

- Title:** Elected on a manifesto of populism and then the real work begins: examining the role of campaigning in the contemporary sabbatical officers' practice.
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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Identify the purpose of campaign work within the contemporary sabbatical officer role
- Discuss the pros and cons of the evidence sources SO used to inform campaign work
- Plan support to assist incoming sabbatical officers to develop an effective campaign

Session Outline

Elected Sabbatical Officers perform a range of functions; from advocating on behalf of the student body and representing student issues to institutional leaders, to ensuring fair governance of student unions (Brookes et al., 2015). The significance of these roles have grown in prominence in recent years (NUS, 2010; Guan et al., 2016). However to many, the traditional perception of a sabbatical officer is of a political activist who campaigns on behalf of the student body (Klemenčič, 2014; Solomon & Palmieri, 2011). Researchers have demonstrated that as the representation and advocacy function of sabbatical officers has increased, their political activism has declined (Brookes, et al., 2015; Guan et al., 2015). This is an interesting and rarely considered juxtaposition, as campaigning is still very much integral to the election of Sabbatical Officers.

Drawing on data collected from a national survey of elected sabbatical officers, interviews with a sample of serving sabbatical officers and student union staff, we will explore the campaigning activities of Sabbatical Officers. Evidence sources sabbatical officers draw on to develop their campaigns will be discussed, and we will debate the role of campaigning activities in the context of the multiple demands placed on student unions and HE institutions. This analysis will be framed through lens of the growing accountability to which student unions are subject to, as a result of the recent revisions to the National Students Survey, and expectations placed upon them by the Quality Code (Brookes, 2015; QAA, 2018). We will conclude by formulating provisional guidance student unions could draw upon to inform the campaigning activities of future sabbatical officers.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

5 minutes – Project introduction and outline

15 minutes – Structured reflections on the campaigning activities of sabbatical officers within participants' own institutions

10 minutes – Presentation of research data

15 minutes – Planning activity: drawing in examples from the research participants will work in small groups to develop a support strategy / campaigning guidance for use with future sabbatical officers

References

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- NUS, (2010). *Surfing the Wave*: London, NUS.
- Palmieri, T. & Solomon, C. (2011). *Springtime: the new student rebellions*. Verso.
- QAA. (2018). *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: part B assuring and enhancing academic quality. Chapter B5: student engagement*.