

Facts about the National Union of Students

The current SUSU referendum is asking students “Should Southampton University Students’ Union be affiliated to the NUS”. This document seeks to set out some facts about NUS membership.

SUSU’s disaffiliation

SUSU last held a referendum on the question of continued affiliation to NUS in the 2000-01 academic year. At that time a majority (1,700 students) voted to stay in membership.

SUSU left NUS in 2002. This decision was made at the Annual General Meeting on 14 May 2002. The motion which was approved is [available online](#). This includes affiliation costs and the arguments for dis-affiliation.

The motion was passed 111 votes in favour and 99 against.

What is the NUS?

The National Union of Students (NUS) is a membership organisation: a confederation of 600 students' unions. More than 95% of all higher and further education unions in the UK. Through their member students' unions, they seek to represent the interests of more than seven million students.

NUS provides an infrastructure that supports individual students’ unions to undertake their own work. It does this through sharing the research it carries out, the training, advice and information it offers and the materials it produces. It seeks to add benefit through the economies of scale it can deliver.

NUS provides research, representation, discounts, officer training and targeted advice for individual students and students' unions.

They describe themselves as the largest student organisation in the world.

The NUS mission, vision and outcomes

Mission: *“Our mission is to promote, defend and extend the rights of students and to develop and champion strong students' unions.”*

Vision: *“Our vision is of NUS as a pioneering, innovative and powerful campaigning organisation: the national voice of students. We will fight barriers to education, empower students to shape both a quality learning experience and the world around them, supporting influential, democratic and well-resourced students' unions.”*

[Mission and Vision extracts from: <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/About-NUS/>]

Run by students

Like SUSU, NUS is run by elected Student Officers, many of them work full-time, often after

they have completed their studies. Decisions and policy are made through a structure of committees, councils and conferences made up of NUS officers, students' union officers and students.

Campaigns

The NUS runs an array of campaigns which have an impact on students. These are reported on the NUS website and in order to retain neutrality in this document we anticipate the campaign teams will reflect on these as they choose.

NUS Extra Card

NUS runs the national student discount card scheme alongside a graduate discount scheme. The NUS Extra card currently costs £11 pa. The Students' Union receives income for each Extra card sold. This is currently at £4.25 per card.

Services provided to students' unions

The following are services which NUS provides to students' unions. Member Students' Unions are not compelled to take these up:

- NUS provides specialised legal and financial advice free of charge to its members.
- NUS runs the national Students' Union Evaluation Initiative (SUEI) - which is recognised within the Higher Education (HE) sector as the quality standard for students' unions. There is a charge for this; NUS non-members are charged £5,000pa more than members.
- NUS runs a number of projects to specifically support students' unions in areas such as Governance, Fundraising and Volunteering
- Membership of NUS now brings free membership of the Association for Managers in Students' Unions (AMSU).¹
- Membership of NUS now brings free membership of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).²
- NUS Services Ltd (<https://www.nussl.co.uk/>) is a separate company - owned 25% by NUS and the rest by individual students' unions - which only members of NUS are allowed access to.
 - NUSSL negotiates student targeted discounts off the purchase prices for goods purchased for resale through Students' Union outlets
 - SUSU currently purchases mostly through a similar Universities consortium called TUCO. (www.tuco.org)

¹ AMSU used to be a separate membership organisation for SUs, which has recently merged its activities into NUS. SUSU has been a member of AMSU and its predecessor organisations since they began, NUS non-affiliates can continue to subscribe to AMSU activity for a fee.

² NCVO aims to give a shared voice to voluntary organisations and to help them achieve the highest standards of practice and effectiveness in all areas of their work. This year's membership is worth £687.

Non-affiliates

In addition to Southampton, the following universities' student bodies are currently not affiliated to NUS:

- Aston
- Dundee
- Durham
- Glasgow
- Imperial
- St Andrews
- Sunderland
- UWIC

SUSU has met with 4 of these Unions in the past year as *United Students' Unions* (USU) to share ideas and collaborate. This should not be confused with University College Union (UCU) which is a lecturers' trade union.

Durham is the most recent Union to leave membership.

Many students' unions are constitutionally required to discuss the question of continued NUS membership on a regular basis.

Financial Impact for SUSU

The NUS affiliation fee is based on the number of students at the institution and the amount of funding the Union receives. For the 2010/11 academic year the affiliation fee for SUSU would be **£49,337.40**. The NUS fee is capped at £50,000 and they have made a commitment to reduce this figure over the next few years.

Some students' unions make savings buying through NUSL. NUSL's buying prices are commercially sensitive and therefore we have not seen them. We have identified our current buying prices for our most popular goods for resale in our shop and bars. NUSL have compared these prices line by line with their own and estimated savings to be in the region of **£44,800** if we were to purchase through their deals and retain our current selling prices.

Membership of NUS would also save SUSU the additional subscription fee of **£800** (2010-11) for AMSU activity.

The combination of these three figures is an **estimated net membership cost of £3,737.40** for the current year (this would be paid pro-rata in year 1)