

# CUSU Ethical Affairs Campaigning Guide

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# Section Overview

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## 1 Introduction

## 2 Strategy overview

- Power Mapping
- 5 step guide to power mapping
- College Structures
- Setting clear goals
- Collaborating with other campaigns

## 3 Research

- Conducting your own research
- How to: Freedom of Information Request

## 4 Building support amongst students

- Get the messaging right
- Spread the word
- Create a space for everyone

## 5 Accessibility

- Organising with college non-academic staff

## 6 How to deal with Management

- Meeting with college management
- Hostility from college management

## 7 Escalating pressure

- What is escalating pressure?
- Direct Action
- Banner Drops
- Hall Boycott
- Rent Strike
- Other ideas

## 8 Sustaining your campaign/ dealing with setbacks

- Handovers
- Keeping morale and numbers up
- Restrategising
- Dealing with Burnout

## 9 Resources for targeted Campaigns

- General
- Rent Campaigns
- Divestment Campaigns
- Living Wage Campaigns

## 10 Future Campaign Ideas

## 11 CUSU Liberation Campaigns

- Disabled Students' Campaign
- Women's Campaign
- BME Campaign
- LGBT Campaign
- Decolonise Network
- Class Act Campaign



# Introduction

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Student campaigning has been a driving force for progressive change at Cambridge University and its colleges for centuries. From campaigning for colleges to divest from apartheid South Africa, to lowering rents and costs for students, to taking action on the climate crisis, there is a long history of committed student action that we can learn from.

This guide seeks to bring together the experiences and advice of dozens of student campaigns and put them into a concise and accessible document to be used as a springboard for you to start your own campaign in your college. We identified a recurring problem with student campaigns, which college managements use to their advantage; that the skills, experiences and gains of committed groups of student campaigners are often lost when they graduate. We have heard countless stories of colleges delaying decisions, waiting for students to graduate and hoping the issue goes away. By sharing skills and experiences, we can help to counter this and build more powerful and sustainable campaigns.

This guide is by no means complete and, to an extent, reflects the experiences and positionality of its authors. It focuses on the college level rather than the University-wide level, although there are overlaps. We hope it inspires you to get involved in or start a new campaign in your College to continue the long history of student activism here at the University.

As Cambridge students and members of our constituent colleges, we have a degree of privilege and power. Our voices can be heard and our opinions are listened to. It is therefore up to students to envision the community which we want to be a part of and fight for the changes that we wish to see. Campaigning work can be tiring and difficult but we hope that this guide helps you to get started, and that you find inspiration and joy along the way.

# Strategy Overview

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The most crucial aspect of campaigning is having a strategy. Without one, you may find yourself wasting a lot of time focusing on the wrong people or the wrong tactics. In this section we outline some key concepts necessary to formulating a strategy; power mapping, the difference between goals, strategy and tactics, and escalating pressure. It is crucial to remember from the outset that colleges have a range of vested interests and will often fail to engage with your campaign in good faith. Whilst some change does come about through persuasion and active engagement, it is important not to be naive to the prospect that your campaign may need to become an oppositional force to college management if you are serious about winning.

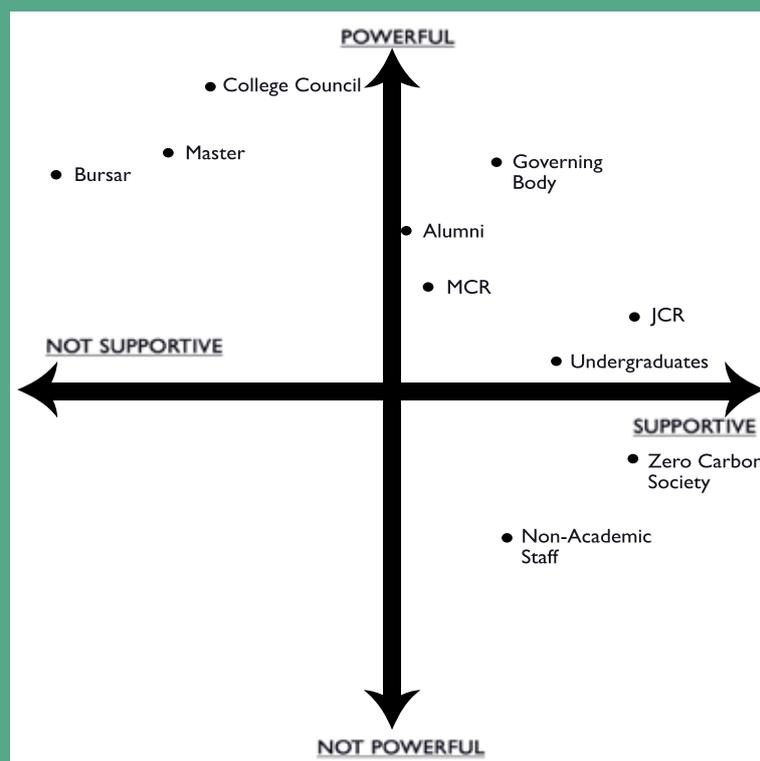


## *Power mapping*

Creating a campaign to win isn't easy, but if you haven't identified who has the power to bring about change, you might well find yourself targeting your efforts in the wrong direction. For some smaller goals, there might be a specific person within the college who has the power to make it happen without needing to go through any committees. For bigger ones, and particularly goals that involve college making a significant financial commitment, you will likely need to go through the key decision-making committees. But power mapping goes beyond merely identifying who sits at the table: it is about unpicking power dynamics – the various stakeholders, as well as the various levels of power and how they intersect.

## A quick 5-step guide to power mapping:

1. Do your research: find out who is responsible for creating the problem, who has the power to fix it, and who is affected by the issue. Additionally, find out who might support you who isn't yet involved, and whether there is anyone else already working to try and fix things.
2. Draw a diagram as below. Write the names of everyone you have identified from your research on the map, ranking them based on how powerful they are and the extent to which they support or oppose your campaign.
3. Now it is time to scope out your primary targets – the individuals you've identified as having the most influence and being the most likely to give you what you want.
4. For each target individual, you need to identify whether you are able to reach them directly. For example, if it is the Master of the college, they might not be willing to meet you directly. In this case, you need to identify secondary targets who are able to reach the primary target. That might be student union officers, or it might be a sympathetic academic who the master would be more willing to meet with.
5. You should now have a logical plan of who you are targeting and how you are going to reach them. Revisit this process as your campaign develops, as it is likely that you will discover more about different people's power and opinions as your campaign develops.



## College structures

Different colleges have different decision-making structures. To work out the specifics of yours, you can find the college constitution online, or contact a member of the JCR/MCR, as they are likely to know the details. However, there are broad similarities and the following information can be used to give you an initial idea:

**College Council:** This committee usually has the most power, and is where decisions affecting the day to day running of the college happen. Budgets are passed, new buildings are approved, and decisions are made on issues such as divestment from particular companies (e.g. those related to fossil fuels or arms) or paying all members of staff the living wage. Most colleges have at least one student representative with voting rights. However, student representatives have expressed frustration at being in the huge minority, with one expressing that college council is little more than a rubber stamping body - with important decisions made by the key players beforehand.

**Governing body:** This usually consists of all the academics within a college. It is a space to discuss the long-term health of the college, such as alumnae connections, review within the college, and constitutional changes. Often, if you are seeking to build consensus for your campaign in the wider academic body, it can be helpful to raise the issue here first before bringing it to the college council.

**Master:** The title for this position will vary from college to college, they may otherwise be the Proctor or President of the college. The role of the Master may vary between colleges but they are generally the head of governance, acting as the chair of various committees and enforcing the decisions made by the governing body. The Master may be a useful figure within college, particularly if they are sympathetic to your case, as they will be able to exercise influence to put a specific issue on the agenda and be brought up at committee meetings.

**JCR/MCR:** These are elected student representative bodies, for undergraduates and graduates. It is worth contacting JCR/MCR members to gain their support before approaching college.

**Liaison committee:** Sometimes called joint committee, this is usually the official channel for JCR or MCR representatives to raise issues to college. JCR and MCRs are a crucial access point to decision-making bodies but they can often have an apolitical tone and emphasise more conciliatory tactics. It can nevertheless be helpful to work collaboratively with your JCR/MCR to make use of this access point when first bringing a cause to the attention of your college. Furthermore, since JCR and MCRs have collaborative relationships with college management, they may find it easier to access information you might need for your campaign, such as college financial documents.

## Setting clear goals

This may be an obvious point, but when starting your campaign it is important to be clear about what your campaign goals are. These will inform your strategy and your tactics and ensure that your campaign is clearly structured.

So what is a strategy? A strategy is a plan for how you are going to achieve your campaign goal. It is normally good to have multiple strategic threads, so you are not solely relying on one approach. Tactics are then specific things you do to make your strategic threads happen. For example, your campaign goal might be to get your college to commit to full divestment from fossil fuels. A strategic thread might be to demonstrate widespread alumni support. A specific tactic might be getting alumni to write personalised letters to college management, or collectively sign an open letter. It is important to relate your strategy to the power mapping you have done, and think about which tactics will be effective on different target individuals.

Another important concept is 'escalating pressure'. Escalating pressure can force change in itself, or it can work to pressure college into negotiating with you. Within each strategic thread, each tactic you employ will exert a varying amount of pressure on college management. It is good to start with tactics that exert a low level of pressure, and give college management a chance to work towards your campaign goals in a cooperative manner with your campaign. So sticking with the alumni example, you might start by encouraging alumni to write politely worded letters to college management that don't go public and so pose no reputational threat to the college. If these are ignored, it's time to start escalating the pressure! The next step might be to start targeting the college's reputation. Colleges are very sensitive to anything that threatens their reputation, as they know it could affect the amount of prospective students that apply and donations they receive, so this can be a very effective form of pressure. Collecting signatures for an alumni open letter which goes public and is then picked up by student press would be one good way to do this. If college management are so entrenched in their opposition to your campaign that they are willing to withstand reputational damage, it may be time to escalate even further! Sticking to our alumni example, you may want to move from reputational pressure to direct financial pressure, e.g. and encourage as many alumni as possible to sign a pledge committing not to donate any money to the college until they give in to the demands of your campaign.

As mentioned, however, it is important not to just get stuck in one strategic thread - and instead to have a diversity of different approaches. If you aren't able to effectively mobilise alumni, or it becomes clear that college doesn't really care about alumni opinions and this is an ineffective way of applying pressure, then pursue a different approach. It all comes back to your ability to map power effectively, identify the pressure points and pursue them.

## An example

**PROBLEM:** In 2014 student FOIs revealed King's was the worst college for paying the living wage, with 123 people paid under £7.65 per hour

**AIM:** The King's College Living Wage Campaign was established with a committee chaired by Barney McCay and Daisy Hughes with a clear aim of getting King's to pay paying the living wage and get accredited by the Living Wage Foundation

**POWER:** They found that this would need to be passed by the college council

**MESSAGING:** They campaigned using the slogan around "wages not wine" to emphasise the £50,000 spent on fellows' wine would be more than enough to raise all full time workers' pay to above the living wage.

**STRATEGIC THREADS:** they used "an official/college-friendly route and "a rowdy publicity heavy campaign/direct action route because King's don't do anything unless there's public pressure too"



**ESCALATING PRESSURE:** the official route began with JCR members raising the issue, which then escalated to passing full motions, while the heavy campaign route started with open meetings escalating to protests outside the college, hall boycotts and the leafleting of alumni dinners

**HANDOVER:** King's agreed to pay living wage in 2015 but by 2018, due to the dissipation of student pressure (largely due to the turnover of students), by 2018 they were paying 114 staff under the living wage and the campaign was reformed

## Collaborating with other campaigns

At any one time there is likely to be a number of different college campaigns running concurrently; for example, a Divestment campaign alongside one for Living Wage Campaign, alongside Cut The Rent. While each campaign has its own focus and set of goals, remember that all college campaigns share the same ultimate aim of furthering social and environmental causes within the college and holding the college to ethical standards. When setting your goals and strategy, it is important to be aware of other campaigns and communicate clearly with them to avoid conflicts of interest or undermining each other's efforts.

For example, college management might claim that to pay staff the Living Wage they would need to increase student rents by a small percentage. Without taking into account the goals of their college Cut The Rent campaign, a Living Wage Campaign could end up harming the cause of other student activists within their college.

An example of collaborative strategy is the Robinson Living Wage Campaign, which produced a report (<https://www.cusu.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Embargoed-until-16th-Jan-The-Case-for-the-Real-Living-Wage-in-Robinson-2-1-1.pdf>) to present to the college council. As well as presenting arguments for why Robinson should pay its employees the Living Wage, the report also made a case for why the college can afford to do so without increasing rents or requesting student concessions. In its closing recommendations regarding Living Wage Accreditation, the report takes care to stress that 'none of the funds for this should, or need to be charged to students in any form, whether in higher rents or cuts to JCR funding.'



# Research

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A detailed, fact-based understanding of an issue and the common arguments used for and against a specific change are fundamental components of a successful campaign. Conducting research and drawing information from a variety of sources can help with this and with deciding on campaign goals and strategy, as well as identifying the best places in which to focus your energy. Well-researched arguments will also better equip you to defend the position of the campaign and persuade college management and fellow students of the benefits of the proposed change.



## Useful sources

There are a variety of sources on hand to help campaigns access information about their college and become familiar with how it works.

- College Accounts - a copy of the financial accounts and expenditures of each college are posted on websites on an annual basis.
- Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs) - any information that can't be obtained on the college website can be requested on [www.whatdotheyknow.com](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com) via a Freedom of Information request. Additionally, previous responses by your college to FOI's are published on the website.
- Other campaigners - information or research conducted by other campaigners have been a useful resource for college campaigns with common goals. Speaking to other student activists involved in a similar campaign can help you understand the nature of the problems and effective arguments to be deployed within the college environment.

- College Staff - speaking to sympathetic members of college committees or employees can help a campaign to understand how to navigate power structures and push for change within college.
- College JCR/MCR - these members of the college come into contact with college management more than others, so may have useful information on current issues or specific members of the college who may be helpful for the campaign.

## *Conducting your own Research*

Alongside drawing on a wide variety of sources, campaigns have succeeded in conducting their own research within college.

- Freedom of Information Requests - a handy way for a campaign to access information about college policies and expenditure. Previous campaigns have used this to scrutinise college employment practices, welfare expenditure etc.
- Polls/Votes - are a useful tool for collecting the general opinion of the student body about the goals of the campaign. Previous campaigns have used polls to collect student opinions on issues such as divestment, Living Wage, MeatFree Mondays etc.
- Survey - for a more qualitative and detailed understanding of an issue, campaigns have used detailed surveys. For example, the Living Wage Campaign has drafted a survey to distribute amongst college workers in order to understand employment conditions.



# How to: Freedom of Information Requests

Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) give you the right to access information held by public-sector organisations, including the University and its colleges. They have been a really useful way for campaigns to access information on investments in fossil fuel and arms companies, Living Wage and college expenditure.

## Things to remember

- The organisation (e.g. Cambridge University) must respond within 20 days
- The organisation has an upper limit of 18 hours to put aside to deal with the request
- If the request would take longer than this, then they can refuse the FOI
- If multiple FOIs are sent to the same organisation, it can refuse the FOI on the grounds that all of the requests together would take longer than 18 hours
- HOWEVER, if it refuses to answer, then it must advise you on how to narrow down your request to fit within the constraints (under section 6.1 of the FOI Act)
- If they invoke Section 43 (they refuse the FOI because they say it will prejudice their commercial interests), they are required to give you various details
- AND we've found it can work to ask for an internal review of whether Section 43 was appropriate to use
- To direct the FOI officer to the information you want, you can specify how and where they search for it - e.g. "Key-word search 'Military' between Mr A.'s emails and Mr B.'s emails"
- We strongly recommend using [Whatdotheyknow.com](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com) for making an FOI Request if the organisation is on the site (colleges and Universities are) as we've found they're more likely to respond and the site gives you help if they don't respond.

It can take a few attempts and it may be worth appealing. Feel free to message CUSU Ethical Affairs (easiest through Facebook, or emails also work) for help drafting an FOI or there's a template on their website.

# Building Support Amongst Students

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Building a wide support base among students is key to constructing a strong campaign that will be able to carry out large-scale organising and be taken seriously by college management. A college is nothing without its students, and the greater the proportion of the student body that can be shown to support an issue, the more likely the college is to consider it. To engage a wide range of students, it is important to take into account differing needs, priorities and levels of commitment, in order to make it possible for each person to find a place in the campaign.

## 1. Get the messaging right

Targeted messaging that strikes a chord with your intended audience will get more people involved in your campaign. Start by thinking about the key concerns of your specific student body. How does the unique environment of your particular college impact these? What does your student cohort care most about? What methods of engaging students have worked in the past at your college? Conversely, are students at your college tired of a particular approach? What is the relationship between students and management at your college and how might this shape your messaging?

### Example: Lucy Cavendish Divestment Campaign

- The campaign noted that since Lucy is very small, many students identify strongly with the college and would be reticent to position themselves in opposition to it. Also, there was a sense of general pride in Lucy's reputation as inclusive and socially conscious, and considerable investment in furthering this.



- The campaign took a college-friendly approach, underlining that they were not pushing against but working with college management, and inviting students to participate in non-aggressive, collaborative strategies such as voting, petitions and writing emails. They focussed their messaging on communicating the interconnected nature of environmental and social issues, a message which rang true in a socially conscious college.
- As a result, the campaign saw record levels of engagement: the vote to divest was the largest vote recorded by the student body in recent years. Following the overwhelming interest shown by students, the campaign was invited to present at a governing body meeting, and to attend a meeting with the firm that handles Lucy's investments.



## 2. Spread the word

Good publicity is key. There are many different channels to get the word out about your campaign, from social media to posters to making announcements at communal events. Try leaving reports or information packs in common areas for people to browse, so that everyone has access to information, whether or not they use social media. Hand out badges or stickers to allow students to show visible support and help start conversations.

Most importantly, keep your publicity regular, updated and consistent, so that interest in the campaign does not peak early and falter. Successful campaigns have posted regularly on social media even when there was no change to their campaign, sharing memes and informative posts. In a similar vein, it is important to continue holding open meetings regularly, ensuring they are publicised well in advance, to keep people involved and engaged with the cause.

As well as open meetings, hold engaging events to generate interest in your cause, such as talks, screenings or discussions on issues related to your campaign. The greater number of media and methods you can use to get the word out about your campaign, the better; this will allow you to reach a wider range of people. Finally, do not underestimate the power of word of mouth; making an effort to talk to as many people as possible about your campaign can sometimes be the most effective strategy. People are more likely to be won round to your cause if they hear first-hand how much you care about it.

### **3. Create a space for everyone**

- Always make sure that your open meetings are accessible to all, and that your campaign feels like a welcoming space for everyone. See later in the guide for more comprehensive advice about how to do this; accessibility and inclusivity should be central considerations when setting up your campaign.
- Another key facet of inclusivity is ensuring there are a range of ways to get involved in the campaign. Each person has differing amounts of time and energy to give, and will feel comfortable engaging in different capacities: not everyone will feel comfortable taking part in direct action, for example, or will feel able to make a huge commitment to your campaign. Successful campaigns emphasise that there is no expectation of commitment, and that all contributions are welcome. Students are often willing to sign petitions, to vote, and to turn up to events, even if they don't get actively involved in organisation. Engaging people in discussion and thought is equally a win for your campaign. Furthermore, providing a range of strategic threads, from diplomatic and college-friendly to escalated direct action, means that people can get involved in whatever capacity they feel comfortable, and contribute their own unique skills.

# Accessibility

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A campaign won't be successful unless it is fully accessible for all students to participate. Whilst this means being physically accessible (e.g. ensuring all events and meetings take place in wheelchair accessible rooms), this also means ensuring that all people feel comfortable in your space. This is all part of creating a safe space for campaigners to work and create in.

To ensure your campaign events are held in accessible spaces:

- You can look up a venue's accessibility on the University 'Disability Resource Centre' > 'Building Access Guide'.
- For each event you run it is recommended to write an accessibility statement. It may look something like this: 'DSC Forum in the CUSU/GU lounge at 17 Mill Lane. The lounge has wheelchair & step-free access via a lift. There is a variety of seating including armchairs and sofas. There are gender neutral bathrooms, including a wheelchair accessible bathroom.'
- You can find an accessibility statement generator on the 'CUSU Disabled Student Campaign' website > 'Accessibility Statement Generator'. This will help create an access statement personal to your event.

It is important to be conscious that accessibility of campaigns is inflected along class, racial, sexual and gender lines. These recommendations are designed to minimise these imbalances:

- Meetings should start by attendees going round giving their names and pronouns. Your pronouns are the words you use to describe your gender identity (he/him/she/her/they/them etc), and are incredibly important for ensuring that all people in the room feel represented and acknowledged.
- If meetings go on for long periods of time, access breaks are important. Meetings shouldn't continue over an hour without a break
- Hand signals are used to increase accessibility and make the decision-making process smoother.
- In larger meetings it is often important to have a designated facilitator, who leads the discussion. This person moves through the agenda and says when someone can speak (based on hand signals), in doing so they should counteract inherent power imbalances, where some people may feel more comfortable to interject or raise a point.
- It is also important to be aware of who is doing the majority of the talking in a meeting. Whilst some people may be confident speakers and knowledgeable on the subject, it is worth checking if there are members who haven't contributed so much. If this seems to be a long-term issue, it may be worth doing a review of how meetings are being run and whether you are using your time effectively.

- Ensuring everyone is heard during meetings is key, but so is ensuring that everyone is taking on an equal amount of work out of meeting-times. Make sure that work is being distributed evenly, and that people are taking on a variety of jobs (both the fun and sometimes the not-so-fun ones)!
- One way to involve new members is to set up a 'buddy-system' which pairs more experienced members of the campaign with newer members so they can take on action points and attend meetings together. This is also important for new members to feel comfortable in meetings and have one key point of contact.
- Taking minutes in a meeting is both useful for keeping track of what was said and allows people who can't access meeting spaces to stay in the loop.
- Breaking into smaller (working) groups mid-meeting is a good way of focussing tasks and disrupting power imbalances.

When involving new people in the campaign, it is important to ensure everyone is on the same page. In Robinson, the Cut the Rent campaign found that providing a backdrop of the campaign so far was helpful. Additionally, many college campaigns explained that providing a number of different strategy routes meant people could decide which route they felt most comfortable in. For example, less confrontational routes such as petitions alongside other more escalated direct actions. This ensured all students felt comfortable campaigning in college and made the campaign more accessible as a whole.



## Organising with college non-academic staff

When campaigning on issues that directly affected non-academic staff, such as Living Wage campaigns, it is important to centre the concerns and demands of the staff members themselves. The Cambridge University Living Wage Campaign, in 2018-2019, attempted to build relationships with staff members at different colleges and organised a joint student and staff meeting to discuss concerns. This also involved unions reps. At the time of writing Unite, Unison and GMB have the most members amongst University and College staff, although unionisation levels remain low.

It can be difficult to bring issues of pay and workplace conditions up with staff, and it is important to do so sensitively. Many will have concerns around the threat of disciplinary action. There have even been reports of one college telling staff that they will be fired if they join a union (something that is illegal and should be challenged). Some staff, however, have actively supported Living Wage campaigns. Ways to build these relationships can include talking to staff in areas away from college management, such as where they go for smoke breaks or in catering halls. Another way to build trust can be to distribute a survey to college staff to identify concerns. The Christ's College Living Wage campaign did this in 2019, putting surveys in blank envelopes and giving them to trusted staff to hand out in order to avoid them being seen by college management.



# How to deal with College Management

This section will explain how to deal with management when campaigning in your college. It can often be difficult and sometimes intimidating to go into a meeting with the more influential decision-makers in your college, but hopefully this section will give you a good starting point. The two areas we will cover here are 1. How to prepare for a meeting with College Management and 2. How to deal with hostility from college.

## *Meeting with College Management:*

Be Prepared! Preparation for any meetings with College Management or committees is essential when advocating for change within the college environment. Providing facts to support your case will make management more receptive to the arguments that you are trying to make, as will tailoring those arguments to their specific concerns. Some things to consider when preparing for meetings include:

### **1. Know your audience**

Knowing who is on a committee, what their concerns are and how sympathetic they are to your cause will really strengthen your case. Work out which members of College Management are most supportive of your position and meet with them beforehand to build mutual support between students and staff. An awareness of the positions of the individuals that you are meeting with on the issue can allow you to focus on convincing those that are least supportive of your case. Knowledge of their particular concerns means that you can tailor your arguments to their particular worries.

### **2. Know your case**

Most successful college campaigns are organised by students who have an in depth understanding of the case that they are putting before college. Backing up your opinion on a particular issue with facts-based evidence and research limits the range of qualitative arguments that can be raised by management. Make sure to speak to previous students involved in campaigning as they may have useful advice on how college management have previously responded to this issue. The campaign for Carbon Neutrality at Clare Hall college presented an in depth and thoroughly researched paper on the feasibility of setting a 2030 carbon neutral target that was able to convince college management.

There may be a strong moral case for your campaign but supporting this with strong facts increases the likelihood of raising support.

### 3. Anticipate arguments

Know the common arguments that are used against your case. Communication and research on similar campaigns will enable you to understand the objections that are most likely to be raised by College Management. Before any meeting prepare a series of fact-based counterarguments or solutions to these objections. This has been an effective way of avoiding challenges in a variety of college campaigns. The most common objections faced by campaigns pushing for divestment, Living Wage accreditation and rent cuts have largely been focused on the potential costs of implementation. Student campaigns have successfully overcome this by thinking of solutions; for example the limited economic impact of divesting, or highlighting where funds could be reallocated in college expenditure. It can also be useful to ask college to conduct a cost analysis of a policy instead of talking about unknown hypothetical costs. Additionally campaigns have found it extremely useful to engage in pre-meeting strategy sessions using hypothetical scenarios to help develop effective counter-arguments.

### 4. Establishing a dialogue

Communication with management prior to any meeting will help to strengthen your position in negotiations and discussions. Before any committee meeting send a brief explanation of your main arguments to all members so that the discussion can focus on debating the merits of a change as opposed to losing focus on clarifying key terminology. Email correspondence and meeting with sympathetic members of college management will also galvanize support for your case through bringing college employees into the focus of the campaign. Constant communication with members of college committees has helped campaigns address particular concerns and understand the issues that particular college members may have with the goals of the campaign.



# Meeting strategy

In addition to preparation for a meeting, successful college campaigns adopt a strong negotiating strategy in meetings and discussions with management. It isn't just the content of your argument, but how you articulate and engage with the issue that can make a real difference to the success of the meeting. Here are a range of things to consider/try in meetings with college staff:

## 1. Tone

Being receptive to the concerns that are raised by College Management - they are more likely to be convinced if you show that you are listening.

A firm tone communicates the strength of your argument.

Be respectful, even in disagreeing - hostility will make it difficult to persuade them. Allow people to finish points before responding - show that you care and are listening.

## 2. Organisation

Sending more than one person into a meeting can stop management from isolating and intimidating an individual campaigner

Communicate effectively with other campaign members prior to the meeting so you can present a united front.

Adopting a 'good cop, bad cop' approach has been effective for many campaigns.

## 3. Wrapping Up

Outline what has been agreed and where the campaign stands on progress.

Even if the meeting didn't go as you hoped, ending the meeting with respect means that future negotiations can take place.

Outline next steps and when communication will take place.

## 4. Recording and Accounting

Management will often misconvey what was said in meetings.

If possible inconspicuously record meetings and take minutes.

Send follow-up emails with what you discussed and further information to show you're engaged and willing to keep up momentum with the discussions.

## Hostility from College Management

Sometimes a college can be hostile to a student campaign. In some cases, they will try to shut down a campaign by identifying a few key people and trying to intimidate them. It's important to be aware of this possibility and make sure you are reducing potential risk to yourself. Be aware of your rights, and make sure there aren't easily identifiable 'ringleaders' who can become a target of hostility from college management.

Make it hard for college to target and identify individuals

- Maintain the collective authorship of petitions
  - Send the petition from a generic campaign email address or through the JCR/MCR if they have endorsed it, not from one individual
  - Circulate petitions privately with a small supportive group to gather signatures before circulating it publicly, as you don't want to circulate it with only a few co-authors' names on it
- If you have meetings with members of college staff about your campaigning issue, try to send different people to different meetings and make sure they engage with a range of students
- Don't act before you have built some momentum and support for your campaign so you have the support of a group. Individuals can get burnt out from carrying too much work and are also more easily identified as 'troublemakers' by the college
- Share responsibility and never do an action like a banner drop without enough people
- Get in touch with CUSU if you're feeling intimidated and want to know what your rights are and what support is available, especially if your college is throwing around legal threats like accusing you of libel. These threats are usually completely empty and they want to scare you into stopping your campaign!

# Escalating pressure

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## *What is escalating pressure?*

To 'escalate' a campaign means to use tactics that exert an increasing amount of pressure on the key decision makers. It is important to be careful and strategic about when and how to escalate your campaign. The 'campaign strategy' section of this guide covers when escalating pressure is necessary. This section will contain some practical tips about how to escalate. We are only covering a few examples; there are of course many other ways to escalate pressure and we definitely encourage you to be creative. One thing to bear in mind is that escalating pressure is not the same as direct action! As covered earlier, escalating pressure within a particular strategic thread could simply mean going from private communication to public communication that seeks to get press coverage and exert reputational pressure on decision makers. Escalation is a means to drive a campaign forward, sustain its momentum and capitalise on any recent successes. It can take many forms, but typically represents a new stage in a campaign which involves innovative techniques of raising awareness and increasing pressure on the university/your college.

## *Direct Action*

Direct action is one tried and tested way of escalating pressure on colleges. While people define it in different ways, we use it to mean a form of action that deliberately breaks college regulations to draw attention to the demands of the campaign or is obstructive to the functioning of the college in some way. Different forms of direct action involve different



levels of escalation and achieve different goals. Some, such as banner drops and poster campaigns, might aim to raise awareness and garner press attention so as to exert reputational pressure. Others, such as hall boycotts or rent strikes, might aim to exert direct financial pressure on the college. All these tactics have been successfully implemented in the past. The important thing is to know when to use them.

There will be some things it is important to do for any direct action.

A model example of an action consensus (for a banner drop action) is here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bGR5Cy\\_Vh5KGFZMVkQ8nqPCpRKlw2Mh9PqxRDXuOKc8/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bGR5Cy_Vh5KGFZMVkQ8nqPCpRKlw2Mh9PqxRDXuOKc8/edit?usp=sharing)

It is also important to create a publicity strategy prior to carrying out the action. Maximising publicity is crucial to the success of any direct action. The more people see what you've done, the more effective you will be in raising awareness about your campaign and exerting pressure on the college. The two main forms of publicity are press and social media. To be covered in the press you will need to create a press release. This can be sent to student press (including Varsity and The Tab), and to local newspapers (such as Cambridge News and the Cambridge Independent) or even national press if the action is big enough. A press release should include a description of events, statements from your campaign and sympathetic figures (such as a JCR president or member of college council), and notes to editors including any relevant context. It is also possible to pitch comment pieces to the 'opinion' sections of these outlets, to provide an extended insight into the situation at your college and the reasons behind your campaign.

Doing a write up of the action, with pictures, on social media will also help publicise it. To maximise reach you can do a 'mass share', where you get as many people to share the post at the same time as possible - Facebook algorithms mean far more people will see it than if you share at different times. You can also ask sympathetic Facebook pages with significant followings to share your post, and re-posting in JCR/accommodation/subject group chats will also help.

A model example of a press release (for a banner drop action) is here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TTMKD7OrW3hAKsGI3cc\\_ahujE9zEc2Acs3HR5xNlwQA/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TTMKD7OrW3hAKsGI3cc_ahujE9zEc2Acs3HR5xNlwQA/edit?usp=sharing)

Below, we give more details of some of these tactics and how to carry them out.

# Banner Drops

Aim: to raise awareness within college of your campaign and to garner press attention to exert reputational pressure on the college.

## How to prepare:

- Organise a banner making session: This can provide a useful way to involve new people in the campaign, as they create a zero risk, relaxed environment in which students can participate, and learn more about the campaign. You will need bed sheets and paint. Spare bed-sheets (from charity shops, friends or supporters) are ideal. Go for large scale and bright colours, and consider chants, music or flares (depending on location and making sure you read and understand the following guidance on legality: <http://www.fsf.org.uk/assets/Smoke-Bombs-Flares-and-Fireworks-Factsheet-for-FSF.pdf>) in order to draw attention to the banner drop.
- Create an action consensus and a publicity strategy, as covered above.
- Get some zip ties and pick a location from which to drop the banner you have made.
- Assign roles: you will likely need at least three people to drop the banner, and someone else to film/take pictures

## How to carry it out:

- Get in position and drop the banner. You can zip tie it on to the area if you want it to stay up for a long time. If you just want to drop it for long enough to take some photos then you wont need zip ties and you can just hold it.
- Leave the area straight away to minimise the chances of you being seen doing the banner drop.
- Send off the press release to student press and put posts up on social media. Request for any faces of campaigners to be blurred out to ensure no one is singled out for being involved in an action.

An example of press coverage of a successful banner drop is here: <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/14811>



# Hall boycott

**Aim:** To exert direct financial pressure on college by withdrawing a source of income, and reputational pressure through any media coverage the action generates.

## **How to prepare:**

- Prepare alternative meals! In 2015, when King's College Student Union organised a hall boycott, they collectively prepared 3 meals a day for students. This is crucial as many students rely on catered food. As well as providing food, this is an exciting way to bring students together and engage them in your campaign.
- Announce it far in advance: one idea would be to announce your intention to boycott catered food far in advance, to give the college time to concede to your demands to prevent the boycott going ahead. The threat itself could exert effective pressure.
- Build support amongst students: this action will only be successful if a significant proportion of the student body support the boycott. So publicise the boycott to students as much as possible. You could even get people to 'pledge' to join the boycott in advance to ensure their support.



## **How to carry it out:**

- Create a rota to spread the work of preparing and serving meals
- Make it very public on social media to draw more people to future meals and generate a sense of excitement
- An example of a successful hall boycott campaign is here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/453391638147556/>

## Rent strike

This is a highly escalated tactic that has been used to great effect by cut the rent campaigns in the past. Rent strikes are a means to significantly hit the financial health of colleges and force management to negotiate with your campaign. In 2019, a national campaign group 'Rent Strike' were set up to support cut the rent campaigns across the UK and their website provides extensive information on how to carry this out: <https://www.rent-strike.org/>

The most famous example was the rent strike at UCL in 2016: 'In 2016, over 1,000 rent-striking students at UCL won over £1.5 million in concessions in the form of compensation, bursaries and rent cuts. Despite eviction threats and attempts to victimise individual students, a collective refusal to be divided or bullied - alongside careful organisation with off-campus groups - forced successive capitulations by managers. When they ignored us, we occupied their offices until they listened. When they threatened to crush us, we expanded the rent strike. When they hit us, we hit back - harder. We won: they lost.'

Yet there are examples at Cambridge too. In 1979 a rent strike at King's College forced King's to publish its investments and partially divest from the apartheid South African regime. In 2000, 286 King's students conducted a 5 month rent strike withholding £235,587.72 of rent in protest at plans to increase rents between 33% and 47% by 2004/05. This resulted in a suspension of rent rises and the formation of a committee to look into the issue. Whilst the committee was largely seen as a sham, and rents did increase by 26% over the next two years, the scale of the increases was significantly reduced by the student action.



## Other ideas

- Organise a mass emailing campaign to college management.
- Pitch an article to the student press (Varsity, TCS, The Tab...) to explain the campaign and put pressure on college to accept your demands.
- Disrupt high profile events; for example formal college dinners or college council meetings. Disruption could just mean handing out leaflets outside as people go in. It could mean dropping a banner in the meeting. You could go in with a large group and deliver a speech outlining your demands. The most escalated action you could do would be to do a 'blockade' of the event to block anyone from going in. An example (although targeted at the University not a college) is this blockade of Old Schools in 2018: <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/16656>. This would have the most serious risk of disciplinary action so make sure you have planned ahead properly and got advice from students who have been involved in these actions (try messaging the Zero Carbon or Cambridge Defend Education facebook page if you don't know anyone) before going ahead.

## Sustaining your campaign/ dealing with setbacks

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While student campaigning is often successful and loads of fun, it is also important to think about how to deal with setbacks in the long-term. Cambridge terms being short and busy means that many campaigns struggle to keep momentum up, especially during exam term or at the beginning of a new academic year. However, there are key strategies which are useful to keep your campaign motivated, even if it's not moving as quickly or achieving as many goals as hoped.

## Handovers

- Handovers are important for retaining knowledge in the long-term. A handover is when an experienced member of the campaign is handing over their knowledge and experience to new members who will be campaigning in the future.
- They are successful when they are done in person but also come with the information written down in a document alongside it. This ensures that the knowledge is kept on paper and can be used over and over again or added to over time.

- Handovers often include basic information like email lists, key contacts, social media admin passwords, how often to call meetings etc. But they also involve more in-depth information such as previous social media strategies, archival information and overall campaign strengths / weaknesses. A strong handover will enable the campaign to continue from strength to strength without having to start from the beginning again, and in the long-term will ensure the campaign is as active and successful as possible.

## *Keeping morale and numbers up*

- Keeping numbers over time is important to ensure that the workload of campaigners is being distributed evenly, and your campaign is still appealing to students within your college. If students aren't engaging in your campaign over time, it might be worth revisiting your goals, strategy or tactics to see if there are any specific issues which can be addressed.
- Some key tips on keeping up numbers from different campaigns:
  - Robinson - more direct engagement, for example speak to students in the buttery / hall, encourage them to sign petitions or join organising groups
  - Clare Hall - leave copies of campaign information in common areas where it will be accessible to all students
  - Emmanuel - have regular meetings even when the campaign isn't going strong to ensure people are updated and engaged
- It is key to keep social media and internal organising groups active - even when the campaign itself is less visible. For example, sharing news, reports or supporting other campaigns publicly engages others in your campaign and ensures it doesn't fizzle out of people's awareness.



## Restrategising

Not every campaign, especially those with big goals, will succeed first time. Cambridge colleges are archaic institutions which move at a very slow pace. Having got the issue on the agenda and discussed is an important step forward, and the progress you have made need not go to waste.

Take time to reflect on your campaign and why you weren't completely successful. Go back to your power maps and strategic threads. Did you move some decision makers in the right direction but not all? Did you target your campaign at the wrong people? Did you pursue too collaborative an approach with college?

The example of the Christ's College fossil fuel divestment campaign shows the success restrategising can bring. The campaign started by adopting a collaborative approach with college, seeking to use reasoned arguments to convince college council members of the merits of divestment. A detailed report was submitted and the campaign worked through the JCR to meet and lobby council members. This was partially successful; several members of college council were convinced. However, the bursar and master opposed divestment and swayed members who were sympathetic to divestment but concerned about the financial and legal implications. There was a widespread feeling that the student proposals had not been taken seriously and college council had not seriously engaged with the arguments presented.

The campaign then reevaluated and decided to escalate pressure on college. After doing a power map, they identified college alumni as being a powerful group who could exert a lot of pressure on college management. The college are very careful to maintain good relations with alumni, in part because their donations are a key source of funding.

The alumni campaign started by contacting high profile alumni and seeking their support. One prominent alumni was convinced and personally contacted a member of college management saying that they intended to go public with their support. This resulted in college council agreeing unanimously to reconsider divestment the following year, just months after rejecting it. The campaign then created an open letter calling on the college to divest and gathered signatures from hundreds of alumni. College have engaged with the campaign far more seriously as a result, and this could be a key factor when they make their new decision in Easter term 2020.

The key lesson was, instead of becoming pessimistic after initial rejection, to restrategise and find new pressure points.

## Dealing with burnout

This email thread between a member of the current King's College Living Wage campaign and the campaign in 2014 draws out the importance of designing demands in a way that they become institutionally cemented:

**Email 1:** We're also thinking about setting up a society (King's College Defend Education / King's College Collective) to try and institute some continuity to this by having something to pass on.

We started talking about this after FOIs [Freedom of Information Requests] found 114 staff at King's were paid under the Living Wage and we found an old poster on one of the Keynes notice boards for a successful 2014/15 Living Wage campaign that was reversed after that cohort left, we then had a pretty similar experience with divestment and rent. We're kinda coming to the conclusion that the College and the Uni are exploiting the transitory nature of the student body to block or reverse change.

**Email 2:** I think your suggestion that the university and college use student turnover as a way of avoiding following through on commitments is absolutely true, but I think it's broader than that also. It's not just the rate of turnover, it's also the heavy workload and things like that too: there have been occasions where the university agreed to follow through on something if students did some legwork first, or agreed to do something jointly with students, and then it didn't happen because the students couldn't keep up our end due to our workload and other concerns etc.

So pushing for things to happen as quickly as possible, developing means of ensuring that changes aren't reversed, and preventing the 'outsourcing' of reform to students are all really important ways of 'locking in' any concessions that are made.

Further suggestions from past campaigns include:

- Emphasising that there is no expectation of commitment, so people feel comfortable taking on tasks only when they have the energy and time (Lucy Cavendish).
- "We have had reflective meetings and set aside significant time for people to raise concerns and discuss how we can improve the situation. From this we formalised a constitution for decision making and delegation" (Murray Edwards).
- Making sure that no one person is taking on too much of the work of the group, and ensuring that tasks are divided between campaigners equally.
- Taking time to build friendships within a campaign - i.e. spending time having meals or socialising outside of campaigning work.

# Resources for Targeted Campaigns

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## General

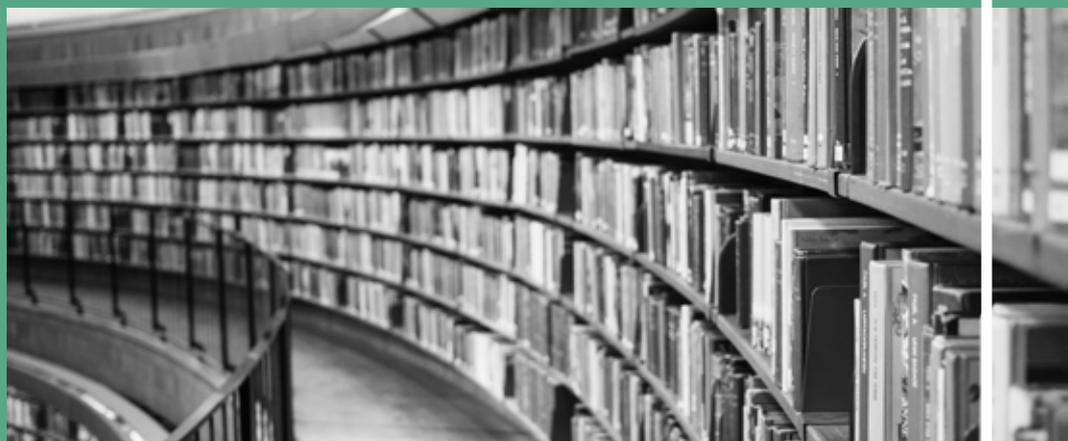
- For press work:
  - NEON have created a 'press officer handbook' which is much more comprehensive in relation to press than anything in this guide: <https://neweconomyorganisers.org/our-work/comms-hub/press-office-handbook/>
- For finding out about college structures and rules:
  - The college constitution, available on the college website, will contain all the rules and structures.
- For finding college council minutes:
  - Most colleges will have unreserved minutes published on their intranet pages. Otherwise, you can get them from sympathetic council members or JCR/MCR presidents who might sit on these committees.
- For finding alumni:
  - College magazines - these will have the names of alumni who have done notable things in the past year
  - Twitter: the college will likely post regularly about notable alumni. You can also look at who the college 'follows' on twitter and many of these are likely to be alumni
  - Famous alumni will likely be listed on Wikipedia or the College's website
  - Alumni year group reps: you can contact them and ask them to share the open letter with everyone in their year. You should be able to find these on the college website. The Christ's one is here: [https://alumni.christs.cam.ac.uk/sslpage.aspx?pid=457&fbclid=IwAR3uCfY6C2SbzB\\_zk7o9T3a5GwudSspv432rdmdk0DWKNq6fHYKSWg8GYQY](https://alumni.christs.cam.ac.uk/sslpage.aspx?pid=457&fbclid=IwAR3uCfY6C2SbzB_zk7o9T3a5GwudSspv432rdmdk0DWKNq6fHYKSWg8GYQY)
  - Alumni Databases: Most colleges will have an online platform where alumni can create a profile and interact with each other (often for the purposes of networking, advertising jobs, or just reminiscing). If you can find a sympathetic alum with access to an online alumni community it can be a great resource. Though it is important to consider the legality of using any details you find, it can even be useful just to confirm alumni you have found online actually went to the college!

## Rent Campaigns

- Other college 'Cut the Rent' campaigns (i.e. Robinson, Murray Edwards etc)
- College Accounts
- University wide 'Cut the Rent' Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cambridgectr/>
- 'Rent Strike' - a national campaign aimed at reducing rents: <https://www.facebook.com/rentstriker/>

## Divestment Campaigns

- Other college Divestment Campaigns (Clare Hall, Emma, Christs):
  - Emma: <https://www.facebook.com/emmadivest/>
  - Clare Hall: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/554127215047274/>
  - Christ's: <https://www.facebook.com/Christs-Climate-Justice-Society-2224082597868576/>
  - King's: <https://www.facebook.com/KingsDivestment/>
- Zero Carbon drive: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B8JoCsS1BLd-HLXgwUFhVcW01cWs>
- Zero Carbon website: <http://zerocarbonsoc.soc.srcf.net/>
- Zero Carbon college campaigns resource pack (which includes some great examples of divestment reports): [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WB-BKTVkK1srzgRP2EljirXsh\\_NtMA4Qx?fbclid=IwAR1BpREqgKmX7ekzALeq-uabvQQy5-saHgL3xYoZNcQVomzmx93A4jtxV2Pg](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WB-BKTVkK1srzgRP2EljirXsh_NtMA4Qx?fbclid=IwAR1BpREqgKmX7ekzALeq-uabvQQy5-saHgL3xYoZNcQVomzmx93A4jtxV2Pg)



## Living Wage Campaigns

- Living Wage Foundation website. <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/>
- Message the Living Wage Campaign Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/322624121622862/>
- Contact CUSU Ethical Affairs Campaign <https://www.facebook.com/EthicalAffairs/>
- College Living Wage Rep
- Local Union contacts:
  - UCU University of Cambridge branch: <http://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/>
  - Unison University of Cambridge branch: <https://www.unison.cam.ac.uk/cambridge-branch>
  - Unite the Union University of Cambridge branch: <http://www.unite.cam.ac.uk/>

## A history of student campaigning

- A Timeline of Political Change and Activism at King's College, Cambridge: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zH-mvpHMWpZrNUcmm30jzwhNtbl-Gtok9lga7Fxo3E/edit?usp=sharing>
- A Timeline of (student) Activism with a focus on Cambridge University: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hrrSJEzizdiS9xwFII1V-9HFlo4hSov3WBVtL6Xt21s/edit>

## Future Campaign Ideas

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- **Demilitarise** - Many colleges, in addition to having investments in Fossil Fuel industries, have many ties to the arms trade and military-industrial complex. These can be direct investments, but also personnel transfer between arms industry and university positions, curricula and sponsorship. There's a university-wide Demilitarise Cambridge campaign, but it has also had success in colleges, and demands are most likely met on a college level (e.g. Divest & Disarm Emmanuel). Contact Demilitarise Cambridge for more information.

- **Free, Liberated Education** - Join Cambridge Defend Education for this at a university level, but at colleges, free education campaigns can put pressure on college administration to improve bursary provision, to stop platforming hate speakers and to promote decolonisation.
- **Living Wage/Unionisation** - Most colleges do not pay all their workers the Living Wage. Put pressure on college to become Living Wage Accredited (<https://www.livingwage.org.uk/>), and also speak to college workers and encourage/support them to become unionised - really successful campaigns have taken place on this in London e.g. SOAS Justice for Cleaners.
- **Climate Justice Campaigns** - Most colleges still haven't divested. Contact Ethical Affairs or Zero Carbon, and have a read of our resources section above, for more info. Beyond this, you can campaign for your college to rapidly decarbonise and set a zero carbon target of 2030, as Hughes Hall have done. Contact Ethical Affairs if you are interested in pushing for this.
- **Boycott the Sun/Daily Mail** - If your college sells newspapers, or has them in the library or buttery for free, make sure that they're not funding the bigoted tabloid press: the Hope Not Hate campaign has been successful in stopping many educational institutions selling these newspapers - <https://stopfundinghate.info/>
- **Undoing Borders/Opposing the Hostile Environment** - People and Planet have a guide on how to set up a campaign here: <https://peopleandplanet.org/undoing-borders>, and in colleges you can campaign for better support for those on Tier 4 visas, more international student bursaries, and to never allow immigration police into the grounds.
- **Supporting Sex Workers** - Some students do sex work while at university, and they also deserve support and rights: join national conversations and campaigns around decriminalisation, and make sure your J/MCR provides free, anonymous protection and runs free sexual health screening events (local charity Diverse runs these screenings in colleges).
- **Sweatshop Free** - This is another People and Planet campaign, challenging the root causes of unacceptable working conditions. Find out more at <https://peopleandplanet.org/sweatshopfree>
- **Homelessness** - Colleges own most of the land in the centre of Cambridge, and there are people homeless metres away from our lavish dining halls; put pressure on colleges to donate money and food to homeless charities and shelters in Cambridge, to open up unused space and to recognise their responsibility to the community.
- **International Solidarity** - Cambridge has an almost unique ability to draw national, and international attention. Historically, student activists have used this to show solidarity with struggles worldwide, particularly those which Cambridge has ties with, e.g. in the 1980s Kings College went on rent strike to lobby college to divest from Barclays because of their links to apartheid in South Africa.
- **Raise the Bar/UCU** - Students have worked closely with UCU on this campaign for better contracts, pay and rights for casualised staff. Lobby your college to employ its staff on permanent contracts, and to improve conditions across the board. For more info: <http://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/pledge-to-raise-the-bar-for-casualised-staff/>

# CUSU Campaigns

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Central to campaigning is liberation work. We would encourage you to get involved with a campaign if you self-identify into one of the groups below. Even if you don't, it is important to be aware of the work going on and how you can support it. On the following pages are brief profiles of the work each liberation campaign does. There is also a profile of the decolonise network, who do crucial work to put the University's practices and knowledge production in their colonial and neo-colonial context and challenge them.





### **Advice for future members of the campaign:**

#### **Media (more often than not, the British media is an op)**

• With anti-racist campaigning comes hyper-visibility, especially for BME students. Be cautious about what you post on social media - the right-wing press do not hesitate to sensationalise the work of BME students in Cambridge.

#### **Navigating Cambridge, the institution**

• Build working relationships with members of staff within the university who are allies - they may be able to provide information and resources which students may not have access to.

#### **Other campaigns:**

• Build interpersonal and professional links across groups and organisations  
 • Solidarity is an asset - but be realistic about its limitations

#### **Look after yourself!**

• Be prepared to receive more backlash, less support, less recognition and less positive engagement (and therefore tangible success) from the university than white activists.  
 • Protect yourself by surrounding yourself with supportive and empathetic people (other BME students involved in anti-racist work are a perfect place to start!)

### **The CUSU BME Campaign:**

The CUSU BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Campaign is a student-led campaign, which functions as a platform that exists to voice the concerns of Ethnic Minority students, both graduate and undergraduate, at the University of Cambridge.

The campaign is a part of CUSU (Cambridge University's Student Union) but retains a high degree of autonomy and has a committee of exclusively BME students.

### **The main ways in which BME Campaign practically strives to achieve its goals are:**

- The provision of welfare-orientated, social and cultural support for BME students
- Raising the profile of issues that affect ethnic minorities in the UK within Cambridge and beyond, such as through holding events
- Acting as a mechanism of accountability for the university and its students. The Campaign sees it as its responsibility to call out the university and its members in incidents of racism.
- Liaison with the university and CUSU to advocate for the rights of BME students
- Liaison and co-operation with College JCRs and MCRs with regard to the interests of its members within their Colleges.

*In the words of Audreya Lorde, 'change is the immediate responsibility of each of us, wherever and however we are.' Whether it be attending a protest, drafting a critique of your college's racial harassment procedure, setting up a BME mentoring scheme - no change is too small!*



***Anti-racist campaigning takes time and effort. Don't beat yourself if things go wrong: recognise the limits as to what students can realistically do. You have a degree to do and an institution built on centuries of racialised violence to navigate: that is hard enough.***

### **For white students interested/involved in anti-racist work:**

Do not rely on BME students for everything! As a white person, it's your duty to reflect on your own complicity in racialised oppression and consistently reflect. Think about how you can practically help - virtue signalling and performative gesticulation is as unhelping as it is ubiquitous in Cambridge..... The BME Campaign's Facebook inbox is not a rubber stamp approval for your society's events!

Critically reflect on your own words and actions: don't place this burden on us!



### **The CUSU Class Act Campaign:**

CUSU Class Act is a new campaign that works to support working class, state-comp educated, low-income, first generation, estranged and care leaver students during their time at Cambridge.

### **What does Class Act campaign on:**

This group campaigns on issues affecting these students on both a university and national level. It also acts as a network for students with similar experiences to support each other and discuss issues of class, educational background and socio-economic privilege which often feel taboo at Cambridge.

This campaign is very much a continuation of widening participation work, as although there's a lot of work going into getting students from these backgrounds to apply to Cambridge, there is little support for them specifically once they are here.



### **Campaign Meetings:**

Meetings should be spaces where all members of a campaign feel comfortable to share their thoughts and concerns. It is important to anticipate the needs of students who may find it more difficult to participate in meetings. Things you can do before a meeting include; setting up an anonymous submissions form, uploading agendas beforehand and putting accessibility information on any social media promotion. A meeting can be an intimidating environment, so make sure that students are made to feel comfortable by beginning with everyone's name and preferred pronouns and setting out a policy that only one person can speak at a given time. Building in short regular breaks and making it clear that people are able to leave and eat whenever they wish are also important.

### **Social Media:**

One of the main ways that college campaigns organise and share ideas is online. To make communications open to all students think about using multiple social media platforms and attaching access statements (the DSC campaign has an online tool for this). Text-only copies of resources are also helpful. Do make sure that any potentially stressful material uses a content note or trigger warning.

### **The CUSU Disabled Students' Campaign:**

The Disabled Students' Campaign has produced a helpful guide for thinking about accessibility in organising that contains important information about how to keep your campaign inclusive. It is important that when planning meetings, actions or discussions that the different needs of campaign members are taken into consideration. Campaigns should be a space where all students are able to participate and feel comfortable. Anticipating the different needs of students with a disability removes the pressure of the individual to ask that their needs be accommodated, although it is useful to be open to suggestions on how campaign spaces can be made more accessible.

This is a (non-exhaustive) list of ways in which you can make your campaign as accessible as possible, using ideas from the DSC zine.

### **Accessible Space:**

When organising an open meeting or discussion for the campaign think about making physical spaces as accessible as possible. The Disabled Students' Campaign has a generator on their website that can help you produce an accessibility statement letting students know how accessible the location is. Consider if a venue has step-free access, comfortable seating, toilets and a quiet space. Also make sure that locations are easily accessible via bus or public transport and making sure students are free to leave at any time they wish.

### **Direct Actions & Occupations:**

If you plan to organise an action or occupation in college, make sure that the accessibility needs of students are considered at every stage of planning. As mentioned above consider making physical spaces and planning meetings as inclusive as possible. An action can be a stressful environment so consider designating a welfare person and warning members about potentially noisy and emotionally charged situations. Also think about how students can get involved in an action in a number of different ways so that all members of the campaign are able to participate. It can also be helpful to make text from any chants or speeches available before an action.



### **The CUSU LGBT+ Campaign:**

As well as organising social events, CUSU LGBT+ campaigns to protect the rights, safety and inclusion of LGBT+ students and raise awareness about LGBT+ issues. We have an anonymous contact form on our website (<https://www.lgbt.cusu.cam.ac.uk/contact-us/contact-form/>) where students can tell us about instances of LGBT+phobia or other issues they'd like us to address. The President and the Campaigns Officer are at the forefront of the 'political' side of our work.

### **Current focus:**

Our current focus is the 'Why Gender-Neutral?' Campaign which aims to improve the university for trans and non-binary students. In our 2018 Big Cambridge LGBT+ Survey, out of 400 respondents, 71 identified as trans or non-binary. An overwhelming number of these students reported difficulties accessing toilets and changing facilities in line with their gender identity, being excluded from events by gendered dress codes, problems getting their personal information changed on the university systems, as well as general lack of awareness around trans and non-binary identities.

CUSU LGBT+ is working to change this. We produced posters and guides to implementing gender-neutral toilets, dress codes and admin; met with staff and local politicians, presented at Gendered Intelligence's conference and on local radio to raise awareness; and we continue to support JCRs and faculty reps on this issue.

### **Successes:**

Today, 21 colleges now have gender neutral toilets and the Equality and Diversity Committee have ruled that these should be included in all new or refurbished buildings. Colleges and May Balls are working towards more inclusive dress-codes. Some college reps have produced guides for trans and non-binary students explaining who to contact and how to change names and gender markers on the college systems (which are currently different in each college - a future aim is to streamline these).

Clare and Robinson college both recently introduced Gender Expression Funds, to help trans students with some of the costs associated with transition. Trans inclusion at Cambridge is a work in progress, and there's still a lot more to be done - check out our website for more details on how you can help.

### **Other issues they've worked on:**

In addition to this campaign, other issues we've worked on over the past two years include:

- Accessibility and inclusion at Glitterbomb
- Improving mental health support for LGBT+ students
- LGBT+ sex/relationships education in freshers week
- Queer(y)ing the curriculum in collaboration with CamQueerHistory



## **The CUSU Women's Campaign:**

The Women's Campaign exists to represent women and non-binary students, advocate for our interests, and defend our rights. We campaign on issues like improving support for survivors of sexual violence, fair working conditions for women staff, and working with the local community to address issues such as the vulnerability of homeless women.

### **What you can do:**

At your college - push the Women's Campaigns 8 demands for change to college sexual misconduct procedures. You can find these on our Facebook, and are a really important way to increase support for survivors at your college

At your faculty - ask your faculty rep to raise the gender attainment gap at Faculty Board and push for the faculty to publish transparent annual reports on gender attainment

In your communities: make sure your organising spaces and activist groups are safe spaces for survivors. Develop accountability processes, tackle internal hierarchies, and don't work with the SWP

Come along to WomCam forum and help shape the campaign!

### **Successes:**

Over several years the Women's Campaign fought for reforms to the university Disciplinary Procedure so it provided meaningful recourse for justice to survivors of sexual violence. After launching our demands with an open letter, protesting on King's Parade and bringing our concerns to debates at Senate House, we eventually saw our reforms go through in the summer of 2019.

### **What happens at forum?**

Forum is where we plan the direction of the campaign, but also where we build community. Don't worry, you definitely don't need to know lots about feminist theory and history to come along! In the first half we work through the agenda, developing strategy for our campaigns, sharing issues we're experiencing and swapping advice and tactics. In the second half, we focus on getting practical tasks done, like sending lobbying emails, folding informative zines, or conducting research. There is no pressure at all to come to every meeting, and you can get involved at any point in the year.





## DECOLONISATION NETWORK

### Testimony and advice:

(from the *Decolonising Politics*)



Know the scholarship

- What has been done before in this field by scholars and activists and what existing work can you build on?

Look for allies

- Lean on existing structures and radical traditions - if they exist!
- Don't duplicate work, and always build on others' strengths!
- Are there people in your faculty/college that you can work with?

Get to know the department and its structures

- Some departments are more amenable to formal avenues of change (e.g. governing bodies, undergraduate teaching committees, tripos reform committees), but others may best be cracked through more informal channels (e.g. reaching out directly to friendly lecturers who convene a particular paper or do other relevant work)
- Use trial and error but of course don't overburden yourself. It's okay to pass knowledge of what \*didn't\* work to the next generation - this is still useful!

Approach teaching staff and graduate students, who are the most well-placed to support the work.

- They will likely be more familiar with the institution and scholarship you're trying to make change in and most of them will be around for much longer than undergrads will.
- At the same time, they are of course contributing free labour in an institution that is usually unkind and exploitative, so that's important to keep in mind.
- Staff/graduates may even be willing to act as advisors/overseers to your group!
- Be sure to do your research on people before you approach them...

### What do people want when they ask the university to 'decolonise'? Some examples:

- To put knowledge generated by Cambridge and the university's practices in their colonial and neo-colonial context
- To re-evaluate and critique the Western so-called 'canon'
- To hold the university and colleges accountable for their current conduct and investments
- To engage with ideas of reparative justice - such as with the ongoing slavery inquiry which several colleges have undertaken

#### (from Decolonise History of Art):

"In the past three years, the group has focused on working with the department to reform the introductory courses... Thanks in part to Decolonise's work, in the last couple of years the department has offered for the first time Special Subjects in Chinese Imperial Art, Jerusalem and the Crusades and Collecting Practices of Islamic Art."

"Outside of the department, we have worked with the Fitzwilliam Society to organise a panel discussion, worked on reading groups and consulted the politics of college art collections. Its members have also taken part in campaigns for the restitution of indigenous objects held in Cambridge collections. We will continue to work both inside and outside of the department, to expand the definition of 'art' and question the ideological narrative of Western supremacy that underpins it."

#### (from Decolonise History and Philosophy of Science):

"The Working Group (including undergraduates, graduate students and staff) meets 4 times a term to discuss specific sub-disciplines within HPS."

"While we are still at the beginning of this process, several members of teaching staff have already made changes to their lectures: there is now greater emphasis on the histories of knowledge traditions outside of Western Europe and the United States, as well as a whole lecture course on the intersection of science with the politics of race and ethnicity."

"Going forward, we hope to continue recommending reforms to lecture content, but also to introduce inclusive teaching and learning workshops to make lecturers and supervisors more aware of how marginalised students are disadvantaged by current academic practices and how to address them."

**(from Decolonise English):** "The working group has pushed for changes in the content of lectures, the faculty's hiring practices, and the inequitable distribution of relevant knowledge amongst supervisors."

"The Working Group also run the Decolonise English Reading Group, which attempts to provide alternative critical tools and approaches that properly situate English-language literary texts in their imperial contexts where the curriculum fails to do so."

"While this work has been slow and incremental, there remain reasons to be hopeful- the faculty board remains receptive and there have been several positive advancements with regard to revised reading lists and the inclusion of wider ranging exam questions."



