

5 Starting up an FE SU: Campaigns

The process and activity that people take to attempt to make change. It's really easy to think of campaigning as big and scary – but in actual fact we all do some form of campaigning everyday of our lives. Asking a friend if you can have pizza instead of pasta for dinner is as much a campaign as organising a demonstration of hundreds of thousands of people is.

Why you should do this

Campaigning in a SU also encompasses a wide variety of activities. Campaigning makes students feel connected with their education, empowers the voices of students, and leads to positive change. As a students' union you will attract students to your door who will explain why they're annoyed about something and how they want to make it better. The students' union's role should be to give support, resources, and guidance on that student's journey towards making that change. Campaigns that are ran by students are also massively important to education institutions decision making. By definition students view their institution from a different perspective to that of the usual decision makers – decisions are more likely to be sustainable and good decisions if the views of as many stakeholders as possible are considered along the way.

Key partners

- Students
- [NUS UK](#)
- [NUS Charity](#)

How to campaign

- **What do we want to change?** - Start with an idea of something that students would like to change
- **Think about the why** – Research the campaign to build an understanding of the issue. Think about the impact the change would make; where the power to change sits; and how best to influence the decision maker.
- **Stakeholder mapping** - Map out who the key people in the campaign will be – both internal and external to the campaign. Find out who your allies are and how they might be able to help you achieve your campaign goal.
- **Make an action plan** - Devise an action plan for the activity of your campaign. The most important part here is to work out what activity is most likely to give you a positive result. The most common type of campaign failure is when campaigns take action that make a positive outcome less likely. For example, if a college principal can be convinced to make a change in a meeting, it is probably not a good idea to organise a demonstration outside of their office.

- **Messaging** - It is vital that you consider what your strongest argument for change is from the perspective of the person making the change. Asking a governing board to back a change because it will improve student retention is a stronger argument than asking them to back a change because it will make timetables more complicated. Consider the goals of those who hold the power to make the change.
- **Pull it all together** - Put together all this work into a campaigns plan and go about working towards the change you want to make. Set clear deadlines and utilise your resources.
- **Review** – look at your progress at each stage and don't be afraid to change your plan based on new information.

Next steps

- Create a set of materials that facilitate students running their own successful campaigns
- Join the [FE Staff group on NUS Workplace](#) to chat about good practice and ask questions from similar SUs across the UK. There's also a [campaigning staff](#) group too.
- Look at the possibility of getting more in-depth campaigns training (ask [NUS Charity](#) about this)

Useful Resources

- [NUS Campaign Hub](#)
- [NUS Connect campaigns tools](#)
- [How to lobby your MP guide](#)