

The younggreens National Union of Students (NUS) Handbook

About...

Set up in 1922, the National Union of Students (NUS) is the most influential student body campaigning for the rights of students in the UK. The National Union of Students (NUS) aims to

- Promote, defend and extend the rights of students in the UK.

The organisation was set up by the University of Birmingham, Birkbeck College, LSE, University of Bristol, Kings College London and Imperial College – now not a member. NUS is a confederation of 600 student unions across the country in further and higher education. Through affiliation, student unions are members of the organisation. This makes NUS the largest body representing students in the world – with over 7 million members. It is to be noted that the majority of NUS' membership resides in the further education sector.

Democracy...

NUS is 'run by students, for students'. Members of the organisation elect students or 'sabbatical' officers to the National Executive Committee (NEC) each year. The NEC aims to be representative of its members, manages the organisation and coordinates its services – such as campaigns, training and the National Union of Students Services Limited (NUSSL – trade for student unions and discounts for students).

The NEC is made up of 10 full-time officers, 15 part time officers (called the 'Block of 15' and elected at the NUS Annual Conference), 2 part time LGBT officers and 1 part time International Students officer. The NUS Scotland and NUS Union Students Ireland (USI) Presidents and NUS Wales convenor are also part of the NEC. The 10 full-time positions are:

1. **National President**
2. **Vice-President Further Education (FE)**
3. **Vice- President Higher Education (HE)**
4. **Vice- President Union Development (UD)**
5. **Vice-President Welfare**
6. **Vice- President Society & Citizenship (Soc & Cit)**
7. **Black Student's Officer**
8. **Women's Officer**
9. **Disabled Student's Officer**
10. **International Student's Officer**



The 15 part time NEC positions or Block of 15 are split up to ensure fair representation for FE students. There are 5 FE places reserved for election at the NUS Annual Conference along with the remaining 10 open spaces. In addition to this all the zones, liberation and student sections elect one representative to be part of the NEC. The role of the Block of 15 members is essentially to help hold the NUS full-time officers to account.

Factions...

Various political factions have always dominated and shaped the political landscape of NUS. Some factions are namely: Labour Students (formally the National Organisation of Labour Students or NOLs), Organised Independents (OIs), Conservative Future (CF), Liberal Youth, Socialist Students, Student Respect, Student Broad Left (SBL), Socialist Workers Student Society (SWSS) and the members of Alliance Workers Liberty (AWL) and the National Campaign Against Fees & Cuts (NCAFC, which acts as more of an umbrella group).

Two key interest groups are: Union of Jewish Students (UJS) and Federation of Students Islamic Societies (FOSIS).

Democratic Procedures Committee...

The Democratic Procedures Committee (DPC) is responsible for managing and co-ordinating the democratic structures of the organisation. It is responsible for the constitution of NUS and how policy is shaped within it. There are 9 committee members who hold meetings which are attended by the National President as a non-voting member.

The organisation also has a Chief Returning Officer who is involved in dealing with election procedures.

NUS is organised into Zones, Liberation Campaigns, three student sections and three nations.

Zones...

There are 5 zones:

- **Higher Education (HE)**
- **Further Education (FE)**
- **Welfare Zone**
- **Society & Citizenship (Soc & Cit)**
- **Union Development (UD)**

Each zone is headed by a Vice President (VP) (see above). Each zone also comprises of elected zonal committee members who are elected at zone conferences. These happen during October – constitutionally they must occur before December.

One committee member from each zone is elected or appointed to be part of the NEC. Zone committee members support the work carried out by each VP as well as holding them to account. There are constitutionally 5 zonal committee members per zone.

Liberation...

There are 4 liberation campaigns: Black Students Campaign (BSC), Disabled Students, LGBT and Women's campaign. These campaigns are politically autonomous. Each campaign is governed by policies made at their own conferences. The officers and committee of each campaign are elected at their individual conferences which is attended by members self-defining as part of the campaigns.

There are 2 part time LGBT officers – one open place position and one female position.

Student Sections...

There are 3 student sections:

- International students
- Mature & part time students
- Postgraduate students

The International Students Campaign (ISC) is headed by a full time International Students officer and an elected committee. The election of the International Student Officer (ISO) and committee happens at its annual conference.

There is an annual Mature, Part-time and postgraduate student conference which elects 4 NEC members:

- Mature student
- Part time student

Nations...

Nations are also politically autonomous, are responsible for shaping their own policies and carrying out their work as part of NUS. The three nations are NUS Scotland, NUS Wales and NUS Union of Student Ireland.

NUS Scotland and NUS Wales have similar structures to NUS in England in terms of committees and organisation. However, NUS USI is vastly different mostly due to size and capacity.

NUS Services Limited (NUSSL)...

NUSSL is the commercial side of the organisation. It deals with the provision of NUS Extra cards to SUs, seeking the best deals for SU bars and shops and negotiating cheap deals from retailers for students. NUSSL has an ethical and environmental wing which aims to look at increasing the ethics and environmental credentials of NUS. The ethical and environmental wing of NUSSL is coordinated by the NUSSL Ethics and Environment (E&E) committee which are elected at NUSSL conference. A key recent success of NUSSL E&E committee was to pass recent policy on NUS's affiliation to the Workers' Rights Consortium.

How members (Student Unions) interact with NUS?

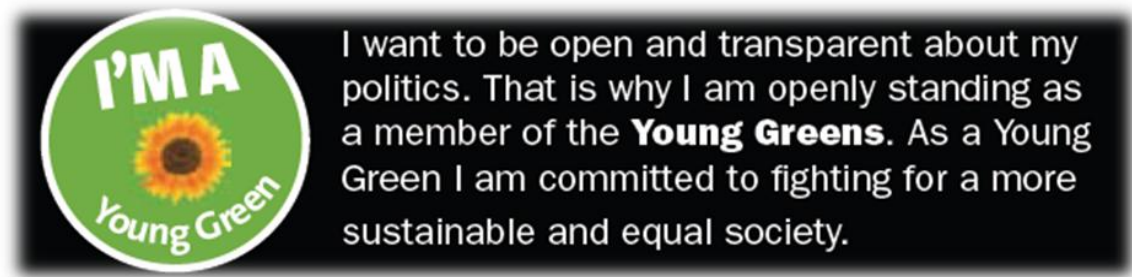
Through affiliation with NUS, student unions receive a range of services such as:

- in-house training,
- external training,
- advice and support on representation, democracy and campaigns
- financial and legal advice
- lucrative deals for SU commercial services (NUSSL)
- governance support

Members of NUS also help shape the policy of the organisation hence directing and prioritising its work nationally.

Why getting involved in NUS is relevant for Young Greens?

NUS is the largest student organisation in the world with political power to shape the landscape of British politics. Education campaigns run by NUS have had high profile media coverage due to adept campaigning by students involved in lobbying and protests. A comparison of two campaigns: the anti-Iraq war and the introduction of tuition fees campaigns can be used as an example to show the importance of student power in NUS. The campaign against the war in Iraq managed to mobilise more people than the tuition fees campaign did in protests, opposition and marches. However, the final tuition fees vote in 2004 was tight with a majority of 5 votes compared to the 163 majority of the war in Iraq vote in 2003.



Students' actions in challenging the NUS's stance on Browne Review and their involvement in kick-starting campaigns against the government's recent austerity measures have empowered civil society and trade unions in voicing out against the government. This has shaped voters opinions on national policies.

Success within NUS is derived from strong campaign skills adopted by students in lobby work and protest, political vigour, consistency in campaigns as well as the electoral power students hold in politics. This means that NUS can be considered as a relatively decent training ground for activists and those interested in politics, and hence Young Greens.

In addition to this, various factions influence the organisation. The most prominent factions have been Labour Students and Organised Independents members. Organised Independents (OIs) are most often members of Labour Party and maybe of Young Labour but not Labour Students due to disagreements on policies. The 'left' of NUS can be summarised as a grouping of fringe factions such as SBL, Student Respect, Socialist Students and the SWP. Those factions are often split and regularly fail to gain seats on NUS's sabbatical positions. Left wing factions in NUS often get elected in part time positions of the organisation and act in opposition to the leadership which is often controlled by OIs and Labour Students. This is one of the reasons why policy making in NUS is flawed to being very often on the side of the OIs and Labour Students.

Young Greens' involvement in NUS can:

- empower the left in NUS
- shift policy making from being totally controlled by Labour Students & OIs
- provide YGs with skills and abilities needed for campaigns & politics
- promote the Green Party to students

Ways to get involved in NUS

There are various ways for students as part of YGs to be involved with NUS and to participate in its democratic processes, shape its policies and engage others to join the Green Party. Those ways are:

- Stand for elections in Student Unions, such as a delegate to NUS conference. This is one of the easiest options. Being an NUS delegate entitles students to vote in elections and motions in NUS National Conference. In some student unions, it may come with additional role of going to other NUS conferences e.g. zone conferences
- Students can directly mandate their unions to shape policy within NUS through motion submission to all NUS' conferences. Depending on constitutions of individual student unions, motions can be submitted to Annual General Meetings (AGMs) (annual meetings where students hold their SU accountable & pass motions), council/senate meetings and executive meetings
- Students able to attend zones, liberation and other conferences and stand for elections on a variety of committee positions, be elected as committee members and help shape campaigns
- Any student, as a member of NUS, can stand for elections for various positions, from a part-time NEC member to a full-time officer. Election regulations regarding liberation and student section positions are set by their standing orders and NUS rules

How to stand for NUS delegate in your SU...

As was mentioned above, one of the most important ways you can be involved in the NUS is to become an NUS delegate to the NUS national conference.

Every year, YGs try to increase the amount of YG NUS delegates going to conference. This is to enable YGs to have more of an influence over policy.

This year, we want as many YGs standing for NUS delegate positions in their SUs. A significant amount (although not all) of SUs elect their delegations to the National Union of Students (NUS) national conference (held in April of each year) in the autumn term. Each SU has an allocated amount of delegate places (depending on how many full time equivalent students you have) to NUS conference.



Rustam Majainah, YG NUS delegate for Royal Holloway, 2012

At NUS conference delegates vote on motions of national importance (concerning Education, Welfare, Society & Citizenship and Union Development issues), attend interesting fringes and elect the NUS full time officers and NEC (National Executive Council) members for the following year. All is paid for (travel and accommodation) by your SU. Please contact your SU for more information on how you can stand.

The YGs committee would strongly advocate that societies encourage their members to stand for such positions. Not only is NUS conference an exciting experience for those involved, but it offers members the chance to meet YGs activists from around the UK and involve themselves in stimulating debates within the student movement.

Standing for the NUS NEC...

The Young Greens choose to stand their first National Executive Council (NEC) Block of 15 candidates in the 2012 NUS Conference in Sheffield. Previously, YGs presence at the conference has been disparate and unorganised. The 2012 conference proved a turning point, with a more organising YG presence than ever before. This was demonstrated aptly with our first official candidate.



Georgina Bavetta, formerly of Bristol YGs, was the first official YG candidate for NUS NEC at the 2012 conference in Sheffield

Running a NEC candidate gives us a number of benefits within the student movement:

- **It allows us to have a great deal of publicity amongst students at the conference, which is attended by around 900 delegates**
- **We can market the YGs to a wide and diverse range of people- through our policies, campaigns and initiatives**
- **We can influence the direction of the student movement, and force diverse groups within the NUS to take us seriously**
- **It acts as a recruitment tool, and helps us to increase our membership and student base**

Standing for NUS NEC can be a lot of hard work, but it is also an exciting and inspiring experience. Candidates are chosen and officially endorsed by the National YG committee, so if you're thinking about running on behalf of the YGs, please let us know!

In Conclusion...



YG Candidates for NUS NEC 2012, Matt Stanley (left) was a joint SBL-YG candidate

In summary, the National Union of Students is a key organisation within the student movement.

The NUS is perceived and viewed as flawed, right wing and undemocratic. This is mostly because left wing factions are not as organised as the NOLs and the OIs in getting elected and passing policy.

However, NUS is a politically intensive organisation where most students that

interact with it do not already have well-formed political views. A majority of students engage with NUS because it provides them with a platform to campaign on issues such as tuition fees, student rights, racism, women's rights, etc... Through its conferences and trainings, NUS enables students to develop and shape opinions on a whole spectrum of issues. This is a chance for the Young Greens to shape political opinions of students by taking part in debates and being pro-actively involved in the organisation.

For the Young Greens, this is also an opportunity to gain electoral platform within the organisation. Because NUS engages with politics and the parliamentary system, it influences policy making in the UK. The Young Greens involvement in NUS would help shape policy-making in British politics and develop activists and those interested in politics further.