



How to...

Set up a Unite Students Society

Starting a Unite Student Society is easy, social, fun and is a great way of bringing Working Students together. It's also a great way to develop campaigning and Organising skills, great for the CV!

If you apply all the principles in this guide you cannot fail! The most important thing is communication; the rest is very simple, with just a little persistence.

If you're interested in starting a society contact the National Organiser for Youth and Students, email: David.Braniff-Herbert@UnitetheUnion.com, so you can receive all the help you need.

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Why a Unite Society?

Being a Working Student is tough, research shows that Students are getting a hard time at work, be it bullying, low pay or even injury!

Between 1996 and 2006 the number of full time students with a part-time job grew by more than 50% and now less than 7% are members of a Trade Union. This figure demonstrates the need to Organise Working Students into Trade Unions. Unite – the Union is a general union, that means anyone can join and everyone benefits from it.

For the past few years Unite's predecessor Union, Amicus, has operated a Working Students Campaign. This campaign has sought to publicise the benefits of joining our Union to Students whilst campaigning around issues that affect them. It has also given us the opportunity to research the best possible methods in Organising students; this research has led us to the society facility in Student Unions which we feel is the way forward.

The society has so much potential, but it's up to you how far it reaches.

A Unite Society can:

- Be a forum on Work-related issues
- Campaign on issues affecting working Students
- Campaign for better employment rights
- Campaign on social-justice issues
- Promote Collectivism
- Organise Workplaces!

A Unite Society means that Working Students at your University have an opportunity to improve their working conditions and thus their life whilst studying. It is shown that working whilst studying can have adverse affects on learning, if students are working in horrific environments surely this makes it worse? But you can help change this.

We hope you share our vision and wish to work together to deliver for you and your fellow students a Society that empowers and campaigns for working people.



Getting Started

The best way to begin a Unite Society on campus or in college is to recruit a core group of interested students. Start with people you know and trust to get involved. The Union will most probably have been on campus at Freshers and the national organiser will have a list of email address of those who have already joined. Most societies have started with a core of two or three committee members. Below are some more suggestions:

- Do a lecture shout wherever possible
- Put up posters in all buildings around campus
- Talk to friends on your course about getting involved
- Contact Unite for assistance
- Create a Facebook group in the institutions network
- Get in contact with already established Unite Societies
- Use the Anger/Hope/Action Organising technique to recruit people to the society

Secondly, register your society with the student union (you may need to have a minimum number of students to do this – normally no more than 20) and prepare your launch event.

Thirdly, decide on positions and roles for committee members to get active and make more things happen.

IMPORTANT: Inform Unite that you have created a Society by emailing:

David.Braniff-Herbert@UnitetheUnion.com



Launch Event

The purpose of the launch event is to: create networks, get people's contact details and introduce the work of the society. Forms with pens on tables near the venue entrance are useful for gathering contact or membership details. Use the campaigns materials on the Unite website to get people campaigning and involved, whether that be signing petitions and draft letters to MPs.

Invite local Unite branch members – we may have a branch at your university, the local Unite organiser, someone from an active Unite Society and the President and Welfare Officer at the Students' Union.

When a speaker is confirmed, book a venue for the relevant date and start to publicise your launch event between one and two weeks in advance. More than two weeks is pointless, and less than one week is cutting it fine. Publicity should intensify until the launch event takes place. A publicity guide is set out in more detail below.

Think about key issues Working Students face and base the launch around that issue, make sure the issues are clear and mean something to your target students.

If you have a core membership already give them all a task and a role in the event, a task could be to bring 2 friends along or designing a poster – keep people involved and active.

Don't forget to bring pens, water for guest speakers and flyers on your **SECOND** event if you have one planned at this stage. If your venue is hard to get to, put signs up. Refreshments do cost, but always go down well and encourage people to stay and chat after events – Unite are also likely to meet these costs, but make sure to contact us first before paying or ordering anything. After a couple of glasses of wine they will feel very well-disposed towards your society!



Publicity & Communication

Use the Students' Union facilities to help recruit students. Print flyers and distribute in people's pigeon-holes. Put posters up on notice boards, around the libraries and in halls of residence.

Campus Media

Write an advance story for a major student newspaper on the launch of a Unite Society at your university, discussing the issues behind the society. Be sure to have your name, phone number and email included so interested people can contact you. Campus media coverage is an excellent form of publicity find out about public announcements on campus radio stations.

Information Table

Set up a table in the student union or high-visibility areas on campus and provide information for students. An effective table is colourful, interactive, and informative. Display the latest copy of Unite's Magazine, Student Recruitment Packs, Unite merchandise as well as flyers and posters to advertise upcoming events. Engage fellow students by first learning about their course, placement and interests and then link that to ways in which membership would benefit.

Logos

Unite will develop a logo for your society – to organise this email:

David.Braniff-Herbert@Unitetheunion.com.

Email and the World Wide Web:

Once you've had your launch, you can use your mailing list to email people. Try not to bombard them with more than one email per week, otherwise they'll switch off. Avoid sending out messages that other societies ask you to send on their behalf, unless the favour is returned! Use your campus or college email network to send out message ads about ways to get involved in your Society.

Think about designing your own web site - so that interested people can view upcoming events. Most students' unions will provide you with an email address (i.e. UniteSociety@studentsunion.org.uk) and web address (i.e. www.studentsunion.org.uk/unitesoc) so make sure you take full advantage and link to the Unite Online membership form!



Get Fresh!

Freshers Events are key to all societies existence, they are the first opportunity you have at getting new students at the University involved.

Unite Societies have usually directly recruited tons of new members by selling membership on the stall, once a member of Unite – they are a member of your society!

Image is important, so look better than the rest; it's easy: avoid information overload! Plan your Freshers' fair well and look at presentation. Unite has a list of merchandise which you can order from; pens, glasses cleaners, key rings and all sorts can attract the newbie's over!

Think about arranging activities around the start of the academic year: Film Night (Bread and Roses is my favourite at the moment) and having a discussion afterwards will attract people and also a reception for new entrants at the SU bar.

The Freshers Period only happens once a year, so make the most of it!

Every year we will publish a **Freshers Pack** for our Societies, so we can help you make the most of it.



Campaigning for Working Students

Winning for our members should be a focus and a number 1 priority. Campaigning for change – for the improvements that Working students expect – is achievable. This working together is an ideal formula to make that happen.

When organising a campaign you need to decide if the issue is:

- wide – affect a lot of members;
- deep – can arise strong passions and feeling;
- winnable – will see a success with the right action; and
- Visible – be run in a way that is inclusive and evident that you are doing it to your members.

Once you have done this think about the following*:

- Needs – what is the need for change;
- Aims – what actually are you trying to change;
- Objectives – what are your indications so you know you are on track
- Method – what activities will lever change and get members involved; and
- Implementation – making it happen/think of practicalities
- Evaluation – did it all work?

*This is known as the NAOMIE method.

Examples of Campaigns

- Abolition of Minimum Wage pay differentials for 16-22 year olds
- Holiday Pay is a right
- Living Wage
- Environmental Campaign to get your University to “Go Green”

Check with the National Organiser for Youth and Students about other campaigns that have been run in Unite Societies.



Working with the Students' Union and Student Reps on Campus

Each department will have Student/Academic Reps who will be linked in with the union and should be key allies in your campaigns. Most students' unions have an Education Officer and a Welfare officer (often the same role) who will be most helpful in winning your campaigns and will sit on high up committees in the university to help you achieve and get heard.

Using the Media

The media is free publicity, read by a large number and wide spectrum of students:

- Submit an article about a relevant topic and advertise an upcoming event on that topic.
- Submit an article on a relevant topic even if you haven't got an upcoming event – it will get the Unite Society's name into the public eye.
- Announce upcoming events in the Events/Calendar section.
- Write a regular column or series of articles on a relevant topic.
- Offer interviews with every guest speaker to student newspapers and radio.
- Host a radio show yourself!
- Request a press presence at an event.

For any further help or advice, do contact:

- your students' union Press Officer

Using your Activists

When campaigning, always keep the duties and tasks shared. If you're campaigning on Social-Justice issues create a campaign committee and get new members on it. Remember not to overload your activists and potential activists, give them small tasks first and see how they do. Development is gradual not instantaneous!



Creating your committee

Every group needs a leader and chair for the meetings, there should be core support beyond this focused on the key areas of work, therefore we advise the following with appropriate remits:

- Chair/Chairperson/President

The person who will chair the committee, be the main liaison with the Unite organiser and the students' union. They will be responsible for and have an overview of all the committees work. They will also be the person to speak to the Press and other figure heads.

- Vice Chair

We advise this be the Welfare Officer of the students' union so your views are included at higher levels. If the Welfare Officer (or otherwise appropriate person) cannot hold office in a society then ask them to be the Honorary President or just invite them along to the meetings.

- Secretary

The person who takes the minutes in meetings, prepares letters from the society and oversees compliance with the society rules and workings.

- Treasurer

The person who oversees the money. Most students' unions will help you with your money management, if not this is something your Unite organiser can help with.

- Campaigns Officer

The person who will organise and lead the campaigning efforts of the society, working with local and national Unite and students' union contacts to win for members and change the hearts and minds of decision-makers, budget holders and political leaders.



- Membership Officer

The person who will keep on top of the membership details and will liaise with Unite around recruitment activity.

- Events Officer

The person who will organise the social aspects of the society, getting to know each other and people in Unite.

- TULO Officer

The person who develops and maintains links with the Labour Party locally and also develops links with other socialist societies related to the Labour Party.

- Environmental Officer

Someone who will begin to network with other students concerned about environmental issues at the University. For further details of resources or campaigns go to <http://www.amicustheunion.org/default.aspx?page=6794>

The fight for equality

Students' unions and trade unions have as a core part of their work, striving for equality for and amongst their membership. Traditionally unions have been at the cutting edge of equality legislation and fighting as far as the European Court for the right we enjoy.

Working Students are no homogenous group, they are women, black-minority ethnic, disabled and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) too. The way our equality structures work is on the principles self-organising (only people from that group) autonomous (they make their own decision) groups that involve the wider membership to win equality. Therefore the officers we propose are:

- Women's Officer

Elected by women only to represent women students and campaign against issues like the gender-pay gap, child care facilities and much, much more...



- Disabled Members Officer

Elected by those who define as disabled only to represent disabled students and campaign against issues like the mental ill health stigma, good practice in fitness to practise hearings and much, much more...

- Black Members Officer

Elected by those who define as African, Caribbean and Asian only to represent black students and campaign against issues like the racism at work, and much, much more...

- LGBT Officer

Elected by those who define as lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans only to represent LGBT students and campaign against issues like the homophobia, goods and services equality and much, much more...

We believe these groups to be fundamentally oppressed and constantly discriminated against – everyone in society can be the victim of discriminate but there are groups who feel this on a constant basis. It is the roles of unions – where we have strong structures – to support this drive for equality.

For more information on these groups see:

Unite's Equality Campaigns: www.amicustheunion.org/

All members of your society should join together and campaign against local fascists who seek to spread their politics of hate. Again trade and students' unions has been key is the fight against fascists, protecting our members from their racists, anti-democratic campaigns. Join the campaigning with groups like Searchlight (<http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/>) and Unite Against Fascism (<http://www.uaf.org.uk/>).



Get involved in your unions!

Your members are all now a member of two unions – Unite and the students' union and subsequently the National Union of Students (NUS).

Core to our values are equality, democracy and collectivism, values that we must make real and share.

Your Trade Union, Unite

If you are reading this, chances are you're already a member! And you're reading this so you're thinking about embarking on creating a society – you're already invested and that makes us feel warm inside. We love you but there's more you can do, if you have the time:

If you're working in a workplace that is organised, you could stand to become a Workplace Representative, Learning Representative, Health and Safety Representative or Equality Representative. You could also become involved in your local or workplace branch.

If your working in a non-organised workplace (the company do not recognise any union) then you could contact a regional organiser to organise your workplace! Your society could also get involved and launch a campaign!

We also have Equality structures for Young (27 or under), Black, Minority and Ethnic Members, Women and for members with disabilities. These structures have regional committees and a national committee, the regional committees often hold 'open' meetings so anyone can come and see what's happening. Find out more by going to our website and selecting the 'Equal Rights' link.

There are also 'Activist Quarterlies' - forums every quarter for local activists, contact your regional office for information on when the next one is.



Students' unions

Getting involved in your students union is important – at many places societies get a vote on union council (the body that makes decisions about how the union runs) but if not - your faculty, school and department will probably have places. These are often left unfilled for the very reason why we are setting up Unite Student Societies so getting involved should be easy.

Each year students unions have elections for Executive Committee members – the people who run the union on a day-to-day basis. Some of these positions are full time and therefore paid to win for students on a full time basis.

The National Union of Students is a democratic body that has a conference made up of delegates from each students union. The delegation should be open to all students and elected on a cross campus ballot. If you win you get to come to National Conference (the biggest democratic event across Europe) and elect the National Executive Committee. Unite always has a presence at NUS Conference.

Find out more by clicking this link:

www.nusonline.co.uk

Or have a look on your Student Unions website.

Getting funds for your society

Unite have funds for local activities; speak to the National Organiser for Youth and Students first. Students' unions give money to societies – you should be able to access both. Students' union should have facilities to help with your financial management.



Resources available

Unite has launched a dedicated website for Student members. Go to www.uniteworkingstudents.org for all the best resources, links and campaign information.

Unite is currently developing its resources for Societies, however, there are other resources available on the website. Click on this link to have a look at our current resources for all members:

<http://www.amicustheunion.org/Default.aspx?page=28>

You may want to pick up a few campaigns that Unite are currently running. Have a look at the campaigns at this link:

<http://www.amicustheunion.org/Default.aspx?page=19>

Remember to join the Unite Students Facebook group 'Unite Working Students', we will post all resource updates as they happen. Go to facebook now, to make sure you are registered:

www.facebook.com

You can also suggest resources for the campaign, email us your ideas:

David.Braniff-Herbert@UnitetheUnion.com



More about Unite – The Union

Unite – the history and the Future

Unite – the Union was formed in May 2007 by Amicus and The Transport and General Workers Union. The two unions investigated merging together and upon a ballot of both memberships, they became Unite.

The two unions will run in parallel to each other for 18 months, this is known as the transitional period. We refer to ourselves as 'Unite – Amicus Section' for the time being, once we have a new NEC and a new General Secretary, things will be well and truly merged!

The Amicus section of Unite is no stranger to mergers; Amicus was formed out of MSF and AEEU and then went on to merge with Unifi and the GPMU.

And there's no stopping us, we have already begun to talk with other unions internationally – primarily the United Steel Workers of America about creating a Global Union. Just think about those global companies being taken on by a global Union...

A campaigning Union

Unite – the Union continues to campaign for working people, at work and in the community. Our Campaigns range from Public Services to Save the UK Car industry. One of our biggest campaigns, Peugeot, saw mass demonstrations and high media attention with billboards around the UK supporting our members and their jobs.

An Organising Union

Our Organisers work with lay members around the UK and Ireland supporting strong workplace organisation and recognition campaigns. We seek to support and empower a membership-led union that pushes forward into every non-organised workplace.

For More information go to our Website:

<http://www.amicustheunion.org/default.aspx?page=3>