

Your SU*

Change It! Handbook
and Campaigning Toolkit



Contents

Introduction: Your SU and Change It	2
Part One: Growing Your Idea.....	3
What is a Campaign?	3
What Isn't Campaigning?	4
Local, National, and International Problems That Have Affected Students	4
Protests – Be Prepared!	5
Problem Statement	6
Change It! – What Is It, How Does It Work, and Why Should You Care?.....	7
Petitions.....	9
“But I’m just one student!”	9
Turning Your Idea into A Successful Campaign	10
Analysing Your Issue – Problem Tree	10
Analysing Your Issue – Problem Tree	11
Your Campaign Plan	13
Further Support.....	14
Part Two: Growing Your Campaign	15
When should I submit an idea to Change It?	15
When is an idea a campaign?	15
Methods for Collecting Research	15
What is evidence?.....	15
How could you go about measuring evidence?	16
Your Space to Plan	18
Feedback from Evidence – What Can Be Learned?	19
Part Three: Getting Support and Changing It.....	20
Getting People on Your Side	20
Social Media and Networking	20
Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down	20
Apathy Staircase.....	21
Power Mapping.....	22
Task List	23
Part Four: Evaluation of Your Campaign	24

Introduction: Your SU and Change It

Welcome to Your SU's Change It Handbook and Campaigning Toolkit! In this document, you'll find guidance on what to do if you want to make a change at university, no matter how big or small. You'll find tips, suggestions, and exercises to help you think out your campaign for change, as well as guidelines on how to use Your SU's Change It platform. Your SU is a member-led organisation that strives to put students at the heart of our decision-making - creating opportunities for them to enhance their time at Sunderland, as well as what we do as a Union. All students are automatically members of Your SU as soon as they reach university. It doesn't matter how engaged you have been with us previously – we are here to help! We represent students in everything to do with their student experience, from trips and events to academic support, from pastoral care to getting involved with one of our many societies. Any student can voice their opinions in a whole host of ways, such as:

- Academic representation - we support both [Course Representatives](#) and [Student Voice Representatives](#) to represent the educational interests of all students, which means they could work on anything from [decolonising the curriculum](#) within their schools or courses to spreading out academic deadlines.
- Contacting your President, bringing ideas to Your SU or having your voice heard on how the SU's democracy works. For example, declaring a "climate crisis" to lobby the University to be more sustainable.
- Support with campaigning and other projects for change.

Your SU has recently launched a new platform called [Change It](#), which is a way that students can submit ideas and collect support. It also helps to show the University and others that students care about what you want to change. All you need to submit an idea to Change It is an account on [Your SU's website](#) – but submitting the idea is just one step! In the next chapter, we will show you how to grow your idea into a campaign...



Part One: Growing Your Idea

What is a Campaign?

A campaign is a project to create change – this could be in public behaviour and attitudes, or in institutional policy and practice. Parts of a campaign can consist of:

- **Social Media Campaigns** - Encouraging others to join you in lobbying the government, University, or other organisations through social media.
- **Protest Demonstrations** – Demonstrations are public shows of support for, or against, an idea or policy. We will support you in developing safe, effective protest demonstrations by helping you with timings, risk assessments, and liaising with the police and the University. To do this we will need as much notice as possible. Some laws apply to these public demonstrations, such as the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) and the [Public Order Act 2023](#). We will help you navigate those!
- **Marches** – Similar to a demonstration but involving a public march from one area to another. [The police must be notified at least 6 days before the scheduled date of a march.](#)
- **Vigils** - Usually made as a response to a public tragedy such as a terrorist attack, natural disaster, or an incident involving a member of the University community. These are public displays of remembering loved ones affected by such incidents.
- **Lobbying Campaigns** - Influencing the University, government, or local authorities through persuasion and conversation.

This list is not exhaustive as there are many ways to campaign, however successful campaigns will usually include more than one of these campaigning tactics. Some examples of successful campaigns include:

- **[This Girl Can](#)** – A campaign that used creative means to get 1.6 million women exercising.
- **Refuge's '[The Naked Threat](#)' campaign** - A lobbying campaign to encourage the government to make the sharing of intimate images illegal. This was done through research, awareness-raising (both socially and politically), and 'positive disruption'.
- **[Students Against Apartheid](#)** - In 1969/1970 the National Union of Students led a campaign to end apartheid in South Africa. They did this by creating networks in British universities and colleges to call on the universities to divest in shares which the South African government profited from. This also included an organised boycott of Barclays Bank, who had large investments in South Africa.



Not all campaigns are a success, however, and it is important to learn from their mistakes to inform a successful campaign. Examples include:

- **The Occupy Movement** – Occurring in 2011/2012, the Occupy Movement demanded a change to democratic systems following the 2008 Banking Crisis. Ultimately, it was criticised for lacking a central message, failing to articulate things succinctly and having varying strategies, rather than a coherent strategy.
- **2010 Student Fee Protests** – The National Union of Students led protests to the proposed tripling of tuition fees in December 2010. Despite these protests, the proposition went ahead, with the legitimacy of the protests being questioned over allegations of violence.

What Isn't Campaigning?

- **Awareness-raising events** - Whilst these are great, campaigning involves having an aim to identify what you want to do and doing it. Being more 'aware' is a good start, but it is not a tangible end goal. Think about how you would measure the awareness of the population.
- **Producing a report with recommendations** - This is a good way to get the University to change things, however to make it a campaign it must be backed up by other activities.
- **Creating a Facebook group** - Facebook groups are wonderful to coordinate campaign activities, but online activity needs to translate into action. They should be a part of a campaign, not the overall end-goal.
- **Producing leaflets, posters, or promotional material** - This is great to raise your profile, but what impact are you looking to have on decision-makers such as the University?

Local, National, and International Problems That Have Affected Students

To give you an idea of some of the issues facing students, here are some local, national, and international examples. This list is only a few of the many issues a student might face.

Local	National	International
Food offered by universities being sub-standard.	The cost of university, including tuition and maintenance fees.	Gender inequality in access to education.
Buildings at a university being demolished, or repurposed.	Political attitudes towards the purpose of education.	International economic conditions.
The affordability of housing around the area.	University funding.	Colonialism and racism in education.
Campus safety and local crime.	Student mental health support.	How universities respond to the climate crisis
Transport around campus.	The job market for students.	Academic freedom of expression and free speech.

Protests – Be Prepared!

If you decide that your campaign also requires a protest, make sure you are prepared and have access to the following. Remember, if your protest has a march as part of it that you also need to notify the police at least 6 days ahead of time.



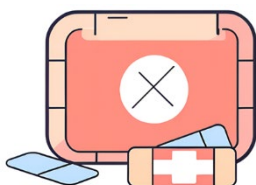
Bottles of Water – for hydration. Aim to have a clear, plastic bottle of water and make sure that all protestors have access to water.

Snacks – for energy, and morale! Make sure to bring plenty.



Weather-appropriate clothes – make sure to have layers if out in the cold.

A way to keep in contact with others – helpful for if other students want to join but don't know where to find you, and to stay in contact with Your SU



Bandages, plasters, and a First Aid contact – plasters and helpful for minor injuries, but if anything else occurs make sure you have a First Aid contact.

This is not an exhaustive list – make sure to look up tips online of other things you can pack for protests.

Problem Statement

Now you are aware of some campaign tactics, what campaigning is and isn't, and some successful campaigns, try to succinctly write down what the issue you want to campaign about is, who it affects, and why it is important.

Remember, this is your initial problem statement – try to make it as concise and to-the-point as possible.

Change It! – What Is It, How Does It Work, and Why Should You Care?

Change It is Your SU's platform for students to suggest an idea or change to implement. This might be to suggest Your SU changes their approach to things, or to ask Your SU to lobby the University to change their approaches. For a submission to be approved, it must:

- Come from a registered student at the University of Sunderland, who is a member of the Union.
- Not violate the law. For example, the submission cannot be libelous, defamatory, or directly call for an illegal action. In this instance, "direct" refers to the explicit call for action related to the change. For example, a submission referring to the introduction of a harm reduction-informed drug policy at the University would not violate this, whereas a submission actively calling for students to take illegal substances would.
- Not violate the University's [Student Conduct Policy](#) or [Your SU's Principles](#).
- Be submitted in good faith.
- Fit within the current governance of the Students' Union. If it does not, they will be contacted with the appropriate route to change governance.
- Fit within the Your SU's current resource. This includes the cost implication directly on the Student Union, the level of staff resources that would be warranted to implement the submission, as well as the sufficiency of physical space to afford the submission.
- Specify the campus it is most relevant to.

An easy way to ensure that you follow these guidelines is the answer the following questions in your submission:

- What headline should the submission use?
- What is the idea underpinning the submission?
- Why is it relevant to students?
- What impact would this have on the student population?
- What campus does this predominantly affect?

If you haven't hit the guidelines don't worry – we will talk you through how to submit your idea whilst hitting all of the guidelines. Once submitted, your idea will be published on Your SU's website, with students being able to 'thumbs up' in agreement or 'thumbs down' in disagreement with your idea. You will typically have 28 calendar days to collect 30 interactions, with the majority of the interactions being positive, for the idea to be considered by Your SU. This means that if your submission has 20 likes and 10 dislikes, it will still be considered. Once the threshold is reached, you will be contacted by a member of Your SU's staff with next steps. From here, Your SU will provide help and guidance on forming a Campaign Team with members of Your SU's staff, any other engaged students, and relevant student representatives.

Sunderland
Students' Union

Your Union ▾ Support ▾ **Make it Happen ▾** Volunteering ▾ Societies ▾ Events

Our Impact Report 23-24

Student Reps

Your Officers

Elections

Change It

Campaigns

Union Council

Your Freshers

Your Freshers is coming soon and the full programme of events will be live!

Check out our dedicated Freshers hub to find out everything you need to know and start getting your event tickets!

Explore Your Freshers →

- On Your SU's homepage, hover over Make It Happen and select Change It.

- Under Top Links, select Submit Your Idea

How it works +

What happens after my idea's been approved? +

Top Links

View Ideas

Submit Your Idea

- Enter your idea and click Submit Your Idea.

Select Type *

Idea ▾

Select Category *

Sunderland Ideas ▾

Title *

Title

Description *

This is where to put the information

☐ Post anonymously

Featured Image

Choose File No file chosen

Supported image formats are [.jpeg, .jpg, .png, .x-png, .gif, .bmp, .svg]

SUBMIT YOUR IDEA/PETITION

BACK

Petitions

In some cases, Your SU may decide that your submission would be better formatted as a petition. This removes the 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs down' feature, and instead calls for students to sign the petition in agreement. Situations where ideas may be turned into petitions include:

- Your SU is already working on this idea but could use the petition as data collection to show the University that students support an idea.
- The submission is a reaction against a decision and is therefore time sensitive.
- The submission is a Vote of No Confidence (VONC) against a President. This is a submission which voices a dissatisfaction in an elected representative and calls for their democratic removal.

Petitions will usually have more formal language than an idea submission. A member of SU staff will get in touch if they think your idea would benefit from being a petition, so make sure to monitor your emails after submitting an idea. Remember to finish it with a call to students to sign in support of your petition! Petitions do not have a threshold to be considered by Your SU, instead functioning as a way to show support for an idea which is already in motion.

"But I'm just one student!"

This might seem like a lot for one student to do! A good way to look at it is that if you are able to convince just three people to thumbs up your idea, and each of them tell a further three people, and the further three people tell another three people, then you will be there in no time! Make use of student networks, such as societies or your course rep, to see if you can send the message out and spread the effort of having to ask people for their support. Your SU are not able to send Change It submissions in student newsletters or share specific submissions on social media, but you are more than welcome to reach out to networks that list their contact information on our website, such as [societies](#) or [course reps](#).



Turning Your Idea into A Successful Campaign

A successful campaign is:

- Widely Felt - The more people who care, the more people you can get involved with.
- Deeply Felt - People won't do anything about an issue they don't care about.
- Winnable - We must be realistic and base our efforts on things that are possible to change.

Now that you have more information on submitting to Change It we need to analyse the issue to show that it will be a good campaign.

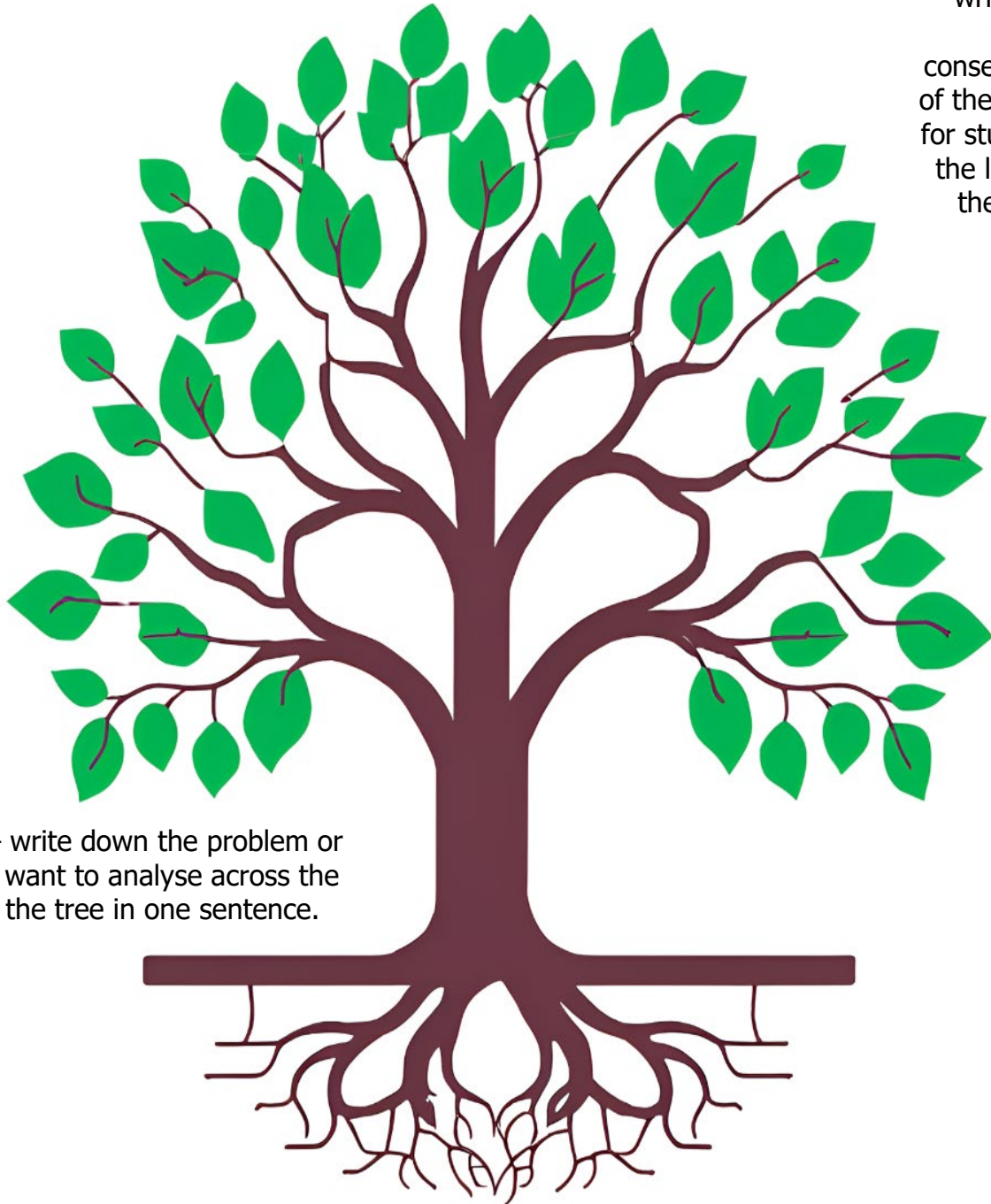
What evidence do you have that a lot of students care about this issue?

How can you convince students that don't currently care that they should?

Analysing Your Issue – Problem Tree

A great way to think about identifying the problem is through using a 'problem tree':

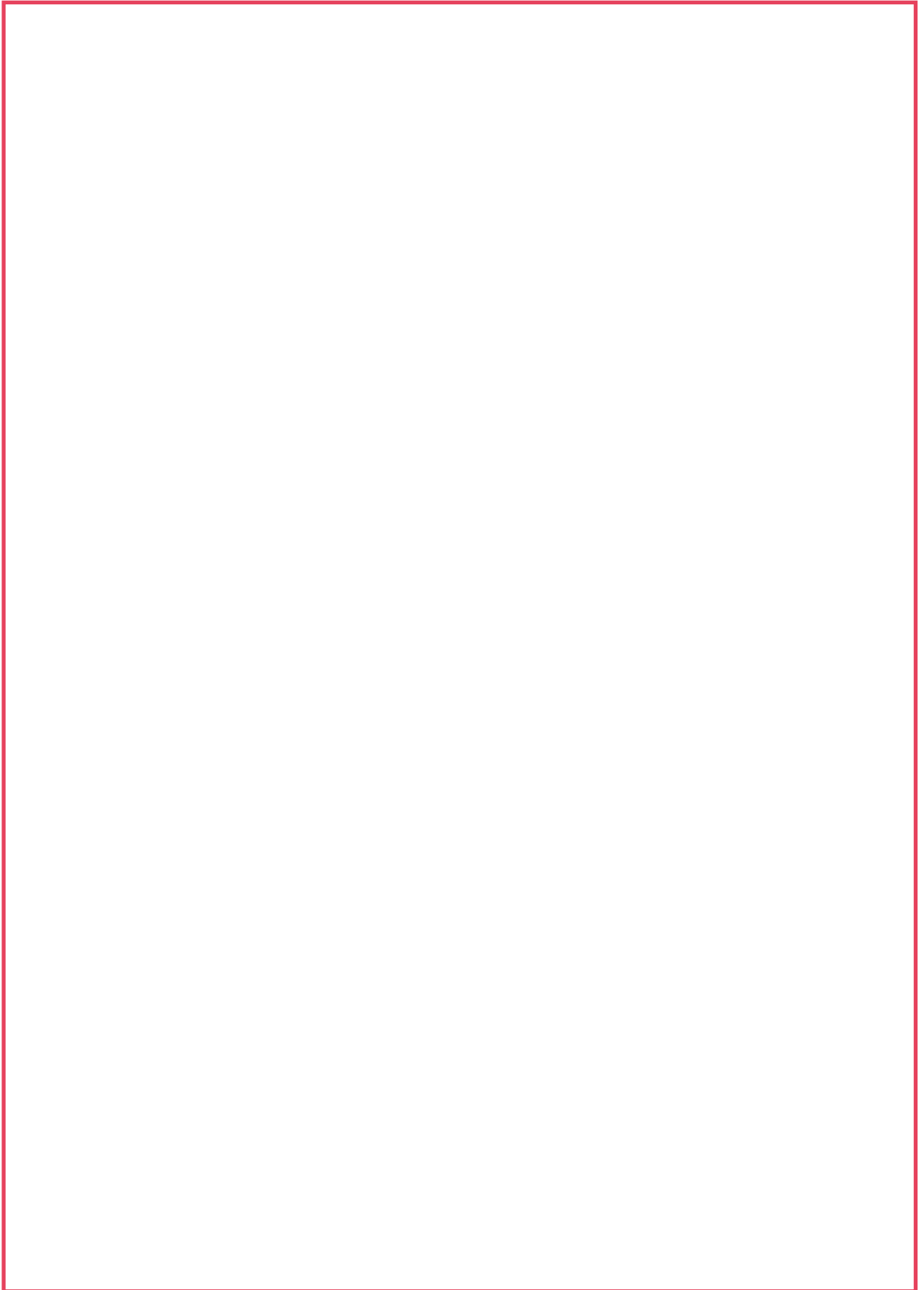
Consequences
– write down
the
consequences
of the problem
for students in
the leaves of
the tree.



Problem – write down the problem or
issue you want to analyse across the
trunk of the tree in one sentence.

Causes – write down the causes of the problem as the
roots of the tree.

Use this space for your own problem tree!

A large, empty rectangular box with a red border, occupying the majority of the page. It is intended for the user to draw their own problem tree.

Your Campaign Plan

So now that you know what your issue is and are equipped with the initial evidence to know that people care and are passionate about it. It is time to plan your campaign!

What is the problem you are trying to solve?	
What is the reason behind this problem?	
What is the outcome you are wanting? What will have changed because of your campaign?	
What is the measurable outcome you want to achieve? What would be a 'win' for you?	
How will you make this change?	

Further Support

- [Beautiful Trouble](#) – An online campaigning toolkit with information on tactics, methodologies, principles, and theories.
- [More Onion](#) – A digital mobilisation platform with plenty of free reports on digital campaign tactics.
- [Impact Stack](#) – A generator which gives you information on a random campaigning tactic every time you press the button.
- [Sheila McKechnie Foundation](#) – A charity dedicated to enabling campaigns with lots of free resources.
- [WonkHE](#) – Higher Education news blog that spotlights issues affecting students.
- [Campaign Strategy](#) – Guidelines, tips and suggestions for changemakers.
- [Act Build Change](#) – Trainings, opportunities, and ideas for community organising and campaigning.
- [The Commons Social Change Library](#) – Thousands of free educational resources for social change.
- [The Rules](#) – A toolkit for 'culture hacking' as part of campaigns.
- [Bond](#) – A guide to 'Theory of Change', a step-by-step process on changemaking and influencing.
- [Change It](#) – Your SU's idea and petition platform.

Part Two: Growing Your Campaign

When should I submit an idea to Change It?

This will depend on the nature of your campaign. Things to consider are:

- If there are any time sensitivities, for example if the University has announced a change that would impact a lot of students very soon then you would want to submit something as soon as possible.
- Is there already evidence that there is a demand for your idea? If not, you may want to talk to students to see if your idea is well received before submitting it.
- In most cases, you should submit your idea after going through the activities in Part One!

When is an idea a campaign?

Having an idea passed using Change It should never be the end goal: it should be the first step in growing your idea into a campaign. An idea becomes a campaign when it is sustainable – it shouldn't depend on one person who may be leaving soon! It should also be based in evidence. Past your initial look into whether students support your idea, you should conduct research to further support the goals of your campaign.

Methods for Collecting Research

Your campaign will be so much more impactful if you base it on evidence. As a Students' Union we conduct research as part of all of our campaigns. Collecting evidence will help identify the change students need, as well as giving more reach, breadth, and power to the campaign. Evidence and data don't have to be numerical – words count as data too!

What is evidence?

Facts Recorded Impact Proven Results Choices made because of an event Outputs and Outcomes.	Figures Student Demographics Data Financial Data Census Data
Opinion Opinion Polls Surveys Focus Groups Case Studies Referenda and Elections	Analysis Policy Evaluations

In a good campaign, you want to gather thick amounts of quantitative (often numerical, measurable) or qualitative data (non-numerical/linguistic). A great campaign will collect both, which complement each other.

How could you go about measuring evidence?

Research Method	How?
Personal Contact with students	Go out and chat with students, you could use your own social media for quick snap polls.
Surveys	You can either do this face to face or online and find out the breadth and depth of an issue, but don't forget to publish the results.
Mapping	Map out the different types of students at the university and use this as a clue to give you more issues about issues affecting students.
Meetings/Focus Groups	You can use small focus groups to gather case studies and ask questions of a group of students who have an experience that relates to your campaign. Larger meetings could be used to invite a speaker in for additional information or to create more support for your campaign.
Freedom of Information Requests	Freedom of Information Requests can be used to request information from other bodies – the next page has a case study and examples of this in campaigns.

This is not an exhaustive list and there are many methods of collecting and measuring evidence – Your SU is always happy to chat about different methods you could use. Remember that evidence-collecting is a step in a campaign and should not be the goal. Keep in mind that collected data should be used to inform another step of your campaign, whether that be persuasion or policy-writing: make sure the data you collect is used!

Some suggestions of tools you can use to help are:

- [Google Forms](#) – A free online survey tool.
- [Qualtrics](#) – A more advanced online survey platform that is included in your University account.
- [Zoom](#) – An online video meeting software which can be used to host focus groups.
- [Microsoft](#) – An online video meeting software which can be used to host focus groups.
- [Microsoft Teams](#) – An online video meeting software which all students have access to.
- [Instagram](#) – Has a handy 'poll' feature on Instagram stories.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

The Freedom of Information Act can be used to obtain information from public authorities such as:

- Central government departments and agencies.
- House of Parliament, devolved assemblies.
- Local authorities.
- NHS bodies including CSUs, CCG's, GPs, dentists, opticians, and pharmacists.
- Schools (including free schools and academies), further education colleges, and **universities**.
- The police, fire, and ambulance services.
- The armed forces.
- Publicly owned companies – such as Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs).
- The BBC and Channel 4.
- Museums.

There are situations when FOI requests can be denied. This can be when it may cost too much when the request is vexatious (likely to cause disproportionate distress, disruption, or irritation), contains personal information or contains information that may endanger a person or business. Organisations which do not fit into the list above are not subject to FOI requests, such as Your SU.

To create an FOI request you must contact the organisation in writing via letter, email, or occasionally an online form. You must include your name, a contact postal or email address, and a detailed description of the information you want - for example, you might want all information held on a subject, or just a summary. More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/make-a-freedom-of-information-request/how-to-make-an-foi-request>

Case Study - UNISON

In 2015, the UNISON trade union started a campaign to lobby for a real living wage. Within this, they completed a comprehensive FOI request to every NHS trust, local government council/authority, university, FE college and 6th form college across the UK.

This looked to identify which employers were paying at least the living wage to all members of staff.

They reflected that their key lessons learnt was:

- Plan well with a timeline. This exercise took them 3 months, which included follow up emails.
- Ask Precise Questions – they wanted to know if they paid their staff living wage, so they asked that.
- Response Rates - There were public bodies that didn't respond, mostly because they sent emails to generic email addresses. If possible, you should try to find the person responsible for FOI requests.

Your Space to Plan

Use this space to plan how you will gather evidence to support your campaign.

Campaign Name:	
Problem Statement:	As concisely as possible, your problem statement.
What feedback method will you use?	E.g. Verbally speaking to students/speaking to students online, surveys, focus groups, large meetings.
What is your target?	How many students would you like to talk to? Who is your target audience? (Students in a particular faculty? Or who are involved in a particular activity?)
What is your key messaging?	What exactly do you want to find out?

Feedback from Evidence – What Can Be Learned?

There's no point in collecting feedback if you don't use the information you've collected! Use this table to summarise your findings, and make sure to refer back to it at a later time.

How many students did you speak to?	
What information did you find out?	
Did you face any challenges whilst gaining this feedback?	
What are you proud of?	
Is there anything you'd change next time?	

Part Three: Getting Support and Changing It

Getting People on Your Side

At this point, you have put a lot of work and effort into your campaign. It's easy try to act as a 'lone wolf' in your campaign, but in order for it to be sustainable and truly make a difference you need to make sure others are on your side and willing to work with you to campaign. This chapter will cover getting support amongst other student communities, how to communicate your campaign in order to persuade others to support it, and other useful tools to help map out who is likely to support your campaign.

Social Media and Networking

Social Media and Social Networks are increasingly useful tools to spread information about your campaign and ensure that it gathers supporters. Some useful platforms for getting your message out there include:

- WhatsApp – useful for communicating with members of a campaign team on the progress of any actions related to the campaign.
- Instagram – useful for informing current supporters on any progress, and for attracting new supporters who care about your cause.
- TikTok – useful for promoting the aims of your campaign.
- Your SU's website – useful for organising events for students to attend.

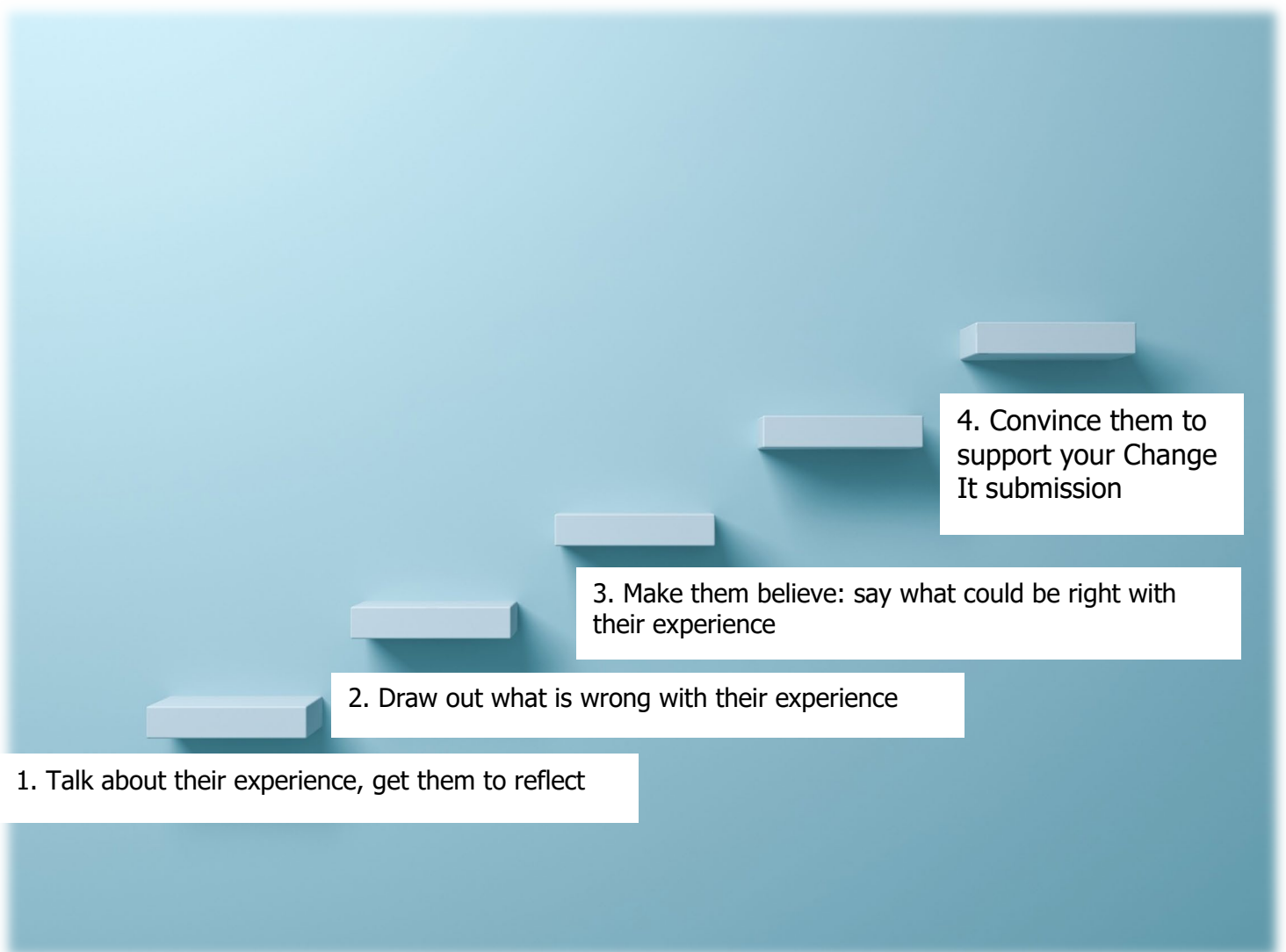
When using digital methods of attracting supporters, its important to keep in mind that digital messages are easier to communicate to an audience, but also easier to dismiss by the audience. Think about how many email newsletters you might be signed up to, compared to how many you actually read. This means that digital methods of attracting supporters can be complimentary to physically talking to and engaging with students in-person to find out what matters most to them, and hopefully get their support.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down

It can be disheartening to see a 'thumbs down' on your submission, or for someone to tell you that they don't agree or care as much as you. It is important, however, to be able to see the reception your idea is getting. It might be useful for you to know that people like things as they are, or that your idea might impact a different group of students negatively compared to others. Try to take every thumbs down as a moment to reflect on how your idea could impact others, and use it to plan accordingly on how you would change your idea so that you can minimise negative consequences.

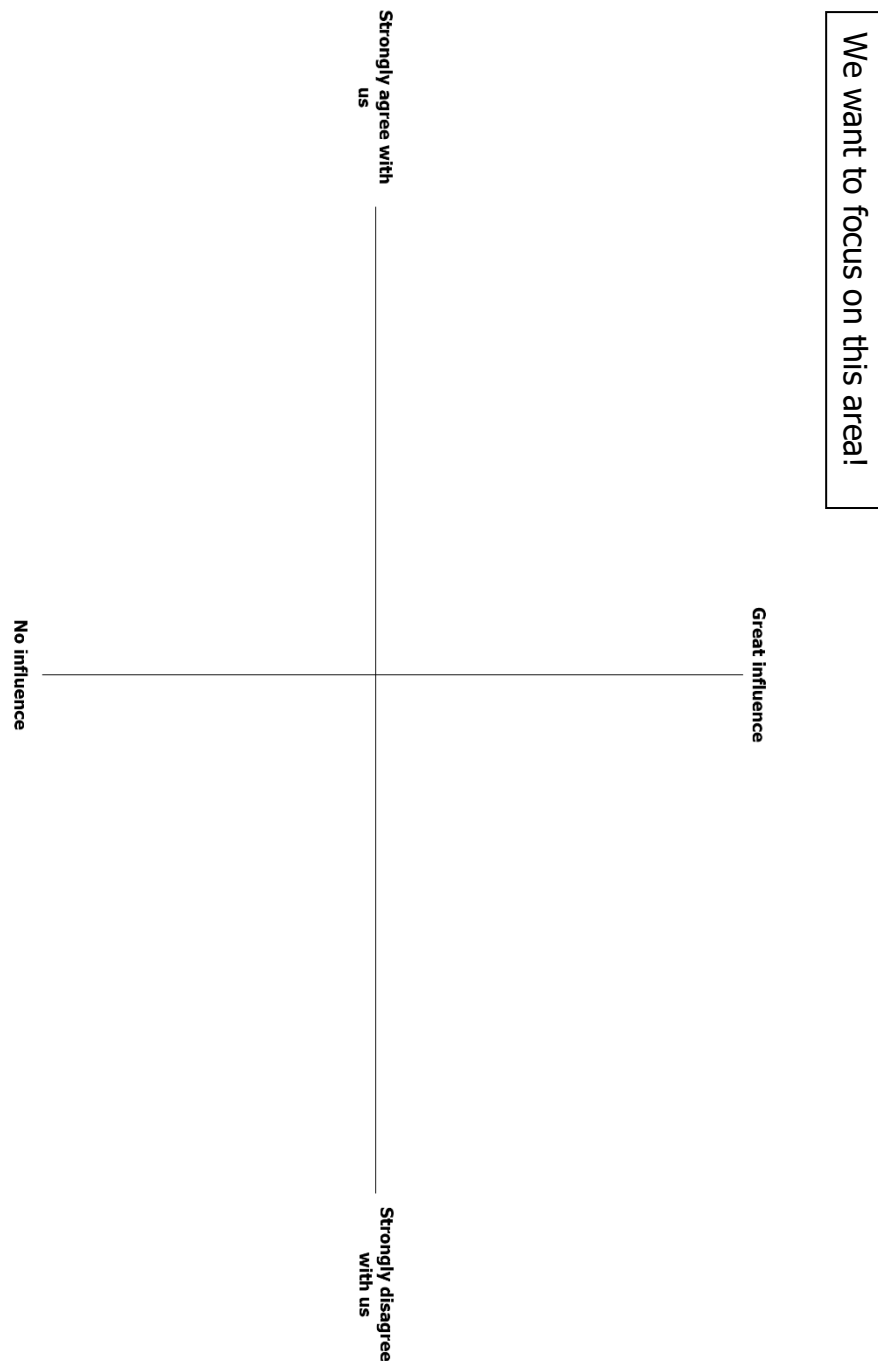
Apathy Staircase

When talking to others about the issue that is important to you, it is helpful to know that not everyone will have the same level of passion or may not agree with you. A helpful tool to help combat this is the Apathy Staircase. The Apathy Staircase is a model to follow when talking to people, both online and in-person, to get them on your side. Start at the bottom of the staircase, and then move your way up



Power Mapping

When focussing our efforts on creating change, we need to make sure we are impacting people who strongly agree with us, and have influence over decisions to make sure the change goes through. Sometimes, it can help to visualise things on a 'power map'.



Task List

Use this page to keep a track of any actions relating to your campaign that you, or your Campaign Team, need to do.

Task	Person Responsible	Comments	Complete
Summarise the task here.	Who is going to do this?	Anything addition	Tick when done!

Part Four: Evaluation of Your Campaign

Well done for completing your campaign! Whether you have achieved the end result of your campaign or made significant steps towards it before completing your course, you have done incredibly well! The following are some prompt questions for self-reflection and evaluating your campaign.

Campaign Name:	
What impact did your campaign have? What would you class as your 'wins'?	
Have you told students what you have done with their feedback? How can you ensure students know about your wins? Is there someone you can hand your campaign over to?	
How could your campaign have been improved?	

What lessons have you learned from this campaign?

What skills did you learn because of this campaign?

What are you most proud of?