

## Why it's important to get involved in Student union democracy

Being an active part of the internal democracy and inner workings of your Student's Union (SU) is one salient way to make a difference as a Young Green. From the fight against raising tuition fees to a genuine and radical commitment to Green and ecological Universities, the Young Greens believe that we can help lead the student movement (while working with like-minded people as pluralists) in a new and exciting direction.



While many YGs have been elected as sabbaticals (a 'sabbatical' or 'sabb' is an executive officer who takes a year out to work full-time for their SU) and Union Officers in SUs across England and Wales in the past, we have lacked the coordination to make a significant difference on a national level. It is time we changed this - and you can make it happen!

Many YG sabbs and part-time Union executive officers have been decisive in making a contribution to their SU on a local level and spreading the values and principles the Green Party stands for as a party that fundamentally stands up for young people.

### What we can do for you

The Young Greens can help you if you intend to stand for an elected position; so it is of the utmost importance that you inform us of this. We can email out to all members of the Young Greens to ask for help on your behalf, put you in contact with other Young Greens in elected positions in SUs, or provide you with the details of YG societies/ groups in nearby Universities/ FE colleges that may want to help you in campaigning.

It is vital that we build a national and co-ordinated group of elected YGs in SUs in order to make campaigning on a national level possible. This is why the national YGs committee want to maintain databases of those YG elected officers in SUs; this is the only way we can coordinate and put you in touch with other officers across the country- so we can be a truly national movement.

Please email [studentsupport@younggreens.org.uk](mailto:studentsupport@younggreens.org.uk) and [admin@younggreens.org.uk](mailto:admin@younggreens.org.uk)

Here are what some past YG sabbaticals/executive officers had to say:



Name: **Aled Dilwyn-Fisher**

Students Union: **London School of Economics (LSESU)**

Position: **General Secretary 2008-10**

*"I joined the Green Party because I genuinely believed in changing the world for the better. I thought and still think that the Green Party is the only party that can deliver true, lasting and sustainable environmental and social justice.*

*I ran for Sabb for the same reasons - I wanted my Students' Union to reflect the same basic values of the green movement.*

*Being a Sabb can be very tough. Naturally, you can never achieve everything you want or meet all expectations. At the end of the day, grassroots activism is still the most important thing. But it is true that as a Sabb you are in control of in many cases large organisations - you set the direction and, with the right ideas and the will to see them through, you can make a big difference to the experience of students and others in society. You can, most of all, help nurture that grassroots activism and bring others forward.*

*Few young people get to experience such a position so young, so you will learn a lot about yourselves and others. And, most importantly, you will have the opportunity to see some of your ideas and principles put into practice, whether it's campaigning for free education or making your campus greener.*

*The student movement has far more power and potential than many people think - running for Sabb is one way of making a difference."*



Name: **Adam Ramsay**

Students Union: **Edinburgh**

Position: **President 2008-09**

*"I am a member of the Green Party because it is the only party willing to make the case for proper public funding for universities and for other public services.*

*I ran to be SU president because I thought it would be a chance to help ensure that everyone could afford to study at Edinburgh university, and to push the government into investing more in education and in student support.*

*As president, I was able to (along with my team) force the university into freezing rents for a year, and help push the Scottish government into increasing the income of the poorest students by £1300 a year, to get very cheap organic veg boxes for 1000+ students and help push for better quality of teaching at the university. (Cont. overleaf)*

*I'd been involved in campaigning on things like this for a long time, but without the resources of the SU, we never could have done it.*

*Similarly, being in the Young Greens has been a great experience. I've found the members to be sensible, thoughtful, passionate, and hard working.*

*Every generation has to build the world anew. Only by working together to build alternatives can we do this ourselves. The Green Party is a key platform for our generation."*



Name: **Daniel Lee**

Students Union: **University of Manchester Students Union (UMSU)**

Position: **Campaigns Officer, 2008-09**

*"I joined the Green Party over 7 years ago just as I was beginning to become more politically active and looking for an outlet for my political frustrations. With the established parties seeming to have either no ideas or bad ideas, the Green Party appeared to have both many ideas, and good ideas. It also lead me to other forms of political participation, in protest movements and activist groups.*

*Whilst at university, I became more involved with the Greens and these groups on a range of issues. In my first year I was convinced to run for a council position at the Student Union by another Green and came close to getting elected.*

*Following this, I became more familiar with the Union, finding it on a campaigning level to be slightly alienating to many students; the best activism was taking place in autonomous groups.*

*I decided to run for election for the Campaigns Officer position in the hope of making the union and campaigns much more open, as well as helping to further the successes we'd made in People and Planet in pushing the university's environmental performance in the right direction. The most important thing was engaging with students wherever they were, or whatever their interests.*

*My experience as a sabbatical officer was very mixed, but ultimately very beneficial. We managed to achieve much in spite of a politically divided executive. This just proved an extra challenge to overcome, and helped further years learn to cooperate more and know what work needed doing.*

*I personally took a lot from the experience, made some excellent contacts nationally, especially politically, and it certainly did no harm to the party locally to have Greens, and more so, Young Greens, elected!"*