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The Changing Agenda?

Special Edition featuring 7 articles on the changing environment & challenges facing SUs today

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AGENDA

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Building strong Students' Unions?



Author: Mark Grayling,
Chair of AMSU Coordinating
Committee

If you came to the residential seminar we held, in November, at the Westwood Training and Conference Centre, you will have taken in the message which ran through the event, from the power of the statistics and trends drawn from the AMSU survey, right through to what happens when the insolvency practitioners go into an organisation.

The world around us is changing and if we fail to adapt then the future is bleak. However, if we respond to the challenge, then the values of democracy, collectivism and mutuality will continue to sustain our movement for decades to come.

Another key message from the November event emphasised the need for strong national organisations in order for us to draw on collective strength effectively. The NUS National President has taken on the process of changing NUS with relish and we now have a momentum that will see reform to democracy, a renewed focus on campaigning and relocation to a fit-for-purpose office with economies of scale from sharing premises with NUS Services.

AMSU must also change. We have already set about the task of improving AGENDA so that the production values match the quality



“ However if we respond to the challenge then the values of democracy, collectivism and mutuality will continue to sustain our movements for decades to come.”

of the articles. This is yet another example of collaboration within the movement as NUS Services have taken on the design and printing, leaving the editorial board to concentrate on the contents.

There is a second residential event in February and places are limited to 120. AMSU has been criticised for not providing enough support and development opportunities for experienced General Managers and these seminars are designed to fill that gap. Content-led with high quality speakers they are also designed to be time efficient with a lunchtime-to-lunchtime format. The first event was fully subscribed, with a waiting list, and the second is following suit. Building on this success will provide the core programme for senior managers for the foreseeable future.

2005 should be the year that sees AMSU adopt a Code of Professional Practice for

Students' Union General Managers after two years of discussion and consultation. It is astonishing that such a document does not yet exist but this year we hope to put that right. The final decision will be taken at the AGM in Cork. This year will see the first of a series of changes to the way we organise the Annual Conference. Cork will bring colleagues from the UK together with delegates from the United States and the Republic of Ireland as AMSU, ACUI and ASUA come together for the first time in a decade. We'll also have news from Australia where Students' Unions have seen off the challenge to their system of compulsory membership, albeit at a price. However, make sure you get your travel plans sorted out early so that you get the cheapest deals on flights!

Finally, an appeal. Volunteering is key to the success of the national organisations that support local Unions and help create our collective strength. At the AMSU leaders event, held last term, a few colleagues expressed concern that it was harder than ever to find enough time to be involved in their specialist groups. I know I'll be pushing at an open door if I ask General Managers to release colleagues as volunteers, so I'll push my luck just a little further and ask that staff be encouraged to get involved. AMSU member Unions gain from the work of the volunteers, and the volunteers gain from the development opportunities. What's more, change is so much easier with motivated staff!

Summer balls, the future of collaboration and collective purchasing



Author: Mal Edgson
General Manager, Buckinghamshire
Chilterns Students' Union

In 2002 I jointly published an article with Phil McKay, the then General Manager of the Union of Brunel Students, about the first joint ball held between the two Unions.

To a substantial degree that event and the one that followed it were a success. However the arrangement ended in 2003 when UBS quite rightly consolidated their Summer Ball calendar (they had three balls at the time) and withdrew from the event. Since that time UBS have concentrated on their remaining sports and graduation balls.

On the following page, Sarah-Jane Moore and Andy Hodgson report on an extremely positive experience of collaboration over the hosting of a joint ball. The article focuses on the organisational arrangements that defined the event and reflective experiences from both Unions. Their experience mirrors my earlier one and confirms the worth of these collaborative ventures.

In the face of rising costs, falling receipts, and perennial problems with the venue at Brunel, collaboration was a way forward that certainly achieved the economies of scale we were looking for. And from a Bucks perspective it is certainly a more difficult event to sustain without a collaborative partner.

“ In the face of rising costs, falling receipts, and perennial problems with the venue at Brunel, collaboration was a way forward that certainly achieved the economies of scale we were looking for.”

Our reasons were similar to those of Southampton Institute and Winchester's and I suspect that these same problems or fears exist for most Unions who still do these events:

- Our existing events were identified by each Union as a financial 'risk factor'
- UBS traditionally lost money on their Ball due to insufficient ticket sales and poor stock control on bars



- Ticket sales at Bucks were levelling off and a decline was feared. With an established Ball, Bucks wished to maintain and improve the quality of the event
- A desire by both Unions to improve the quality of their summer ball for their respective students and to derive small surplus from the event
- Possibility of growing the event in time and achieve greater economies of scale

The business models for large scale events are becoming more precarious as costs rise, ticket sales stabilise or fall, and the cost of performers increases exponentially. Local collaboration and collective purchasing are going to be key to the continuation of these important large scale events.

On page eight, Luke Fitzmaurice outlines a vision of how collective purchasing through the new Entertainments Department at NUS Services could make the staging of these events easier, safer and more financially viable.

Organising a joint summer ball



Author: Sarah-Jane Moore,
Permanent Secretary, Southampton
Institute Students' Union

Author: Andy Hodgson
General Manager, University College
Winchester (formerly King Alfreds
Students' Union)

Southampton Institute Students' Union and Winchester Students' Union hosted a joint Summer Ball in May 2004. This article sets out the objectives and the arrangements for the project and includes comments from both senior managers involved: Sarah-Jane Moore and Andy Hodgson

The following points were the main features of the contract:

1. The capital of the joint venture will be no more than £75,000. SISU will contribute 75% of the agreed costs. Winchester will contribute 25% of the agreed costs.
2. The profits and losses of the joint venture shall be determined in accordance with good accounting practices.
3. In return for the 75% contribution to costs, SISU will receive an allocation of 2,000 tickets to the event and the profit from the sale of goods and services at the event. This includes concession/licence fees from third parties, profit from licensed trade and profit from other retail sales.
4. In return for the 25% contribution to costs, Winchester will receive an allocation of 1,000 tickets to the event. Any profit or loss made on this ticket allocation will be the sole responsibility of Winchester.
5. Southampton Institute Students' Union's Event Committee nominates Sarah-Jane Moore (SISU Permanent Secretary) to have the sole discretion, management and entire control of the business of the joint venture as the Venture Manager.
6. The event will be covered by a joint public liability insurance. SISU and Winchester will also retain their own separate public liability insurance.
7. There will be a joint Entertainment Committee to agree acts and entertainment budget, for sourcing and booking of acts and for recruiting stage managers for each arena.

SJM – Like many Students' Unions we have a custom of hosting large, outdoor summer balls, but continue to struggle with the financial risk associated with a large budget event.

AH – Winchester Students' Union normally uses the local Guildhall for our balls (Graduation, Christmas and Summer) as our venue is simply too small. We have little-to-no knowledge of organising outdoor summer events, our experience limited to just one aborted attempt in 1998. That year, we were forced to abandon our plans and with little time and no back up venue available, we were very grateful to Southampton Institute for allowing us to buy into their event for that year.

SJM – Our Students' Union has tried many different models for the summer ball and have found an event style that suits our

market, however, we continue to seek a financial model to match the event.

Having run a joint event in the past (1998), we asked KAC, now Winchester University College, to see if they wanted to explore a joint event.

Winchester Management Exec team were keen to learn more about organising an outdoor summer ball and we wanted to share the costs, so we sat down to work out a method for organising and running a joint event. We agreed to formalise the partnership by setting up a joint venture agreement.

Organising a joint summer ball

8. SISU shall set up and manage the bars, keeping the cost of the bars separate from the main budget, and employ bar staff.
9. The transportation of students to the event will be kept outside the main budget and will be paid for separately by each party.
10. Management of the actual night will be shared with key staff from Winchester.
11. Winchester staff and students to contribute to the set up and dismantling of the event.
12. All health and safety, security, insurance, licences, liaison with EHO, will be the responsibility of SISU.

Event Description

Location: Eastleigh Football Club

Capacity: 3,000

Ticket price: £30 (each Union sold a number of tickets at a reduced introductory rate)

6 Arenas (5 x 600 capacity marquees and a club house, each with its own bar, stage and style of music)

Funfair, circus, food concessions

Over 30 acts

With all the staff, security, acts and liggers, probably another 500 people on site.

Final Figures

	Event Budget	Transport	Ticket income	Other income
Total	£67,000			
SISU (75%)	£50,250	£4,500	£59,225	bar profits etc
Winch (25%)	£16,750	£2,250	£25,000	none

AH – The arrangement suited us very much at that time, for a number of key reasons. Firstly, as we have never been able to provide bar services at our major ball events, we had no reservations or financial jealousy for SISU to provide this service and yield any profits. Indeed we were happy for a bar provision that was well managed and whose profits helped students in their union.

It also provided us with a solution to our ongoing problem of providing a fresh and new feel to our event without using the one suitable venue available to us in Winchester. The process as a whole from start to (very tired) finish was an invaluable lesson to my staff and myself on the fundamentals of organising and guiding such a massive event. Sarah-Jane and her team were helpful, informative and patient. The level of collusion with regards to the shape and

content of the event was 100% and transparent to both institutions.

SJM – Would we do it again? Yes. Although the site wasn't perfect and we had a lot of problems with the weather, the event was a great success for both the students attending and the Students' Unions.

AH – Would we do it again? Absolutely yes. Our ticket allocation sold out in record time. Our students loved the event, and whilst the sheer amount of work (both physical and administrative) should never be underestimated, the staff and sabb team here are keen to begin negotiations for next year's event.

Many of the problems we were originally wary of, with such a fusion of students from different institutions, (including rivalry and conflict) did not occur and the problems Winchester encountered with transportation at the

end of the event (congestion and slow turn over of pick-ups) has provided us with valuable experience and we shall avoid that issue in the future.

Anyone wanting further details should contact Sarah-Jane Moore (SISU) or Andy Hodgson (Winchester).

Balancing balls and collaboration



Author: Luke Fitzmaurice,
Entertainments Manager,
NUS Services

There is little doubt that Balls play a major part in the social life of many students. Similarly, the organisation of these events creates huge resource implications for Students' Unions, with many late nights and early mornings used on the planning and delivery of these high risk, but high kudos, and potentially high earning events.

Following the development of the NUS Services Entertainment Strategy, the Company has been investigating the possibility of using collective purchasing to deliver cost savings on the infrastructure and artiste fees at these events. The preliminary findings indicate that significant benefits could be obtained if an organised and structured collaborative system is put in place. This is exactly what NUS Services will be trialing in 2005 with the Special Events Network.

As a former Students' Union Entertainments Manager, I am only too aware that a one-size-fits-all approach has the danger of removing the individuality of a Union's own events, as well as disregarding the hard work that will have gone into building the event in the first place. As a result, extra care has been taken to ensure that the Special Events Network remains flexible and able to be moulded to meet the specific needs of individual events.

This approach acknowledges the complexity of different operations and the

varying requirements which exist within current ball events. It also capitalises on the professionalism and expertise that exists within Unions themselves – the events will very much remain a Union event!

With the flexibility that the Network offers, it is anticipated that it will be suitable for all events from a 100 to a 10,000 capacity, and for Freshers Parties through to Graduation Balls alike.

Getting down to the details, some of the proposed areas for collaboration are listed below and it is anticipated that venues will be able to select those aspects they wish to purchase collectively, and as individuals:

- Artistes and Ticket printing
- Hire of fencing, marquee, crowd barriers
- Event sponsorship
- Formal wear hire
- Security
- PA & lighting hire
- Fairground rides
- Staging
- Event management
- Health & Safety consultancy

As the above list illustrates, financial gain will not be the only advantage of taking part in the Special Events Network. Those Unions that join will also benefit from and contribute to a collective experience in which information sharing and benchmarking excellence are central to the success of the event, and the Network itself – collectivism, business development and raising standards are key principles at the heart of the Special Events Network.

The success of the Special Events Network will depend primarily upon NUS Services' ability to deliver the collective purchasing benefits, and upon Students' Unions ability to collaborate. It will provide a support structure to assist Unions in working together through regional planning meetings, consultancy and specialist advice from leading industry figures.

Additionally, the Network will provide a new revenue stream for Unions by providing an opportunity for NUS Services to attract sponsorship from our existing client base and attract new businesses. The ability to target Freshers, Graduates and students heading for

the summer break is a valuable asset and the Network provides a clear opportunity to target the market nationally in a way that has never been possible before. It is anticipated that these opportunities will generate an increasingly important revenue stream for members of the Network.

None of the benefits can be obtained however, without an initial decision to get involved and a desire to benefit collectively from shared experience. Furthermore, to obtain the economies of scale required to make significant savings the Network must first develop an economy of scale of its own, and here I must ask for an initial leap of faith to set the ball in motion.

Over the last 15 years, Students' Unions have used their collective power to equip themselves with a competitive edge in the Licensed Trade. Over a similar timescale, Entertainment activity within Unions has also developed but without the collectivism that the bars departments have enjoyed. As a result, many of our competitors have developed their competitive edge in this area and are ahead of Unions in this field, but now is an opportunity to start reclaiming lost ground.

Thankfully, the idea of Students' Unions collaborating on ball events is not as new as some of the other elements of the NUS Services Entertainment Strategy. The experience gained through previous collaborations has taught many lessons and alongside other new Entertainments projects, the Special Events Network will build on and apply this knowledge across the movement as a whole.

As a knock-on benefit, it is anticipated that the Special Events Network will go some way to re-establishing the importance of Students' Union Entertainment Departments in the industry and help to develop a strong platform from which individual Unions and NUS Services can utilise the collective power for the benefit of all.

To register your interest and become part of the Special Events Network, please complete the form in the new Entertainments Section of nussl.co.uk.

Introduction to a special feature on strategic challenges facing Students' Unions

Author: Agenda Editorial Board

Over the next few pages you will discover seven articles that discuss the changing environment facing UK Students' Unions. The need for reflection and re-invention to reflect changing circumstances is one that has dominated much of AMSU's work over the last two – three years and the last 12 months in particular. This series of articles and the recent Securing Strong Students' Unions Seminar are just the latest and most extensive examples of this.

However, this does not mean that it will be the last time articles about such subjects are featured. The issues involved are ongoing and simply too important for that to be the case. So, if you have a story to tell, a message to convey or an alternative perspective please contact us as we can offer practical assistance and will be keen to publish.

We are delighted to print an article from the NUS National President for the first time in many years. Kat Fletcher discusses more than just NUS issues, offering a fresh and challenging perspective on the wider student movement and individual Students' Unions.

The next two articles are both factual in tone and content. AMSU Treasurer, Jon Berg, uses the AMSU survey to discuss the financial state of Students' Unions and Hywel Griffiths from NUS services follows up his excellent article in Agenda 76: "Have students really stopped drinking" with an update and refinement

"The need for reflection and re-invention to reflect changing circumstances is one that has dominated much of AMSU's work over the last 2–3 years and the last 12 months in particular."

of his research based upon NUS Services purchasing data, statistics about the licensed trade as a whole and student lifestyle research.

Then come two articles attempting the very risky activity of predicting the future for UK Students' Unions. Nick Berg outlines a frightening futurescape that he feels may face us if we don't wake up to the fundamental changes that are affecting Students' Unions and goes onto outline a scenario for how a Students' Unions demise can arise in practice. Andy Parsons takes a more optimistic perspective showing that within the pessimistic signs there are more positive factors and opportunities emerging as well. We hope that readers will appreciate that like science fiction these articles don't have to accurately predict every aspect of the future in order to illuminate the present and thereby influence that future.

Matt Hyde has taken one of the biggest changes facing UK Students' Unions and tried to convey just how significant the immediate impact and the wider implications may be. He is writing about the changes to student financial support arrangements from 2006. We hope that readers who work in different Students' Union roles and operations will see that this has an importance that extends beyond the remit of the elected officers,

or welfare or education staff.

Lastly a case study from which we can draw some positives. Mike Baron writes about Glasgow Caledonian Students Association going through virtual collapse and re-invention. We know that this has and is happening in other Students' Unions (and feels imminent at even more) and are very grateful to Bill Blackstock and the staff and officer team at GCUSA for sharing what was clearly a difficult experience.

Those of you who want to read further around this subject and related ones may want to search through the index of old articles from Agenda that is now available on the AMSU website as well as the extensive resource library of Students' Union materials. For example, there is far more detailed financial analysis in the section devoted to the AMSU survey and also within the section devoted to the Building Strong Students' Unions seminar. We believe that in this time of change we need to draw more than ever on the collectivist values of sharing and supporting each other within the student movement so please use the AMSU website resources and contribute to them.

Challenges to the UK student movement



Author: Kat Fletcher
President of the
National Union of Students

Kat Fletcher, President of the National Union of Students addressed the AMSU/NUS Services/NUS joint seminar on Securing Strong Students' Unions with an address that laid out where she sees the future for the movement, and the strategic partnership between elected officers and staff, that will be needed to get there.

This is a time of rapid change and reorganisation in Students' Unions locally and in the National Union. Now we need to reassess, reclarify and redirect if the movement we all feel so passionate about is going to succeed and grow.

The NUS' Extraordinary Conference was a turning point for us, but what I actually want to do here is talk about students' unions, their role and some of the challenges that I see facing them.

Students' unions naturally appear to have huge amounts to contribute to Higher Education Policy.

It would be simple for me to talk about QAA institutional audit, and the role that students' unions can play in developing student submissions.

It would be easy for me to talk about student representatives, and the work of students' unions in recruiting, training and developing their skills.

"Today, having spent so long winning the right to representation, we now seem reluctant, hesitant even, to do something with it. Representation is not a goal in and of itself."

I could talk about employability, volunteering, and the rounded education we offer.

And it ought to be a doddle, especially for me, to talk about student funding, the NUS campaign and the devastation that marketing the HE system will bring.

But what I want to talk about is education itself, and the role of students' unions within it, because what the student movement lacks is a positive, agenda for our students' education system.

That's not to say that the National Union doesn't take a view on the big education issues. We responded to the Schwartz review on admissions. We talk to the DfES about their adult skills strategy. And we submit a pro-student view on every consultation, based around the principles of access, equality, democracy and freedom.

But we do so, often without support or even interest from our constituent members. We find it hard to engage student officers in our education work. And all but the biggest issues seem to fail to catch light at a local level.

Of course, when students' unions were battling for representation rights, things were much easier. Of course, students should have representation on University committees. Of course, students should have a greater say in the running and organisation of their own education and of

course students should have the right to run and control their own student organisations.

But today, having spent so long winning the right to representation, we now seem reluctant, hesitant even, to do something with it. Representation is not a goal in and of itself.

How can it be that our movement has so little to say on course modularisation? How have we ended up with a strategic plan for the bar, but no long-term strategy for our representational goals? And why is it that we teach course reps how to say things, but rarely give them the right arguments?

Of course, there is the positive contribution so many officers make to University committees and Governance. That said, we need and have to do more to engage students and their officers in the development of their own education system, locally and nationally.

At the core is a debate about the role of student organisations. Should we serve or lead? Should we accept apathy or seek to challenge it? Should students be serviced – because that's what they want – or organised, because that's what they need?

Over the years it seems we have chosen the former of all those options.

Part of the reason I suspect is survival. It has been said that the student movement was far more effective at defending itself in 1993 and 1994 than it has been at protecting its students in 2003 and 2004. The need to protect the organisation – its funding, its status and its position – is something that will be ever present, but protecting students is important too.

And part of the reason is about politics. Idealism out of fashion.

Challenges to the UK student movement

“I want to see a student movement that celebrates politics, loves learning, challenges authority and embraces diversity.”

If we refocus on representation and start to offer a more positive, optimistic, radical view on education, how can we encourage students to do it?

In some ways the solutions are easy. The key messages of Freshers' Weeks can easily be changed and it ought to be possible to argue to institutions that having to depend on bar revenues is destroying students' unions' ability to offer a space for community and learning.

And it would be simple to admit that the notion of staff as ideologically empty civil servants is a lie to be exposed rather than a protocol to be protected. Students, unlike councillors and MPs, do not have a set of politics to be implemented. They have a set of ideas and thoughts to be developed and challenged. It's as much the staff role to implement students ideas as to debate them, challenge them and change them within our values as a democratic movement. And it's as much a staff role to help officers question their education and their world as it is to prepare them for it in the future.

But when we start off down that road, things get mightily complicated. There are so many questions that need to be posed, debated, exposed and thought about by us and our members.

On one level, the student movement must admit and celebrate its political role – and I mean staff as well as officers. We cannot go on pretending that the activities of commercial consumption and student development are free from political content – they are not, never have been and never will be. Embracing

diversity remains a key issue and there are no easy answers.

We must encourage students to think about and raise these issues inside the University – and what effects do our own organisational perspectives on Equal Opportunities have on their capacity to think critically and question assertively?

The divide between academic and vocational ought to be swept away. Unions' values of equality and diversity ought to be clearer, ready and able to challenge students' own prejudices. When our officers question the 50% target, we ought to be encouraging them to think about opportunities in society, not attacking NUS for wanting education for all.

We have to consider the notion of authority and resistance. Politically imported ideals of the 60's were one thing, but resisting authority remains a large part of student identity. And how do our own needs for survival and continual funding affect the way we encourage student officers to challenge authority when it is imposed to students' detriment?

Most students worry about their own rankings, assessments and performance. Education remains a remarkably individual pursuit – yet, ironically in a mass individualised system, 80% come out with a 2:1 or a 2:2. How can we question the notions of such generalised achievement when we also want to see students properly individually rewarded?

The point is that our own values and practices, democratic, collective and seemingly old-fashioned, are the best place to start in developing influence, recognition and impact on the higher education system.

People in students' unions should be free to think and speak – so we might need to reconsider staff student protocols.

People should be empowered to find out, know and to learn.

Diversity is a good thing because it makes the collective strong. But what do we do with the people who express different ideas from the cultural orthodoxy?

People should not be afraid to use their initiative, make mistakes and learn.

Ultimately, people should respect the collective truth. Organisations will always have collective truths that are not shared by some people – there will always be some people who do not share our pro-choice policies on the issue of abortion. However, they still work for the organisation, or remain a member of it because they respect the organisation and the collective way that decision was made. The debates in our unions from binge drinking to no platform policies are ultimately not as important as student officers playing a part in them.

I want to see a student movement that celebrates politics, loves learning, challenges authority and embraces diversity. Only when it does that within itself, will students and their officers begin to do that inside their institutions.

Finally, I do want to say something about student funding. Now, as in 1997, the student movement faces a string of critical choices. In a movement so diverse, so keen on both political principle and pragmatism, there will always be conflict between those who wish to see us refuse and fight fees on principle, and those who wish to see the student movement take a more reforming course, accepting the inevitable and amending the plans to make them more palatable and acceptable.

You won't be surprised to hear that I like taking the principled view.

If you can't be idealistic and principled when you're a student, then you probably never will be. And it is nothing if not useful that when a local union is forced to be pragmatic, it can still have, in its National Union, a space to be principled.

And that's not to say that I think NUS should ignore the realities, or carp from the sidelines. It's to say that we have as much a responsibility to help our students question the world for the long term, as we do to make their situation better in the short term.

Challenges to the UK student movement

There is little doubt that fees are deterring potential students from poorer backgrounds: university applications last year in England and Wales dropped. The fact that people able to study at this level are being prevented from doing so for financial reasons shows the mess this Government has made of Higher Education.

But it is not only students who are worse off than before. We know that universities themselves have been chronically underfunded, ever since intake doubled between 1988 and 1995.

The UK lags far behind other western European countries in government support for universities. It is hardly surprising but roundly depressing that many of them have demanded the right to set higher fees; even, in some cases, to charge the actual cost of undergraduate courses.

But the very urgency of the debate about fees, loans and funding has left little opportunity to step back and question the deeper assumptions underlying it, many of which are shared by people with different positions in the debate itself.

The assertion that students themselves should pay for their education retrospectively because graduates earn more, on average, than the rest of the population needs to be challenged.

The idea that education is simply some kind of income-enhancing device is a sad one. The goal of any collective, democratic representative movement must be to educate and empower students to question their own assumptions and fight for an education system that means more than a return on investment.

If we believe in a collectively funded student movement, we really ought to remain of the belief that education should be collectively funded too.

Lastly, I want to talk about NUS. Whilst NUS is a student led organisation - this should never preclude working closely with other organisations and recognising that their experience and expertise are of great

value and further that the resources they commit to a specific issue are greater than resources NUS is able to allocate – we need to focus on our prime purpose and that is as an educational pressure group committed to improving conditions for present and future students, and an education developer committed to creating strong, representative Organisations with a radical agenda and strong democracy. No one else is going to do this – and we need to stop thinking that we can do everything.

NUS has a proud tradition of working with other campaign and pressure groups and not seeking to act unilaterally on an issue. With declining resources we need this strategy now more than ever. I would welcome the greater pooling of resources between AMSU, NUS and NUS Services – it can only benefit the student movement, provided of course, that democratic integrity and student control are maintained. The positive outcomes of student input are often just as important as the process of being involved and being democratic in the first place.

At the November Conference we started to change NUS, structurally, and financially. We made massive gains but culturally we have a long way to go. The decision was a conscious choice by student officers and activists to show commitment to their National Union; no games, no political stitch ups, but appealing to all our members from across the movement, factions and political persuasions to unite.

Today I ask all in the movement to help us, help us all become a stronger voice.

But ultimately, if we take a historical perspective on NUS' role in education it's clear that NUS is at its best and its most influential when it is talking about education; about student living conditions whether that be finance or accommodation; about student health; about discrimination in education; about lack of human rights and educational opportunity abroad; and about defending students' union autonomy.



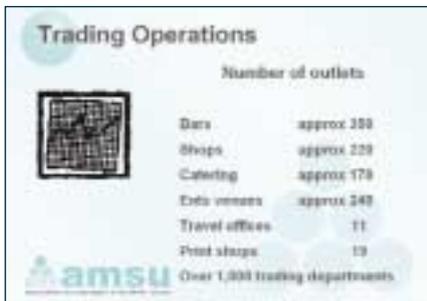
“ If we believe in a collectively funded student movement, we really ought to remain of the belief that education should be collectively funded too.”

Trends and the tracker unions



Author: Jon Berg,
AMSU's Treasurer

With the AMSU Survey 2005 in progress, AMSU's Treasurer Jon Berg, takes a last look at the results from the 2004 Survey



The main source in almost students' unions of income is grant funding from the parent institution, which totalled £56.2 million for 104 students' unions in 2002/03. This is nearly three times the £20 million generated from trading activities. On average the grant funding rose by 4.8% with 77% of unions receiving an increase. However 8% saw no increase and 15% of the students' unions had a reduction in grant funding. Parent institutions funded £1.6 million in capital spending, averaging £84,000 across nineteen students' unions, this excludes the £7 million investment at Cork. Institutions

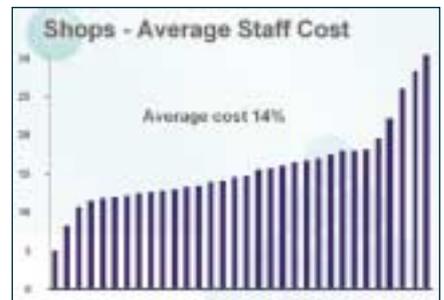
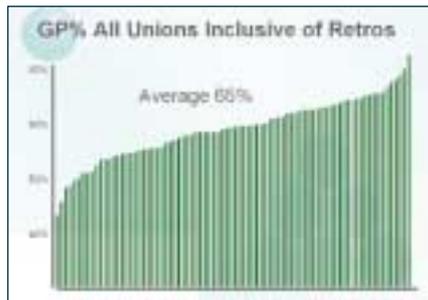
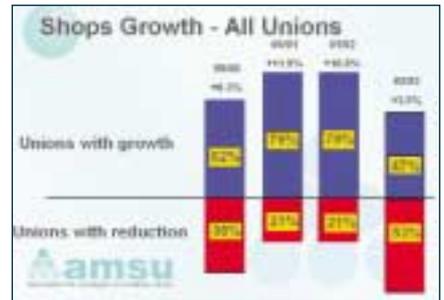
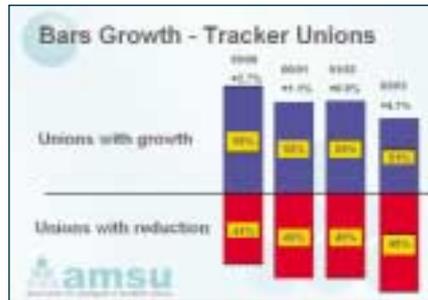
also made loans to nine students' unions, averaging £273,000.

The net surplus generated from trading activities arises from a range of over 1,000 operations, dominated by the traditional mix of bars, shops, and catering. I will look first at the bar operations because they are the highest turnover and largest source of net income.

We are able to make meaningful comparisons between different years by looking at those "tracker unions" which have submitted returns in all of the last five years. Although a record 104 students' unions submitted data to the AMSU Survey 2004, there were 58 which met the requirements for tracker unions.

average growth has exceeded inflation, but only just. Of these bar sales an average 65% was retained as gross profit but an average 24% of this was absorbed by staff costs. In both cases there is a wide variation across the tracker unions group.

Bars are the major commercial activity in students' unions, accounting for over half of the trading sales and nearly three quarters of the net profit. With increased pressure on student finances, high street competition, and staff cost rises, it is likely that the Survey figures for 2003/04 will see falls in both bar sales and net profit.

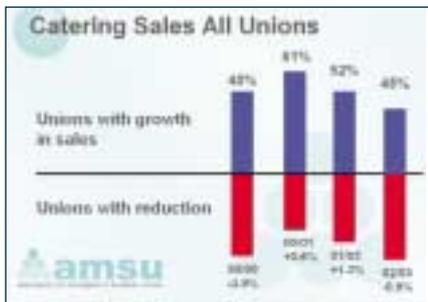


The bar sales trend highlights several significant points. There has been growth in sales, including an average increase of 4.7%, but only half (51%) of the tracker unions saw sales growth last year. Over the five years, the

After two years of sustained growth exceeding 10% per annum, 2002/03 saw an average 3.5% increase in shop sales which totalled £65 million for all unions in the Survey. However this

Trends and the tracker unions

growth in sales was confined to 47% of the unions, whilst over half had a fall in sales. The average 26% gross profit on sales has remained close to that of previous years, whereas the average 14% staff costs has fallen over the past five years.



Catering sales have fallen by an average 0.9% to £17 million, with 55% of the unions seeing a reduction in these sales. The gross profit percentage has risen by 1% each year, reaching 56% in the current year. Whilst a number of students' unions generate profits from catering, 40% of unions make losses. Many unions operate catering as a requirement of their bar/club license and offset the cost against bar profits but it is notable that the combined loss on catering was nearly three quarters of a million pounds in 2002/03.



The games sales of £7 million contribute a significant proportion of reported profits on trading so the 5% fall in sales has had an impact on net income for unions. Entertainments and travel each attract over 5% of trading sales in the Survey, but neither generate significant profits. There are a number of other commercial activities in unions such as printshops, launderettes, and bookshops which have combined sales of £8 million.

Category	Sales	Net profit
Bars	75m	13m
Shops	85m	4m
Catering	17m	-
Travel	17m	-
Entertainments	14m	(0.5m)
Games machines	7m	4m
Other	8m	(0.5m)
Total	£203m	£20m

Year ends:	2001	2002	2003
Fixed assets	701k	743k	579k
Current assets	612k	618k	641k
Current liabilities	(415k)	(334k)	(300k)
Net current assets	197k	252k	261k

The trading sales of £203 million and net profit of £20 million continue to be dominated by bars and shops. It is likely that the falling sales experienced by many unions in this Survey have been repeated in 2003/04, further reducing the self-generated income and increasing reliance upon funding from the parent institution.

Ninety percent of the unions in this Survey had incurred capital expenditure or additions to their fixed assets at an average of £144,000 per union. Approximately £5 million was invested in bars which may slow or arrest the decline in sales in some of the unions.

The balance sheets show the average figures for a group of unions. The fixed assets of £701,000 have fallen from 2002. The capital expenditure in 2002/03 was less than the depreciation charges leading to an average fall of about £40,000 in the net book value of fixed assets.

The fall in net current assets from £282,000 to £197,000 represents a decline in the liquidity of the unions. The current asset ratio has fallen from 1.8 in 2002 to 1.5 in 2003. Typically the current assets are bank balances, customer debts and stock for resale. Current liabilities are suppliers and creditors, VAT and payroll taxes to be paid over, overdrafts and short-term borrowings.

The AMSU Survey 2004 showed downward trends in the average income from mutual trading in the financial year 2002/03. Despite a fall in bars trading sales and net income in many students' unions, this continues to be the main source of trading income and leads to an increasing reliance upon funding from the parent institution.

The liquidity and overall value of some students' unions has dropped, based on the changes in the average net current assets and total net assets of the balance sheets tabled above. This decline continued in the year 2003/04, according to the first edition of the AMSU Survey 2005 results.

The initial results of AMSU Survey 2005 suggest these trends have continued in the financial year 2003/04, leading in some cases to spending cuts and significant deficits.

Have students really stopped drinking ?



Author: Hywel Griffiths
Data Project Manager, NUS Services

This article is a follow-up to one published in *Agenda 76*, (June 2003) entitled 'Have Students Really Stopped Drinking?'

I wrote before that 2002/03 represented the third year in a row that Students' Unions had sold less alcohol. This trend has continued into 2003/04, however the decline has slowed somewhat. Volumes in 2002-03 were over 7% down on the previous year, but, figures to the end of July 2004 show that NUS Services members purchased 3.7% less alcohol than the previous year.

To put this into some kind of context, figures from AC Nielsen show that the total on-trade liquor market was down by 2.1% in July 2004. However, managed pub chains (what we often refer to as the high street) saw a decline of 7.9% over this period - around one third of these high street bars are classified as young person/student venues.

Previously we examined the difference of our market compared to the rest of the on-trade in Great Britain. When we focus in on the high street we get a closer picture to our own, although there are still marked differences.

Figure 1 shows how the Students' Union market has changed in a year, and also compares the mix of products sold over the bar with figures for

the high street from AC Nielsen. The biggest change year-on-year within Unions has been the continued decline of premium packaged spirits, which declined by around 21% to account for just 13% of the total liquor market by the year end. The PPS market has also declined on the high street, but it was never as important a sector, accounting for less than 5% of the total mix. Even though Unions have doubled the share of wine (with the help of the new wine deal) the 4% share is still at odds with the high street where the category is far more prominent.

Beer has maintained its share within Unions at just over 40%. Although the beer share in the high street is higher, it is declining rapidly. In 2003 beer accounted for over 62% of the market and in a year it has fallen to 58%, principally due to the growth in wine and also spirits. Spirits volumes on the high street are running over 12% up year-on-year, however, the category still only accounts for 21% of liquor compared to 37% within Unions.

There has been something of a shift within the beer category in Unions over the year, with premium lager declining by 10%

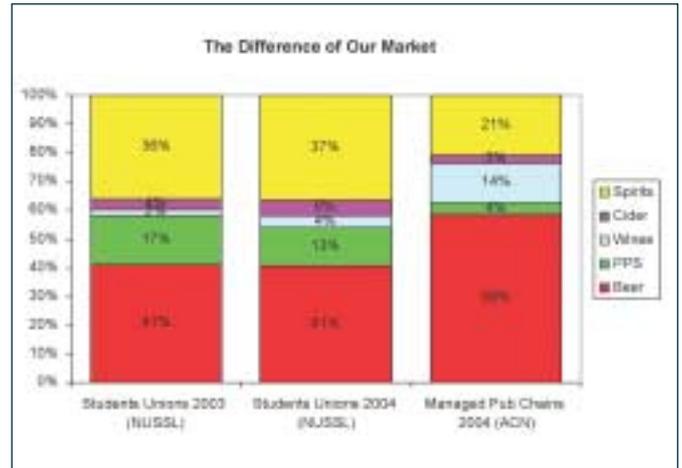


Fig 1

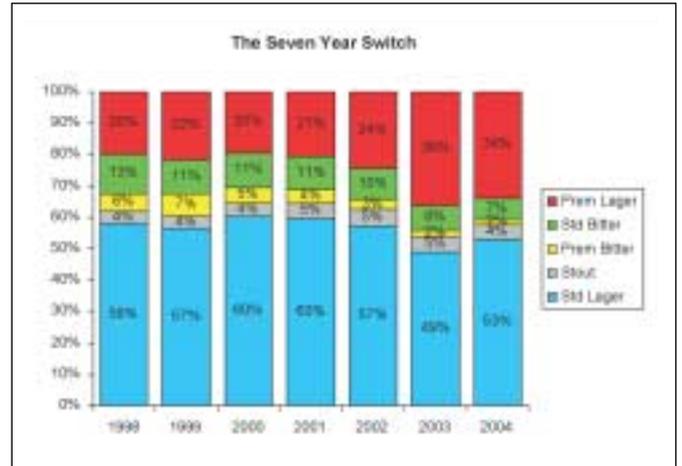


Fig 2

and standard lager increasing by 5%. When looking at the effects of this change, however, it is perhaps best to look at a more long-term picture.

Fig 1. Source: NUS Services

This shows how the beer mix has changed within Unions over the last seven years. The introduction of Stella Artois had a clear impact on the premium lager category in 2002-03, and a similar impact on standard lager shares. The decline in premium lager in 2004 means that the growth curve has slowed slightly, however, Unions are still selling the equivalent of around one million more pints of

premium lager than they were in 2002.

A shift towards standard lager logically implies that students are spending less on alcohol. The latest MORI Student Living report (2004) reckons that students who drink alcohol spend an average of £23 per week. This represents a decrease on the 2003 average of £25 per week. When you take inflation into account this 8% decrease looks more like 11%.

The difficulty of looking at weekly averages, though, is that by definition you lose the variances in the figures, as evidence points to students going out less often.

Have students really stopped drinking ?

AlcoVision look at alcohol spend in a slightly different way: they monitor average spend per occasion of drinking – effectively per night out. AlcoVision report that the average spend on alcohol per (on trade) occasion is £15.96 for 18-24 year olds, a 5% increase on the previous year. The average for 18-21 year olds is slightly higher at £16.42. The average for students works out at £13.07 per occasion. The importance of the youth market to suppliers and brands is clear, as AlcoVision estimate that the 18-24 age group account for almost one quarter of on-trade volumes despite the fact that they only account for 11% of the population.

The issue of declining frequency of drinking outside of the home is also picked up in a survey undertaken by Interbrew UK on the youth market.

Fig 3. Source: Interbrew UK

Figure 3 shows that a “great night out” could actually be considered a “great night in” as the second most popular response was ‘hanging out at a friend’s house’.

A word of caution on surveys, however; the 2003 MORI study reported that one in four students did not drink alcohol. The 2004 report states that this figure is one in five (20%), the same as they reported in 2002. The nature of sampling does mean that occasionally there will be statistical blips, so, whenever possible, it is best to look at longer term trends.

Speaking of which, I was asked to look at five-year trends for Unions to try and discover any patterns. I used servings information from Central Billing

data for all alcohol, which is also known as ‘equivalent drinks’ and allows all products to be analysed on the same basis over the time period.

Of the ‘top ten’ alcohol buying Unions of 2000, seven remain in the top ten in 2004. Overall, the volume of alcohol bought by Unions has fallen by 17% since the year 2000.

The 2003-04 total is just over 53 million servings of alcohol and the trend over the last five years is shown in Fig 4.

Fig 4. Source: NUS Services

Delving a little deeper, we can break the above down into bands of Unions: the top ten (by purchase volume), then the groups of Unions who are 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51 and above. Using the year 2000 as a base, we can then look at how those groups of Unions have fared on average over the five-year period.

Fig 5. Source: NUS Services

Fig 5 shows the performance of each grouping of Unions over the last five years. The total average (which shows the net 17% decline on 2000) is also shown on the graph for comparison purposes. The graph clearly shows that larger Unions are fairing better than smaller Unions. On average, top ten Unions are only 3% down on the volumes they were achieving in the year 2000. Unions outside the top fifty, however, are on average running 30% below the volumes that they were achieving in 2000.

The next step is, perhaps, to combine the above with an investment of capital expenditure over the same period.

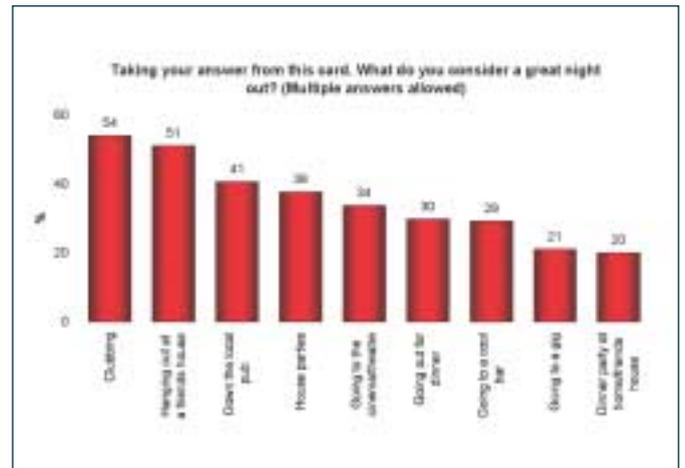


Fig 3

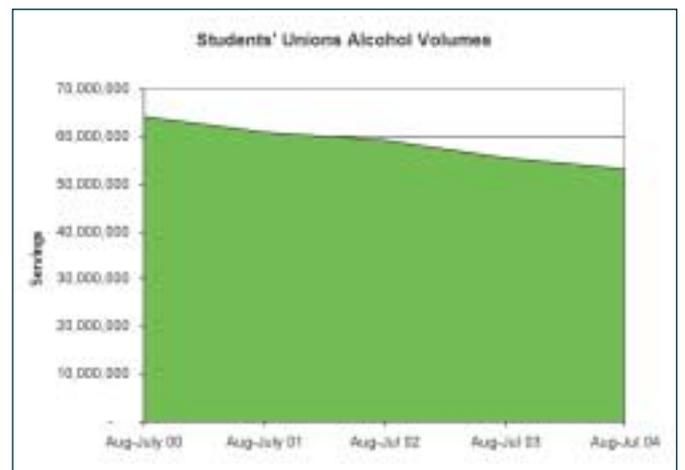


Fig 4

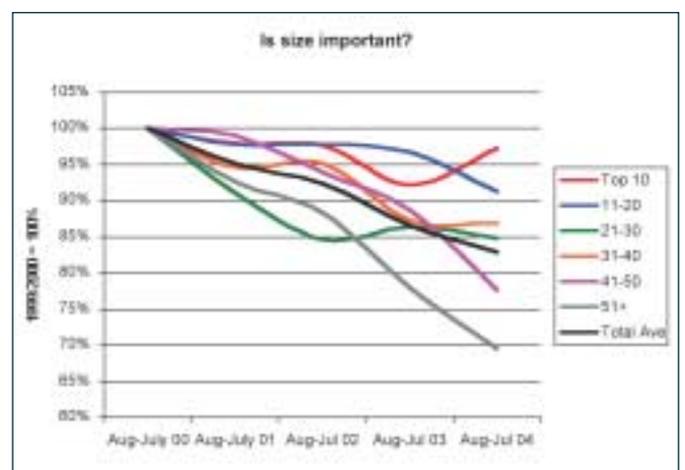


Fig 5

Doomed I say. We are all doomed



Author: Nick Berg
University of London Union,
General Manager

Building on the theme of macro-environmental change Nick Berg, ULU General Manager, has been doing some gazing into the future for UK Students' Unions. What he sees is potentially very alarming for the future of UK Students' Unions but he believes that it is far better to be alarmist now than to be seen to have been complacent when viewed with hindsight.

Nick outlines his theory that UK Students' Unions are facing a historic strategic crisis, outlines the nature of that crisis, how it may affect Student Unions' in years to come, how crisis may develop at a university level, some new opportunities and some thoughts on what we should all do about it.

I believe that there is a strategic crisis in UK Students' Unions. What do I mean by a strategic crisis? I mean a crisis that is, long term rather than short term, is fundamental to the role of the Students' Unions and to its relationship with its stakeholders and one that could lead to organisational collapse. The symptoms of this crisis have built up over many years before becoming significant to such an extent and may show up in ways that lead them to be misdiagnosed or partly misunderstood. The term crisis often

“ This strategic crisis is the result of the confluence of a combination of factors rather than a single factor.”

implies rapid change but strategic crisis is more like violent geological change i.e. the shifts can be too slow to be noticeable for a long time but the culmination is often very sudden, violent and unexpected like an earthquake. It can also be likened to a boat being pulled towards the edge of a waterfall by an ever strengthening current until the rowers have to actually row straight back up-stream to escape. This is a little like economic applications of catastrophe theory.

These trends are not absolute. Traditional Students' Union activities and services will continue to have great resonance for it isn't that suddenly no-one wants to do a particular thing, but rather that slightly less want to do this each year even though the declining service is still good, popular and relevant to many. Operational and tactical measures can easily create the limited short-term appearance of bucking the trends; indeed this has served to disguise the trend to some extent in many Unions in recent years.

This strategic crisis is the result of the confluence of a combination of factors rather than a single factor. Behind the obvious symptoms are other phenomena that are less tangible and measurable and slower acting but we need to understand these to respond effectively. The long term (i.e. 10-year) and national trends are more significant in this context than just year-to-year trends locally. Cruelly, it is likely that students and the university will be more demanding of the Students' Union than

ever before at precisely the time when we are trying to adjust to change, when net resources are shrinking and competition or alternatives is increasing.

I believe that the many elements can be summarised as an attack on two fronts:

1. The undermining of the legitimacy of UK Students' Unions through the erosion of both the feeling of a shared student identity and the sense and reality of there being a student community
2. The collapse of the financial model of UK Students' Unions with Students' Union trading income declining significantly, whilst costs are rising

The crisis of legitimacy questions our right to exist, whilst the financial crisis challenges our ability to exist.

So what are these pressures undermining the sense of a shared student identity and the idea of a student community? Anything that undermines homogeneity, shared experiences and affinity is going to lead to a lessening of that identity. As the student population is bigger and more diverse and with different motivations for being at university, and the academic programme and timetables are less uniform between different students, so there becomes fewer aspects of student life that are genuinely common. Indeed some have described this as the difference between students and studiers. The latter want many of the same things that students have always wanted out of being at university whereas the latter tend not to even use the word student to describe themselves.

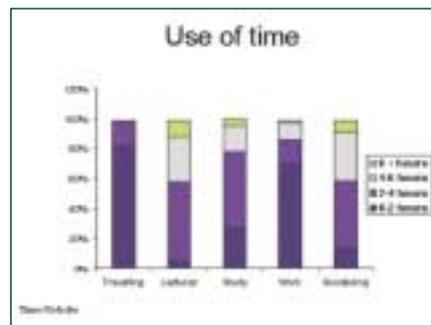
Doomed I say. We are all doomed

Some pressures undermining the sense of a shared student identity and community:

- The growth of size of the student population. Many universities are three, five, or even ten times the size they were originally envisaged to be and for many universities that growth has completely changed the feel of the organisation, in the same way that a settlement changes when it goes from being a village to a town. Typically affinity and participation within the community decline and local services are increasingly compared with the competition rather than being seen as local assets.
- The diversification of the student population, especially age and cultural background and residential status. All of these can lead to different assumptions and motivations about being in Higher Education
- Time poverty: UK Students' Unions activities are largely predicated upon students having free time to participate in them. With students working longer hours than in previous decades and feeling part of a generally more rushed society, activities that suggest you need a lot of time to do them could appeal to fewer students.
- Fragmentation of the academic programme: e.g. modularisation, expanded teaching hours, compressed weeks, placements, mode surfing, continuous assessment. All these trends move students away from a shared experience of time and landmarks. It is rather like a factory that used to have all its staff at work during the same part of the day and the same days per week with all the rituals that go with that, whereas now it is more like a call centre with different shifts all starting at different times and no common sense of time and the shape of the week.
- Increasing ability to live and work at home (as opposed to halls) all reduce the need to physically be at university at all. Factors such as greater internet access, home computers, mobile phones all make students more fragmented in terms of place.

How these factors may impact on UK students' unions in the next few years.

Few of these changes are new and nor are they necessarily happening at all institutions or if they are at similar rates of change. This is part of the apparent diversification of the Higher Education system in the UK. This might be fine if these various factors that are undermining one of the founding assumptions behind Students' Unions, namely that there is such a thing as a student identity and a student community, were not occurring at a time when the financial position of many Students' Unions is the worst it has been for 10 years or more.



There are also many pressures undermining Students' Union finances and this has been detailed quite effectively elsewhere. However it isn't just about the decline in bars sales alone. There have also been many things that have driven up operating costs for Students' Unions (regardless of what we think of them as policies or trends). This includes things like the introduction and increases in the minimum wage, the increase in part-time workers rights, growing emphasis upon health and safety and risk, corporate social responsibility around environmental impact, drinking, smoking, gambling, the problems with pension arrangements and so on. The point being is that all of these cost pressures erode relative Students' Union income even when that appears to be growing. (See Antony Blackshaw's article in Agenda 77).

Some believe that the widening of access has made and will make, going to university more commonplace. The student

“Some believe that the widening of access has made and will make, going to university more commonplace.”

population will be more diverse due to this and the growth of international student numbers. The increased flexibility in course delivery and other matters, compression of the timetable and time poverty will mean that students are less likely to have significant periods of time that coincide with other students time in college, and especially their free time to socialise or volunteer. Universities will feel more like airports and railway stations where people are constantly in transit and on the go and behaviours will match this e.g. emphasis on speed and flexibility of delivery. Universities will have more and more “people who study” who do not think of themselves as “students” in the traditional sense with all its assumptions about background, motivation, lifestyle and behaviour. They may see the Students' Union as something for traditional students and the student community to which they don't belong or even want to belong.

The liquor and leisure markets are changing irrevocably and the change is not cyclical or seasonal. Students' Unions will need to re-evaluate their commercial activities, some will:

- Continue and succeed
- Continue less successfully
- Pare down the level and type of service
- Discontinue

An increasing number of Unions are looking at:

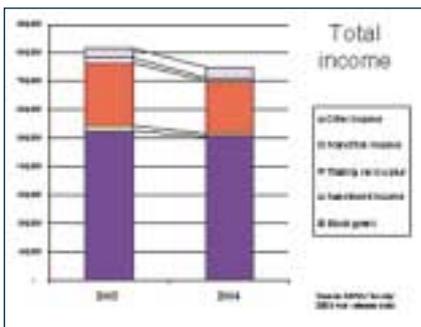
- Institutional take-over
- Institutional intervention or partnership
- Third party contract
- Other Union collaboration

Doomed I say. We are all doomed

Students' Unions will need to re-evaluate their mission, purpose and resource base. Dependence on University funding will grow as trading income continues to decline. More funding will be ring fenced or project based.

There may be pressure to separate off successful membership services e.g. why not merge with University advice services, give sports clubs to the University sports centre. Clubs and societies expenditure will have to be cut and better regulated – this will create political conflict. Student media will be cut or allowed to decline – there will be fewer student newspapers. This may even be accelerated by how they cover the difficult process of making cuts.

In Students' Unions commercial services sales levels will only be maintained through higher levels of initial and ongoing investment in facilities and marketing i.e. you will have to spend more to earn the same so that net profitability will decline and trading activities will become less profitable generally. Many Students' Unions will close facilities and this will sometimes create student conflict.



The rate of investment in facilities will slow and will struggle to make a return on capital and so the rate of renewal and growth of commercial facilities will decline. Facilities will become shabby within 5 years.

Elected officers will have to preside over, and defend to the electorate, deep and public cuts in services possibly several times per year. This will include defending staff job losses, closing facilities like bars

at remote sites, reducing funding to clubs and societies. This will create political conflict. By contrast, officers will rarely have new facilities to open or extra investment in activities to announce.

One of the hardest questions to answer is "how do such long-term national trends lead to a crisis for the local Students' Union?" Most times the crisis involves the university management having discussions with the Students' Union about its future, often in a situation where the Students' Union feels in a very weak position to argue its case.

Here are 10 ways that in the current environment such a crisis can occur quickly:

1. A mid-year budget crisis i.e. Students' Union heading for a monster deficit
2. A summer cashflow crisis leading to an overdraft that grows each year or an inability to pay the university generally
3. Sales decline sharply in a trading activity with high overheads creating a rapid descent from nominal profit into big losses e.g. a catering outlet
4. An inability to justify borrowing for capital investment in facilities leads to deterioration and dissatisfaction with the Students' Union management especially with UK students paying fees
5. Ambitious performance targets for a new refurbishment are not achieved. This can even happen where the project is well managed and the facility is meeting customer needs well
6. Policy makers refusing to make cuts in membership services (or less likely) price rises to make budgets balance e.g. the clubs and societies budgets are due to be cut but a General Meeting votes against this, leaving the Students' Union with effectively no budget
7. An industrial relations crisis arising from staff redundancies leads to the university being worried about the Students' Union managing its own affairs

“ Students' Unions will need to re-evaluate their mission, purpose and resource base.”

8. There is a discussion of changes to the SU's organisational status or structure such as looking at the Students' Union's deemed charitable status or incorporating the trading operations
9. As a result of attempts to outsource services and sub-let space in the Students' Union, Universities will dispute the ability of the Students' Union, with its organisational status to sub-let space and also why the university shouldn't get that money
10. A new campus development where the University doesn't want the Students' Union included and instead wants to use the private sector or its own operators to provide social facilities

Doomed I say. We are all doomed

The future for UK Students' Unions: New opportunities & directions

Of course I am probably being too pessimistic, as most future gazing tends to be (1984, Brave New World, Metropolis). More importantly, it is far easier to anticipate possible negative impacts (especially the loss of something that currently exists) than it is to imagine how change might lead to previously unthinkable improvements, applications and consequences. Andy Parsons takes a more optimistic view in his article and here I have provided 5 reasons to be cheerful:

1. Tuition fees income may enable some universities to invest in facilities and services that will make them more competitive in terms of student recruitment and assist retention or greatly enhance guidance services to deal with the introduction of the new funding system in 2006. This may see money going into support and services, student study facilities like libraries but also social facilities like bars and catering, sports and guidance and support services. This could herald a boom time for Students' Unions where this happens and the Students' Union is regarded as the natural partner for such expansion. In other universities this may be used as the opportunity to expand alternatives to the Students' Union such as college run services or the private sector.
2. The notion of the student experience may get much more important once students are paying fees. Fee paying students may not be satisfied with just good teaching but want the whole student experience with all the interesting and potentially life changing opportunities that surround the academic programme.
3. QAA and the general strengthening of QA regime. Many readings of what the post tuition fees world will be like have students becoming less deferential and

more consumerist in regard to what the university provides. We shall see whether this happens but when this is combined with the more student focused QA regime, including the QAA and the national students satisfaction survey, it is highly plausible to believe that students will become more interested in getting a good deal from their course. It remains to be seen whether this will translate into Students' Union based involvement or more money for lawyers.

4. Volunteering and citizenship become more valuable as pressures working against them increase. Students' Unions are quite successful at this at a time when more resources are going into this via funding but also the promotion of citizenship within schools.
5. Widening access and general recruitment and retention will become major headaches for many colleges. Students' Unions can play a vital role in outreach work in schools and communities where role models can be very effective and Students' Unions already do such work and are very well placed to continue to do so. The valuable role that Students' Unions play in providing advice, support and motivation to stay at college may be more widely recognised by universities in the post-tuition fees era.

However, we as managers, have to get excited by these new opportunities and see the role of Students' Union management to be less about managing trading operations and more about this emerging agenda for Students' Unions. This strategic challenge needs the same or more effort from senior managers as was previously put into commercial strategies over the last two decades.

“ This strategic challenge needs the same or more effort from senior managers as was previously put into commercial strategies over the last two decades.”

Doomed I say. We are all doomed

What should we do?

Following on from my use of phrases from Dad's Army, it is no surprise that I suggest that in the words of Corporal Jones (or the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy) we "Don't panic". Here are some suggestions as to what we should do next.

1. Recognition of the situation. First internally, then publicly, then with stakeholders. Let's be mature enough to admit we are undergoing sector wide change.
2. A national approach will be more effective than "Devil take the hindmost", however the nature of how change develops locally and the structure and culture of the national student organisations makes this unlikely.



3. Good quality analysis and cash flow forecasting will be needed to get buy-in to the problem by stakeholders and prevent the Students' Union hitting the rocks before it sees them. Students' Unions that struggle to do this themselves should look to buy in expertise rather than do without or use inadequate data.
4. We must get universities to own the problem and want to solve it. The last 20 years can be seen as a time when Students' Unions and universities benefited from student social spending to fund activities that otherwise would have been funded by the tax payer. Now that this is likely to change we need to have genuine dialogue about how to

respond. The influx of tuition fee income should be used with some consideration as to how to build strong SUs that do not need to rely on selling alcohol, cigarettes and gambling to students in order to support other activities that promote health, fitness, citizenship and well-being.

5. Students' Unions should consider re-aligning the Students' Union role towards key university strategic goals (as an ally not a department of the college). This can be done by focusing on recruitment, retention and employability through the enhancement of the student experience. Start with the University strategic plan and show how the Students' Union contributes in its own way to this.
6. Make drastic cuts now to buy time to develop a new strategy and do painful things now i.e. close facilities, make redundancies whilst the Students' Union still has funds left to do it. Start meaningful and fundamental strategic review.
7. In the face of these challenges still try and deliver on the core services especially institutional representation.
8. Partnership will be central to any new strategy. It is largely a question of who with and how e.g. other Students' Unions, through joint college trading companies or with the commercial sector. We need to start thinking about the new outlook and behaviours needed to make this work.

So it appears that, in the words of the Chinese curse "we live in interesting times". However it is also the case that "crisis" can produce high levels of creativity and industry in people. I believe that as the crisis that we are facing is strategic in nature, so the creativity that we need is in terms of strategic thinking and planning. There are plenty of exciting opportunities arising from these interesting times, what is not so clear is how to grab those opportunities. Perhaps most difficult to work out is how to do this

" So it appears that, in the words of the Chinese curse " we live in interesting times".

whilst faced with so many day-to-day challenges to keep the Union going in its present form. However I believe that leaders will need to be bolder than ever and learn to live with the higher levels of risk that will be attached to virtually any course of action we take locally or nationally in these interesting times.

The introduction of tuition fees in 2006 will in itself be a dramatic change for UK Students' Unions but I believe that this may overshadow the longer-term shifts already underway and become critical before we reach October 2006. Events at Aberdeen, Glasgow Caledonian, Middlesex University and elsewhere make me believe that we may be at the end of an era. Certainly there is little reason for complacency at the moment, and this new era will require exceptional (and perhaps a rather different style of) leadership from managers and officers alike if we are to not only survive, but be as relevant to this new higher education landscape as we have been in the past.

Prediction is always difficult especially when it concerns the future



Author: Andy Parsons,
General Manager Loughborough
Students' Union

Reading the tea leaves of the world about us and working out the implications for the future of the Students' Unions is always going to be tricky. Nick Berg has done us all great service in setting out a pretty comprehensive analysis of the political, economic, social, technical and educational issues that have a bearing on Students' Unions.

In my view three issues stand out as being the most significant:

- The composition of the student population
- Students' time and money
- The financial climate for Unions.

All three therefore deserve closer analysis if we are to know what to do as a result of these new factors in the world around us.

Though it is intended to be more optimistic than Nick Berg's doomsday scenario, this article should in no way be taken as comfort for those who hope "we can do nothing – it will all be alright". I am also especially keen that we should not provide cover for those who say "what can you do, the trends are against us".

My aim is to look below the surface and beyond the cliché and in particular to identify what seem to be current and future

trends not just to observe what has happened in the past.

The composition of the student population

The view of university students as 18-21 year old, white, middle class, living away from home is obviously way out of date and should be old news for us all but the detail exposes more complex challenges and interesting solutions.

Ethnicity

It is clear that ethnic minorities will be increasingly well represented particularly as second and third generation immigrant families work their way through the school system.

British ethnic minorities represent about 16% of the Higher Education student population. This has been an increase of about 20,000 students on first degree courses, and on all courses numbers have approximately doubled between 1995 and 2002 (HESA).

This demands that we look more closely at the diversity that exists.

For example whilst such an increase inevitably means that there are more Muslim students, the majority of the UK ethnic minorities are not Muslims. Many of these students will have cultural differences that are significant in terms of the services a Union should offer them.

Lumping the whole of the UK minority population together, as though it is one thing, is no longer nearly good enough. We need to understand our student population and adapt our flavour of service to match their needs and target communications directly to the right groups.

It should also be understood that during the 1995-2002 period there was a significant (20%) increase in the number of white, 18-21 year old, first degree students. They are a declining proportion of our members but they are still growing in numbers overall.

Obviously looking at national statistics in

this way disguises very significant divergence between institutions. I am sure there are several institutions in which the classic student population has declined as an absolute and that there must therefore be some institutions in which changes in the ethnic makeup of the population have been marginal.

International students

There is a very marked growth in the numbers of international students especially from China. Many institutions clearly see this as the road to financial salvation. Unions that fail to embrace and understand these new members will be seriously failing both their members and their institutions.

The Union can offer strong opportunities for international students to meet with and understand home students. Far too often we miss this opportunity for cultural enrichment, leaving international students in touch with each other but not really in touch with anyone else. This is an important and growing challenge for Students' Unions.

Mode of study

Similar facts seem to apply to modes of study. There has been significant growth in both post graduate taught degrees and sub degree level courses, both full and part time, but the standard first degree continues to thrive and grow too.

The growth in taught post grad is unsurprising. For all the debate about fees for first degrees, it has not escaped the notice of University managers that there is essentially an unregulated market in post grad courses. Warwick Business School offer their MBA for a bargain £23,000 for example.

Other institutions are more inclined towards partnerships with business to accredit training. As Peter Knight, VC of UCE, said "the Government is a very poor paymaster, we would rather spread our clients to include some with a bit more cash".

Prediction is always difficult especially when it concerns the future

Our relationship with part-time MBA students who are being paid for by their employers is inevitably going to be a limited one.

However the image of post grads on a taught course as being ready for their pipe and slippers is also clearly out of date. A large proportion of post grad follow directly on from a first degree or come in after a one year break. They are 22-25 and share many of the characteristics of undergraduates, not least significant financial pressures.

These students are our core members and we need to increase our understanding of their circumstances, needs and aspirations.

Day trippers

There is an assumption that student concerns about costs will reduce the number of students moving away from home in order to study. There seems to be a dearth of national research on the actual figures. Those that exist suggest that about 22% of students stay at home and I can find no evidence of significant growth in this proportion, nationally over the last 3 years (though my research on this matter is far from definitive). Again some local institutions have observed significant shifts toward this mode of life at university which further supports the idea that institutions and the student experience is diverging.

The impact of students moving away from home is obviously profound. Arguably for younger students, day tripping to university is being short changed on the university experience. The Mori/Unite student lifestyle survey found some evidence that stay-at-home students are less happy than those moving to study. The extent to which fear of fee driven debt will keep students at home is a major imponderable for the future which will potentially have a critical impact on students' unions.

Again though we need to check our

“ My aim is to look
below the surface and
beyond the cliché.”

assumptions about this growing minority. research conducted by the University of Liverpool suggests that whilst about half of local students simply “change bus routes” the other half have aspirations to join the full student experience albeit from the parental home.

The study found however that these students often find it very difficult to break in to student groups in their first few weeks and end up by being alienated from the student lifestyle instead of integrated into it.

This suggests that these students may have similar aspirations to the classic student but may need an induction more oriented to their needs.

Students time, money and future trends

It is sometimes said that students have less money (in real terms) now than they had five, ten or twenty years ago. In fact the reverse is true. The underlying story is far more significant to the future of Students' Unions; more indebted but on average their disposable funds have grown consistently.

There are also other costs. The link between student time and money is fairly obvious, students who are short of cash will work more and therefore have less time to volunteer and socialise let alone study. Being short of cash is debilitating in many other aspects of life.

The Mori/Unite student living survey provides the clearest work in this area. The survey has been conducted over the last four years. During that time they have asked students why they work and there has been a steady increase in the proportion of working students who

Year	Time pressure worst	% of students working
2001	31%	30%
2002	34%	43%
2003	31%	41%
2004	28%	39%

answer that it is “to cover basic essentials”. This is the top answer followed by “to provide money for a social life”.

The proportion of students reporting that they work during term time has however followed an interesting pattern. This pattern is shadowed by the number of students who say time pressure is the worst aspect of university life.

Both of these indicators seem to suggest that proportion of students who need to work during term time may have peaked.

The question of whether the introduction of the new fees system will have any impact is again difficult to call but it seems unlikely since students report that they are working to solve immediate cash problems rather than to alleviate debt.

There is also substantial evidence to indicate that students from poorer social backgrounds are more likely to work. Is it possible that improved bursary schemes would help these students and reduce their need to work?

Mori also identifies a growing awareness of the need to gain experience over and above academic experience amongst students. Many working students cite this as a benefit of work but it is also be a major benefit of involvement in the Union.

It may therefore be that the clearly observable trend of money pressures driving participation in activities down, bottomed out in 2002 and that therefore this may be turning from a challenge into an excuse for failing to find things our students are interested in.

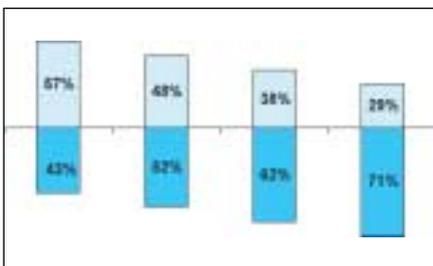
Prediction is always difficult especially when it concerns the future

The financial climate for Unions

The financial crisis that has beset most Students' Unions over the last three years or so has overwhelmingly been driven by one factor.

The quiet drink in the Union bar during the day and in the evening has dramatically declined as part of student culture.

This is an area in which we had a number of clear location and cultural advantages over our competitors and many unions have found it difficult to replace this trade with the far more harshly competitive evening entertainment based drinks trade.



Over the last four years the proportion of Union's whose licensed trade has been in growth or decline is illustrated by this graph (NUS Services). Last year was a particularly difficult one with 71% of Unions facing declining sales by volume. Interestingly there seems to be no strong relationship between growth and decline and type of institutions, new or old or campus or city. The main factor seems to be that the bigger unions are doing better than the smaller ones.

Whilst in several cases this decline in bar sales has precipitated a financial crisis for the Union, as a whole the outcome has been a highly supportive and constructive response from the institution often resulting in extra financial support in return for a strong strategic plan.

In other cases Unions have adapted to the new financial circumstances both commercially and in overall terms, cutting their coats according to the cloth.

This year many unions also face the down scaling of the Active community fund and ongoing pressure from increasing cost e.g.

pension, minimum wages, SIA.

Can we make efficiency gains to cover tighter financial circumstances without compromising core activity?

- Technology outsourcing and collaboration will all have a role to play as will benchmarking to measure efficiency.
- Have we got too many managers on too high salaries for downsized organisations?

Will HEIs stump up more cash for Students' Unions? Possibly.

- Positive impact on key organisational objectives
- Recruitment
- Continuation
- Student experience
- If they have the money!

Attempting to solve these pressures at a few months notice is doomed to failure but flagging up the difficulties with stakeholders well in advance seems to have elicited a helpful response.

What impact will this have on the future of Students' Unions?

It is clear that growing divergence in Higher Education which will be underlined further by the new research selectivity exercises, means that generalising from national statistics and trends is no longer tenable.

Each Students' Union needs to consider these and other factors in planning its future direction and style of operation.

Very often we will need to undertake further more detailed research before you can even map this journey.

Some questions we should be able to answer, but probably can't.

- What is the ethnic/religious make up of your student population? What impact do these factors have on the relationship that each of these categories of students may have with the union?
- Where to your international students

come from (China is not a good answer it's a big country with a widely divergent culture)? What is their experience of attending your institution? What can the Union do to have a positive impact?

- How many post grads are there at your institution? Taught and research? How appropriate is your Freshers material as an induction for these students?
- How many students come from their home town? How many live in the parental home? How suitable is the Freshers process for these students?
- Which of your members work regularly during term time? When, where and at what do they work?
- As far as you can judge how will this change over the next three years?

Some easier questions

- What are your institutions plans for the next three years?
- What do they want from you?
- What critical changes in those plans seem most plausible?

Conclusions

Finishing as I started, with a cliché.

The only thing that is predictable is the unexpected.

To be effective we need to build characteristics that equip us for all eventualities.

- A strong complex relationship with a good proportion of our members
- Understanding who they are and what they need and want.
- Listening and responding
- Being their kind of people
- An ability to deliver quality services
- An ability to change and adapt rapidly with the minimum of disruption

Unions like this will always have a strong future but getting there requires a long term substantial commitment that will probably be the difference between doom and success.

Brave new world or apocalypse now?



Author: Matt Hyde
General Manager, Goldsmiths
College Students' Union

Building on the two themes of strategic change in students' unions and the impact of the 2004 Higher Education Act, Matt Hyde discusses some of the implications for HEIs and students' unions post-2006, following the introduction of variable fees, and speculates about who might be the winners and the losers.

"Facing it, always facing it, that's the way to get through. Face it!" Joseph Conrad.

Variable fees are upon us. In 1997, I remember hearing Rodney Bickerstaff, former General Secretary of UNISON, describe the introduction of tuition fees as the 'thin end of the wedge.' We are now approaching the fatter end of the wedge. Over 66% of HEIs have stated an intention of charging the maximum fee of £3,000 across the board according to a recent Guardian article. So for many of us the fight has now shifted away from whether or not our HEIs should charge the full whack to what level of support they will be offering students in the way of bursaries, scholarships and additional support measures (e.g. free laptops, luncheon vouchers. I kid you not - these are serious proposals. Whatever next? Buy one course, get one free? Free pencil case if

you sign up before 1st September?).

And I suspect that some of us are also cynically (or honestly?) thinking 'will students' unions be getting a piece of the cake with all this new money flowing into Higher Education?' There are indeed opportunities for students' unions as a result of this new income, but I fear that there are as many, if not more, threats. We are entering into uncharted territory where the nature of higher education will be quite unlike anything we have known before. So who will be the losers and the winners as a result of the new legislation? This article ponders upon that question and initiates a debate about how students' unions might respond to the introduction of variable fees in the short and long-term – a debate that will be developed in subsequent issues of Agenda.

The Act itself is highly complex. The devil appears to be in the detail and it was only recently that I found that there are in fact numerous implications for students' unions – beyond the more straightforward matter of how much institutions will charge and give out in the way of bursaries. It is for this reason that all General Managers, senior managers, officers and membership services staff need to be aware of these implications in order to start anticipating the impact of the Act. This article is a mere introduction to some of the issues and in no way should be seen as being an exhaustive list of these implications.

How Higher Education might look post-2006. No One Size Fits All

Never was this ubiquitous phrase so appropriate. The 2004 Higher Education Act will affect students' unions in very different ways, because it will affect our parent institutions in different ways and, whether we like it or not, they inherently affect how we, as students' unions, operate. A number of variables come in to play when determining whether or not your parent institution will benefit financially, in comparative terms, as a

result of variable fees. The following factors will be key:

- the ability for your institution to charge £3,000 for all or the majority of its courses
- the size of your institution
- your institution's student profile (e.g. do you have lots of undergraduates or more post-graduates?)

A large Russell Group member is unlikely to hesitate charging £3,000 across the board (indeed, they probably would like to charge more and I fear one day they will). With a strong reputation and good research rating they are clearly in a very strong position to charge £3,000 across the board, or, at least, for the majority of the courses. However, a post-1994 institution with a far weaker research rating will clearly be less able to charge £3,000 and instead might vary fees depending on demand or not charge the full £3,000 at all. Part of this will depend on market positioning.

Equally, however, size matters more than ever. If you have 10,000 full-time undergraduates and you are charging £3,000 across the board, then clearly by 2009 you will be in for a huge influx of cash – presumably approximately an extra £20million cash to spend (gross). Compare this to a pre-1994 University which is not in a position to charge full fees. Indeed, Goldsmiths College – an institution which is perfectly capable of charging full fees based on reputation, research rating – will only be getting an estimated gross income of £4.8 million due to the fact that it is a medium-sized institution (7,500 students) with a student profile of 31% postgraduate students. Compare this to a large new University with a majority of undergraduate students and you can see that identifying the winners and the losers in the Act is not a straightforward exercise.

What is clear is that there will be greater deregulation and less obligations to the state and this will result in a weakening standardisation of higher education which will have an impact on every students' union.

Brave new world or apocalypse now?

Implications for students' unions

The marketisation of higher education will mean that HEIs will come in different shapes and sizes. Will this mean that our collective framework is less valid? Are we more likely to develop families of students' unions who have similar issues and whose institutions are of a similar make-up? Even the homogeneity of the Russell Group will be questioned as the big 2 or 3 break away from the rest of the pack.

Variability

Variability will come in many forms. It will either be upfront where, in a prospectus, course A is cheaper than course B and anecdotal evidence would suggest that this will normally be because course A has lower demand. Or, variability will come through the back door, where all courses are advertised as being the same at an institution (say £3,000 across the board) but an incentivising scholarship is offered for low demand courses to increase take-up.

Implications for students' unions

Scholarships introduce variability through the back door. But this could put the Union in a precarious campaigning position where either the Union is arguing against incentivising a low demand course or, by inference, it is arguing that the course should close. Arguing either point could put you in an interesting and potentially troublesome position with your members.

Bargain offers

There could also be different students paying different amounts for the same course – even at different stages of enrolment. Institutions are totally empowered to charge what they like. So, for instance, if it's clearing time and an institution can't get enough students for a particular course, there is nothing to stop that institution saying they're going to sell places half price for that week. This is very similar to the lastminute.com notion that we are all familiar with as consumers (say, on low cost airlines like Ryanair or easyJet.

“ Clearly there will be issues of parity for students paying different fees for the same course.”

I'm sure Stelios is already getting excited about a new easyUniversity, (though some older colleagues may think that we have some of these already).

Implications for students' unions

Clearly there will be issues of parity for students paying different fees for the same course. Your Union may end up representing an increasing number of students who have concerns about issues of parity and breaches of contract. In fact, the overall complexities of the new funding model, with localised differentiations, will almost certainly confuse and bemuse students and they may be looking to their students' union for the answers – particularly where there is a range of bursaries and scholarships on offer. This will come at a time when students are paying more and therefore will be demanding more, which in itself could put additional pressure on union and college welfare and advice services.

OFFA and the Access Agreement

There is a great and understandable fear that the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) will be a fairly toothless regulator of HEIs in ensuring the effective promotion of widening participation strategies. It should be noted that OFFA is not concerned with retention issues, even though we as students' unions will be. However, the access agreement, agreed by OFFA, may in fact provide a tremendous opportunity for students' unions. Firstly, it is important to note that OFFA will not be taking into account an institution's current profile. The focus is on steps that an institution is taking

to achieve a more accessible institution. And the institution will theoretically be assessed against how well it meets its milestones, laid out in its access agreement and not on the basis of whether there has in fact been a demonstrable change in the student profile with an increase in non-traditional students. These milestones can probably be seen as the completion of successful projects such as mentoring initiatives or school ambassador schemes – classed broadly under the heading 'outreach.' And this is where students' unions could come in.

I have always been slightly sceptical about students' unions being involved in outreach work per se, as one can argue that such initiatives do not benefit our members beyond the development of some transferable skills for a handful of students. But I wonder if students' unions might be able to turn this to our advantage by informing our democratic processes. Are there ways through mentoring non-traditional students either inside the institution (retention) or outside the institution (outreach), that may in turn help us to provide services that are more tailored to these non-traditional groups. Perhaps ultimately the focus should be on retention where the students' union can provide support systems and peer mentoring that will help students to complete their degrees.

Implications for students' unions

In short, there are opportunities here for the Union to get significant funding for outreach and retention projects (though, as previously noted, OFFA's focus is not on retention). Of course, we need to ensure that these projects are still ultimately providing a value to our members and that we don't set ourselves up for failure. But it would be an awful shame if we found ourselves in another HEACF situation where the people best placed and most experienced to deliver such projects didn't see any of the money and weren't used in any way.

Brave new world or apocalypse now?

Checklist

Again, the following is not intended to be exhaustive or instructive. Rather, it is an indication of some of the actions that a handful of students' unions are currently taking to pre-empt some of the changes in the future.

1. Understand the impact that the Act has on your institution and therefore your students' union. This is not simply a case of knowing what your institution will be charging for its courses and how big the bursaries will be. There are bigger issues than this.
2. Nevertheless, keep on the inside track of what your institution is planning on doing. Are your officers on any working groups?
3. Know how much your institution expects to approximately be receiving in gross income as a result of variable fees.
4. Know how much of this they expect to spend on bursaries, scholarships and outreach work.
5. Think through ways in which this additional money could be spent at your institution and bid up now.
6. Think through any projects that the Union could undertake as part of the outreach or retention work.
7. Could you get the above into your institutions access agreement or is it too late?
8. Ensure someone in your Students' Union is clued up about the Act. Students and potential students will be asking questions about this very soon (particularly implications for gap year students and the like).
9. Collectively we need to start thinking about feeding in to the 2010 review of fees (when the DFES is monitoring the impact of the legislative changes).
10. Finally, start talking to your HEI on a big picture level. How do they see the institution looking in five years time? Find out what they are expecting of the Union and where the Union fits into their plans? Is there an open dialogue about future changes with the institution and the union?

With grateful thanks to Lindsey Fidler-Baker, Research and Information Manager, NUS Welfare Unit, and Hannah Essex, Vice President for Education, for conveying the full impact of the Act at a recent one-day conference at ULU.



From adversity to opportunity – The fall and rise of Glasgow Caledonian Students' Association



Author: Michael Baron
General Manager, Heriot-Watt
Students' Association

In the context of the debates about the future of Students' Unions, and as many find their role questioned and their finances becoming questionable, Michael Baron reports on his visit to Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association to see how such an organisation can go through a crisis and come out stronger.

Many unions would like more input from the university senior management, but few would like to go down the route Glasgow Caledonian Students' Association took. In 2002/03, their financial position declined to such an extent that they were facing insolvency. They were badly hit by changes in student demographics and the decline in bar sales. They were forced to go to the University for assistance. The result was radical change in the relationship between the union and the university and a complete rethink of how things were run within the union.

Glasgow Caledonian are based in the centre of Glasgow on a campus site. They are very close to Strathclyde University and to a number of student orientated venues in the centre of Glasgow. Like many of the new universities, they find that they have a high percentage of non-traditional students who are not interested in the traditional services of a students' union. In the past they have had a relatively strong commercial trade but a

weak volunteer base. There has been an enormous amount of development on the campus and the Union has a very old fashioned feel about it compared to the new buildings around and about.

The University organised an away day to discuss the Students' Association's problems. Present were the four University senior managers including the Principal (Vice Chancellor) and the Association Sabbaticals and General Manager. The outcome was that the University agreed to bail out the Association providing major changes were made. The following came out of the day and subsequent follow-up work:

- The University would provide extra funding but targeted at specific projects. They were concerned that the Association were not working with volunteers particularly on academic representation.
- The University were also concerned that officers were spending too much time involved in the day-to-day management of trading.
- The Students' Association would be required to report monthly to a committee set up for the purpose.

In the first year, the University agreed to fund a new post of Student Development Co-ordinator. The role of the post was to recruit and train volunteers, particularly class reps. Jill Collins, the post holder, meets regularly with senior University staff to discuss developments. The Assistant Principal and the Assistant Deans for Quality take a lot of interest in her work and also provide real support in getting the co-operation of the Academic Schools.

This year the "Partnership in Delivery" programme has been developed. This involves the University the Students' Association, students and employers. The aim is to work together to produce graduates of quality. The programme includes:

- A written statement of responsibilities for the University, the Association and students printed on a small glossy fold out leaflet. This was given to all 3,500 first year students at meetings held in each school with the Student

Development Co-ordinator and members of University staff in the school responsible for quality.

- A student leaders programme run by the Students' Association for all class reps and other volunteers.
- A development account which provides reward points for involvement – these points give campus benefits such as reduced prices for sports.
- All academic departments have been asked to find partnership initiatives. Examples of ideas being discussed are to train students doing sports science to be coaches in the Sports Union and to use Events Management students in running the events in the Union.

Look at <http://www.gcal.ac.uk/pid/index.html> for more information. Note particularly the presence of the Students' Association logo – it is on all the material for the programme – something that General Manager, Bill Blackstock, feels is a sign that this really is a partnership.

The Students' Association have changed their internal structures. The financial difficulties led the officers to realise that the previous structure was not effective. The Vice-President Services post has become DeputyDepute President with responsibility for representation and volunteers. The day-to-day running of trading and the Union building has been devolved to staff members. The Social Secretary position has been abolished, the trading and entertainments committees have been abolished. The General Manager provides a written report to the Association Management Committee that meets fortnightly. Previously the President was on 22 University committees and this made it difficult to contribute – now the University committee work is split between the different officers. Ben Rogers the Deputy Depute President said that the changes had very much improved the relationship with the University. He said: "It has been very positive. At meetings the University listen to us a lot more. More lecturers know who we are and what we do. Also this year, volunteer activity is up in many areas including Welfare, Rag and Nightline."

From adversity to opportunity – The fall and rise of Glasgow Caledonian Students' Association

Liaison between the Association and the University is through the Student Officer University Liaison Committee (SOUL). This meets about 8 times a year and at each meeting the Association gives a report on financial and non-financial key performance indicators. The committee consists of the Association's four sabbaticals and General Manager. At first the group was only concerned with the Association's financial position but it has developed to deal with a wide range of issues that students have an interest in. It allows a general discussion on how the Association's strategy and the University Strategy fit together. There have been tensions within the committee on its role in influencing the Association. The previous year's President had to make it clear to the committee that they did not manage the Association and this seems to have been accepted.

The new financing regime for the Association

provides that commercial surpluses should not be used for non-commercial projects. The University have given a commitment to fund properly argued projects in addition to the Association grant and they have kept their word. In the current year, an extra £20,000 has been given to finance a job shop, accommodation finder and second hand book trading system. There has also been the development of 9 Academic Representation Co-ordinators, who will get a bursary of £200, whose main job is to provide liaison between the Association staff and officers, and the Class Reps.

One further thing to note about Glasgow Caledonian Students' Association – they are getting a brand new Union building. Somewhat frustratingly, the new Union has already been built! It is currently occupied by various administrative departments of the University who are waiting to move into a new building which will replace the library,

when they move to the new Information Centre at the start of the next academic year, (a process akin to the chain in house purchasing in England and just as unpredictable). This new building will be a vast improvement on the current premises providing dedicated space for volunteers and office-bearers for the first time as well as vastly improved commercial areas. Unfortunately, the building will not be available until 2006 at the earliest.

From the low point in 2002/03, things at Glasgow Caledonian are really looking up. There is no doubt that the Union faces a number of challenges, not only in developing a volunteer culture from a very low base, but managing the move into the new premises. However, they are confident that the University will back them providing they deliver on the agreed targets. How many Unions can say that with any confidence?

Any Other Cheese and Biscuits

Author: Michael Baron
General Manager, Heriot-Watt
Students' Association

Pedant Rides Again!

We are pleased to welcome back Professor Pedant of Wichgreen University. He is in the process of starting a new pressure group provisionally called FLAGIROE – the Fewer Less Association Get It Right Or Else.

AOCB "Is this a major problem?"

PP "It certainly is. Wherever you go you see 'less'. Less students in the bar, less birds in the garden, less shop assistants in

Debanhams, less bank branches in small towns, less tutorials in my course. It is all wrong (with the exception of the last which allows me more time to get on with more important work)."

AOCB "How do we get it right?"

PP "It's easy. Fewer of things you count and less of things you measure. For example, there are fewer ducks on the pond this year and a lot less quacking. I have been disciplined by the dean fewer than five times. The last time was a lot less severe – I was suspended for fewer than four weeks. Fewer female students have made complaints about my behaviour this term. I have had to spend less time in disciplinary hearings."

AOCB "Is there a guide to deciding which is correct?"

PP "Fewer people would get it wrong if they thought less and used the water method."

AOCB "What is the water method?"

PP "Think of water. In this case you can count on water to be measurable not countable! "Fewer water" sounds wrong."

AOCB "In the supermarket do you ever go to the '10 items or less' aisle?"

PP "Not unless I have an incendiary device with me."

AOCB "Thank you, Professor Pedant."

Studentsinmind

What is Studentsinmind?

Studentsinmind is a new socially inclusive national charity specifically for students in both further and higher education who may be experiencing varying degrees of mental distress. The charity is working directly with students and professionals to establish various projects services in order to promote positive mental health.

Why do we need a new charity for students?

By 2005/06 there will be an estimated 4.9 million students in further education and 2.2 million in higher education. 1 in 4 of these students are expected to experience a form of mental distress.

Where is Studentsinmind based?

We are based at the University of London Union. ULU are supporting Studentsinmind by providing our premises. We have just employed two part time Project Managers Sophie Allchin and Ziaur Rahman.

Other sponsorships

We received 2 Mind Millenium Awards, a Scarman Trust Community Champion award and various other donations. We have just been awarded three years of funding from the Department of Health Section 64 Scheme.

We are currently fundraising in order to be able to implement our projects and will soon be having our first musical fundraising event at ULU. All help or suggestions for this are appreciated!

Who else is involved?

The Trustees include those involved with Association of College Counselling Services, Heads of University Counselling Services, Corporate Culture, Media Action Group for Mental Health, the Samaritans, Connexions and student groups. The advisory panels include representatives from National Union of Students, Student Survivors, National Nightline, Young Minds, MIND, Rethink, Disability Rights Commission, Samaritans, Mental Health Officers, Samaritans, Heads of Student Services, Heads of University Counselling Services, Royal College of Nurses, Royal College of Psychiatrists, Chaplaincy, University College Chichester, Outside Organisation (PR) and many others.



Author: Natasha Donnelly
Director of Studentsinmind

Studentsinmind is a new and exciting student led professionally guided charity to support students experiencing varying degrees of mental distress. Studentsinmind = advice, advocacy and empowerment. The founder and creator of the Studentsinmind charity, Natasha Donnelly, explains the charities development, its principle objectives and the relevance for Students' Unions, whilst the sidebars provide further information about the charity and its projects.

How did it begin?

This new national charity began as an idea formulated whilst I was working as a researcher on the Universities UK, 'Student Suicide Project' continued as I worked with students as a University lecturer. Alongside this I have been deeply involved in my own Doctoral research project and which focuses on issues surrounding student suicide in Higher Education. This research led to me being invited to act in an advisory capacity for the latest 'National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England,' (DoH, 2002) and



being actively involved in the research leading up to the recent publication of the report published by Universities UK (2002) 'Reducing the risk of student suicide: issues and responses for Higher Educational Institutions.'

The research encouraged me to want to know more about student mental health but not only from an institutional viewpoint but also hearing, understanding and valuing the views and perceptions of the students. I was in strong agreement with the statement in the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, (CVCP/SCOP), 'Guidelines on Student Mental Health Policies and Procedures for higher education,' (April 2000) that 'student feedback is a key element of any institutional process for the monitoring of policies and services.' At this time there was a paucity of research available on student opinion especially in relation to mental health (although several HEFCE projects were underway including the University of Leicester's in depth study of student opinions headed up by Dr Annie Grant together with the research at the University of Hull led by Dr Nicky Stanley and Dr Jill Manthorpe). This research coincided with current fears following the reported rise of psychological disturbance among students in Higher Education,' (BACS 1999; Foster 1995).

Studentsinmind

The First Studentsinmind Project

During a networking session, I suggested a national 'stepping stone' service for students run by students who had direct experience of mental distress. At the end of the session I was approached by a member of the conference team who suggested that I should apply for a MIND Millennium Award to pilot this service.

It was further developed using the results of the online survey, student's opinions, other institutional research findings, international research and further networking with professionals in the field including Peter Wilson the Director of Young Minds who has kindly given me ongoing support.

We are in the process of designing a national website with an email signposting and guidance service which when launched will be available to all students.

The value of this service is in the fact that it is online and therefore easily accessible to most students. This virtual venue should be culturally neutral and is arguably more likely to be used than other services by both males and females. It is fast, direct and less formal than other mediums and most importantly it will be an unobtrusive, anonymous and confidential service.

This project development is now near completion. It is different from existing projects in four key respects:

- 1). The users will be responded to by fully trained and supported students who have themselves had direct experience of mental distress. Information will be accessed by the volunteers via a regularly updated national database of services including those provided institutionally by universities and those provided by charitable organisations.
- 2). It will act as a 'stepping stone' signposting service to further help and appropriate support. Studentsinmind is not a counselling service and any students in severe distress will be advised to call their institutions' student services, G.P the Samaritans or in an emergency contact their local Accident and Emergency Service.

“ The aim was to try and gain an insight into student mental wellbeing nationwide which had not been done before.”

I decided it would be valuable to evaluate national student opinion about the student support services available and possible causes of mental distress. This led to the idea of a web based questionnaire. It appeared to be a way of accessing a national sample of students across a variety of institutions in a quick and effective manner. The aim was to try and gain an insight into student mental wellbeing nationwide which had not been done before. Other attractions were the limited cost for the students as it was hoped that most students would be accessing the site from campus so the cost to them would be minimal and there was also the suggestion that males may be more likely to respond to online questionnaires (Samaritans 2000, Schmidt, 1997). This was particularly relevant as in recent years there has been a particular concern about the rise in suicides in young men aged between 15 – 25, (DoH 2002).

Following extensive time spent designing and re-designing a suitable website with very limited financial resources and there being a lack of literature available about online research to act as guidance, the site was finally set up with a questionnaire. (I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jeremy Paxman for his support of the site and allowing us to use his photo as part of the promotion. Thankyou also to the Samaritans in London for their time spent helping with the design and of course the students for their input in the

designing and piloting of the questionnaire).

The focus of this questionnaire was on the student's views about the available student support services; who they would turn to first if they were experiencing mental distress and suggestions of what might cause them personally to feel distressed or suggestions of what they thought might have contributed to their peers experiencing more than usual stress. I tried to ensure as far as possible that the information obtained via the online questionnaire was accurate with respect to answers, student status, age, gender, ethnic group, and institution. The best way it appeared to combat rogue responses was to define a starting point, carefully in order to gain access to the right group of respondents, (in this case students in higher education who were interested in student welfare and had utilised the welfare services), (Kivits, 2001). The starting point was to link the web site designed to one specific site that would be accessed by students. Gaining the support of the National Union of Students (NUS) and having permission to have a direct link from their welfare site to the questionnaire achieved this. This had the added benefit of only allowing access to students who were members of the NUS so this again limited the number of rogue responses. Linking to the NUS site also enabled my site to be viewed as an official, and legitimate web site which is regarded as important as it instills additional trust in people interested in responding. It also offers an official way of contacting the researcher, (Kivits, p.2, 2001). The only example of rogue respondents which could be accurately pinpointed were those who put inappropriate responses to the questions; for example one respondent when asked what they would do if a friend felt depressed responded 'kill them.' These invalid responses were not used in the final analysis of the data.

Studentsinmind

- 3) A wide range of information will be provided to the students using the service to help them find the most suitable support and plan for their initial meeting / discussion with an organisation.
- 4) In certain circumstances and with the permission of the service user, the student volunteers will be able to act as advocates for the service users by contacting a service on their behalf.

The project objectives are:

- The project hopes to raise the profile of the many current examples of good supportive practice available throughout the United Kingdom.
- It is also hoped that the project will work towards removing the stigma associated with mental distress and assist these students in working towards successfully completing their courses of study.
- It is hoped that the project will be an empowering and confidence building experience for the student volunteers.
- It is hoped that this project will become a successful national service for students in Higher Education and lead to the development of further services and publications.
- It is hoped to be a service that will reach out and help vulnerable young men who have been found to be at an increased risk of suicide and who the Samaritans have suggested are more likely to seek help via an online resource.

Project Two:

Student survivor web board designed and created by Emma whilst she was a student. For further information about the web board, its founder or how to get involved please contact us directly.

Project Three:

Providing a 'sensory' drop in lounge for students. The pilot will be at ULU and will be a safe/ chill out zone for students with access to the latest music via headphones, newspapers, leaflets on various issues and advice from trained Studentsinmind volunteers. For more information do contact us.

The website ran for 18 months and had approximately 28,000 hits and 298 students completed the questionnaires. The preliminary results were first presented at the British Educational Research Conference in 2001. Further results including a discussion of the perils of using online resources were presented at the British Sociological Association Conference (2002), in a joint paper with Lucy Solomon a researcher and Student Welfare Officer at Sussex University who had been using email as a research tool. The paper was entitled the 'Virtual Phenomenon.'

This website went on to be highlighted in the Guardian newspaper as a useful resource for students and the preliminary results were also published via the NUS Magazine. The results and the amount of feedback from students was very positive. Many of the students who answered the questionnaire had very genuine concerns. The completed questionnaires contained very valuable suggestions on how to improve the services. Many of the respondents described in detail their painful personal experiences. One student respondent wrote about how they had felt 'frightened, inadequate, confused and I didn't know who or which service to contact so I took an overdose.' At this time I was contacted by Rachel Tooth who has since spoken at various conferences about her experiences as a student who had direct experience of mental distress. Rachel has given me a great deal of encouragement with my work.

The students who responded came from a diverse range of backgrounds including different age groups, different classes, various minority ethnic groups and various sexualities. The students were from a variety of courses including maths, sciences, art, social science and many others. The respondents also came from many different institutions from around the U.K so this could be truly regarded as a national sample.

The main comments on causes of stress for themselves were about overwhelming workloads, financial and accommodation problems. These were in line with those

described by Claire Callender (2001). When students were asked about what might be the main reasons/stress factors for making a friend feel depressed, low self esteem and loneliness scored very highly. Most students suggested that they would go to a friend first when seeking advice.

Students highlighted the poor location of some of the institutional counselling services and the stigma of actually going to a counsellor and they suggested the need for more counsellors to overcome the often long delays in getting appointments. Many suggested compulsory student and staff training about, 'Issues in Mental Health.' Suggestions were made that student services were not accessible or publicised enough. Many students valued the input from the NUS particularly the localised services and would like to see the profile of these services raised. This also included requests for more peer support services such as Nightline and 24-hour drop in centres for students in distress. Many found the process of finding the right service confusing and thought it was 'embarrassing' to ask for help.

The published results from the relatively few studies available at the time of my online research in 2001 into causes of student stress reiterated the findings from the above questionnaire. They also suggested that commonly reported conditions are depression and low self esteem, which could be linked to various external and internal factors: socio-economic factors, relationship problems and academic pressures to name a few, (Roberts et al 1998, Callender 2001; Hawton et al 1996; Hawton et al 2001; BAC 1999). The value of my online survey was further highlighted by the fact that other studies using more traditional research methods of interviewing and pen and paper questionnaires have had similar results. For example the Oxford Student Mental Health Research (OSMHN 2002) demonstrated that students would turn to their peers first for support.

Studentsinmind



“ We want to work towards removing the stigma associated with mental distress and highlight the many examples of good supportive practice available to students.”

I went on to present the results of this online questionnaire at the MIND Conference in 2001. At this conference I also ran a networking session about student suicide and mental distress. It was during this networking session that I was inspired to design and create the service which has become Studentsinmind.

The delegate's present during this networking session included students who shared some very moving experiences of difficulties they had accessing the right services and the overwhelming anxieties and fears experienced when deciding to approach a service.

It was suggested that often when a person feels distressed it can be a difficult and confusing process to firstly locate the most useful service and then make the first step of contacting a service. Male students suggested an email service of some sort would be useful as they would be more likely to use this as a way of accessing information. (These comments were similar to those expressed by some of the respondents to the online questionnaire and have been recently echoed in findings by the

Oxford Brookes study (OHMHN, 2002), which raised concern that some of the students who were interviewed 'are clearly disturbed but do not seek help' (Perhaps the reasons in some cases are confusion, anxiety and embarrassment).

Studentsinmind has been highlighted in the national press including the Guardian newspaper, Radio 4, soon to be highlighted in Cosmopolitan Magazine and in several key reports including the Universities UK 'Suicide Guidelines' (2002), and has been presented at the European Symposium on Suicide (2002), The 'Beautiful Minds - Heads of Universities Counselling Conference' (2002) and the MIND National Conference (2002) where all of the Award winners were invited to present their projects at a Millennium Commission evening event. The first sets of volunteers have begun their training, handbooks and regulations have been set up and the IT system and database is almost fully functional.

Barbara Walters from SKILL at the 'Beautiful Minds Conference,' (HUCS 2002), highlighted the need for cross collaboration with external and internal institutional

support services. We hope that Studentsinmind can assist in encouraging this collaboration, consolidation of information and in the highlighting of good national practice. We hope in the near future to be able to collaborate with other existing mental health charities and apply for substantial funding in order to employ a project manager, training manager, research assistant, IT support, consultancy and other necessary roles involved in establishing a truly professional service and training for students.

We want to work towards removing the stigma associated with mental distress and highlight the many examples of good supportive practice available to students. Counselling is just one of the services which are often successful 'in preventing student drop-outs, supporting achievement in the face of the pressures and enabling students to address important life issues', (Meyer, D, THES 2001). We believe students should have the information 'to be able to choose or to have a say in what catches you when you fall', (Rachel Tooth, Previous Student, Service User, Ex-NUS Welfare Officer, Beautiful Minds, HUCS Conference 2002). We will be supplying students with information about many and various institutional and non-institutional services; clubs and societies these will include sports, music and arts associations as well as useful links and contacts for overseas students.

Informing and consulting under the new regime: act now or later?



Author: Stuart McBride
Partner at TLT Solicitors

If you employ 150 or more staff the new information and consultation rules coming into force in April 2005 are likely to be on your radar. If you haven't already given the new rules some consideration, now is the time. You may be able to soften the impact of the new rules, or make them more suitable for your union, by voluntarily agreeing your own information and consultation procedures with your workforce outside the scope of the rules.

This briefing looks at the issues you should be considering when making a decision whether to act now or wait for employees to take the initiative.

Are you caught by the new rules?

The most important requirement to be covered by the Information and Consultation Regulations (ICR) is that the average number of employees employed in your undertaking in the previous twelve months must exceed 150. This threshold will reduce to 100 from 6 April 2007 and again to 50 from 6 April 2008.

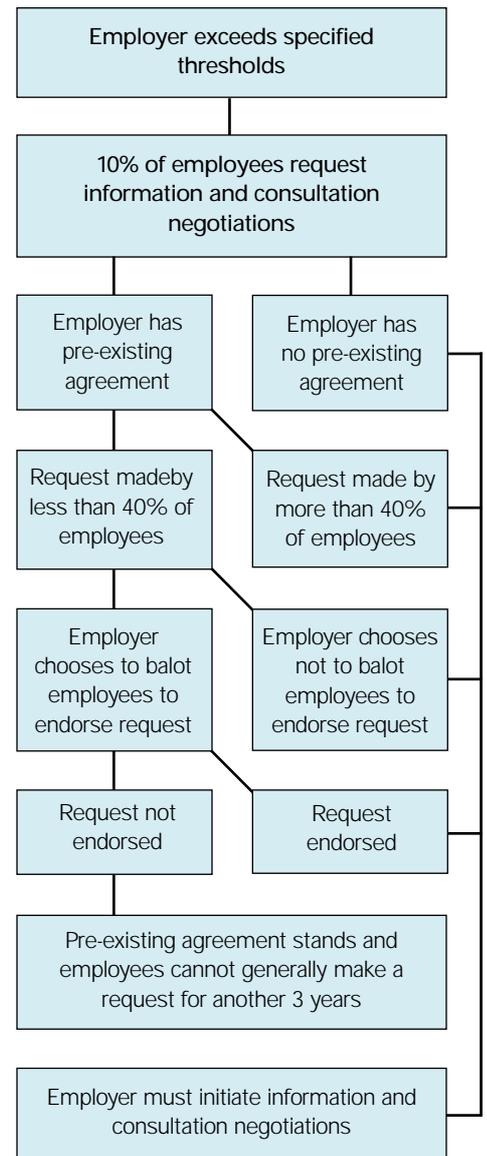
The important thing to note here is that the ICR works by reference to the number of employees in an individual

undertaking. This is very likely to include non permanent staff such as student staff, although you can elect to treat each part time employee as "half a person" for these purposes. The DTI's view is that employees are counted by reference to the formal legal employer for which they work and not to the group as a whole. If therefore some of your employees are employed by a trading company and others by the union, the ICR will only apply (for now) if the total staff in either is 150 or more.

What is the significance of a voluntary approach?

The important thing to bear in mind is that the ICR by themselves don't force employers to do anything. However, from 6 April 2005, an employer will be obliged to negotiate an information and consultation agreement with its employees if (but only if) it is asked to do so by the relevant number of employees. If following a valid request an employer fails to reach a negotiated agreement with the employee representatives then it will be obliged to follow the standard information and consultation provisions set out in the ICR. These are detailed below but in summary this means informing and consulting with elected employee representatives on a wide but uncertain range of areas.

For the initial request to be valid it must generally be supported by only 10% or more of employees (subject to a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 2500). However, if an employer enters into a pre-existing agreement (PEA) (as legally defined) before a valid request is made by employees, then it need only enter into negotiations under ICR if the request is made by 40% or more of the employees. If the request is made by fewer than 40% of employees the employer can choose to hold a ballot of employees to endorse the pre-existing agreement, and the threshold increases to 40% of the eligible workforce and a majority of those voting. If the request is not supported by the



employees then the employer need not enter into negotiations under ICR and employees are generally prevented from making a request to negotiate for a further three years. If the request is endorsed by the employees, then the employer must initiate negotiations under ICR.

Informing and consulting under the new regime: act now or later?

Requirements for a pre-existing agreement

The only requirements are that the agreement:

- be in writing;
- cover all the employees in the undertaking;
- be approved by the employees; and
- set out how employees or their representatives are to be informed, and their views sought on such information

Do you already have a pre-existing agreement?

The requirements for qualifying pre-existing arrangements are in the adjoining box. You may already have (by accident or by design) an arrangement that qualifies as a pre-existing arrangement. Alternatively it may be quite easy to convert existing arrangements into a pre-existing agreement.

The most important issue is that they must cover all the employees in the undertaking. Collective agreements negotiated with trade unions on information and consultation, can be PEAs but most will not qualify because they often do not cover all employees e.g. student staff, and/or some or all senior managers, and/or sabbaticals (assuming they are employees, but that is another story).

If you have different arrangements for different sites or parts of the students' union, that is perfectly alright as long as each and every employee is within a PEA. For instance you could have different PEAs for different sites, or classes of employee e.g. student staff, senior staff.

The arrangements will need to be in writing. This should be a straightforward matter. But the arrangements must also be approved by the employees. As mentioned before there are no requirements on how that approval should be given but you will need to be able to produce evidence of approval if the status of the arrangements is ever challenged. Custom and practice or other forms of implied approval are unlikely to be sufficient.

Finally, you need to be able to show employee approval. If you have more than one arrangement then each arrangement can be approved in a different manner. Approval can be by representatives, so a collective agreement can be approved by TU representatives, or a works council/consultative forum by elected representatives. Arrangements can also be approved by e-mail vote, by individual signature, or of course by a ballot.

Issues for you to consider if you don't have a pre-existing agreement

- You may already do plenty to keep your employees up to date on union matters or feel that there is little demand for new procedures. If so you can take the risk of sitting back and doing nothing. However, bear mind that without a PEA the threshold for an employee request is a very low 10% of the workforce. This could be triggered for example by the staff within just one department, say in the context of a particular dispute.
- If you do receive a valid request, the subsequent (effectively compulsory) negotiations for a negotiated agreement will take place in the shadow of the default provisions. Any agreement you reach is therefore likely to be very close to the default.

The standard default information and consultation provisions compared to pre-existing agreements

- The standard default information and consultation provisions specify the matters about which an employer must inform and consult.

With a pre-existing agreement there are no prescribed areas on which you must inform or consult.

- An important point is that under the standard provisions you must have a single consultation body for the whole work force. You can not mix and match with existing trade union agreements consultation committees, or have different arrangements for different groups of employees or different sites.
- ICR contains prescriptive rules on the election of representatives to negotiate the negotiated agreement. There is therefore a lot less flexibility than with a pre-existing agreement, which allows for using other methods for informing and consulting employees such as notice boards, intranet sites, newsletters.
- Confidentiality is always an issue for an employer dealing with employee representatives. ICR anticipates this and permits employers to withhold information or restrict information in certain circumstances. You may want more control over information you deem confidential. In a pre-existing agreement you could agree what information should and shouldn't be disclosed.
- Employees or representatives who feel their employer has breached a negotiated agreement or standard information and consultation provision can complain to the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC). Pre-existing agreements will not normally be legally binding and failure to abide by them is more likely to have industrial relations consequences.

Informing and consulting under the new regime: act now or later?

Standard information and consultation provisions

- The employer must:
- inform on recent/probable developments in its activities or economic situation
- inform and consult on probable development of employment including threats to employment
- inform and consult with a view to reaching agreement on decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation or contractual relations.
- Information must be given in such a way as to allow representatives to conduct an adequate study and prepare for consultation.
- Representatives must be allowed to meet the employer, give an opinion and receive a reasoned opinion from the employer on the opinion.

Trade Union issues

Trade union attitudes to the new consultation arrangements vary widely:

- Some unions, particularly where their presence is strong, are unenthusiastic about ICR because they feel ICR may water down or detract from existing union negotiating arrangements.
- On the other hand your union may view ICR as an opportunity to extend its influence over the remainder of the workforce.

With the voluntary approach PEAs there is a lot of flexibility in how you resolve the issue. You could have a combination of union and non-union arrangements covering the workforce. Alternatively you can have union and non-union arrangements overlaying each other in respect of the same employees e.g. negotiate with the union on pay and conditions, and a work council to be consulted on other, wider organisational matters. This may be however be difficult to manage in practise, and there is the risk of time consuming double consultation.

Bear in mind that if you are forced to use the standard default provisions, you will have to set up a new consultation body for the whole workforce, even if both you and the union are quite happy with existing arrangements.

Final words

The decision whether or not to take the pre-existing agreement option will ultimately depend on your existing culture and approach to employee communication. But unless you are very sure that employees and unions are happy with existing practice in the organisation, there are strong factors which support a voluntary introduction of information and consultation measures, or at least adapting existing arrangements to make sure they qualify under the new rules. So if you wish to take the pre-existing agreement option, now is the time to put the wheels in motion.

Stuart McBride is a partner with TLT Solicitors. Tel 0117 917 7845 or email smcbride@tltsolicitors.com

Student sports organisations in Britain



Author: Mike Day

Ten years ago the British University Sports Association was created through the merger of all the main student sports organisations in Britain, an event celebrated at a gala dinner last July. Mike Day takes a look at the history of those student organisations and highlights some of the discussions and tensions that led to the creation of BUSA.

Sport was one of the most important catalysts that drove students and students' unions to seek to create links with each other. The first steps in organising student sport came with a conference of Presidents of University Unions, convened at Manchester in July 1919, which discussed ways of developing sports within universities. A sports event was held at the same time. From this meeting came the commitment to establish the Inter-Varsity Athletic Board of England and Wales (IVAB). Its expressed purpose was to organise an annual national students athletics event. By 1922 association football, hockey, rugby union and swimming were part of the events programme and the following year saw the establishment of the Women's Inter Varsity Athletics Board (WIVAB).

International initiatives

The initiative to form the IVAB had taken place at the same time as the formation of



“One of the first tasks was to organise a Student Olympic Games which was the vision of Jean Petitjean, a French supporter of the Olympic movement.”

the more general Inter Varsity Association which had come into being, following French initiatives to establish the Confederation Internationale des Etudiants (CIE). Work to establish the CIE had begun following the cessation of hostilities after the Great War and was launched with a meeting in the newly liberated University of Strasbourg, in 1919. Francis Sidney Milligan, the President of Birmingham Guild of Undergraduates, attended this preparatory meeting, Profoundly conscious of the sacrifices his generation had made, Milligan believed that by creating international structures, where young people, could meet and above all understand each other and engage in sports and other activities could do much to ensure that the horrors of

war were not repeated. In his report to the Guild Committee he expressed the hope that, “by establishing an intellectual brotherhood among the students of the world, from whom will naturally be drawn the rulers of another generation, [it] will contribute greatly towards the peace of the world.” Milligan was particularly keen to promote social and sporting activity, and he returned from Prague determined to establish a national student body in England and Wales that would be able to participate in CIE activity. A general meeting of Birmingham Guild, was held in May 1920 to discuss the idea, and to establish a union which would be able to play a full role within the proposed international union. The meeting was attended by around a hundred members and considered a motion proposed by Milligan and seconded by C A Ashley, that, “The Birmingham University Guild of Undergraduates desires to associate itself cordially with the proposal that a British National Union of Students be formed”. In recommending that the motion be adopted, Milligan paid tribute to the role that inter varsity athletics, social functions and conferences had played in paving the way. The IVA eventually merged with the International Students Bureau to form the National Union of Students.

Student sports organisations in Britain

The Student Olympics

At its first formal meeting in Prague in 1921 the CIE established a series of commissions to progress areas of work, one of these was Commission VI which concerned itself with student sport. One of the first tasks was to organise a Student Olympic Games which was the vision of Jean Petitjean, a French supporter of the Olympic movement. The games took place in Paris in May 1923, and attracted 200 athletes from nine countries. British students were not formally represented; NUS felt that organising a national team was a task best left to the various Universities Athletic Unions and were reluctant to presume to speak on their behalf. However, one English student from Birmingham took part on his own initiative and won his race. Throughout the

twenties and early thirties the CIE attempted to organise a range of international sporting events, in co-operation with other international sporting bodies. They were fully involved in the process of establishing rules for international competition, in particular, agreeing a definition of a student for the purposes of competition. It was agreed that the CIE would take the lead in organising sporting events to coincide with meetings of their Congress which took place every three years. The CIE were certainly clear about the role they saw sports playing in their work to promote international understanding. "Sport with its attributes of fair play, has been recently described as one of the greatest international forces in the world today".

"The increased involvement in international competition and a developing domestic programme meant that the administrative infrastructure of student sport in Britain needed to be strengthened."



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Student sports organisations in Britain



The World Championships

Despite the CIE's international mission, it tended to be European countries that took part in its activities, the high cost of travel being a major constraint. This did not stop students trying. In 1924 an Imperial Conference of Students met in London and established the "Dominions Students Athletics Union", with the aim of organising international sport events and tours of each others countries. Sadly the same constraint of cost applied; indeed there were insufficient resources for a second conference, let alone a sporting event.

In 1924 the first Summer Student World Championships were held at Warsaw, the main sports being an athletics programme and a football tournament between Poland, France, Estonia, Great Britain and New Zealand. In 1927 the event was repeated in Rome with some 200 athletes taking part in an event in which Hungary topped the table. The events included a full programme on both field and track, football, tennis, fencing, swimming and rowing. Germany and Japan competed for the first time. Again British students were not formally represented due to a lack of finance, nor were they present at the first Winter Games also organised in Italy in 1928. Not all countries were able to field full teams for the World Championship, and so the CIE also organised small scale tours for teams to visit other countries.

NUS' reluctance to help organise a national team was undergoing revision. From the outset the CIE had been riven with national rivalries and the NUS were coming to the view that only co-operation on practical matters would help the CIE achieve its objectives "The CIE has now seen eight years of life as the official student body of Europe. Those years have not been free from post-war fevers, and university conditions have, in many countries, been the most difficult in history. National rivalries have at times compromised the federation in the eyes of British onlookers and have hindered its practical work. It is hoped on all sides that the period of youth, in which the Federation has been skilfully nursed and led by M Balinski and Mr Macadam is giving way to a maturity for which they have prepared it. Your delegation in Rome came, returned unanimous on one thing – that the Federation's practical work must take preference over national rivalries, which may be better expressed in sports."

Discussions were held on the practicalities of holding a student Olympiad, with competitions not just in sports but in both arts and science as well. NUS delegates were keen but the plans were abandoned, mainly, once again, on the grounds of cost. But NUS persisted and were at the forefront of urging the CIE to play a greater role in promoting sporting and cultural

" Discussions were held on the practicalities of holding a student Olympiad, with competitions not just in sports but in both arts and science as well."

activities in preference to some of their more political discussions.

In 1928 a formal British team competed for the first time at the third CIE games in Paris (only one year after the second World Championships), and they were enthusiastically received. The team was organised by the Inter Varsity Athletics Board and the Athletic clubs of Oxford and Cambridge and was captained by Mr D. G. A. Lowe. It was judged that despite it not being the strongest possible team, they had made a fair showing, and it was hoped that the policy of non co-operation was now a thing of the past and that a team would compete in the next games scheduled for 1930.

D. G. A. Lowe was once again in charge of the British team that took part in the games at Darmstadt in 1930, by which time both the games and British participation in them was established. The fifth Championships were held in Torino and saw Buscali of Italy break the world record for the 1500m; the first world record established at the World University Games. One of the participants at the sixth games, held in Budapest in 1935, was Barney Mulrenan (1912 - 1995), who was part of the GB football team; it was to be the start of a lifetime of support for student sport. He went on to become the Director of Physical Education at Cardiff University and served as the UAU representative on the FA and in 1995-1996 was Vice President of the Football Association.

Student sports organisations in Britain



The Universities Athletic Union

The increased involvement in international competition and a developing domestic programme meant that the administrative infrastructure of student sport in Britain needed to be strengthened. Between 1919 and 1927 the administration of the affairs of the IVAB was taken on by a different university each year. It was agreed that there was a pressing need for a more stable base and, in 1927, the IVAB Committee took up an offer by the University of London to provide accommodation. Three years later, thanks to support from the British Olympic Association, a permanent headquarters was established and a full time Secretary, Captain Evan A. Hunter, employed.

In 1930 the IVAB changed its name to the Universities Athletic Union (UAU), its membership embraced the whole of the United Kingdom (there were no student sports bodies in Scotland or Northern Ireland at this stage), and its purpose was to organise a domestic student programme and to co-ordinate British representation at international student sporting events. This latter role was to be taken on by the British Universities Sports Board in 1953. A leading light in these early years of the UAU was Denis Follows, a graduate of Nottingham University and London. He had served as NUS President

from 1931 – 1933 and was then elected as the President of the CIE (he had been Vice President the year before), he did much to promote the idea of international student sporting events. Many years later, in 1948, he was appointed Chairman of the UAU a position he held for a number of years. He went on to be appointed as Secretary of the Football Association in 1962.

Another significant figure in the early years of the student sport was R. A. Kerslake who was the Secretary of the WIVAB from 1949 - 1955, thereafter he was Treasurer of the UAU from 1956 - 1963. He also wrote a regular column on student sport for NUS' national newspaper. Both men now have BUSA trophies named after them.

The arrangements for teams attending international events were made by a committee consisting of representatives from the UAU, WIVAB and NUS; Captain Hunter (UAU), Denis Follows (for NUS) and Miss Whitehead (WIVAB). All three organisations co-ordinated over fundraising activities to cover the British teams costs; the teams for the World University Games of 1935 (Budapest) and 1937 (Paris) were selected through the Athletic unions of the Universities and were based on trials. £526 was raised for the team that went to Paris consisting of 28 men and women for athletics, 11 Swimmers, 1 fencer and 1 for women's

“ The increased involvement in international competition and a developing domestic programme meant that the administrative infrastructure of student sport in Britain needed to be strengthened.”

tennis. The team performed well, surpassing the record of all previous British teams, the men won all of their track events, except the hurdles and all three relays.

Student sports organisations in Britain

“The report concluded that provision within the UK was best in Scotland, but still required much improvement.”

NUS, Sport and Health

Now that the UAU had taken on responsibility for international events, the relationship with NUS was a lot clearer. The latter focused on campaigning for better health, sports and recreation facilities for students whilst they were at college as well as highlighting the disadvantages faced by students from poorer backgrounds who wished to take advantage of co-curricular activity, “the dice is heavily loaded against the poorer child, who has very little chance of getting to a University. The disadvantages besetting the poorer child in the University, the limitation of his sporting, intellectual and social activities”. Specific recommendation was made for the increase of grants and scholarships. “The constraint of finance is an issue that continues to frustrate the student of today, who may well be faced with a stark choice between working their way through their chosen college or playing for them. 1934 saw the launch of the first major research document produced by NUS, entitled the Student Health Report. A questionnaire was circulated to institutions, and students and staff were invited to contribute comments on strategies which could be implemented to improve student health and encourage sporting activity. The collated responses were published in 1937, along with recommendations which included developing student insurance and



health schemes. The report called for universities to take action on the grounds of the intimate connection between, “Health of the mind and health of the body [which] is becoming increasingly recognised, and we feel that the health of students at the Universities is a matter which cannot be ignored.”

Dr V Adami, the Vice Chancellor of Liverpool University, gave his full support and noted his concern about the student who had a “constipated complexion and a custard face, we all know you cannot be constipated in body without being constipated in mind.” Adami added that he was speaking as a medical man. A quote from Lord Moynihan was included in the introduction to lend weight to the call for improved health care provision, although his remarks reflect the more elitist attitudes held by some in the University sector, “In a country that spends annually so many millions on the rescue or relief of those who are going to be of no value to the state and of those who are going to fulfil no useful function, it is time we began to spend a few millions on the preservation and the physical health of the normal individual.”

Comparisons were made between health and sports services for students in the USA, Canada, Sweden and Germany. The common factor in other countries appeared to be insurance systems and regular medical examinations with, what was seen by the authors of the report as, an overemphasis on team games. The German services were admired, but with a note of caution, the authors having, “grave doubts and suspicions in some minds in regard to the real purpose or ultimate aim of German University Health Services, but we hope that such doubts and suspicions - well justified though they may be, will not be allowed to obscure those merits which the services outlined below have . . . as health services.” The report concluded that provision within the UK was best in Scotland, but still required much improvement. A follow-up report was issued in December 1938 which featured a review of facilities available to students in England and Wales along with a survey of the membership about the sort of provision they wished to see. The years that followed saw university authorities placing a greater priority on promoting sport, healthy living and health services on campus.

Student sports organisations in Britain

Cold War splits

International student competition was, of course, suspended during the war. The World University Games for 1939 were scheduled to take place in Berlin but there was, understandably, some objection. Vienna was proposed and rejected and eventually the eighth World University Games took place in Monaco. After the war, national student bodies once again set about trying to organise new international structures, and following a meeting of national unions in Prague in 1945, the International Union of Students (IUS) was born.

British delegates were keen to develop an organisation which would promote international friendships through travel, exchanges, sports events, drama, and pen friends. Once again their hopes were to be frustrated as the IUS became an ideological battleground in the Cold War. The IUS declared its intention of holding a summer and winter games every two years. The first such event took place in 1947, once again in Paris, but participation by western countries was patchy. The following year saw the formation of the International University Sports Federation (FISU), which organised its first event in 1949 at Merano. This was followed by games in Luxembourg (1951), Dortmund (1953) and San Sebastian (1955). The IUS continued to organise the World Student Games in this period but attempts to negotiate attendance by FISU members were not successful, most western student sports organisations, like the BUSB, did not see the IUS as an appropriate body. It was in effect, a tool of Soviet foreign policy. NUS had left the IUS in 1951 but was prepared to remain involved in what it termed practical matters, sporting events being at the forefront of what were seen as vital non-political activities. On the political front, a rival to IUS, the International Students Council (ISC) emerged consisting largely of western student organisations, a Cold War dividing line was to separate them until the ISC collapsed in the late sixties, following revelations that they had been in receipt of funding from the CIA. International Sports activities were more fortunate.

“ Conscious of the political tensions that could mar the games, it was agreed that national anthems would not be played.”

In 1957, French students agreed to organise a World University Sports Championships, as part of a number of events celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the French student organisation (UNEF). The games brought together those that participated in both IUS and FISU events and were a success; consequently they were repeated two years later in 1959, at Turin, which welcomed 1,400 participants from 43 countries. From this year onwards the IUS agreed that all future events should be organised by FISU; the event came to be known as the Universiade. Conscious of the political tensions that could mar the games, it was agreed that national anthems would not be played.

More students – more organisations

The British Universities Sports Board, who since 1953 had co-ordinated British student sports participation abroad, evolved into the British Universities Sports Federation (BUSF) in 1962. Membership was open to all University Sports groups in England and Wales with corporate membership open to the UAU, the Scottish Universities Sports Federation (SUSF), University of Wales Athletic Union (UWAU) and the Northern Ireland Sports Committee (NISC). The new organisation was financed by the Universities rather than through Students' Unions a proposal championed by Sir Douglas Logan, the Vice Chancellor of the University of London. His position was probably influenced by Charles Wenden who had worked at ULU for a number of years.

In 1964 BUSF negotiated a broader definition of a student, to include those at non university higher education institutions with FISU. The agreement pre-empted the Government's decision to grant university status to the Colleges of Advanced Technology in the mid sixties. Indeed Government policy on higher education was to lead to a significant expansion of student numbers following the Robbins Report. These initiatives of course, led to a consequent increase in UAU and BUSF membership. At the same time some of the larger technical institutions, under local authority control, were reformed as Polytechnics and their sporting interests were co-ordinated by the British Polytechnic Sports Association (BPSA), founded in 1969 (it was briefly known as the British Polytechnic Sports Federation) whilst that of Teaching Colleges, Voluntary Colleges and non advanced FE was governed by the British College Sports Association (BCSA).

The creation of the Binary divide presented a problem and as student performance was no longer restricted to one sector of education there was a need to provide an overarching structure to bring together all students from all sectors of higher education. This led to the creation of the British Students Sport Federation, BSSF (originally the British Committee for Student Sport) in 1972, with the prime purpose of representing the interests of British student sport to FISU and for funding the British teams at the World Student Games. Consequently they had strong links with the Sports Council and had direct representation to the Central Council of Physical Recreation. In 1979, the UAU underwent further expansion when it merged with the WIVAB. It was these student bodies, UAU, BPSA and BCSA, along with BUSF and BSSF that were to be at the forefront of the organisation of the student domestic sports programme for the next twenty-five years.

The Richer Way by Julian Richer



Author: George Candler
General Manager, University of
Central Lancashire Students' Union

As far as management books go, I am, as some would say, a bit of a late starter. I've been a manager in some shape or form for some 10 years now and *The Richer Way* is the first one I've read.

And boy has it set a benchmark for others to follow.

The book is based on the thoughts and actions of Julian Richer on running a successful business – and he should know, with his company Richer Sounds being the biggest and most profitable hi-fi retailer in the UK.

The book is packed full of tangible ideas that can be applied to any manager in charge of a team, let alone an organisation, and centres predominantly throughout on one thing – people, or to be more precise, your staff and your customers.

Written in easy to read, bite size chunks, the book focuses on managing & motivating your team in some detail, which I found particularly enlightening, with the author observing that treating your staff better will make your business perform better. Stating the obvious? Probably. But this book then backs up the statement with useful ideas, which can be transferred back into your own workplace.

The staff suggestion scheme, the staff satisfaction survey (he even provides a copy of his own if you need a template to start with), promoting from within – just three



“For me, the key thing about this book is that the ideas suggested I could relate to in my own workplace. Some of the ideas he suggests I've done already, but a lot I haven't.”

examples I have personally actioned from the book. And there are so many more.

Supporting each chapter is his passion for continuous improvement - the Japanese principle of kai zen (which means 'good change'). Everything he suggests or does he measures, continually looking for the best way of doing things. Something we all know we should do – but do we?

As he says, there is never a perfect way, there is only the best way, until you find a better way.

There is also a fascinating chapter on measuring motivation with five key steps:

- Fun (which centres on benefits, incentives, training, stress control)

- Recognition (from management by walking around)
- Rewards (suggestion scheme, salaries, mystery shop)
- Communication (yes, that old chestnut!)
- Loyalty (promoting from within)

And then ways in which to manage motivation some obvious some not so, but all thought provoking and more importantly tangible.

For me, the key thing about this book is that the ideas suggested I could relate to in my own workplace. Some of the ideas he suggests I've done already, but a lot I haven't.

The second part of the book centres on good customer service and again contains a wealth of useful ideas and suggestions. I won't reel off a raft of info but just highlight the most important part of customer advice he gives:

Under promise, over deliver, combined with do what you say you'll do.

So all this raving – were there any negatives you may ask?

Well, no, not really. The chapter Building a Successful Business focused a lot on his initial experiences when setting up his business and was the least useful of all the chapters, but I'm nit picking really.

The book is full of ideas, thoughts, suggestions, templates, sentences for business plans, quotes to impress your friends, the re-wording of negative signs – you name it, it's got it.

For those of us in a customer driven business who manage staff – the book is a must.

Oh, and it's dead easy to read and to the point. Just over 200 pages and I read it in five hours.

So no excuse.

If you would like to review a book that you think would be of interest to Agenda readers (e.g. management, strategy, leadership, the world of work), we would be interested in publishing it.

Ideally reviews should focus on relating the book to its application in the world of Students' Unions and should be 500 words in length. Looking for inspiration? The AMSU website has a book club section with dozens of recommended books.

Redbus Outdoor working with Unions on outdoor media

Redbus Outdoor is delighted to be working with AMSU and NUSLL unions. Since commencing operations in October 2004, Redbus Outdoor has signed 60 plus unions and continues to bring on board new unions each week.

Redbus has taken a long term approach to developing its media network on campus and has invested in the highest quality advertising panels and service to ensure that panels fit with the environment and advertising clients receive a quality campaign.

With high spec, ultra thin 6 sheet panels, which compliment the interior of the Union, Redbus is able to deliver blue chip national advertising campaigns to your student body.

Campaigns run on the Redbus Outdoor network include:

- Film – Universal Pictures, Buena Vista Pictures, Redbus Pictures
- Mobiles – Sony Ericsson
- Consumer – The Times

Redbus can deliver to you:

- Increased rentals – quarterly in advance
- Higher spec panels – designed for the interior
- National clients – no local advertisers
- Long term, safe income

Feedback from AMSU Members

We have always found Redbus Outdoor to be a professional and competitively priced company. They have installed high quality illuminated panels in our building that have enhanced the overall ambiance of the areas in which they have been placed. I have also found the business relationship that we have with their senior management to be both personal and productive.

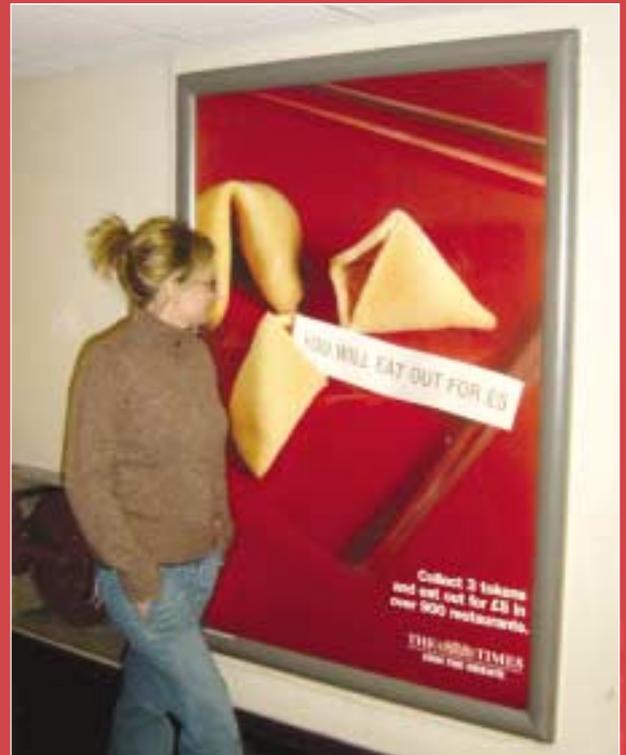
Neil Jenkins
Business Development Manager,
University of London Union

We recently reached an agreement for a 5-year period for Redbus to install illuminated poster panels in our Students' Union. The new panels were installed in time for the start of the academic year and the flow of information between the company and the Students' Union has been excellent. We are very happy with the income this generates for the Students' Union and I would certainly say that the working relationship is off to a very good start."

Keith Brackstone
General Manager,
University of Bristol Students' Union

Redbus have come into our building and installed first class poster panels with no problems at all. They have been extremely easy to work and nothing has been too much trouble. The posters that are going in them are also very modern which was important to us to make sure they fitted in with the ethos in the Students Union.

James Brooks
Entertainments Manager,
Asylum, Hull University Union



Please contact Paul Carr, Sarah Farrer at Redbus Outdoor for more information.

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