

A Guide to UGMs

Foreword from Gen Sec

Union General Meetings (UGMs) remain at the heart of our union. Stemming from the School's radical past, the weekly meetings are as much part of the furniture at LSE as Houghton Street itself. We are the only Students' Union in the country to hold weekly Union meetings allowing students' to submit and speak for or against policies which dictate the direction of the Union. Meetings can become heated as some of the top debaters in the country battle it out. With heckling, jokes and banter strongly encouraged - entertainment is guaranteed.

Beneath this facade UGMs have a serious side. They are the main forum by which students democratically engage with their union. The UGM can remove any elected officer and the policies which are passed set the Union's agenda. Motions can be submitted by any student, therefore, if you want to see something changed within the Union, School or wider society, putting a motion forward at a UGM is the best place to start.

LSE has a strong and proud history of campaigning and directly influencing change. This guide will help you write a UGM motion, provide top tips for getting your motion into policy and offer guidance to ensure your policy is fully implemented. So what are you waiting for? Read this guide book, think about the change you want to see and make it happen!

Best of luck,

General Secretary

So what actually goes on at a UGM ?

UGMs are an unmissable part of the student experience. Despite this many students are unaware of the meetings' purpose beyond killing an hour between classes on a Thursday lunch time. UGMs are key to making sure the Union operates in a democratic manner, giving a forum for students' to hold their representatives to account and guarantee that the Union remains membership led. As well as setting Union policy and holding elected officers to account, the UGM offers students the opportunity to question invited guests. Every term the School's Director attends a UGM, in addition Presidents' of NUS and ULU regularly make an appearance to answer questions from the student body.

Key Points - The format of UGMs are constant throughout the year. So here are some key points you need to know;

- UGMs take place every Thursday at 1pm in the Old Theatre.
- A designated member of the Democracy Committee chairs the meetings and the Vice Chair is elected during the first meeting of the academic year.
- The order paper is produced by the Democracy Committee. It is made available online and in printed form at the earliest opportunity.
- Any full member of the union may submit a motion. All motions must be submitted before 5pm on Friday to be discussed by the Democracy Committee the following week.
- A motion submitted for debate at a UGM must sit on an order paper for at least one calendar week before being discussed.
- Meetings start with reports from elected officers before motions are debated.
- Voting on Union policy takes place online and is open from 3pm on Thursday to 5pm on Friday every week. All Union members are eligible to vote.

The Basics

What is a UGM Motion?

A UGM motion is a document proposing a change to the Union's policy. Motions can be submitted on anything ranging from decisions the School or Union has taken, to wider national and even international concerns. Previous motions have covered topics ranging from introducing vegan wine to the Three Tuns to bringing British troops home from Afghanistan. If you want to see change and real action taken by your union then submit a motion.

How do I get a motion passed? – Flow Chart

- ⇒ Any full member of the Union can submit a motion.
- ⇒ Motions can be submitted via email (su.democracy@lse.ac.uk) or in person to the Students' Union reception desk.
- ⇒ Motions must be submitted to the Democracy Committee before 5pm on Friday to be discussed by the Committee the following week.
- ⇒ If the Democracy Committee allows the motion to go onto the order paper, the Committee will contact you directly giving you the date the motion will be debated.
- ⇒ Remember motions must sit on the order paper for one week.
- ⇒ At the UGM the motion will need to be proposed and seconded. You should be ready to take questions and queries from students.
- ⇒ The motion can get amended at the UGM.
- ⇒ The motion will then go to a vote online, once quorum (250) is reached a simple majority is required for the motion to be passed into policy.

Stage 1 – What should I do before writing the motion?

Top Tips:

1. **Show how the motion affects students** - In order for students to vote for your motion you must show how getting it passed will positively benefit them. So for example if your motion is about an international issue, try and relate it to LSE students. An issue which affects students everyday is far more likely to receive the necessary votes to become policy.
2. **Be realistic** – Motions which are clearly unachievable are unlikely to succeed. Proposing that the Union should lobby the School to give every student a laptop is likely to be a waste of time. Your proposal should be practical, realistic and achievable. If the motion does have a financial impact, consider if it is viable or if there are ways in which the financial impact could be offset.
3. **Be accurate** – It is important that the motion is factually accurate. Remember to source any quotes and facts. The Democracy Committee is likely to send the motion back if it does not believe you have provided accurate information.
4. **Be aware of restrictions** – Although all successful motions become Union policy, they can not contradict the School's policy or the law. A motion couldn't extend the School's holiday but it could mandate the union to lobby for this change.
5. **Gather support before submitting your motion to the UGM** – If it is clear that the motion commands the support of a significant proportion of the student body, the motion is more likely to succeed.
6. **Be prepared to campaign** – If you want your motion to succeed you must persuade members that voting for your motion will benefit them. Therefore you need to campaign! This means talking to students, explaining why your motion is important to them. Putting up posters, writing articles and leafleting although they represent good campaigning tools, they are not as important as talking to students directly.

Before you write your UGM use this check list to make sure it is properly thought through -

Can you tick these boxes?

- ⇒ I am passionate about the issue.
- ⇒ The campaign is relevant for students.
- ⇒ The issue has not been properly addressed by the Union before.
- ⇒ I have thoroughly researched the issue and have accurate sources.
- ⇒ I have researched similar campaigns at other universities

- ⇒ I have contacted relevant individuals/groups who may be interested in helping out with the campaign. This includes assemblies, societies and exec members.
- ⇒ The campaign has clear action points.
- ⇒ The campaign is winnable.

Remember: The most important part of your campaign is, of course, the issue!

If you have any questions or queries regarding submitting a motion contact the Democracy Committee on su.democracy@lse.ac.uk or the Democracy Coordinator on p.walley@lse.ac.uk.

Stage 2 – How do I write and submit a UGM motion?

All motions must follow the same simple structure.

There are three sections to UGM motions.

1. This Union Notes:
2. This Union Believes:
3. This Union Resolves:

Title for the motion

Make this eye catching. Remember when students are voting online it is important that your motion stands out. A personal favourite - "I want to eat my Kebab in the NAB"

Proposed and Seconded

All motions must have a proposer and be seconded – these must be current students and LSE student number should be provided.

This Union Notes (FACTS)

- In this section you write the established facts.
- For example –
 1. LSESU has 9,000 members.
 2. Students use a variety of transport to get to their classes.
 3. Rowing boats are expensive.
 4. The School provides no facilities for students to safely park their rowing boat on the Thames.

This Union Believes (OPINIONS)

- In this section you reflect on the facts and state your own opinions.
- For example –
 1. The LSESU should encourage students to travel to the School using sustainable transport

2. The LSESU current policy alienates a section of its membership who row to the School.

3. Members who own rowing boats are being prevented from accessing the School because they are unable to leave their boats safely.

This Union Resolves (ACTIONS)

- This section tells the Union what actions it should take.
- For Example –
 1. The LSESU resolves to undertake a survey of members transport habits.
 2. The LSESU resolves to lobby the School to provide a dock for students to anchor their rowing boats.
 3. The LSESU should establish a transport forum to discuss students' transportation issues.

To submit a motion either email it to su.democracy@lse.ac.uk or hand it in at the Students' Union reception, please provide contact details and mark it for the attention of the Democracy Committee.

Stage 3 – How do I build my campaign and get my motion passed?

Building a campaign

Building an effective campaign is the best way to ensure your motion receives the support required to become policy. It is a great way to build a consensus surrounding your issue this gives the motion greater weight and importance. LSE has a strong history of campaigning and the Students' Union is prepared to provide support in any way it can.

The Students' Union already has a useful online toolkit which will give you lots of campaigning ideas (<http://www.lsesu.com/campaigns/startyourowncampaign/>). Please feel free to use any of the ideas or pop into the Activities Resource Centre and speak to a member of staff.

Here are a few ideas to get the ball rolling –

Press – Organise a photo opportunity, write a press release and try to get the Beaver to cover your campaign.

Stall – Grab a stall on Houghton Street lots of students and staff walk past, this offers a great opportunity interact with people and get students discussing your campaign.

Internet – Think about using Facebook, Twitter and email to get your message across. Could a departmental secretary send an email round or do you know someone who could put a campaign website together?

Visit Halls – Go to Halls of residence, put up posters and speak to students.

– Stage 4 – Action – How can do I make sure my policy is implemented and not forgotten!

Just because your motion gets passed it doesn't mean that it will necessary be implemented. If you really want to get the most out of your campaign you must have a post-policy plan to make sure that your motion succeeds.

Chase up relevant people – Some motions will mandate the Sabbaticals/Students' Union to do something. For example to undertake a survey. Do not assume just because the motion is passed that action will be taken. Talk to Sabbs/Students' Union staff to make sure it actually gets done. Don't be afraid to hustle.

Don't settle for less - It is possible that you may achieve parts of your campaign quite quickly. But don't settle for less than you set out for. Be ambitious and keep going!

Get more people involved – You should find that getting your motion passed will result in more students knowing about your campaign. Use this to your advantage. If you haven't already, organise a campaign team together and actively engage more students in the campaign. The more people engaged with the campaign, the more weight it has. It is harder to ignore a mass of people than a single individual or group.

Keep up the momentum – Don't let the campaign stop just because the motion has passed. If students are getting behind the campaign, keep the momentum up. You may find you can achieve more than you originally intended.

Use Students' Union Resources – Visit the Activities Resource Centre in the Students' Union. Not only will you find lots of free resources to use – placards, paper, paint, chalk ect. There is also Students' Union staff who would be more than willing to lend a hand.

- Celebrating your success and useful contacts.

If the campaign has been a success don't be afraid to tell people about it.

Let us know contact: Peter Walley LSESU Democracy Coordinator on p.walley@lse.ac.uk with reports, feedback and photos. We can then publicise this on our website.

You could also get in contact with the Beaver and local press.

You may even choose to feedback at the UGM, thanking those students who supported the original motion.

Finally, if things didn't quite work out the way you wanted then don't get disheartened – things don't always go to plan learn from your mistakes and try again. UGM's happen every week so there are plenty more opportunities to put motions forward.