

Being a Women's Officer

Handbook 2014–15

'Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.'

- Maya Angelou

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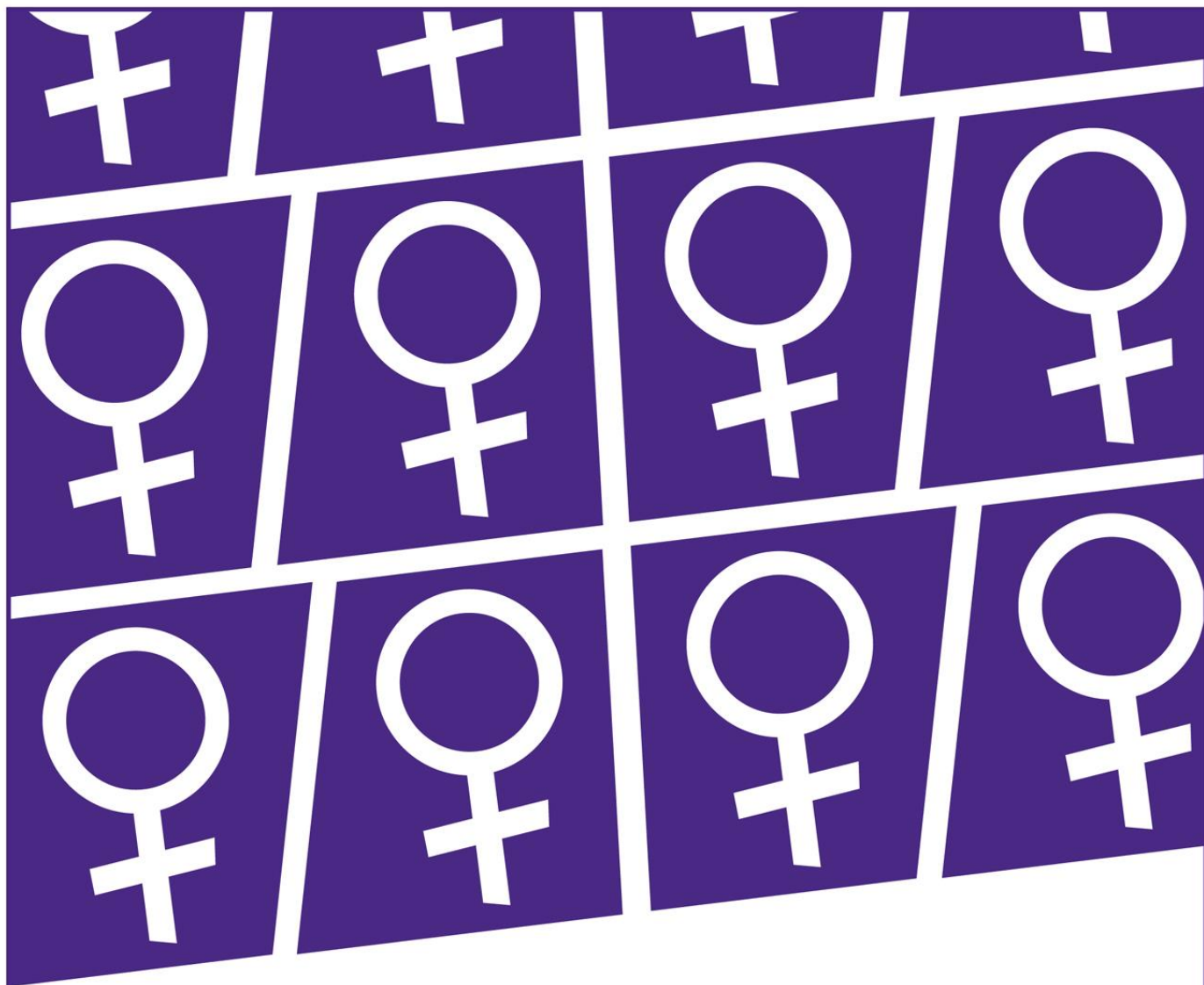
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Section one

NUS Women's Campaign

Introduction by the National Women's Officer

Hello and welcome to NUS Women's Campaign 2014–15. My name is Susuana, your new National Women's Officer and I'm really excited to welcome you to the campaign this year. This newly edited handbook aims to provide up-to-date information about how the Women's Campaign works, our aims for the year, how to get involved and how to start and maintain a strong and inclusive Women's Campaign on your campus. This year, the committee and I are really looking forward to driving the campaign in a more actively intersectional direction and promoting more collective and effective change, by providing the resources and networks to create and strengthen women's officers, groups and communities to fight sexism in all its forms.

NUS Women's Campaign priority campaigns this year will be **Tackling Lad Culture**, which will involve supporting students' unions in higher education (HE) to effectively implement the new Lad Culture strategy in HE and develop creative campaigning resources to tackle sexual harassment on campuses. These resources will range from consent workshops and staff training programmes to model zero tolerance policy and procedures. We will also be researching sexism in further education. We are also launching the new **Student Women's Activist Network**, which involves creating student women's regional groups and facilitators and regional women's officer and activists' training days. The network aims to help women students to build and share their skills as activists and conveners, identify and deal with issues that affect women on their campuses and also organise collectively.

Improving access to education and supporting student carers is another of our key priorities. The **Fair to Care** campaign aims to secure funding for student carers in institutions and work with Carers Trust to provide information to improve campus support systems for student carers and support the new Student Parents' and Carers' Conference. NUS Women's Conference this year also passed policy to prioritise work with sex workers' rights organisations to research the needs of **Student Sex Workers** for future projects.

We will also be running lots of exciting projects and events with other NUS liberation campaigns and organisations, including the Black Women in Academia Conference, pro-choice activist days and intersectional campaigning workshops. I really hope you will get involved in these.

Remember, the whole Women's Committee and I work for you! So if you need any help throughout the year or want us to visit your campus, you can always contact me at Susuana.antubam@nus.org.uk. I'm really looking forward to see what great things we can achieve as a movement this year.

Wishing you the best!

Susuana Antubam
National Women's Officer

NUS and the Women's Campaign

NUS Women's Campaign is one of the four autonomous liberation campaigns within NUS; the others being the Black Students' Campaign, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Campaign and the Disabled Students' Campaign. What these campaigns have in common is that they all seek to represent and empower individuals who experience disadvantage and oppression, in terms of status and opportunity, because they belong to — or are perceived as belonging to — a particular social group.

Having a national Women's Campaign for students facilitates collective action between colleges, universities and outside organisations. Collective action has much more impact on national politics and the media than action isolated in certain cities or regions. When many of the problems we face are spread across the country, we can all work together to make big changes.

Our Women's Conference, as well as events held throughout the year, helps members of the student women's movement to come together from across the country to share ideas and meet new people. Affiliation with NUS is also beneficial as it facilitates work between different campaigns. This helps strive to be an inclusive campaign as well as benefit from each other's specialist knowledge to solve problems.

As an autonomous campaign, NUS Women's Campaign has its own conference that only people self-defining as women can attend. This conference elects the National Women's Officer and decides campaign policy for the year ahead. The National Women's Officer and the Women's Committee (also elected at Women's Conference) then prioritise this policy. This year, policy that was passed included:

- asserting a Woman's right to protest
- confronting lad culture
- anti-FGM (female genital mutilation)
- improving the lives of student sex workers
- campaigning on behalf of student carers
- tackling lad culture and sexism in further education

At Women's Conference, Susuana Antubam was elected National Women's Officer by women students from all around the country. Susuana sits on NUS National Executive Council (NEC) and works to ensure that women's perspective is reflected throughout all NUS work. Susuana is joined in that role by Rochelle Owusu-Antwi, who was elected as the Second Women's Campaign Rep on the NEC. Susuana works full time as National Women's Officer to meet conference policy and co-ordinate the work of the Women's Committee. She also chairs the Women's Committee when it meets.

NUS Women's Committee

NUS Women's Committee is elected at NUS Women's Conference and meets regularly throughout the year. Committee members are held accountable through the Women's Campaign Report and via individual caucuses, which take reports from relevant representatives.

The National Women's Officer and Women's Committee prioritise NUS Women's Campaign policy, support and promote the NUS Women's Campaign, and provide advice and support for women's officers and women's groups.

NEC members who self-define as women may also sit on the Women's Committee as observers, meaning that they can contribute to discussions but cannot vote.

NUS Women's Committee for 2014–15

National Women's Officer (and committee chair): Susuana Antubam

Second NEC Rep: Rochelle Owusu-Antwi

Open Place Reps: Nana Gyasi, Beth Sutton, Lauren Steele, Bola Tajudeen

Bisexual Women's Rep: Bethan Bishop

Lesbian Women's Rep: Sammi Whitaker

Women with Caring Responsibilities Rep: Barbara Ntumy

Disabled Women's Rep: Bahar Mustafa

Black Women's Rep: Saphra Ross

Trans Women's Rep: Anna Lee

NUS Scotland Women's Officer: Vonnie Sandlan

NUS Wales Women's Officer: Rosie Inman

Further Education Rep: Shakira Martin

NEC members who self-define as women can also attend committee meetings as observers.

We also have a **Black women's sub-committee**, elected by the Black women's caucus at NUS Women's Conference. The 2014–15 sub-committee is:

- Noorulann Shahid
- Shaki Obadina
- Amy Washington
- Nana Lee Gyasi

If you wish to contact any of the Women's Committee members, please do so via the NUS Women's Campaign and we will pass on the message.

"That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man — when I could get it — and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne 13 children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?"

Sojourner Truth (1797–1883, Women's Rights and African-American Rights Pioneer, born to second-generation slaves working for a landowner in Ulster County, New York) speaking in 1851 at the Women's Convention, Akron, Ohio

The nations

NUS Scotland Women's Officer, Vonnie Sandlan

This year, the Women's Campaign in Scotland has set an ambitious plan of work and I'm excited to work with the outstanding women in our movement to achieve our goals.

This year at NUS Scotland Women's Campaign, our priorities include fighting for more comprehensive, easily accessible and reliable childcare funding for student parents returning to education, with a focus on those studying at further education level. We also want to challenge the white male hegemony in our institutions and lobby the Government to take legislative action on quotas for fair representation on the boards of colleges and universities. We also aim to strengthen the women's movement in Scotland by developing a support network for women leaders-in-waiting and running a 'feminism 101' campaign.

Currently, there are disappointing outcomes for women who study (science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)-related subjects, therefore we want to work with organisations like Interconnect and the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) to improve the lives of women in the STEM sectors.

NUS Scotland Women's Campaign also stands in solidarity with student sex workers, and this year we aim to work with organisations such as ScotPep and SWOU (Sex Worker Open University) to inform our narrative.

To find out more about the NUS Scotland Women's Campaign, get in touch — email me at vonniesandlan@nus-scotland.org.uk

NUS Wales Women's Officer, Rosie Inman

This year in Wales, we are reaching the third and final year of the Student Sex Work Project. The project aims to promote a greater understanding of the needs of, and issues surrounding, students in sex work and develop tangible solutions to the problems they face. This includes work on sexual health, physical and mental well-being, and combating violence. We will be working to provide guidance for students' unions on what they can do for sex workers at their institutions, as well as lobbying the Welsh Government for better rights and services for sex workers.

We also have the opportunity to contribute to the Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill, which aims to focus on the prevention of these issues, the protection of victims and support for those affected by violence against women. This will include work around issues such as greater access to services for women students in rural areas and forms of violence against women that often are insufficiently discussed, including FGM, trafficking and forced marriage.

Other areas of work will include topics such as: tackling lad culture and zero tolerance; sexual consent and healthy relationships education in the curriculum review; and childcare in further education.

If you would like to get involved or hear more about the work of the NUS Wales Women's Campaign, please feel free to email me on Rosie.Inman@nus-wales.org.uk and join the NUS Wales Women's Campaign group at facebook.com/NUSWalesWomen

"Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression ... I liked this definition because it did not imply that men were the enemy."

bell hooks, Professor of English at City College, New York, 2000

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."

– Audre Lorde

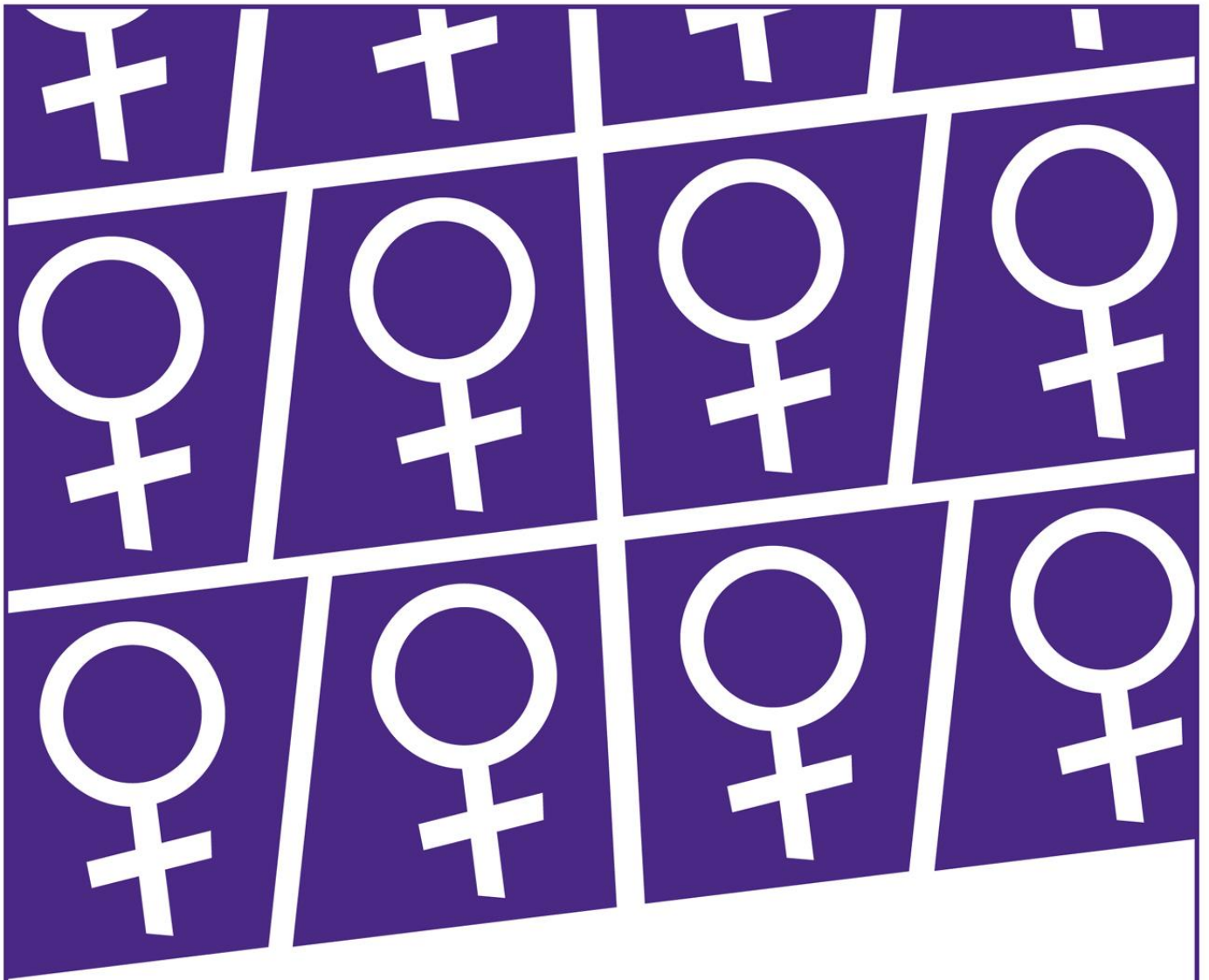
NUS – USI Women's Officer, Ellie Drake

Alongside studying for my degree at Queen's University I have actively campaigned for furthering women's equality, in particular relation to a Northern Irish context.

Reproductive justice is a crucial issue for all women in both the North and South of Ireland and I will be continuing the pro-choice campaign set up by my predecessor. By working closely with organisations such as Alliance For Choice and Abortion Support Network the NI Women's Campaign will work towards mobilising the pro-choice movement and members of the Northern Irish Assembly in order to gain equal reproductive rights for women, similar to those in Scotland, England and Wales.

My key priorities for the year are about making Student Union's across Northern Ireland safe and more inclusive spaces for all of its students. By collaborating closely with *Hollaback!* Belfast, I will be delivering information and training sessions to newly elected Union Sabbatical Officers across NI about street harassment and what they can do to prevent it. By the end of the year we aim to have set up *Hollaback!* Facilitators in SU's so that people who have suffered from street harassment know that there is support for them in their own Union.

The Women's Campaign for self-identifying women in Northern Ireland is expanding. Through the work that myself and the NUS-USI Women's Committee will be doing we want to aid this expansion and for Women students to know that there is a welcoming and comfortable space for them within NUS-USI and the broader student movement. I will be travelling around Student Unions, reaching out to women who may not have heard of the Women's Campaign before and encouraging them to join us and be a part of the wider change that both NUS and NUS-USI Women's Campaigns are fighting for; ultimately creating a larger and more intersectional movement for Women in Northern Ireland.



Section two

Women's representation

Women in society — key facts and statistics

Women and education

- Some 59 per cent of graduates are women.
- Only 20 per cent of university professors and 14 per cent of vice-chancellors are women.
- Women represent 71.3 per cent of primary school heads, but only 38.4 per cent of secondary school heads.

Women and work

- The average gender pay gap in the UK is 20 per cent — and 10 per cent among full-time workers.
- In 2013, the gender pay gap increased for the first time since 2008, after five years of stabilisation.
- Two out of three people on the minimum wage are women.
- Only 22 per cent of chief executives and senior public officials are women.
- Just 11 per cent of UK bank CEOs are women.

Violence against women

- One in seven women has experienced a serious physical or sexual assault during their time as a student.
- Some 68 per cent of women students have experienced some kind of verbal or non-verbal harassment in and around their current educational institution.
- More than one in 10 women have been the victim of serious physical violence.
- Around 1.2 million women have suffered domestic abuse.

Lad culture

- NUS Lad Culture & Sexism survey August-September 2014 showed that a quarter of students have experienced unwelcome sexual advances. Women are significantly more likely than men to say they have experienced it.
- Almost one third have had overtly sexual conversations directed at them which make them uncomfortable
- More than a quarter endure unwanted sexual comments about their body
- The same amount have suffered unwelcome sexual advances inappropriate touching and groping
- Two thirds say that they have seen fellow students experience, sexual comments and overtly sexual conversations
- Just under one third (30%) cite verbal harassment
- Almost two thirds said they heard rape /sexual assault jokes on campuses

- Three quarters of students are aware of online communities such as 'unilad' and 'lads bible', with over half agreeing that these contribute towards an unfair representation of women
- More than one third of respondents were aware of promotional materials around university that have sexualised images of women, with over two in five individuals agreeing that they images make them feel uncomfortable

Women and caring responsibilities

- Some 92 per cent of lone parents are women refugees, women's centres.
- Among providers of unpaid care, 60 per cent are women.
- Only 36 per cent of student carers feel able to balance commitments such as work, study and family or relationships.
- More than half of student carers have seriously considered leaving their course.

Women's reproductive rights

- In 2011, the total number of abortions in England and Wales was 189,931.
- The average abortion rate is 17.5 per cent per 1,000 residents in England and Wales, and 15 per cent among residents under 18.
- In 2006–07, three-quarters (76 per cent) of women aged 16–49 in Great Britain used at least one form of contraception.
- Across the UK, it is estimated that 66,000 women live with the consequences of FGM.

Women in Parliament

- Women represent 22.6 per cent of MPs in the House of Commons, and 23.4 per cent of members of the House of Lords.
- The UK was ranked 65 out of 189 countries for women's representation in Parliament.
- Out of 22 UK cabinet ministers, just four are women.
- Only 16 per cent of Conservative MPs, 32 per cent of Labour, 12 per cent of Liberal Democrat MPs are women.

"I call myself a feminist when people ask me if I am, and of course I am 'cause it's about equality, so I hope everyone is. You know you're working in a patriarchal society when the word feminist has a weird connotation."

- Ellen Page, Actor

Model motions for women's officers

This union notes:

- Nationally, women are vastly under-represented in students unions. Women make up 56.4 per cent of HE students, 55.3 per cent of postgraduates, 64 per cent of undergraduates and 46 per cent of further education students. However, 45 per cent of student officers are women and only 38 per cent of student presidents are women.
- An NUS survey found that one in seven female students has been the victim of a serious sexual or physical assault during their time as a student — 12 per cent had been stalked and 16 per cent had experienced unwanted kissing touching or molesting. Only 10 per cent of women victims of serious assault reported it to the police, mostly because the victim was ashamed or embarrassed.
- Women take on average five years longer than men to pay off their student loans.
- The gender pay gap has increased and the difference between men's and women's mean hourly pay has risen to 15.7 per cent. Women now earn an average gross full-time salary of £23,100 — £5,600 less than their male counterparts.

This union believes:

- That women students suffer from sexism within the education system and within society.
- That this union should be proactive in combating the discrimination that women students face during education and in the community.
- Women should lead the way in fighting their own oppression and representing their experiences.
- In order to redress and campaign against these political, economic and social imbalances, this union should create a position of Women's Officer on the Students' Union Executive Committee — elected by, and for, women.
- In addition to being a full voting member of the Students' Union Executive Committee, this officer shall be responsible for campaigning on issues related to the NUS Women's Campaign and raising awareness of the discrimination that women students face.
- To support the Women's Officer in her work, the union should also create a Women's Group and provide it with the space to organise and campaign on issues prioritised by the group's members.

This union resolves:

- To create the position of Women's Officer as a full-voting member of the Students' Union Executive Committee and to provide her with a campaigning budget.
- That the Women's Officer will be elected by those members of the students' union who self-identify as women.
- That only self-identified women may stand for the post of Women's Officer.
- To create an autonomous Women's Group, convened by the Women's Officer, that shall operate under a constitution decided democratically by the group's members, in keeping with the ethos of the union and its ends and objectives.
- To amend the constitution accordingly.



Section three

Women's campaigns in
your students' union

Creating a women's group

This section looks at what women's groups are and how to set one up. As a women's officer, you may have responsibility in your official capacity to run a women's group. This may be laid down clearly in a job description. If not, you may have to decide what your role is.

If no one else in your college or university is willing to get a group off the ground, then the first steps are yours. You will have to decide how to start it and, once it has started, what involvement you have. This role might evolve naturally, but it is helpful if you have a good idea of how you would like the group to be run. You may remain the main organiser, or this might fall to a 'committee' within the group. Whatever happens, it is essential that you remain involved in the women's group. You are the link between the women's group and the students' union and NUS.

What is a women's group?

A women's group is an opportunity for women to get together and campaign to improve the lives, and education, of the women students at your college or university.

If possible, organise a mix of events in your women's group as this will get more people involved. Some may be interested in campaigning, others in learning more about women's issues, while others may join the group to meet new friends.

At the start of term, many women's groups organise an informal meeting for those interested, which gives women the chance to see what the group is about. At the first meeting, you could get women to fill in a questionnaire about what they want from their women's group. This could help you plan events for the future.

It is critically important that you create an inclusive and accessible space for all self-identifying women. You can find out about the importance of inclusive spaces and how to create them in this guide.

If you would like help planning the first meeting, contact the Women's Campaign at NUS as we can help you find speakers, suggest topics and even come to speak on your campus.

There are no hard and fast rules about what a women's group should do, as the activities can vary depending on what group members want. In the past, women's groups have organised events such as:

- **Discussions** on a topical subject, such as pro-choice issues, violence against women, the rights of student carers or anonymous marking.
- **Inviting guest speakers** to talk on an issue. Why not invite the National Women's Officer to speak at your women's group? In the useful

links section of this handbook there is a list of organisations, some of which may be able to send speakers to your group.

- **Campaigning workshops** on topics affecting women locally and nationally, including ending the gender pay gap, improvements to childcare facilities and support for student carers.
- **Training sessions** on topics such as self-defence, assertiveness and self-esteem.

Mark internationally recognised days, such as International Women's Day (8 March). You can also celebrate women from different liberation groups around their allocated dates, such as Black History Month (October) and LGBT History Month (February).

Top 10 tips for setting up a women's group

1. Decide the overall aims of the group

Write these down so you are clear yourself and can show others if required. These are helpful for you to refer back to. Be clear of your level of participation within the group. Check your women's officer job description — if you do not have one already then you could write it and submit it to your students' union executive committee or annual general meeting. This will lay out your responsibility to the group.

2. Decide on a title for the group, if you would prefer an alternative to 'women's group'

Perhaps an intriguing title such as 'The 51% Group' (the percentage of UK society that is female) could grab attention? But remember to clearly explain what the group is in your advertisements, and that it is women-only, or the title will just confuse rather than intrigue.

3. Find out the rules and regulations for clubs and societies in your union

For example, there are usually rules governing what groups can and cannot spend their money on. It is good to be aware of these in advance, rather than getting tripped up by them at a later stage.

4. Find a suitable venue

If you have a union building, there may be a room there you can use. If not, you may be able to book a classroom in the college or university for your meetings. It is worth considering whether your meeting venue is accessible to all women. For example, is it accessible to wheelchair users? Are there toilet facilities suitable for wheelchair users nearby?

5. Decide on a suitable time

Finding a time that suits everyone is next to impossible, but try to maximise the number of people who can attend. Is there a time of the week when most women are not in classes, eg Wednesday afternoons? Remember that it may not suit women with dependants to hold an evening meeting. You could get

group members to suggest what time suits them best, or vary times of events to give more women the chance to come along to meetings. Why not do a survey at your first meeting and on your website (if you have one) to find out which times suit the most women?

6. Make your group a safe space that makes all women feel included

Think about what steps you can take to ensure that your women's group is accessible to all women, and to make sure that everyone feels it is a comfortable environment in which to socialise and exchange ideas. At the first meeting, perhaps the group could agree on some ground rules to stick to and refer back to in future meetings?

Is there a particular group of women students that does not get involved in the women's group, such as Black students, mature students, international students, disabled students or lesbian and bisexual women? It may be worth talking to your LGBT society, Black students' group, disabled students' officer, and so on, to find out ways to make your group more open and accessible and encourage more women to attend.

Although as women we are at a disadvantage, this does not negate the fact that most of us have some sort of privilege — which needs to be acknowledged and checked regularly. If you have a committee, you may want to look at creating reserved spaces for Black, LGBT or disabled women etc to help increase the representation and involvement of women from these groups in your campaigns.

7. Letting women know about the group

Get the message out to your students through:

- **Word of mouth:** Publicise your success stories and those of other women's groups. Use people who have been, or are, involved and get them to tell others about what they have achieved.
- **Posters:** Order NUS Women's Campaign posters and fill in your local details in the box at the bottom, or produce your own posters. Try putting posters in unusual places — in toilets, on floors, in stairwells, etc — unless your institution prohibits posters except on noticeboards. Be creative — use teaser campaigns, posters with unusual messages or very little writing.
- **Use different media:** eg plastic bags, flyers, pens or T-shirts (depending on your budget).
- **Set up a stall:** This is a proactive way of getting your message across — students can question women on the stall and can receive information specific to their situation. Remember that music, freebies, sweets and leaflets make stalls more attractive to passers-by.
- **Newsletters:** If your students' union has a newspaper, newsletter or magazine you could write an article about the group or use this publication to advertise your meetings.

- **Prospectus/student handbook:** Try to put a page in the college or university prospectus, so that prospective female students know about the women's group before they start their course. Your students' union may produce its own student handbook and you may be able to have an article printed in that as well.
- **Email:** Will the IT department or registry let you send a mass email to all students? You could also add details of the women's group to your personal email autosignature.
- **Website:** If your students' union has a website, you could put details of the women's group on the site — websites are easy to update and so are a good way of keeping people informed of your activities.

8. Incentives

If you are holding an event, meeting or workshop, try to offer free food and drink: these are close to most students' hearts! Think carefully when organising an event with food and drink, though, as some women may be put off the event if it is based around alcohol, for example for religious reasons. If possible, offer non-alcoholic alternatives and do not always offer alcohol. Try to find out if any of your group's members have special dietary requirements and cater for these so that everyone can join in.

9. Use NUS Women's Campaign

- Contact us to ask for advice or just to run an idea past us.
- Tap into one of our national campaigns and use our resources to campaign locally.
- Use the contact information at the back of this handbook and on our website to make links with like-minded external organisations.

10. Evaluate your progress

Examine your own aims and objectives: What could you do to improve the meeting? What was good about it, and what did not meet your expectations? By relating this back to your original aims and objectives, you can adapt your approach to improve the effectiveness of your women's group.

Look at feedback: If you got meeting attendants to fill out questionnaires, have a look at what they suggest and what they want from future meetings. This will help you to ensure that the group meets the needs and expectations of its members.

Campaigning for women in your union

A campaign is a series of actions that aim to do one or more of the following:

- change attitudes, eg challenging the notion that feminism is about hating men and that sexism is acceptable
- change behaviour, eg encouraging women to feel confident, well-informed and empowered in choosing and using contraception and practising safer sex
- change legislation, eg lobbying for a change to legislation governing immigrant women's access to refuges
- change services, eg pressing your local Primary Health Care Trust (England), Local Health Board (Wales), Health Board (Scotland) or Area Board (Northern Ireland) to improve and extend abortion provision and services
- change something that people feel is wrong: eg working to close the gender pay gap and get the union and college or university to carry out gender pay audits
- protecting current provisions and services: eg protesting against the closure of childcare facilities on campus

Campaigns can take the form of protests, lobbying local or state officials, petitions, awareness-raising and much more. Campaigns are only limited by your imagination.

As a women's officer, there is plenty of campaigning work you can do, whether that is linking up with a national campaign or campaigning on a local issue. Here are some top tips for you to consider when preparing and running your campaigns.

Top 10 campaigning tips

1. Decide what you want to achieve

You may have a lot of goals for the coming year, and it's great to try to make many changes. However, for each campaign you plan, it's good to decide:

- What is the most important thing you want to achieve?
- Is your campaign going to be local or part of a national campaign?
- Do you want to raise awareness of a particular issue?
- Do you want to change attitudes?
- Do you want to influence decision-makers?
- How will you know when you have achieved your aims?
- Who do you want to involve in your campaign?

2. Do your research

How can you successfully persuade others that an issue is important if you are not clear on the facts yourself?

- Ask NUS for help — make the most of the work done by the NUS Social Policy Team does.
- Have a look at the information and links on our websites: www.nus.org.uk/women and www.nusconnect.org.uk/women
- Look at the useful links section at the back of this handbook and use the expertise of external organisations.
- Do some research of your own — find out about the issues first-hand from talking to your female students. Find out about their experiences as women. Design a questionnaire and/or hold (minuted) discussion forums.
- Be quantitative in your research if possible — what per cent of women students are affected by key issues or have experienced a certain problem? These help your arguments when influencing decision-makers or raising awareness among students, and help you to measure your campaign's success in effecting change.

3. Decide on your key messages

Your key messages should exist to engage potential supporters and targets, making it clear what you want to achieve.

- What does the audience for your campaign care about? Decide which angle is most likely to appeal to your target audience and think of ways of communicating this.
- Draw on key facts from your research.
- Look to national campaigns for examples of key messages. For example, the key message from NUS' *Pro-choice and proud of it!* campaign was, "NUS Women's Campaign believes that women should be the key decision-makers when it comes to their own bodies and that their decisions should be respected".

4. Make your objectives SMART

From your research and key messages, develop a strategy that will help you achieve your overall aim. This will involve smaller steps (objectives) that should be SMART:

- **specific** — make them as clear as possible
- **measurable** — set indicators so you know how successful you have been
- **achievable** — set realistic objectives

- **resourced** — take account of your resources (money, materials, people to help out, etc)
- **timely** — set deadlines and stick to them! Think about externally-imposed timescales you need to take note of, eg college term times or parliamentary timetables

5. Put together a campaigns team

Set up a campaigns team to manage the campaign and assign clear roles to each member.

6. Communicate — get your message out

What are the most effective media in your institution — postcards, posters, leaflets, flyers, messages on the web, beer mats, badges, emails, T-shirts, stalls, stickers, letters, events, press releases, articles, displays or stunts?

- Think about how to make your campaign materials striking enough to grab attention, and provocative enough to spark debate without causing offence.
- Use NUS Women's Campaign posters and personalise them in the blank 'local details' section.
- Do you have a union website? Could you link up to the NUS site?
- Who are the key people you want to hear your message? Adjust your key messages for different target audiences.
- Which decision-maker do you need to write to or set up a meeting with?

7. Take action in the media

Do you have a student newspaper? Can you offer a ready-made article and graphics on your campaign issue, in case they need something at the last minute?

Get your campaign into the local press! Would your free or regional paper be interested in stirring up local discussion about your campaign? You could ask the NUS National Women's Officer for a quote. You could also see if you can get a supportive quote from the college, your local MP, MSP or Assembly Member.

8. Reach out

If you have a women's group in your union, are you involving its members? Or does a women's group need to be set up in your institution in order to campaign on women's issues?

- Can you join forces with other unions in your area that are interested in campaigning on the same issues? Have a look in the NUS Directory at www.nusconnect.org.uk for the contact details of other local unions.

- Would a local, external women's group or organisation be interested in joining forces with you (for example, a local Rape Crisis centre or refuge)?
- Think about other people in your community who could get involved, eg lecturers, alumni, schools, teachers, community groups, police or dignitaries.

9. Use NUS Women's Campaign

Remember that we are here to assist and support you in your work as a women's officer. Contact us or consult the website if you want to know more about:

- our national campaigns
- the materials we produce
- where to find information on women's issues
- women's organisations we have contacts with
- other students' unions campaigning on the same issues as you
- how to run an idea past us or share a success story

10. Evaluate your campaign

There are three main ways of evaluating:

- **Process** (did you carry out the tasks you set yourself well?).
- **Member satisfaction** (did women on campus like the campaign and perceive it positively?).
- **Impact** (did you make actual change?).

Look back at your original aims — have you achieved them, is there more work to do in a follow-up campaign?

Discuss with your campaign team how you think the campaign has gone. What could you do differently next time, and what would you do again?

Could you conduct an opinion poll in your union newspaper, by letter, email alerts or on your web page to see if people have seen your campaign and what they thought of it?

Evaluating your campaign as it develops will allow you to alter and modify aspects of the campaign in light of your successes and/or setbacks.

Building an intersectional campaign

In this section we explore how different aspects of women's identities can affect their experiences, both of education and in the wider world. How these different aspects of identity interact within society is called 'intersectionality'. In short, intersectionality is a way to understand oppression differently than simply as a hierarchical woman/man, black/white divide. Different oppressions intersect with one another to form unique experiences of identity. For example, lesbian women experience gender discrimination differently from straight women, as discussed below.

Below are some of the major identities that you should be mindful of, and some ideas and suggestions for ways to ensure that women of all backgrounds can take part in activities you run at your union, whether that is campaigning, social events or your women's group. For further information, see NUS' *Intersectionality 101* guide.

Trans women

Women's groups and women's officers have much to gain from engaging with trans issues. Both sexism and transphobia are rooted in outdated, misogynist models of binary gender, and conformity to fixed social gender roles. Trans people are often keen to be involved in women's campaigns, but due to past conflict within the feminist movement they may be unsure of how welcome they will be.

A trans person may expect to experience discrimination and harassment in every part of their lives. Although many trans people are increasingly protected by law, there is a long way to go in terms of everyday attitudes and media (mis)representation.

There are a number of actions you can take to ensure that trans people are fully included in your group and/or campaign.

Firstly, always respect the stated gender identity of any trans individual. This identity may be relatively straightforward (eg a trans woman who was assigned a male gender at birth, but has a female identity) or may be more complicated. The NUS Women's Campaign is open to all who self-define as women, including (if they wish) those with complex gender identities that include 'woman' and those who experience oppression as women. The NUS Women's Campaign affirms that self-definition is at the sole discretion of the individual in question.

Secondly, make it clear within your advertising that trans people are welcome. For example, if you are having a woman-only event, state that it is "inclusive of trans women" or for "self-identified women". Many events that describe themselves as "for all women" actually exclude trans women.

Finally, consult trans people within your group or contact the Trans Rep in the Women's Committee about issues that affect trans people. If there are no trans people within your group, try contacting your institution's LGBT society, the NUS Women's Campaign Trans Rep or the NUS LGBT Campaign.

Key resources:

Under Construction: Trans Students, NUS

New guidance on trans equality in post-school education, The Forum on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Post-School Education

Lesbian, bisexual and trans women students' experiences of violence, NUS

www.nusconnect.org.uk/lgbt

Lesbian, gay and bisexual women

Research carried out by ECU suggests that LGB women students may face discrimination from their lecturers or homophobic bullying from their peers or flatmates.

NUS research has shown that LGB women can face same-sex violence while they are students, but may be less likely to access help because of the assumption that domestic violence is always male-on-female and the way in which services are catered to that dynamic. Many LGB women also encounter problems accessing healthcare. For example, LGB women are often refused smear tests because it is something that has traditionally been offered to people having heterosexual sex. And fewer than half of LGB women students have ever been screened for sexually transmitted infections, partly because one in five has been told they are not at risk.

Students' union events are often focused on heterosexual relationships (eg Valentine parties or 'traffic light' nights). It is important to try and influence the way in which these kinds of events are marketed to ensure that LGB women feel included in their union.

One of the best ways to get in touch with LGB women at your institution is to contact your students' union LGBT group, if you have one, and by working with your LGBT officer. Ask the LGBT officer or president to invite women members of the society to your group, or to contribute ideas for women's campaigns and representation in your union. These kinds of relationships can really help to make your job easier and ensure that you make the most of your limited resources.

NUS LGBT Campaign provides resources to help you campaign for inclusive services for LGBT students, including healthcare.

Key resources:

LGBT Students' Handbook, NUS

LGBT Healthcare Manifesto, NUS

Lesbian, bisexual and trans women students' experiences of violence, NUS

Prescription for Change, Stonewall

Experiences of LGBT staff and students in higher education, ECU

Advancing LGB equality, ECU

www.nusconnect.org.uk/lgbt

Disabled women

Another group who can face a range of barriers to participating and succeeding in education, and who may need specific representation, are disabled women.

Disabled students may face issues in a number of different areas while at university or college. They may not be provided with lecture materials in the format they need, they may experience problems with the suitability of their accommodation, or they may simply be unable to socialise with their peers in accessible bars and nightclubs.

NUS believes in the social model of disability. This is the belief that disability is caused by barriers and discrimination, not individual impairments. If these barriers were removed, such as by making access adjustments, that person can become non-disabled. NUS Disabled Students Campaign works to ensure that institutions and students' unions do what they can to remove these barriers, to ensure that disabled students can participate equally in education.

If you are setting up a women's group, you can do a lot to remove barriers and make it as inclusive as possible for disabled women, for example:

- Producing meeting papers in alternative formats and advertising the fact that that alternative formats are available.
- Circulating any documents you will be using in meetings ahead of time so that students can familiarise themselves with the material or pass materials onto their interpreter.
- Trying to ensure that any meetings that you hold are in accessible rooms — this could be to do with step access, the noise levels in and around the room or whether there is a hearing loop installed.
- Looking into funding and support available from your institution for activities that may prove costly to organise, such as providing a BSL (British Sign Language) interpreter.

Key resources:

Mental Health Toolkit, NUS

Disabled Students Officer Handbook, NUS

Finding the Way in FE, NUS

Hidden Disabilities Briefing, NUS

www.nusconnect.org.uk/disabled

Black women

NUS uses the term 'Black' — with a capital B — as a political statement. It is not a term that refers to skin colour or a particular ethnicity, but rather to a common experience of racism, under-representation and exclusion experienced by people who are not white. NUS Black Students' Campaign welcomes students of African, Arab, Asian and Caribbean heritage within its membership. At your institution, you may hear people talking about BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) students instead.

Racism, whether institutional or direct, can seriously impact on Black students' education. Black women can often feel excluded from the women's movement because of the issues and tone of activities and campaigning carried out. For example, some women are attacked by other women for their choices, particularly around religion. At NUS we consider that the argument for a woman's right to choose extends to all aspects of her life. We support women's right to choose to wear the hijab, to the same extent that we support a woman's right to choose an abortion or to have a child while a student. To get to the root of why Black women may not be involved in your women's group, make sure that you consult with them specifically to find out what challenges, if any, they face in the institution and how they might get involved in your students' union.

Some issues you may want to explore include:

- shadism
- Islamophobia — some Black Muslim students face hostility and prejudice because of their religion
- Pay — the gender pay gap is even wider for Black women than for women overall
- Retention — education drop-out rates of Black students are higher than the average, at 12–15 per cent
- Attainment — without anonymous marking, Black students are likely to receive up to 12 per cent lower marks if they have a typically African- or Asian-sounding name

Key resources:

Exploring the experiences of Black students in further and higher education, NUS

Charter for Black Students' Representation, NUS

Ethnicity, gender and degree attainment, ECU

www.nusconnect.org.uk/Black

Women with caring responsibilities

As the college and university population has grown older over time, the number of students who have caring responsibilities has increased. For example, more than one in three part-time students in HE is a parent. In addition, some younger women become mothers during their studies. Some 70 per cent of student carers are women, and the majority of student parents are women, so the issues that they face as students can be very different to those faced by students without similar responsibilities.

There are a number of different ways to encourage students with caring responsibilities to become involved in your women's group and other union activities. NUS has produced research and a range of briefings containing lots of tips and hints to help you to do just that. As a part of our priority campaigns, we are also working on more research that targets student carers as opposed to student parents.

Key resources:

Meet the Parents, NUS

Involving student parents in your union, NUS

Student parents and family accommodation, NUS

Improving the learning experience for student parents in further education,
NUS studentparents@nus.org.uk

Being a Women's Officer Handbook 2014-15, NUS

Communication

As your union's representative for women students, it is vital that you stay in touch with women students at your institution. Remember that this is a two-way process — you need to let women students know about the work you are doing, and you need to hear from them to inform your work and represent them effectively. Here are some points to consider in communicating with female students at your college or university:

Get your contact details out there

Get an email address, phone number and postal address that you can give out to students. If you have not got your own phone or do not want to give out a personal number, give out the general students' union phone number but make sure whoever answers this number knows how to get messages to you. If possible, have a generic women's email address, eg [womensofficer@...](#) so it can stay the same year after year, no matter who is in post, and it will always be clear how to contact the Women's Campaign.

Get an email autosignature

Set up an autosignature on your email account, so that every time you send or reply to an email it will include at the end: your name, officer position, phone number, postal address, email address and any website details. Remember to use your auto signature to promote your women's group and campaigns too.

Create e-newsletters

Send out e-newsletters to students with news from the Women's Campaign, or have a women's section in a general e-newsletter from your students' union.

Remember that you are the link to the national campaign — refer to NUS Women's Campaign e-newsletters for information on what is going on nationally and reproduce this in your own newsletters.

Get a noticeboard

A noticeboard specifically for the Women's Campaign in a prominent place is a great way to get information out there. But remember to keep updating the display — use it to show how campaigns are progressing and what events are coming up. It is important to keep your contact details as a permanent part of the display.

Use the 'local details' section in NUS posters

NUS Women's Campaign posters have a section for you to fill in your local contact details. To order posters, email women@nus.org.uk

Get a web page

If possible, get a specific Women's Campaign web page with news of your contact details, campaigns, events and links to local services or support organisations, eg Rape Crisis centres, refuges and women's centres. Make sure you link to NUS' website for students too — www.nus.org.uk/women

Ask women students to contribute to the web page by emailing in soundbites that you can post, eg you could ask for opinions or personal stories on topics such as body image, violence against women, the objectification of women in the media or street harassment of women (via email, on your noticeboards etc). Remember to ask students to specify whether they would like to give their name or remain anonymous.

Get a stall

Choose a few days over the year to have a stall with information on the Women's Campaign, perhaps staffed by you and members of your women's group. Choose a prominent spot and a day when there is going to be a lot of 'student traffic' passing by. Remember that music, freebies, sweets and leaflets make stalls more attractive to passers-by. Not everyone is going to have time to stop to talk, or even pick up a leaflet, so make sure there is someone handing out information that students can grab and read later. You could organise the stall to coincide with internationally recognised dates in the feminist calendar, eg International Women's Day on 8 March, Stop Violence Against Women Day on 25 November or the start of V-season on 1 February.

The case for a Women's Officer

Some people continue to question the need for women's officers, women's groups or associations, and the NUS Women's Campaign and Women's Officer. Whatever the reason, it is useful to be familiar with their arguments. You may have been through them hundreds of times before. On the other hand, the need for these things can sometimes seem so obvious that you may struggle to know how to start refuting them.

Here is a list of common questions and queries about students' unions' representation of women and some standard responses. Please bear in mind that every union's circumstances are different and there is no ideal option that suits every representative body.

You may find the 'Women in society — key facts and statistics' section of this handbook and the inspiring quotations sprinkled throughout these pages useful to back up your arguments. The Women's Campaign has also just published a more comprehensive 'Winning the Arguments' pack, which can be downloaded from NUS Connect.

If you need any extra support, please do not hesitate to contact Susuana Antubam, by email at Susuana.antubam@nus.org.uk or by phone on 07919 328 328.

"Why do we need a Women's Campaign? Surely women are equal now?"

The feminist movement has come a long way since the days of the Suffragettes and this shows that collective feminist action really does get results. After much campaigning, women now have the right to vote, the right to divorce, can take legal action over sexual discrimination at work, and have many other legal rights that women were denied a century ago. However, despite anti-discrimination laws, women still face disadvantage because of their gender — often in less immediately obvious ways. The fact that gender inequality persists in the UK is backed up by statistics, including the following:

- The full-time gender pay gap stands at 17.4 per cent, which means that women who work full-time are paid on average just 82.6 per cent of men's hourly earnings. The part-time gender pay gap is 15.2 per cent, which means that women who work part-time are paid on average just 84.8 per cent of men's hourly earnings. [Source: *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*, 2009]
- Unequal pay makes student debt harder on women. The Government estimates that women will take, on average, five years longer than men to pay off their student loans. [Source: Parliamentary question answered by Bill Rammell, then Minister for Higher Education, 2008]
- Gender segregation persists in education, with the male-dominated subject areas often linked to the UK's highest paid industries. In further

education, men make up 87 per cent of engineering, technology and manufacturing students and 95 per cent of construction students. Women make up 93 per cent of further education students in hairdressing and beauty therapy. In higher education, 81 per cent of computer science students are male, and 86 per cent of engineering and technology students are male. Some 82 per cent of education students are female. [Source: *Facts about women and men in Great Britain*, EOC, 2006]

"Why isn't there a Men's Campaign?"

NUS Women's Campaign believes that specific representation for women is essential, as women systematically face discrimination and disadvantage within education, employment and throughout society specifically because of their gender. Women continue to be under-represented in our democratic and governmental power structures. Men are not discriminated against because they are men, although they may face discrimination because of another factor (eg because they are gay, Black or a single parent).

'Liberation' campaigns seek to represent and empower individuals who experience discrimination and disadvantage in terms of status and opportunity because they belong to, or are perceived as belonging to, a particular social group. Men are not disadvantaged due to a dominant and embedded culture that discriminates against their gender and has a long history of doing so — whereas women are.

It is worth asking what a 'Men's Campaign' would actually do. There may be issues that primarily or solely concern men. Testicular cancer is often used as an example, but this is an example of a single-issue campaign, not a liberation issue, and so it should be addressed by the union's welfare officer. If your welfare officer is 'always a woman', the union could write into the officer's job description that the officer must campaign on at least one male and at least one female welfare issue each year. Or it could look at encouraging more male welfare or campaign volunteers to get involved.

"What has all this got to do with students?"

A lot! Female students are part of a wider society that systematically discriminates against women. Among female students there are mothers who have to deal with inadequate childcare provision, women who suffer physical and psychological abuse in their homes, women who suffer sexual abuse and assault ... to name but a few examples. And, unfortunately, women do experience gender discrimination that relates specifically to their student lives and their lives as graduates from further and higher education. For example, women can expect to earn less after graduation and take five years longer than their male counterparts to pay off their student loans.

The Women's Campaign also operates on the principles of solidarity. That is to say that an injury to one should be regarded as an injury to all. For example,

NUS Women's Campaign hopes that even female students who do not feel personally and directly affected by sexual assault will act on their concern that it is happening to other women.

"Why are most NUS Women's Campaign events for women only?"

The Women's Campaign is about women organising themselves as women and making their own decisions about their own lives. This is not to say that men cannot be involved in campaigning on issues of concern to women, but they must allow women to define their own priorities. The NUS Women's Campaign does hold open events to which men are invited. However, we want women students to make their own decisions about the campaign, so conferences, committee meetings and some campaign events are for women only.

"There are plenty of women on the Union Exec. They can represent women"

Although other union officers may be women in some years, they are not elected by women to represent women specifically or to ensure that women's issues are raised and addressed by the union. Women students deserve a union that is responsive to their needs and concerns as women; an officer whose primary role is to concentrate on this is the best solution.

"Surely an Equal Opportunities Officer could represent women?"

Many union equal opportunities officers do a wonderful job managing a large portfolio and the creation of an equal opportunities officer is a useful first step to creating awareness around equalities issues in a students' union, particularly in smaller colleges where having separate liberation officers is not feasible. However, this is not the ideal as it is unrealistic for any one individual to understand and fully represent the needs and interests of all minority groups — including women, ethnic minority students, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans students and disabled students. Effective representation needs to include members of disadvantaged groups themselves, otherwise it is open to accusations of tokenism.

"Why shouldn't a man take up the position of Women's Officer?"

Women's liberation and equality is about women organising themselves as women and making their own decisions about their own lives. It would be impossible for a man to represent women, as no self-defined man, however well-informed and sympathetic, can speak with the full authority of experience about issues of concern to women. That is not to say that men cannot be involved in campaigning on issues of concern to women, but they must allow women to define their own priorities.

"Autonomous women's space discriminates against men — it's sexist and against equal opportunities!"

Ensuring equality of opportunity does not mean treating everyone the same. If a particular group is disadvantaged, it may need particular representation to overcome this. Having a women's officer or a women's group is not about giving women more power than men, it is about redressing the balance.

Closed space is a positive action to redress the balance between men and women. Sexism describes a systematic experience of discrimination or oppression, which must have power behind it to be discriminatory. Women's groups in general, and the NUS Women's Campaign in particular, do not have that level of power to discriminate against men and are not part of a systematic process discriminating against men as a group.

"What should I do if someone submits a motion to abolish the Women's Officer position in my union?"

Unfortunately, the position of women's officer occasionally comes under attack at students' unions and sometimes proposals are submitted to scrap this important position. If this happens at your union, here are some points to consider in campaigning against such proposals.

Contact NUS Women's Campaign. We will be able to give you support and advice, and the National Women's Officer or a member of committee can come to your union to help you campaign against this proposal.

Clearly establish the case for a women's officer position. Use the arguments given in this section, the facts and statistics given at the beginning of this handbook, and the information on www.nusconnect.org.uk/women to inform your case. Important points to stress are:

- Women need specific representation as a minority group in terms of status and equality of opportunity — in both education and society as a whole.
- Students' unions should be progressive forces for change. By having a women's officer position, students' unions are making a bold statement about discrimination and the need for equality.
- Having a women's officer position sends a clear message to women students that the union values them and will represent them and campaign on their behalf, regardless of the gender make-up of the rest of the executive.
- The women's officer is the only position on the executive committee that is elected by women, specifically to represent women. Other members of the executive, who may be women, do not have this mandate.
- In some years the women's officer could be the only female member of the executive. Having a women's officer is an important step in guaranteeing that there will always be a woman on the executive committee.
- Women are consistently under-represented at every political level, including student politics, so abolishing the women's officer position would be pre-empting a state of equality that does not yet exist.
- The women's officer is a vital link between the students in the college and the national NUS Women's Campaign. The women's officer plays an

important role in representing the interests of the college's female students to NUS and in communicating NUS' work back to the students.

Celebrate your successes! Remember to emphasise your successes and achievements in establishing the case for a women's officer position:

- Which campaigns have you run and which campaign targets have you met?
- Do you know how many 'hits' your web page has had?
- What events have you run and how many people attended? What was their feedback?
- How many women attend your women's group and what activities do they carry out?
- How have you been involved in representing your college in NUS Women's Campaign democracy?

Organise a Women's Campaign meeting before the vote. Organise a gathering, open to all students, to educate people about the Women's Campaign and its importance in the student movement. Arrange for some inspiring, persuasive speakers to address the audience, for example a representative of NUS Women's Committee or a staff member from your local women's refuge or Rape Crisis centre.

Get the message out there! You need to bombard students from all angles on why the Women's Campaign is important in their students' union.

- Use your noticeboards, web page, student newspaper, student magazine, stickers, leaflets and flyers to communicate to students, and run a 'keep the women's officer' stall.
- It is not enough to just convince people of the need for a women's officer position, you need to make sure they are there to cast their vote at the general meeting, student council meeting or referendum (cross campus ballot). You need to convince students that their vote counts, and that the small effort involved in voting to keep the women's officer position will make a big difference.
- Target students going in to vote. Stand by the doors to the meeting or voting room to hand out flyers urging students to vote to keep the women's officer position, summarising the key arguments and relevant statistics and facts.
- If it is decided to scrap the women's officer position at a general meeting or union council meeting, remember that you can ask for a referendum (cross campus ballot) to reverse the decision.

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."

Audre Lorde, writer and activist

"Women comprise more than half the world's population. Women are 70 per cent of the world's poor, and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and write. Women are the primary caretakers for most of the world's children and elderly. Yet much of the work we do is not valued – not by economists, not by historians, not by popular culture and not by government leaders."

Hillary Rodham Clinton addressing the fourth UN World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 5 September 1993



Section four

Women's Conference

Register for conference

Each individual union will receive their own security pass code in October of each year. You will need this code to register to attend any NUS Conference, please ensure you speak to your Union about being register before deadlines.

All delegates and observers must self-define as women, as defined in the standing orders: "all who self-define as women, including (if they wish) those with complex gender identities that include 'woman' and those who experience oppression as women".

The delegation must register for conference online. Unions often hold autonomous elections for students to attend conference. If you have not held your elections by the registration closing date, make sure your registration reaches us before the stated deadline with the number of delegates and observers you will be sending then phone us with full names and details at least one week before the start of conference.

Access requirements

Please ensure that you include details of any access needs required by your delegates to enable that person to fully participate in the event before the close of registration. Advance notice of access needs allows us to make the right arrangements in plenty of time.

Childcare

We will provide childcare if we are notified of a requirement in advance. It is very important to register children in advance to ensure a high standard of care, safety and enjoyment for children using the crèche.

Delegation

Each CM is entitled to send a maximum of **four** delegates made up of:

- up to two **open place** delegates with full voting and speaking rights, who must be elected
- additionally, one reserved place delegate who defines as a **Black woman**
- additionally, one reserved place delegate who defines as a member of **another liberation group** (Black, disabled or LGBT) or who has caring responsibilities

In addition, each CM may send up to a maximum of two observers. All delegates have full speaking and voting rights. Observers have full speaking rights but not voting rights.

Electing the Women's Officers and Women's Committee

Any woman who wants to run for the position of National Women's Officer must submit a nomination form and a manifesto to NUS by the close of nominations deadline (Check Conference page for key deadlines on NUS Connect). The manifestos are then sent out to all our CMs and put up on the NUS Connect website, so that you can find out vital information about the candidates, such as their relevant experience and their plans if elected.

The election vote takes place at conference. On the first night, there is an informal hustings session, where candidates give speeches and you have the opportunity to ask them questions. The election takes place the next day, when candidates give one last speech and then you get to cast your vote. The count takes place soon after, and the result is announced during conference.

For the committee elections, things work slightly differently. Nominations for committee places do not open until conference itself, so only conference participants can run in the elections. All voting delegates are eligible to stand, and vote, in the elections for the Open Place reps and Steering Committee, but some places are elected in caucuses, where only delegates who self-define into relevant liberation groups (such as Black students) or are members of other groups (such as the further education sector) can run in the election and vote. This is to make sure that your Women's Committee reps actively reflect and represent the diversity of the student movement — it's the same principle as having a Women's Officer on your students' union executive committee or the National Executive Council of NUS.

Elections for the Open Place and Caucus Reps on the Women's Committee, and the members of the Steering Committee, normally take place on the third and final day of conference.

Motions and priority ballot

There is more to Women's Conference than elections

Every year, we spend a long time discussing, debating and eventually voting on the policy that will direct the work of the Women's Officer and Women's Committee in the year ahead. This is where students' unions and women's officers are given a fantastic opportunity to have a real say in the work of the Women's Campaign.

Every CM can submit policy to Women's Conference. This is done in two main stages — motions and amendments. The motions deadline is set months in advance and each CM can submit motions on topics that the women in their union want discussed at conference. You can submit motions and amendments even if your union is not sending anyone to Women's Conference.

Motions are generally formatted like this:

Conference believes

Followed by one or more statements of fact, eg "Women have the right to vote but not all women use their vote."

Motions and debate process

Motions are separated into 'zones'. You will be able to submit motions under certain headings and the Motions Discussion at Women's Conference will be divided into these topics.

The four policy zones are:

- **Education:** gender segregation in subject areas, gender studies course closures, under-representation of women in PhDs and professorships in HE
- **Society and citizenship:** women's rights worldwide, abortion rights, conflict and poverty, women at work
- **Welfare:** sexual health, violence against women, childcare issues
- **Building stronger unions:** defending women's officers in unions, liberation in every union campaign

Each union is entitled to send up to six motions of up to 500 words each. Each motion must fit into one of the four zones.

Priority ballot

Once we have received all your motions, our Steering Committee will check that they are valid and will group them into areas of common interest (eg pro-choice, women in the workplace). We will then send them out to all CMs and then you can specify the order you want to debate them in, by returning the priority ballot form to NUS. This is extremely important, as if we have 30 different subjects, there may not be time to discuss all of them. As we are an organisation based on the principle of democracy, we believe it is important to

allow our members to decide the order of debate. We let you know the outcome of the ballot.

Amendments

The second stage of getting policy to conference is through amendments, which is when you read through the motions document and suggest amendments. Each union is also entitled to send up to six amendments of up to 300 words each. You can submit an amendment because you agree with the motion — or because you completely disagree! You can also decide to submit an amendment because you want to expand the debate — eg if the original motion talks about women's rights at work, you may decide to submit an amendment that focuses specifically on the gender pay gap.

The same rules for submitting motions also apply to amendments.

Compositing

Once we have received all the motions and amendments, we then put it all together for conference itself, in a cohesive and clear document. If 20 unions submit text about the gender pay gap, we combine their submissions into one motion or amendment.

Every union that submits motions and/or amendments can attend the compositing (or send someone else on their behalf), and we come to a consensual agreement about how to lay out and divide the motions and amendments. It is great fun and means that the Final Motions document accurately reflects the wishes and intent of the unions who submitted text.

We also use compositing to finalise the order of amendments (eg, should the amendment about the gender pay gap come before or after the amendment encouraging women to join trade unions?) and who will speak on each motion or amendment. You will receive this Final Motions document that before Women's Conference.

If you have any queries about motions, zones, amendments or the process in general, please contact NUS Steering at steering.committee@nus.org.uk

There's much, much more to conference than elections and policy debates, and we will send you more information closer to the time, but these are the two main ways in which you and your union can have a real say in the NUS Women's Campaign priorities. Without your input, we cannot hope to accurately represent your views or campaign on the issues that matter to you. It's your campaign, so use it!



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