Lobbying Decision Makers

Aim of this document
This document sets out what lobbying is, when you might use it as a campaign tactic and some top tips for getting the best out of it.

What is lobbying?
Lobbying refers to direct discussion with decision makers. It originates from Parliament and the name given to the space in the Houses of Parliament (the lobby) where members of the public can go and speak with their MP.

When campaigning as a member of KCLSU, lobbying could refer to talking directly with MPs, their civil servants or local councillors but it could also refer to lobbying senior members of KCL staff such as the Principle or Dean of Faculty.

Lobbying can come in different forms including:
- Writing a letter
- Making phone calls
- Arranging and attending meetings

Why would you bother lobbying?
Lobbying can be a powerful and beneficial long-term tactic as part of a campaign. It’s all about building relationships with decision makers and trying to put your side of an argument across in such a way that they will begin to agree with you. This can take time and compromise on both sides.

Lobbying is also useful to find out what decision makers are planning, how they honestly feel about an issue and areas where you might be able to work together.

Securing a meeting with a key decision maker can take time and may take a few round about routes to get there.

If you can’t speak with the decision maker you want to immediately, it’s a good idea to think about people below them that might be able to put you in touch with them or help you secure a second meeting. If you aren’t sure who you need to speak to, spend some more time thinking about who your target is. There is more information on how to do that in the ‘Identifying your targets and allies’ handout.

How can you get the best out of a lobbying meeting?
- Make sure you do your research – Who are you meeting and what are their responsibilities? Are you meeting with the right person to help? If not, can they help you meet the right person? Have you had previous contact with this person? Have they made promises or commitments to you? Have these been kept? What impression does the decision maker have about you? What arguments do you think they will be persuaded by? How much time do you have with them? What questions do you think they might ask you? Are you prepared to answer them?
- Make sure you know where you are going – Make sure you are clear on where you are meeting and what time so that you are not late. If you are attending the meeting with a few people, make sure you have agreed on what you want to say beforehand so you don’t look unprepared. If you are meeting an MP, it’s really important to take along a constituent with you as this means it will be more likely that an MP will take action if it impacts their own constituents.

- Make sure you know what you want to achieve – When you go to the meeting, make sure you are clear on what you want from the meeting, whether that is a commitment to changing a policy or just another meeting in a few weeks to check on progress. Make sure you are realistic on what you want to achieve and think about areas you are and are not willing to compromise.

- Make sure you stay on track in the meeting – It can be easy to go off track in meetings but try and stay clear on the points you want to discuss. Lead with your priorities and try not to become agitated or annoyed if the meeting isn’t going well. Try and clarify at the end of the meeting the agreed next steps, particularly agreed time frames.

- Make sure you follow up after the meeting – Send an email or letter thanking the decision-maker for meeting with you and remind them of the commitments you both made. After a while, get back in touch to see if they have done what they promised.

Other resources
Lobbying at Parliament: [http://www.parliament.uk/lobbying](http://www.parliament.uk/lobbying)