BRIGHT IDEAS

GUIDANCE
2023

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INTRODUCTION & APPROPRIATE IDEAS

So you want to submit a Bright Idea? **Fantastic!**

We've put together some brief guidance on how to get the most out of your idea, or where it might benefit you to actually go elsewhere.

Before we get into developing your idea, let's cover what is not appropriate for this platform and where else it could go:

- **Ratifications of student groups** – If you want to start up a student group, you should contact the Vice President Societies & Sport or check out our website su.rhul.ac.uk/opportunities/create. All ratifications take place within the Societies, Sports & Opportunities Executive.

- **Laws and Governance** – Does your idea breach or contradict a law or governing policy external to the Students' Union such as licensing and the Education Act? If so then we won't be able to act upon your idea. However, you could look to launch a campaign for change.

- **"I need help next week!"** – If your idea relates to a time limited action then this platform might not be right for you. Ideas once made live won't be directed further for fourteen days from the moment it goes live. You may want to submit it directly to an Executive or the Officer Group.

SUBMITTING YOUR IDEA

Writing your idea

When writing up your idea, it doesn't need to be long, but you should consider including these three points:

- **Problem**
- **Example**
- **Solution**

Why submit an idea? Is there a particular problem? This is where you should start with your idea. Outlining the current situation will provide students with some insight of what is going on and help them to understand you.

Providing an example can help you in a couple of ways. An example can be used to show how the problem or point of improvement is having an impact. You could use your lived experience in relation to the problem here. Alternatively you could use an example as part of your solution.

Have you had any thoughts regarding what exactly can be done **to solve the problem**? If not, that's fine and we can work with you to identify possible solutions – you might even find some more help in this toolkit! If you include a solution in your idea, it's much more likely to get the support from fellow students.

Don't forget to do some research! Your idea may have been looked into elsewhere. There may be existing research or statistics that you can use to back up your idea, whether it's enhancing student experiences or by highlighting where solutions have worked. Keep reading this toolkit to find some ways to gather research!

Union values

Whenever you're considering your idea, try and incorporate one of our strategic aims into the idea! They will help both yourself and us see how they fit into the wider work of the organisation. What are our aims, you ask?

- **Improve your education:** The number one reason you're a student at Royal Holloway, and it's what you've told us you spend most of your time doing.

- **Make your campus fun:** Something we've always known that we need to do, and the single most popular area identified by you as a priority for us.

- **Look after your wellbeing:** We know it's really important that we play a role in supporting your health and general wellbeing, and that money is an issue.

- **Make you more employable:** The second highest result for what you want us to focus on. We know that once you've finished studying the graduate job market is tough.

- **Empower you to change the world around you:** Higher Education is transformative for people at all stages of their life. It inspires and drives people to look at things how they could be, rather than how they are.

SUBMITTING YOUR IDEA

Examples

To give you some guidance, we've included a few well written ideas below from a variety of ideas that incorporate some of the guidance provided above.

Male Mental Health Campaign

The prevalence of mental health issues experienced by men across Britain has become a focal point in recent years. Just over three out of four suicides (76%) are by men and suicide is the biggest cause of death for men under 35, whilst 12.5% of men in the UK are suffering from one of the common mental health disorders. Throughout this campaign I will seek to understand the male perspective on seeking help, through discussion with young men on campus. I want to challenge how men interact with mental health and how they engage with support services and networks, looking at what more we as an institution can do to help. I would seek to help create a culture on campus where men feel comfortable discussing their mental health – with anyone from peers to friends to professional services.

Greenery in the Davison Library

Whilst the Davison library is well-equipped, its grey floor tiles, grey carpet and pale wood panel result in a rather sterile and cold atmosphere. It often feels soulless and claustrophobic. The addition of greenery in the library would not only make the working environment more pleasant but be beneficial to the mental health of students. There is plenty of open space in the library's atrium for plants and other forms of greenery, and other UK universities such as Exeter have implemented greenery into their libraries, particularly in their atria. I believe addition of plants inside the library would benefit students and staff for the following reasons: Plants have been linked to an increase in creative thinking, and a 2016 study, conducted at the University of Illinois confirmed that greenery helps reduce psychological stress. The presence of plants would greatly improve the mental well-being of students, especially around the busier times of term, when the library sees higher usage. The presence of plants in the library would be beneficial to the air quality and visual environment of the library. The glass roof of the library would ensure enough sunlight for plants in the atrium to grow.

SUBMITTING YOUR IDEA

Analysis

Identify the issue

Here are some questions that can help you identify the issue you want to tackle:

- **What do you want to change?**
- **Why is this an issue?**
- **Do you have evidence?**
- **What do you need the SU to do?**

Gathering evidence

Researched evidence can help you save time, build trust with potential collaborators, allow you to find new causes and solutions for the issue, and help you deliver the campaign better.

Being able to simplify the reasons behind your campaign is extremely important to get support!

Here are some questions to help you:

Is there any useful archive data or do you need to collect your own?
- Useful resources can include the NUS, the National Student Survey and any RHSU research (such as Policy Inquiries).

To collect your own data you might have to:
- Run a survey **(in person or** online)
- Talk to people
- Host a focus group
- Make sure to write your questions out in advance! (And ask the people you interact with **why** – e.g. why do you think assessments should be moved back online?)

We've put together a list of ways to collect your own data along with the pros and cons of each research method!

Pros

Surveys
- Collects information from a lot of people
- Open text comments give great insight

Polls
- Easy for people to fill in
- Great for a single question
- Open text comments on some platforms
- Quick way to gather feedback

Social Media
- Most people have it, so it's a sure-fire way to get in contact with the people you represent
- Create videos, take pictures, post polls

Cons

- Timing is key – avoid using surveys in Spring Term as there is the possibility of overload

- Not good for a complex issue
- Might not be able to include an open text comment

- Not everyone has it, so it's best to supplement your social media stuff with a good old-fashioned email

SUBMITTING YOUR IDEA

Pros

Feedback Box
- People can drop information in it whenever they want
- Can be moved to key points

Talking to People
- You'll hopefully talk to people regularly anyway
- Getting a small group of students together to discuss a common or collective issue or idea will give you detailed feedback
- You'll also be able to elaborate on comments through a conversation easily

Get Creative
- Give out free stuff
- Organise a conversation with one of the student media outlets
- Get as creative as you want!

Cons

- If anonymous, you won't be able to let the specific person know what you've done

- You may need to ask open-ended questions, such as "how did you find that talk?" or "how do you think it could be improved to be more inclusive?" to get a good response

- Remember, some stuff will cost money, so get in touch with your key contact and/or the SU before you plan on splashing the cash!

Engaging with students at analysis level

For a lot of students, there is the need to feel involved and represented by campaigns. If they don't feel that way, you might have to explain why they should care about the campaign and engage in it.

Some questions you could ask yourself are:

- **Is this issue widely felt?**
  - If it isn't, you might need to emphasise the research behind the campaign – explaining what you're doing and why.
- **Is it deeply felt?**
  - If it isn't you might need to emphasise why the students should care about it.
- **Is it winnable?**
  - If it seems like a very big issue to tackle, it might be worth breaking it down into manageable chunks to have milestones to celebrate!

These questions will help shape your campaign discourse and materials, so make sure you tackle them before you get planning and designing!

SUBMITTING YOUR IDEA

Problem & Solution Trees

To help your campaign take shape, **make** use **of** Problem and Solution Trees:

Problem Tree
1. Write your issue on the trunk of the tree
2. At the roots write the causes of the issue
3. In the branches, write the consequences of the issue

Solution Tree
1. Write the campaign's aim – the vision – on the trunk of the tree
2. At the roots, write the solutions
   (tackling all the causes from the problem tree)
3. In the branches, write the effects of your campaign being successful

Consequences

Impact

Issue

Vision

Causes

Solution
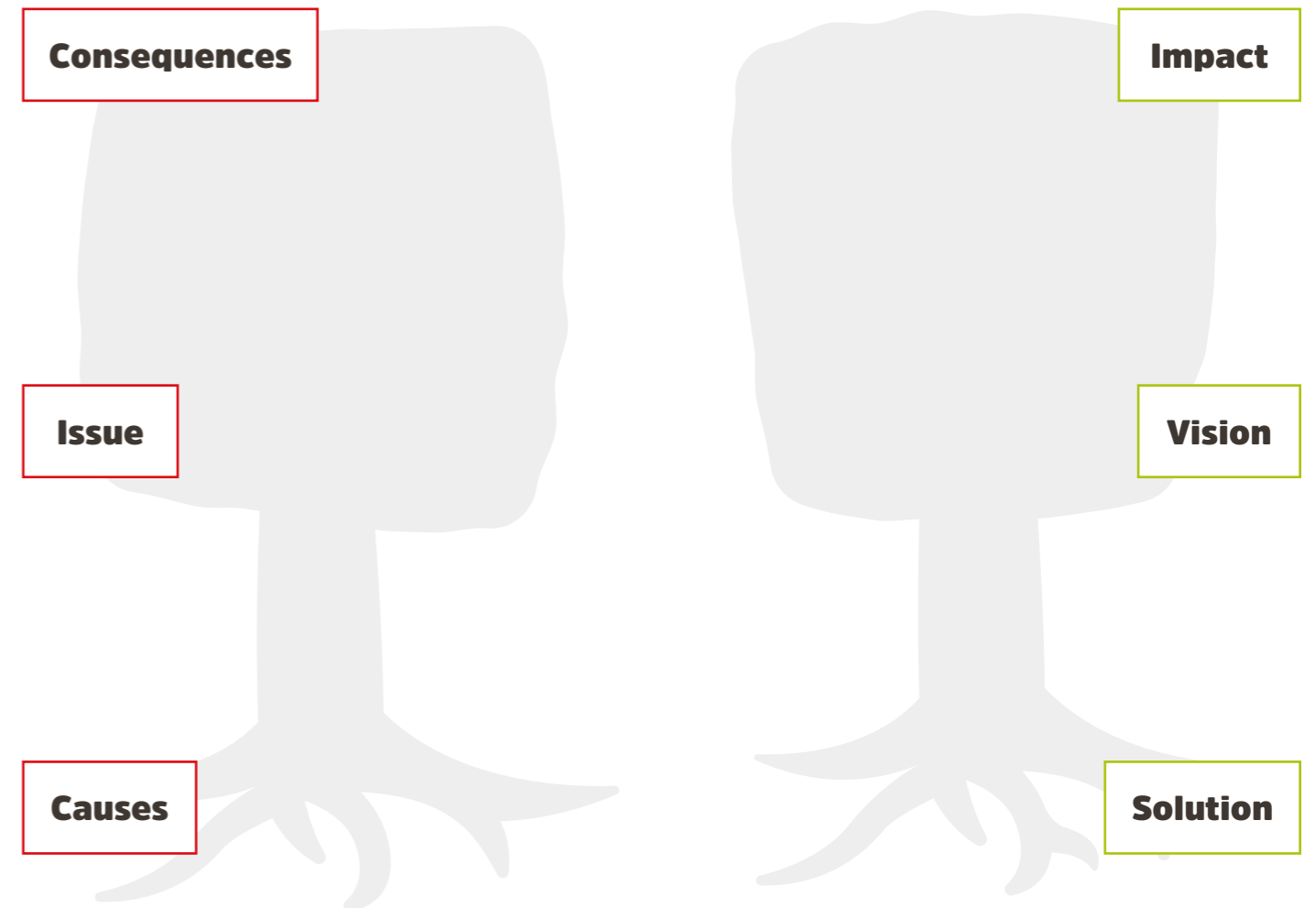
SUBMITTING YOUR IDEA

How to campaign for your idea during voting

Campaign aim and outcomes

The aim is the lasting effect the campaign will have, in other words, its impact. This is the change that comes from the outcomes of your campaign. You can find out your aim by returning to the question of "why" you are running this campaign and coming back to the problem and solution trees in the last section. Remember that having a clear campaign aim linked to the desired impact is **ESSENTIAL**.

It is also important to identify what outcomes of the campaign can be measured for success.

- **Outputs are the actions taken during the campaign**
- **Outcomes are what happens as a result of those actions**

All outcomes should be contributing towards achieving the campaign aim. To help you with this, it might be useful to word your outcomes or objectives using the SMART Objectives method.

Don't forget to do some research! Your idea may have been looked into elsewhere. There may be existing research or statistics that you can use to back up your idea, whether it's enhancing student experiences or by highlighting where solutions have worked. Keep reading this toolkit to find some ways to gather research!

SMART Objectives:

- **Specific**
  - State what you want to achieve clearly and in detail

- **Measurable**
  - How can the progress to the outcome be measured during the campaign?
  - When do we know when it's complete?

- **Achievable**
  - Is it possible to achieve within the timeframe of the campaign?
  - What barriers are there?
  - How do they affect the campaign to be successful?

- **Realistic**
  - Do you have the resources to achieve the outcome? (time, money, skills, people etc.)

- **Time-bound**
  - Set deadlines to keep your campaign on track and keep momentum

SMART Objectives example grid

Objective	Outcome (how will you know when the objective has been achieved?)	Timescale (for completion)

SUBMITTING YOUR IDEA

Objectives into actions

At this stage, you will need to turn your objectives into a series of actions. Choose the actions depending on what resources you have available as well as on the nature of the objective and required outcome itself.

Possible actions for your objectives can range a lot, some ideas on methods to consider are:

- **Raise awareness:** Converting people to your cause through events, stalls and talking to people
- **Gather support:** Show your campaign is widely supported through a petition or vote in the SU

As a Bright Idea submitter, the main action you will be aiming towards is gathering support to get your idea actioned!

SMART Objectives example grid

Objective (SMART)	Desired Outcome	Actions (to achieve outcome)	Resources required	Timescale (how much time the action will take to complete)	Who is responsible? (this may also be called the task owner)

Campaign Team

As the campaign grows, more people will be aware of it and the potential of the campaign increases, but it's always useful to have a strong core team from the start.

Identify the groups or people who would be interested and think about:

- How you can get them involved?
- What they can do to help?
- What would **they** get out of it?
- How **are you** going to recruit them?

Engage meaningfully

- Make **it** clear what you're hoping to achieve
- Find out what their motivations are as well
- Involve other members of the team in the decision-making process and always keep people up to date
- Show campaigners the impact they are having – **and** thank them!

Campaign Team example grid

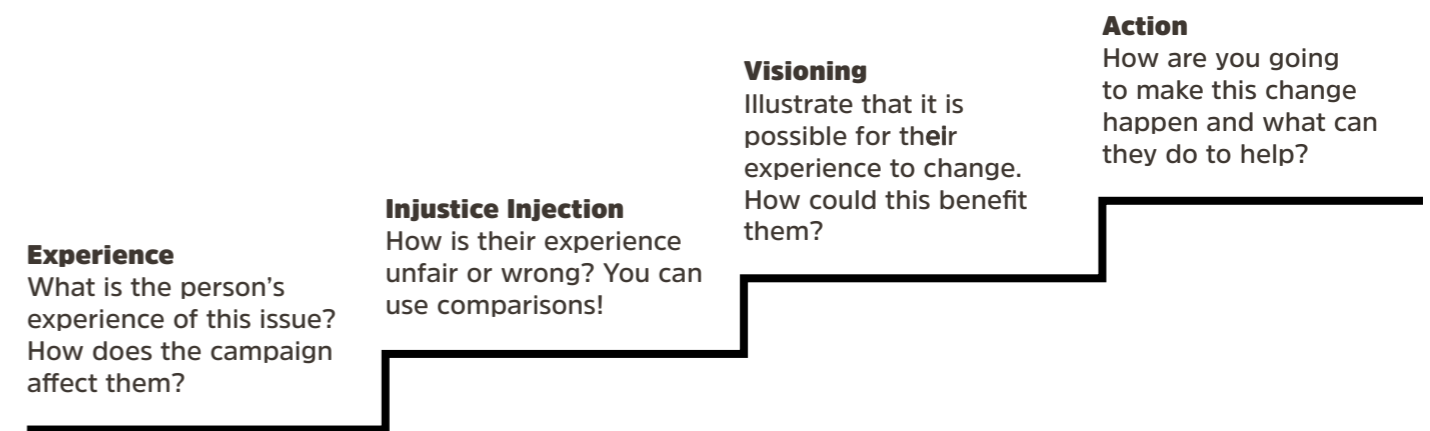| Potential campaigner	Why would they be interested?	How can you get them on board?	What can they do?	What will get they get out of it?

SUBMITTING YOUR IDEA

Engaging people

There are a few ways to engage with people, all with the end result of encouraging students to take part in the campaign.

Anger/Hope/Action

Anger	Hope	Action
• Make people angry about the issue • Explain why the situation you are tackling is unfair/ unjust • Explain that campaigns always take place in response to a feeling of unfairness, it's that emotion that allows it to happen	• Give them hope that this can change • Why is there hope at this moment? • Why is it the right time to campaign? • Is there a real chance of success?	• Ask them to take action (for example, to vote for your Bright Idea!) • Always have a clear action you would like people to take and ask them to commit to it • The action can be anything meaningful that will move the campaign forward

Apathy Staircase

Not everyone will share the same enthusiasm as you at the start, it can be a problem but there are ways to solve this. Apathy is often not deliberate but more likely due to lack of information, or different priorities. You will need to show them why your campaign is relevant to them or those they care about!

Action
How are you going to make this change happen and what can they do to help?

Visioning
Illustrate that it is possible for their experience to change. How could this benefit them?

Injustice Injection
How is their experience unfair or wrong? You can use comparisons!

Experience
What is the person's experience of this issue? How does the campaign affect them?

Communication

The campaign team needs to have constant communication and stay in touch with one another. You can do this through regular in-person meetings, online discussions or by arranging a group chat with your team members.

SUBMITTING YOUR IDEA

What next?

We will aim to give you a response on your idea or any updates along the way as much as we can, but you can always reach out to us at **voice@su.rhul.ac.uk** to get an update on where your idea is in the process! Here is the pathway your idea will take – make sure to give it a close read!

Idea submitted
Idea submitted online through the Bright Ideas platform which is supported with online guidance on how to submit a successful idea.

Representation & Democracy Coordinator
Recieves idea, checks it for quality and liaises with sudents on how to improve the submission if needded. The idea is either made live, redirected or rejected.

Rejected
Idea may not be appropriate for the platform and is not suitable for another avenue so a written explanation will be provided. (The idea may have already been posted within the last few months!)

Live idea
idea goes live on the platform for 14 days and students can either vote for, against or abstain from an idea. An idea must receive at least 50 positive votes.

Redirected
Idea may be more appropriate to be investigated as a policy inquiry, **contemporary** resolution, or because it was the wrong space for the submission.

Idea passed
If the idea has met the 50 positive vote threshold, it is sent to the Officer Group to analyse and triage in a report.

Officer Group
Analyses and triages ideas that have passed through the threshold. If the idea needs further support it gets sent to either an SU staff member, Management Committee, or a Student Executive.

Idea redirected

Redirected to:
- SU Staff member
- Management Committee
- SU Executive

Respond
The R&D Coordinator will respond to the idea author to either ask for more information as required by Officer Group or, to pass on an explanation on why the idea will not be taken forward and other avenues should the author wish to take it further.

Defer
Idea may be deferred to a policy inquiry, contemporary resolution or another space as relevant.

Enact
The Union aims to complete the proposed idea.