

Power in Papers

Paper Writing 101

Other methods of getting your point across...



Presentations
Student Business
Items



Responding to
Questions
Asking Questions



1:1s with Key Staff

So, you want to write a paper...

- Decide on your topic
- Has the issue been raised before? (Ask the SU Voice Team, SU Officers or other Reps)
- What do you want to achieve?
- Who else is involved? (stakeholders, other student groups or Reps...)
- Create a paper plan
- Tell the SU Voice Team of your intention to write a paper and share paper plan
- Check with the Secretary of the committee:
 - Deadlines for agenda item notification
 - Deadlines for paper submission
 - Format of paper
- Working from the submission date plan in time and deadlines for writing and sharing the paper

Do Your Research

History

- Talk to the SU Voice Team (and others around the SU or key staff) to find out if this issue has been raised before
- Look at old papers, minutes of committees etc to see the history

Student opinion

- Survey data – what already exists or do you need to gather more? Speak to the Insight & Engagement Manager in the SU
- Forums, social media, Execs, SUMmits, student groups

Current Situation

If this is an ongoing issue:

- What changes have been made / not made?
- What is student opinion on the changes?
- Why are you re-raising the issue?

If this is a new issue:

- Has the issue already been raised informally?
- Is there any work taking place to rectify the problem?
- Where has the issue come from?

Balancing Act

- Be constructive in the paper.
- Recognise any work that has happened already.
- Offer some solutions as well as presenting the problem.
- Recognise that some issues may not be solvable immediately.
- Don't use very emotive language – but use anonymised student stories to support your points where applicable.
- Think about the long term impact of your paper or wider impact on other elements of the student experience.
- Keep on point.
- Consider any counter arguments to what you are asking for.
- Don't introduce new things in your recommendations – recommendations should be a conclusion of the content.
- Think about how to present any data – quotes, tables, charts, appendices.

Writing Tips

Create a plan using a paper template (usually from the committee secretary) and roughly sketch what you want to include in each section.

Don't get caught up in how to write something in your first draft, just get everything down (particularly relevant for your recommendations)

Give yourself more time than you think you will need to write and don't use 'we' or 'I', use 'The SU', 'the student community' etc.

Include an executive summary of your key points at the beginning – assume (unfortunately) that some people won't read the whole thing.

Share with SU Voice Team, SU Officers and other key SU staff who can help with wording, context, identify sources of feedback.

Creating Recommendations

- Go back to your original plan, what is it you are wanting to achieve with the paper?
- Do you want to raise awareness of an issue, ask for something to be introduced / changed, update on student feedback?
- Recommendations should not introduce something new that is not referred to in the body of your paper
- Recommendations need to be as specific as possible
- Examples:
 - X Committee to note student opinion on X issue (means that it will be noted, no action has to happen)
 - X Committee to recommend to X Committee / Position (higher committee / decision maker) that ...
 - X Committee to X (committee to do something – however, does the committee have the power to do this?)

Final Checks

- Is the wording consistent – the tense, how you refer to the University, The SU etc
- Spelling and grammar check
- Do any stats you're using add up?
- Is the formatting consistent?
- Are you clear with your asks / recommendations?

After Submission

- Talk to key people in the meeting about your paper in advance.
- Think about how you will present the paper. If collectively presenting between a few people, who will say what.

Presenting Your Paper

- Before the meeting read through your paper to refresh your memory
- Highlight the key points you wish to present
- If this is a committee where you have a briefing, discuss how you will present the paper and how any student reps or other SU Officers in attendance could support you
- Prepare for any expected questions you may receive
- Don't re-read the paper – assume everyone has read the paper and just present the key points (maybe from the executive summary) and recommendations
- Be clear which recommendations have been accepted
- Agree the next steps (you can also follow up after the meeting with the Chair or Secretary if you are not sure how it was left)

After the Meeting

- ❑ Debrief with other Reps or SU Officer attendees and / or report back to relevant SU staff the outcome of your paper
- ❑ Agree if there are any next steps you need to take and who will do these
- ❑ Follow up with the Chair / delegated committee members re. actions
- ❑ Communicate outcome with students (where appropriate)
- ❑ Send a copy of your final paper to the SU Voice Team so that a record can be kept for the Student Voice Report and for future Reps
- ❑ Check the minutes when released
- ❑ Be ready to ask for updates on action agreed in future meetings