

Amnesty International

How to make the most of your Student Union



Who to ask

Ask previous Amnesty International group members, or anyone else you know who is/has been involved in running a society, to brainstorm everything they know about how your Student Union works.

It may be that your Student Union holds a special meeting for clubs and societies which can be used not only for plugging your events and meetings but to obtain more information about your Student Union.

If your Student Union produces a special information booklet for clubs and societies then get hold of a copy of this.

Your Student Union's Clubs and Societies Officer (or equivalent sabbatical) has been elected to represent you – ask him/her for advice.

What to find out

Find out what resources are available to you. Do you have access to: a pigeonhole, a computer, a phone, a fax, printing and copying facilities, collecting boxes and money counting facilities?

Find out if you can have a room or cupboard and what the booking procedures are.

Check if you can hire audiovisual equipment, such as a TV, DVD player, overhead projector, laptops etc. (If you will regularly be using these, see if you can hold your meetings in a room where these are permanently installed).

Have you got an Amnesty International notice board that you can use to raise awareness and advertise your group's events? If not, ask if one can be put up in a prominent place.



Can you have a permanent email address for your group? (NB: You will probably have to obtain this through your university). Or create a group email address with another server e.g. Hotmail.

Find out where it is 'legal' to put up posters in and around your university and Student Union.

Find out if your Student Union has a "What's on" type newsletter, in which you can advertise your meetings, stalls and events. Remember to check the copy deadlines.

Check the format and deadline for getting articles in your student newspaper and programmes on your student radio, if you have one.

See if there are any established events and/or awareness-raising weeks organised by your Student Union, which you might be able to link up with (e.g. One World Week). You may be able to get free publicity and resources through these. (NB: Please check with the Education and Student Team if you are not clear about AI's policy on shared platforms and joint actions).

Find out how to put motions through your Union's AGM. What are the dates and deadlines?

Are there any Student Union Committees that it would be useful for your group to have an input on (e.g. Campaigns, Student Activities, Clubs and Societies, any that decide on the distribution of money!)? If so, then encourage members of your group to stand for election to them.

Get to know your sabbaticals (e.g. Campaigns, Vice President, Student Activities, Clubs and Societies Officers) and keep them informed about your activities.

Find out if there is a contact list for other societies. Check their notice boards for days and dates of meetings and events. Get in touch with like-minded societies. It may be that you can link up with them for certain activities and events. (NB: Again, please check with the Education and Student Team if you are not clear about AI's policy on shared platforms and joint actions).



Check what sources of funding/grants are available for Student Union societies. (NB: You may not be able to obtain funding without a minimum number of members.)

Find out if there is any 'hidden funding' available (e.g. for specific events and / or conferences). You may also be able to get extra funding through Student Union General Meeting motions (e.g. one Student Group got a motion passed for there to be an annual Human Rights week in their Student Union).

If you have any ideas on making the most of Student Unions which we could add to this leaflet, then please contact:

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