

RUNNING WINNING CAMPAIGNS AT RUSU

2021/22



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RUNNING WINNING CAMPAIGNS

Creating positive change for students is one of the primary reasons RUSU, and other Students' Unions in the UK, exist. At RUSU we want to make students' lives better and so campaigning is a key part of the Strategic Operating Plan.

Campaigning is important because it:

- Brings about positive change for students
- Visibly represents students
- Makes sure the voices of students are heard
- Engages and empowers the students who get involved
- Gives students and representatives the opportunity to lead their union

It also enables students to develop transferable skills such as communication skills, project management, event planning and publicity etc. when they take part.

Who can get involved in campaigning, and how:

- **Full-time Officers**
Lead campaigns on campus on issues which affect students, but also work on local and national campaigns ensuring that RUSU achieves positive changes for our students.
- **Part-time Officers**
Lead on campaigns which affect a specific group of students (the group the PTO represents). This could be a RUSU campaign or supporting a local or national campaign (such as NUS). Also supporting and working with FTOs to carry out relevant campaigns.
- **Academic Reps**
Run campaigns which create change relevant to students on their course or in their school. They might also support the Education Officer in their campaigning.
- **Student Groups**
Run campaigns which create change relevant to students in their sports club, society or volunteering group. They might also support other national campaigns relevant to their cause.
- **Students**
Run campaigns on issues which they are passionate about. These can be based on an issue at university or something in the local community or a national issue. They can also get involved with campaigns any of RUSU's Student Reps, Full-time Officers, Part-time Officers and Academic Reps, are running.

The change you want to create will depend on the aim of your campaign. You may wish to change a particular policy or practice or to raise awareness of a particular issue affecting the students / student group you have been elected to represent. Whatever the issue, you have to make sure that you are having a positive effect on the campaign issue you are trying to influence. Planning effectively ensures that you meet your intended aims. This will help you avoid any unintended negative consequences from your campaigning.



Campaigning Effectively

NCVO describe effective campaigning as:

- a process, not an event
- about achieving specific impacts, not just raising awareness of problems
- about developing strategies based on research and analysis rather than guesswork
- about choosing approaches and deploying resources where they will have most impact
- communicating in ways which resonate with those you seek to influence

...thinking and acting strategically (which is something you do and practice as a trustee)

Here at RUSU we agree with this and it is important that we are creating **tangible change**. Something which is based on evidence and that you can measure an impact.

A campaign is a set of activities with a clear, achievable aim and a call to action that seeks positive change to benefit students.

What type of campaigns happen at RUSU?

Broadly speaking you can split campaigning at RUSU into 4 main themes:

1. Behaviour change campaigns

A campaign which focusses on altering students' actions or beliefs. This will often include education as well as tools for change. These campaigns often do not see results very quickly as it takes time for people to change their behavior.

These campaigns should still be focused on change. Raising awareness is not a goal in itself!

e.g. I <3 Consent – this is a long term campaign (over a few years now) to encourage students to adopt a safe consent culture



2. Policy change campaigns

A campaign which seeks to alter or create a union, university or other policy. This could include stating support for the cause and/or altering systems to support students around the problem. It can also include more concrete changes.

This will often involve a lot of 'behind the scenes' work: writing papers, attending committees and standing up for students' views.

e.g. Free Periods – ensuring that RUSU provides free sanitary products to students



3. Promotional campaigns

A campaign which aims to promote a particular event or product. The aim could be to sell tickets, to get people to come to an event, to buy a particular product, or to change behaviour around a particular product.

e.g. Summer Ball promotion – to get people to buy tickets to the event



4. Elections campaigns

These are run by candidates around any election that RUSU holds. They are to prepare and present the ideas a candidate has to the student population with the aim to secure votes. They will often include a manifesto as well as different campaign activities such as social media, lobbying and branding.

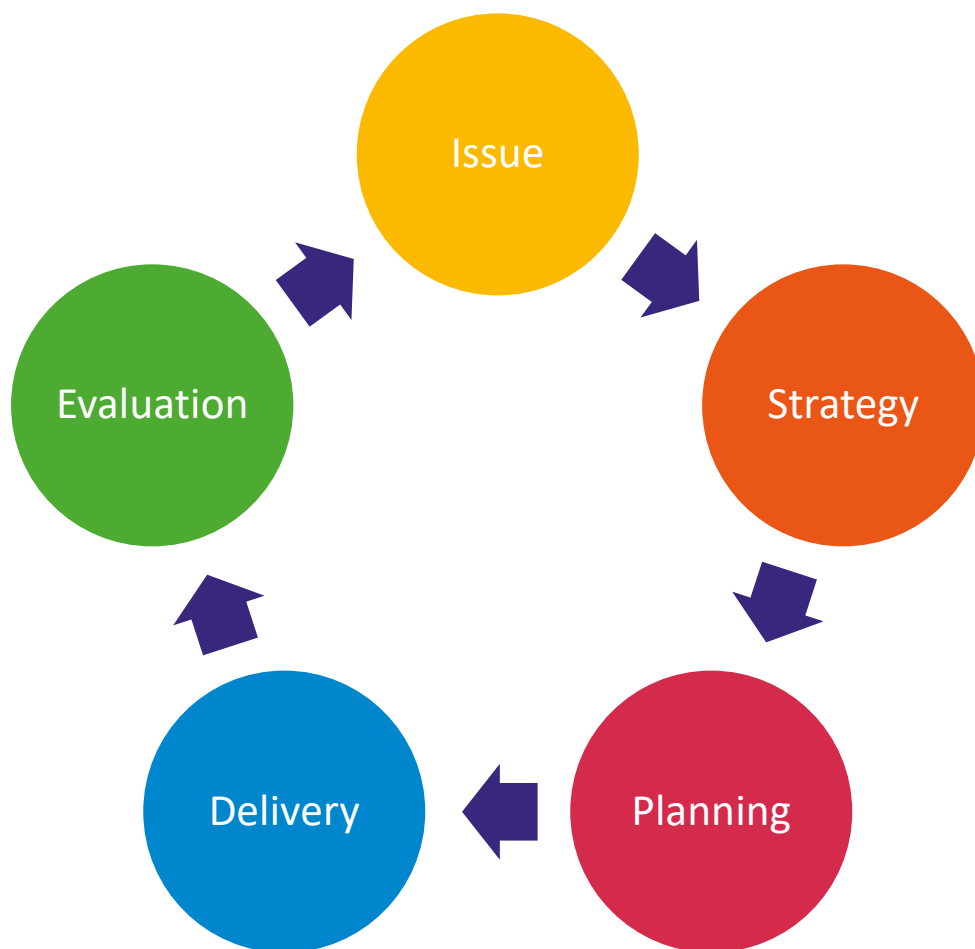
e.g. a candidate running to be the next Education Officer – to raise their profile and to get students to vote for them.



RUSU Reps tend to focus on the first two although will be, or will have been, involved in all types of campaigning at RUSU.

Not everything will be a campaign. Some things might be more like a project, a piece of work or just a one off event.

Carrying out your campaign



1. Issue

Where has the idea come from?
 Collecting your evidence
 Who should be involved?
 Exploring the issue
 The environment (internal and external)

2. Strategy

Developing a clear aim
 How to achieve the aim
 What can be evaluated

3. Planning

Making an action plan
 Creating risk assessments
 How to involve others
 Budget

4. Delivery

Understanding the audience
 Communicating with target audience
 Ongoing monitoring

5. Evaluation

Evaluating the impact
 Shouting about your wins
 Recognising setbacks

This document will work through these themes to create a winning campaign plan.

Issue

The whole point of a campaign is to make a difference. There is an issue that you have come across and you want to change it.

Issue = problem (the thing you want to change)

Where has the idea come from?

Campaign issues may come from various places:

Manifestos



These are the things that, back in February, you decided were a problem for students. They will be to do with your remit and are about making the lives of students better.

Change It!



These are changes that students want that have been submitted through Change It!. The ideas will have gone through a scrutiny process and been voted on at Student Voice and by the student population. RUSU is mandated to carry out the campaigns (up to 2 a term and held for 2 years).

University



The university often want to work together on campaigns. This is to make the lives of students better but can also focus on the community and university staff.

Reactive campaigns



These are a response to something which has happened. They are often fast paced and unlikely to have been planned for.

National issues



These are based on a national issue. It might be something another group is campaigning on such as the NUS. Remember that when finding issues like this they must affect students as students.

It is important that the issue is something which affects the students you are representing.

The law around campaigning for SUs says we can campaign on something which affects:

1. Students as students
2. Students in the near future (e.g. graduate employment)
3. Future students as students (e.g. change in funding that will take place in the future)

Although it **must** fit into one of the three categories.

e.g. Local authority not collecting bins on time – this will be affecting students, but it is affecting them as residents, it isn't a problem **BECAUSE** they are a student.
We cannot campaign on this

e.g. The local authority is introducing a student tax on properties to cover the cost of the litter left – this will be affecting students as students. It is only happening because they are a student
We can campaign on this

The most effective campaigns are based on a strong understanding of the issue and how it affects students. It might be something that is only felt by a small group of students although it is better to focus on something that affects the larger student body because your change will have an impact on more students.

fewer campaigns
=
more time to spend on
each one
=
more likely to make a
change

Collecting your evidence

As a union, it is vital RUSU is seen as the representative body on campus. To do this effectively, it is important to ensure that we can evidence the campaigns are based on our members' needs and views.



Why do campaigns have to be backed up with evidence?

- To justify use of resources
- So you know it is definitely an issue (and not a perceived issue)
- To understand how widely an issue affects students and which student groups it affects
- So you know which areas to target your campaign on (this will make it more effective)

The evidence could be number based or statistics, it could be personal accounts from people or it could be from a report you've read or lecture you've attended.

It can also be primary (you've collected it yourself - **research**) or secondary (you are using someone else's evidence).

Where to get evidence:

- Do it yourself (with support)
 - Speak to students
 - Do a survey
 - Hold a focus group
- RUSU evidence
 - Surveys we have put out
 - Statistics (e.g. how many drinks sold on a Union night)
- NUS sources
 - NUS surveys
 - NUS recognised surveys (on their website)
- University evidence
 - Surveys that are carried out nationally
 - PTES (Post-graduate Taught Experience Survey)
- HESA (Higher Education Statistics Survey)
- NSS (National Student Survey)
- UKES (UK Experience Survey)
 - Statistics (e.g. how many people access the Counselling and Wellbeing service)
- External sources
 - Office of National Statistics (ONS)
 - Government departments
 - Think tanks
 - Academic research
 - Other charity research

Once you have some evidence you can use it in a few ways:

1. **Inspire**
It can be to get you thinking and create a base for your issue and how to explore it
2. **Inform**
It can be used during the campaign to demonstrate its importance or to raise awareness of the campaign
3. **Improve**
It can be used as evidence for policy changes, to hold decision makers to account and to learn from others

You might discover that what you thought was an issue is not. That is okay, it will give you time to focus on something else!

Who should be involved

the more people involved from the beginning
=
the more people who are invested in the campaign

Involving other people at this stage of the campaign is **especially** important if you are not an expert on the problem. They can help you to refine the issue so you know you are working on the change you want to see.

It doesn't matter how good your campaign is, if you haven't correctly identified the problem then you won't create change.

Who can you involve?

- **Students**
Talking to students means you get people engaged from the start which may help you identify activists who can help deliver the campaign. They can also help you to identify the problem as they will be experiencing it.
- **RUSU Staff**
Staff all have different interests and you might find someone is an expert on your issue – it might be worth involving them.
- **University Staff**
It can be good to get university staff involved as it can help add weight to your campaign if it is a joint effort. There are also a lot of very specialist staff who will know lots on certain issues.
- **Expert charities**
Charities carry out a lot of research, it can be good to have a look for what information they can provide and if you can use their expertise or findings in any way. Remember Charity Law (CC9) when you are working with other charities or using their evidence.

Exploring the issue

Now you have your evidence and know that your idea is actually an issue you can begin to delve deeper and work out the cause of the problem. This will help you to come up with a solution later on.

You need to give the idea plenty of consideration! The more you think about it, the more effective the campaign will be as you will be able to focus your efforts. Ask yourself lots of questions. This thought process will help you identify the issue, what causes the issue and what you want to change to solve

the problem. Thinking about the causes and the effects of the problem can help to refine it to make your campaign aim more specific.

A great way to think about this is by creating a problem tree:

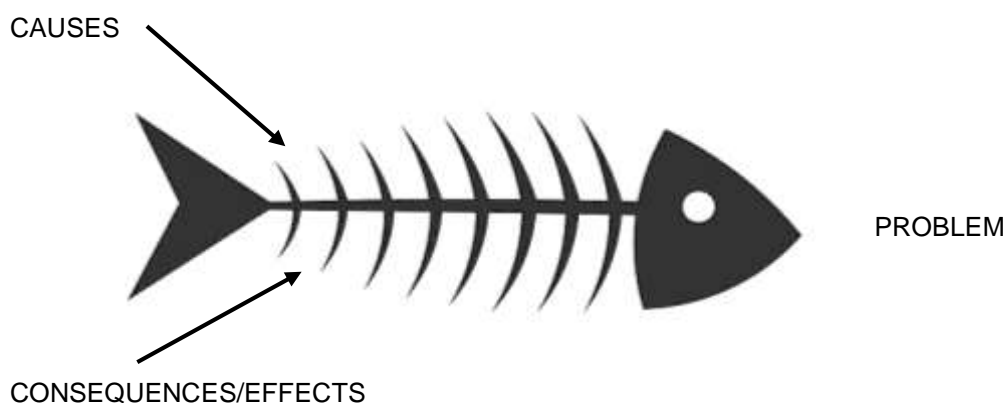
EFFECTS: Like the leaves on a tree, the effects are what you can see. They are the things which the problem has caused

PROBLEM: This is just a rough idea for now but jot down the main problem or issue

CAUSES: Like the roots of a tree, the causes are the things you cannot see but have created the problem. To help, ask yourself **why** the problem exists



Another method to get you thinking about the causes and effects is fishboning. It explores the same themes as the problem tree although follows a different format.



When you have created your tree (or fish) it is good to go back to the problem statement (what you have put on your trunk or head) to refine it and be more specific. The more specific you are about what the problem is, the easier it will be to tackle.

The environment

Before going head first into a campaign it is good to think about the environment (as in time of the year, decision maker's agenda and what is happening in the local area rather than plants, animals and the sea!).

There are a few different 'environment' aspects to consider:

- **The decision maker's timeline for change**

Imagine you are trying to change a senior member of university staff's mind about something and hoping that they will change a policy. They also want to make this change but they have 4 things which they think are more important which they need to get done first. This means that the policy update is on their plan in a couple of years. No matter how hard you try to convince them of its importance, they will not focus on it for a couple of years.

This might mean that your efforts are better used on something else for now – is there another problem where you can focus your efforts? This might be something you come back to or hand over to another officer.



- **The time of year**

This is a really important one when thinking about your campaign, especially in a Students' Union. The longer it has to be worked on the better it will be, so it is worth starting early.

Another thing to remember, which may seem obvious, is when students will be around. When can you get their help and when will they engage most with the campaign? Over deadline season just before Christmas, over breaks and during the summer term students are not very receptive.



- **The world around you**

This is things that are happening in the world such as Brexit, climate change and country relationships. It may seem as though these things won't have an effect on your campaign here at RUSU but they can sometimes have a knock on effect.

e.g. Brexit

This is creating some uncertainty at the university. This might mean that because they are planning for the effects Brexit will cause, they have less time to focus on other things, such as your campaign



If you have considered this and use it to plan your campaign later on then it will be more effective.

It might be that, having spent some time to identify your issue, you realise that it is not a problem at all or only affects a small group of people. That is okay. It is good to challenge your views and be your own devil's advocate. Something that you thought was a problem might not be, or it might not be anymore. This is okay because it means you can focus your efforts somewhere else.

Strategy

You have spent a lot of time thinking about your issue. The next steps are thinking about how you will change this and have an impact on it. What is it exactly that you want to change?

Developing a clear aim

Once you are confident you've identified the issue, you need to identify the solution. This is known as the impact and is what your campaign will be working towards.

Using the same technique, the tree, to refine the problem, you can create your impact statement. This can help you to identify the change you want to see.

"The World's Best Birthday Cake"



IMPACT: This is the ideal situation, the aim of your campaign, the change you wish to see or the impact you want to make

SOLUTIONS: These are the things that need to be changed in order to see your impact

EFFECTS: These are the differences your solution will make, the effects they will have

Remember that as you do this you will need to think about the campaigning environment. If you are aware of the things that are happening, or might set you back, then you can plan your campaign around it for on more effective change.

How to achieve the aim

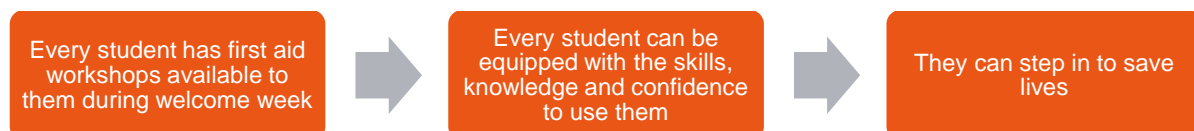
The problem has been identified and now you have an impact you are hoping to achieve, so what is next?

You will need to identify manageable steps to achieve your impact. This is the point you will break down your impact statement to decide how to actually go about it.

As you start to consider the change you want to see in smaller steps your campaign might take on one form over another. Campaigns are generally broken down into two areas, although can use both techniques for change.

The next step is to break the impact down into outcomes. This means the significant changes that lead to the final impact. There maybe two or three for your campaign.

An outcome can often take the form of a 'so that' statement. This can get you thinking about the steps you need to take.



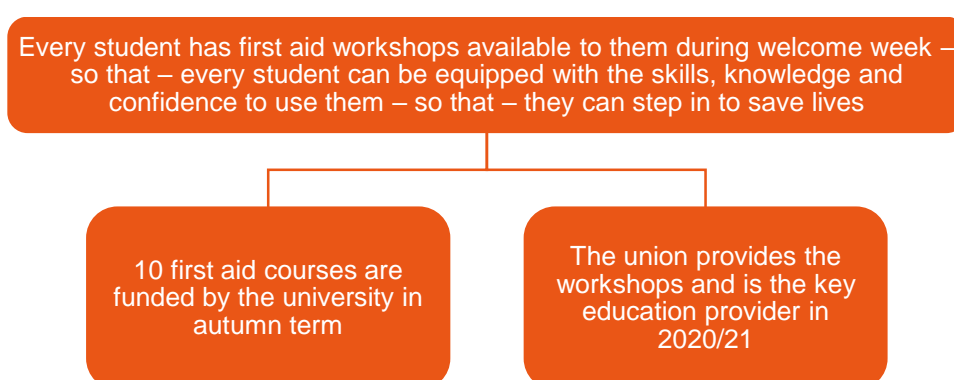
Smart goals

From there you will break each outcome down further to smart goals. These smart goals are the specific results of the work you do. They are often more tangible than outcomes. They are things that you can measure or are more manageable to understand.

- S** – specific
- M** – measurable
- A** – achievable
- R** – relevant
- T** – timely



(back to the example)



What can be evaluated

Before you begin your campaign it is good to think about how you'll know you have achieved your aim. Without monitoring a campaign there is no way to check the progress.

Have a think about two or three things that you can measure to achieve your goal. These are often along similar lines to your evidence because it can be an easy way to see before and after.



Here is an idea of some of the things you could measure:

- How many clients are the money advisers seeing a week?
- How many pints of beer are sold on a Union night?
- Number of new memberships to student groups per month
- How many people report on the #NeverOk system?

Some changes and objectives are not as measurable as others. For example, it can be really difficult to measure changes in behaviour and awareness. Think out of the box and find things to measure your work against that we might not already have thought of!

Planning

All great campaigns start with thorough planning and development. You need to spend plenty of time planning your campaign. Don't jump ahead without putting together a great, well-thought out plan.

Making an action plan

This is where you will start to plan your campaign activities. Remember that when you do this you must be able to show how each one is achieving your aim.

An action plan is essentially a fancy to do list. It includes all the activities you will carry out as part of your campaign and will include whose job it is, when it needs to be done by and any extra things to remember.

Planning the activities is your chance to get creative.

Some of your activities might include things like:

- Lobbying university staff to get their support
- Giving evidence at meetings or committees
- Putting out information on social media
- Hosting an event
- Giving out campaign merchandise
- Speaking to students

But there are many more ideas too!

To reach your audiences and ensure that you are working effectively towards your campaign aim it is important to use a variety of activities.



change.org



Creating risk assessments

Throughout your campaign there might be some aspects which need some more pre-planning.

You may have heard of risk assessments before, especially in a health and safety situation. Campaign risk assessments are similar although aren't about what you might trip over on the floor.

A campaign risk assessment is thinking about the things which could risk the campaign itself; things which will stop you achieving your impact.

Some of these things might be things you have already considered when you thought about the environment. If not, now is a great time to have a think.

How to write a risk assessment:

- List all the potential risks
- Put these into categories (e.g. financial, legal, reputational)
- Undertake a bit of research around these areas (e.g. what the actual risk is, ways it can be reduced etc.)
- Come up with strategies to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring
- Decide if these risks are mitigated enough or if you need to abandon part or all of the campaign



How to involve others

This is another great time to involve other people. You will need to get lots of things done while you're planning and it's great to get other people on board with planning it. Remember that other people in the organization are experts on certain things and their knowledge can be invaluable.

Some things you'll need to do:

- Organise meetings with other members of staff to get new perspectives/help planning
- Discuss resources/timings/timeline/find out costs.
- Check times/dates/venue availability. Provisionally book rooms, catering, technical and venue requirements (you will confirm these once your budget has been signed off)
- Complete the right forms (e.g. Event Notification or External Speakers Policy)
- Put all activities/events and the time you need to prepare in your diary! Invite any other FTOs/Reps etc. who are going to be involved at the activity/event.
- Discuss promotional plan, artwork and website requirements. Find out costs.
- Complete a Campaign Budget Request and get sign off from campaigns budget holder(s).

Budget

While RUSU has money to spend on campaigns, it is not an endless pot so it is worth thinking about finding before you get any wild ideas! You can speak to a member of RUSU staff to find out what is available for you or you can seek funding elsewhere. There are lots of grants and other forms of funding that you can apply for if you branch out of RUSU.

The money RUSU has is there to spend on campaigns although it must be spent on things which help to achieve the impact of the campaign. Always consider each item/event/activity and whether it will help achieve your overall campaign aim. Don't spend money because it is simply something you want to do!

There might be times when you will need to reassess your plan as the budget will not cover the costs of your original plan.

Steps:

1. Ideas should be talked through with the Campaigns & Research Coordinator (or Advice & Representation Manager)
2. A budget request form should be filled in. This includes what it is you're hoping to buy, how many and how much it will cost. Remember to include ALL items, no matter how small!
3. Send your budget request form to the Representation team for approval and for a record to be kept.



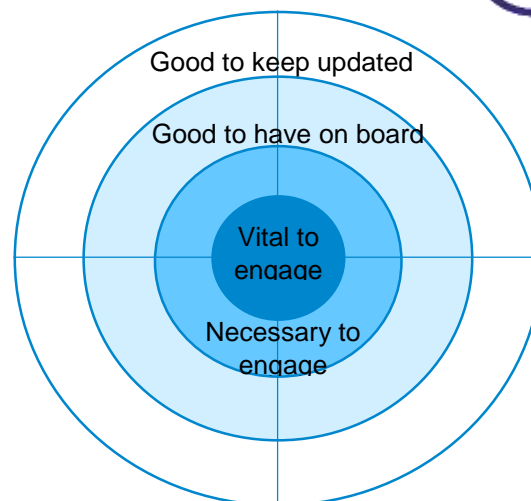
Delivery

Now you have planned everything out it is time to make the change! You have put a lot of work in up to this point so make sure you use it to ensure your campaign is as effective as it can be.

Understanding the audience

It is time to think about who you will be targeting with your campaign. It could be key university staff, a specific school or department, students or a local or national governing body. They will all think in very different ways.

It is good to do a stakeholder map to work out who it is you will be focusing on and who else could help you in your campaign.



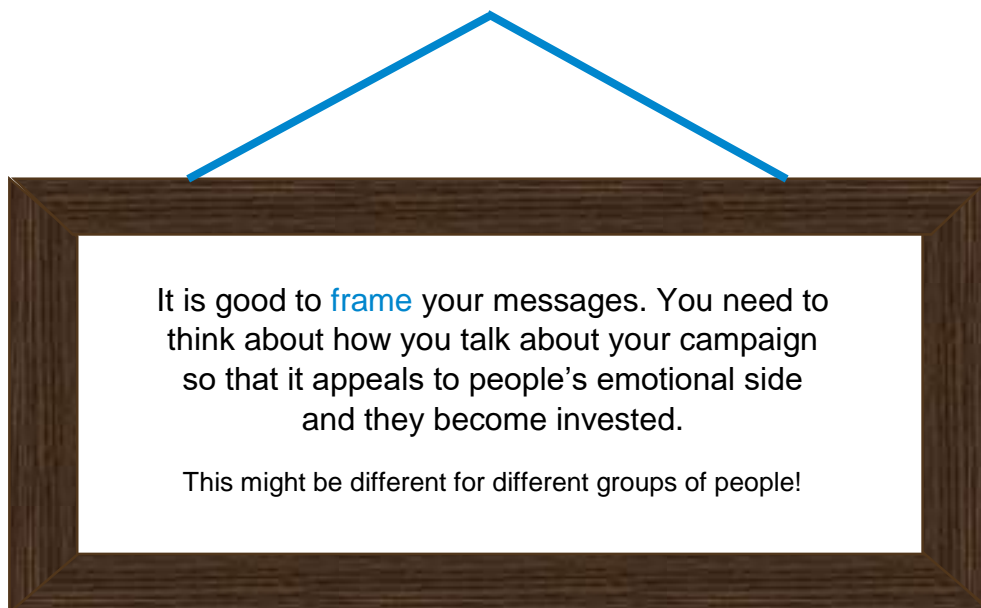
Now you know who your audience is it is you will need to make sure you understand them so you know how to communicate best with them later on.

- **Think carefully who you are trying to influence**
It is good to be specific. Think about things such as:
 - How do they see the world?
 - What values and beliefs underpin this view?
 Develop key campaign messages that will appeal to these beliefs and fit with how they see the world
- **What voice are you going to use?**
Your language will activate the values of the listener. Make sure you are appropriately aligned to the views and values you want to tap into
- **Test your messages with your audience**
Test your messages with people that represent your target audience. Don't get feedback from people who are already 'on side'. That way you know your ideas for communication are working.

Communicating with target audience

Now you know who you're targeting you need to make a plan of how. Your campaign will need a message that is inspiring, impact focused and targeted in order to motivate people to take action. While people often understand hard facts they do not tap into the emotional nature of humans. This is especially noticeable if the facts go against people's values.

Remember your stakeholder map. It will involve lots of different people and you may need to communicate your campaign to each of them differently.



One thing to remember is try to avoid using your opponents' frame, even when explaining your reasons. By repeating something they believe (that you are trying to change) you will only reinforce their argument, even if you are trying to challenge it.

Top tips for framing:

- **Practice story telling**
Tell a story about your campaign that pinpoints exactly what problem is. By telling it as a story you can develop the structure of the narrative, bringing in the facts and figures later on. You may not want to share your story but it can help you clarify your thinking and shape your messages
- **Keep it simple**
Explain the problem, describe how big the issue is and present a solution
- **Establish clear responsibility**
Who is responsible for the problem and who has the power to change it?
- **Find the narrative**
Avoid framing an issue without a clear narrative that makes it real and credible to people
- **Be creative!**
Challenge how you and (and RUSU) usually think about and communicate issues

Your communication may not be a face to face conversation, such as in a meeting. You may be communicating through social media or committee papers and reports. You will need to remember your framing when using these styles too.

Ongoing monitoring

Remember it is good to keep an eye on how things are going throughout your campaign period; you might need to make adjustments. That's okay, things don't always go to plan and other things might get in the way. Just remember to stay flexible.

Examples of things you might want to keep an eye on:

- Getting an update on the factors you were going to measure (e.g. pints sold on a union night)
- Attendance at events

- Feedback from university staff about the report you submitted
- Word of mouth about what is a priority coming up over the next month or so

Evaluation

Evaluating the impact

This is thinking about one simple question: **did your campaign work?**

Carrying out an evaluation is just as important as planning because it shows you which techniques work, which don't and how you can improve in the future.

Evaluation should be an ongoing process throughout your planning and delivery. This is the easy bit because you already planned what it was you would evaluate much earlier on in the process!

Keep a record what worked well and what didn't work and why.

- Did students get involved?
- What comments have been made?
- What feedback you've had?
- Were objectives and the overall aim achieved?
- Are there any recommendations for the future?

Possible evidence that you can collect for campaign evaluations:

- Social media statistics (engagement, reach, attendance/interested on events)
- Email open rates and clicks
- Face-to-face feedback
- Survey results
- News coverage
- Feedback via letter, email, message
- Decisions taken which had an impact
- Change in policy
- Change in behaviour

This is the easy bit because you already planned what it was you would evaluate much earlier on in the process!

Recognising setbacks

Sometimes things might not go as planned. That is okay. It could be that you didn't achieve your aim or that the first part of your plan couldn't be carried out which had a knock on effect for the rest of the campaign. These things happen which is why it is good to be flexible while carrying out your campaign.

There are three main options when you have noticed something isn't going to plan:

- 1) Carry on working towards your aim
You might still be able to work towards the overall aim and just tweak things such as the timescale or particular activities
- 2) Adjust the campaign aim
You can change what you were working towards so that it is now more realistic
- 3) Stop campaigning



Sometimes it is best to cut your losses and stop using resources. This might be because the opposition is too strong or your plan hasn't gone as you thought.

It can be disheartening although there are good things to take away from a setback too. For example, you may have changed something else by accident which is also a good thing, or made sure an issue is on someone's agenda (this is a great step for future campaigns). It can be particularly useful to think about why it went wrong when planning for future campaigns.

Remember that even if you haven't achieved your overall aim and vision you may have made some steps towards achieving the overall aim. This is definitely something to be proud of and is often worth shouting about too.

Shouting about your wins

Don't forget one of the most important aspects of campaigning... Celebrating your successes and achievements.

SHOUT ABOUT YOUR WINS

It is **vital** that our members hear about what you are doing to represent them and bring about positive change for students. This is what RUSU is here to do!

How can you let people know?

- Post on campaign webpage
- Add it to your progress tracker
- Write a story for the Reading Rep
- Write a story for the Spark
- Post on social media
- Write a press release for the local media
- Include it in the RUSU Impact Report
- Put an update in your Officer Scrutiny Report
- Talk to students and tell them about your success
- Talk about it at meetings with students and staff
- Nominate your campaign for an award e.g. RUSU Representation and Diversity Awards or NUS Campaign of the Year.



Remember that a win doesn't have to be achieving your whole campaign impact, it could just be a little thing such as getting something on a committee agenda or having some funding approved.

Most information came from NCVO Good Guide to Campaigning if you want to find out more!



Notes:



Notes: