

# Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free

## Campaign Guide

Across the country students' unions are campaigning to Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free (KWAF) for their students. Below is a guide to running your own campaign!



### What is the campaign about?

Sport, societies, volunteering and other co-curricular activity are central to the university experience for students across the country.

While many students have Wednesday afternoons free to take part in such activities, some do not and for others it is under threat.

At [National Conference](#) in April, policy was passed for NUS to support students' unions in running Keep Wednesday Afternoon Free (KWAF) campaigns on their campuses.

Below is a guide to running your own KWAF campaign, from planning your campaign to putting together the strongest arguments to present to your university.

### Who do you need to convince?

#### Senior management

The senior management of your university will be the ultimate decision makers who can decide to Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free for students.

Everything you do in your campaign should be geared towards convincing senior managers that they can make that decision.

#### Lecturers / academics

Although senior managers are the ultimate decision makers, lecturers have a considerable influence as senior managers will want to keep them happy.

They can though be a help to your campaign, so build into your plans a strategy for reaching out to them.

### Questions to consider when planning your campaign

#### Do I know the strategic priorities of my institution?

Take a look at the strategic plan of your university, thinking about their stated priorities and how KWAF could help to deliver on those priorities.

Their priorities could for example be focussed on student experience, retention or graduate outcomes. See the arguments section below for evidence.

#### What do you think the main concerns of senior management will be?

Think about what the main concerns of senior managers with implementing KWAF would be, putting yourself in their shoes.

It could be pressure fitting lectures into the remainder of the week, the cost involved or opposition from lecturers.

If you're not sure about what their concerns will be, think about setting up an initial meeting to sound them out.

### **How is timetabling decided at my institution?**

Find out the process for timetabling at your university and if you are able to be part of that decision making process.

If possible, get hold of the data on timetabling. This will help you put together your case for KWAF and also anticipate any counter arguments.

### **How can we involve lecturers?**

Getting lecturers on board will be key to running a successful campaign.

You might like to encourage your societies to involve lecturers / academics, or consider inviting them to an SU open day to build relationships.

### **We have Wednesday afternoons free but they're under threat. How can we protect the arrangement?**

Think about setting up a system where students can report lectures being scheduled on a Wednesday afternoon, in order to monitor and protect your arrangements.

## **What are the main arguments in favour of KWAF?**

### **Mental health**

- 29% of UK university students experience clinical levels of psychological distress.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.4% of students formally disclosed a mental health difficulty to their university.<sup>2</sup>
- But 75% of students with a mental health difficulty had disclosed to a friend about their mental health.<sup>3</sup>
- [Student Minds' mental health continuum model of mental health and wellbeing](#)
- "Physical activity stands apart from more traditional treatments and therapies for mental health problems because it has the potential to simultaneously improve health and wellbeing, and tackle mental illness".<sup>4</sup>
- 52% of students take part in physical activity at university.<sup>5</sup>
- Higher physical activity correlates with an improved quality of life, and can improve symptoms of mental health difficulties including anxiety and depression.<sup>6</sup>
- [5 steps to wellbeing](#)
- BUCS have collated resources about [sport and mental health](#).

Thanks to [Student Minds](#) for supporting the campaign.

### **Retention**

'[TUSU Premium](#)' by Teesside SU is a good example of how student opportunities can impact on student retention.

### **Experience**

- Students with a low number of workload hours or a high number of workload hours reported lower student-satisfaction rates. E.g. only 57 per cent of students with between one and 19 hours a week of

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<sup>1</sup> Bewick, B., Gill, J., Mulhern, B., Barkham, M. and Hill, A. (2008). Using electronic surveying to assess psychological distress within the UK student population: a multi-site pilot investigation. *EJAP*, 4(2).

<sup>2</sup> Equality Challenge Unit, Understanding Adjustments... Report

<sup>3</sup> Equality Challenge Unit, Understanding Adjustments... Report

<sup>4</sup> Taylor & Faulkner, *Journal of Mental Health and Physical Activity*

<sup>5</sup> Sport England, 2014

<sup>6</sup> Schmitz, N., Kruse, J., and Kugler, J. (2004). The Association between Physical Exercises and Health-Related Quality of Life in Subjects with Mental Disorders: Results from a Cross-Sectional Survey. *Preventive Medicine*, vol. 39, pp. 1200–1207

workload gave ratings of seven to 10 out of 10 for happiness.<sup>7</sup>

- Students volunteer to help people (60%), improve their CV/employability (52%), and to make a difference (55%).<sup>8</sup>

### Graduate outcomes

- 51 per cent of recent graduates under 30 years old who are in paid work say that volunteering helped them to secure employment.<sup>9</sup>
- More than nine in 10 (94 per cent) of employers questioned identified a clear link between university sport participation and valuable skills and strengths in potential employees.<sup>10</sup>

### Widening participation

Having lecture free Wednesday afternoons makes it easier for students who work while studying and carers to participate.

There is more information about the barriers that stop students participating in Student Opportunities in [this report](#) by NUS and Universities UK.

### Case studies

Case studies or examples of students who would benefit or have benefitted from KWF will really help the arguments you make come to life.

Think about speaking to your societies or sports teams in order to collect great case studies that you can use when meeting your university senior management.

Could you look at question 13 of the National Student Survey - *Does the timetable work efficiently as far as your activities are concerned?* – and explore the link between the results for your institution and KWF?

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<sup>7</sup> HEPI: <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/STRICTLY-EMBARGOED-UNTIL-22-SEPT-Hepi-Report-88-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Data from 10 SUs that completed the Volunteer Engagement Survey 2016

## Arguments against

### We don't have capacity/it would cost too much

One argument could be that removing lectures from Wednesday afternoons would put too much pressure on other days in the week.

It's important to get access to full information on timetabling so you have the same information as the university when making your arguments.

The stronger the arguments you make, the more likely the university are to try to make KWF happen.

### Lecturers are opposed

You may come across the argument that lecturers are opposed because they prefer to keep Fridays rather than Wednesdays free.

Speaking to lecturers as part of your campaign plan can help to win them around. Think about speaking to your local branch of trade union such as UCU, or to senior lecturers.

## Meeting senior management

When you are happy to do so, arrange a meeting with senior management to discuss KWF. Make sure you have done the following beforehand:

- Researched their views and the likely arguments you will come up against, and prepared counter arguments
- Summarise the evidence and arguments you want to use in a briefing you can give to them after the meeting
- Picked out some key case studies to use as examples

## Keep in touch with other KWF campaigners

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[https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/bursting\\_the\\_bubble\\_summary\\_report.pdf](https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/bursting_the_bubble_summary_report.pdf)

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<http://www.bucs.org.uk/page.asp?section=18560&sectionTitle=Value+of+Sport>

Here's how you can keep in touch, seek support and offer help to other KWF campaigners.

- Join the KWF Facebook group – please share your ideas and use it as a resource to seek help from others running similar campaigns.
- You may also find help on the [BUCS Facebook group](#)
- Any other questions? Email [campaigns@nus.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@nus.org.uk)

Macadam House  
275 Gray's Inn Road  
London WC1X 8QB  
 0845 5210 262  
 nusuk@nus.org.uk  
[www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

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