

Amnesty International

How to deal with committee handovers



Committee handovers

All Amnesty Student Group members eventually leave university; so keeping groups going from one year to the next can be tricky. It's no fun becoming a new committee member for your group, only to find that you have no idea how your Student Union works, where your resources cupboard is and why you have not received your Freshers' Fair pack from the Education and Student Team. This is why committee handovers are so important; they are the key to ensuring the continuity of your Amnesty Student Group.

Forming a new committee

Do not hold your Committee elections/handover in September or October – it is too early to tell which members are fully committed.

If possible, hold your Committee elections/handover in weeks 5-10 of the first term or in April/May. By this time, new members will have had a chance to get to know the group before deciding to commit themselves further, and the old Committee will still be around for a while to help you out.

If possible, try to stagger the handover of your committee, so that knowledge can be gradually passed on. Encourage 1st /2nd years, post grads and anyone else who will not be leaving at the end of the year to stand, to ensure some continuity.

It may be an idea to extend the number of officer roles beyond the 3 which are usually required by the Union (chair, secretary and treasurer). This will increase your pool of officers so that you can share responsibility. Beware of being too “top heavy”, as this may make decision-making difficult.



Fit the tasks to officers – consider having co-chairs or vice-chairs in order to share responsibility and to cover for, and support each other.

Consider appointing officers to run specific events – this may suit people well, as they only need the position for the time it takes to run the event.

Being the new committee

Before the old Committee move on – ask them questions and learn from their mistakes!

Keep contact numbers of last year's committee members. Get their email addresses / mobile numbers before the end of the summer term – invite them to help you plan/run events.

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Use an Amnesty group e-mail address if you can, so that when you handover to a new committee, the Education and Student Team does not lose touch with your group.

Make sure you know where all your materials are sent to, if they go to your Student Union, find out where to collect any post and how they inform you of anything that has been sent. If it goes to a Committee member's personal address, make sure you inform the Education and Student Team of this change; this is very important as if we have the wrong information you will not receive your materials for Freshers' Fair or any other key campaigning materials and general mailings.

Remember to inform the Education and Student Team of your new chair and contact details if they have changed. Again this is very important in order for us to send you important information and generally keep in touch.



We like to know what you're up to and how you're getting along throughout the year so keep in touch with us via the student email: student@amnesty.org.uk. The Education and Student Team are here to help you, so if you do have any problems please get in touch.

Consider how information is to be distributed, it is very important that the materials get beyond the person to whom they are first sent. Should materials be sent to the Chair or to a general Amnesty pigeonhole / email address?

Make a regular slot in your meetings to update the group on important correspondence – the Chair could summarise and distribute information. If you have a small group you could circulate information to each member using a pro forma to be ticked-off by each person and passed to the next.

If your old Committee has not passed on any resources to you (e.g. "How to.." leaflets, Groups manual, Student Speakers list), then contact the Education and Student Team at Amnesty for a new supply.

If you would like a Student Trainer to come and give a workshop to your Committee, which aims to help new Committees or groups over the difficulties they may face in getting their group going, then contact the Education and Student Team at Amnesty for more details.

Preparing for a new Committee

Make up a "society pack" containing information about how your Student Union works (e.g. how to book rooms, what Committee Officers are required by the union, how to get events listed in the Student Union newsletter and how to get funding).

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Keep a file or book with Amnesty International contacts, a membership list, a speaker's list and other relevant organisations and contacts. Computerise this if possible.

Keep a record of all events that you have organised and when they took place. Take photos of your events and include these. Record what was good about the event – as well as any problems that arose.

Make it the task of one of your officers e.g. the secretary, to update these records. If it is done at the meeting it need not take long.

If you have storage space, make sure it is kept in order and that the new Committee knows where it is and what is in it. Make sure there is some record of what publicity materials are available to your group and where to get them from. A list of what resources are available to you can be found on the Amnesty website.

Attend '**ACTION FOR CHANGE**', Amnesty's student training event, held at the Human Rights Action Centre in London. This event is usually held in February / March of each year and will give members of your group a unique opportunity to learn more about Amnesty International and gain practical training skills in how best to run your group and organise great meetings. This provides a perfect opportunity for new committee members to learn all there is to know about running an Amnesty group. It also gives you the chance to meet students from all over the UK and swap ideas as well as have some fun at the same time!

More information on this event will be sent to you nearer the time, or you can check on the Amnesty website to find out more and book places.

Do you have any ideas for dealing with Committee handovers which we could add to this leaflet? If so please contact:

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