bullying and harassment as rife online as in the playground, classroom, lecture hall or workplace. This affects students’ ability to speak up, as well as discouraging an open academic environment.

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Antisocial media affects students’ mental health and wellbeing and is damaging their education. Antisocial media can also seriously impact upon students’ futures; pics and posts on Facebook or Twitter today could seriously affect your employability and career tomorrow.

**What can we do about it?**

As leaders on campus, students’ union officers must encourage a more open and respectful debate and environment, clamping down on hate speech and calling out abuse and intimidation.

NUS’ #AntisocialMedia campaign will challenge the abuse that is too often directed at students’ union and NUS officers, as well as ‘ordinary’ students.

Cyberbullying is rapidly becoming commonplace on our campuses. And where elected officers are concerned, people often deliberately attempt to blur the lines between accountability and abuse.

We want all students to feel free to learn and to challenge without fearing for their safety, or being shut out of debate. We also want students to understand that the world of online also impacts offline in the ‘real’ world.

The campaign aims to:

* Raise awareness of the issue of bullying and harassment and its effects on education, attainment health and academic discourse
* Provide support and resources for students’ unions and student union officers
* Support NUS’ defence of free speech and academic freedom and re-imagine longer term how social media and the internet has changed education and has empowered students

**How can SUs get involved?**

**Take part in the #Antisocialmedia summit, Monday 7 March**

For more info see [here](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/winning-for-students/campaigns/antisocialmedia) and to book your place please contact campaigns@nus.org.uk

**Case studies**

Have you been the target of trolls/ online abuse? Has fear of trolling prevented students at your SU from running in elections? We are looking for case studies of student officers/ students who have experienced online abuse. Please contact [campaigns@nus.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@nus.org.uk) if you are willing to share your story.

**Let us know what you need**

We want to take a collaborative approach to the resources we produce. In order to make them as useful for you as possible we need to know what you want – so please let us know!

**Resources**

**Social Media Charter**

Download the model social media charter for Students’ Unions [here](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/strong-students-unions/resources/social-media-policy--2).

***Further resources for SUs and students will be available over the coming weeks***

**Further reading**

* Megan Dunn’s [Huffington Post article](http://nus-email.org.uk/In/106128346/0/UfUb4lJZXjSdv2oQ5YDL8F4tvGlpSNZ56NZdY8tlP5F/) about challenging abuse that officers face
* Megan Dunn’s [Sunday Times article](http://nus-email.org.uk/In/106128347/0/UfUb4lJZXjSdv2oQ5YDL8F4tvGlpSNZ56NZdY8tlP5F/) on why we must end online abuse

For further information please contact [campaigns@nus.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@nus.org.uk) Tweet @nusuk/ @nusconnect