

# Handbooks

## Creating handbooks for your student volunteers

Handbooks are a great way of providing information and guidance to volunteers. This inspiration sheet highlights ideas for content and ways of presenting the information.

### Introduction

Many staff and officers spend much of their time doing administration and answering questions from student groups. A handbook can save you time in the long-term as it can answer questions and clarify the students' union processes.

A well-designed handbook offers great opportunity for continuing your brand and establishing your students' union values. It shows the students reading it that they are important and valued. You can also use the document as a way to say thank you, and to highlight what they gain from getting involved with the students' union.

Think about the best way of designing and organising your handbook. It's good to look at any previous documents used by your students' union and note the important information, and it's also beneficial to look at how other students' union organise this document. However don't feel you have to present the information in the same way as your students' union has always done, or in the same way that other SUs do theirs. Don't be afraid to innovate!

### The handbook format

Consider what is best for your students and work out how much you have to spend on producing your handbook.

Some ideas for formats are:

- Paper copy for every committee volunteer
- Paper copy one per committee
- Digital handbook with a few paper copies for reference in main SU offices
- Digital handbook on USB drive
- Online – booklet style
- Online – website

If you have environmental policies in place, you may not be permitted to make paper copies. Printed handbooks can also an expensive method as it requires much printing and will need to be reproduced each year.

### What to include:

Your handbook should reflect the information that your students need to perform their role.

Topics that could be covered include:

- **Constitution/rules & regulations** – if you have this for student groups you could include it and include explanatory notes to help them to understand it.
- **People** – the staff and officers that they need to know to perform their role.
- **How-to guides** – step-by-step instructions to perform tasks such as booking rooms/planning events/performing risk assessments.

- **Frequently asked questions** – consider all of the most commonly asked questions and if there is a standard answer, include this in the handbook.
- **Key dates** – the important dates and deadlines that they need to know.
- **Affiliation** – explain why it is beneficial to be an affiliated club/society/group.

## Contents

If you have any questions about this guide or would like to suggest any amends please contact [rosie.hunnam@nus.org.uk](mailto:rosie.hunnam@nus.org.uk).