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Q1: Personal Details

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Q2: Member Organisation Nomination

Member Organisation Name:	The National Union of Students
Country:	United Kingdom
Legal Representative Name:	Simon Blake
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Q3: What is your motivation to become an IGLYO board member and what roles/duties particularly interest you?

Since I became involved in LGBT activism as a student I have become extremely driven and motivated in fighting for the equality and liberation of the LGBT community. I attended my first IGLYO General Assembly last year as a delegate and I was blown away by the sheer amount and the diversity of the work such a tiny organisation manages to achieve through its volunteers. Also, the impact of that work within Europe is not only phenomenal but life changing for LGBTQA+ youth. However, there is more work in certain areas that I would like to see more of from IGLYO and that I think needs to be done. Particularly I would like to see more campaigns, awareness raising and advocacy work about trans issues, LGBT sex-workers rights, LGBT migrant rights, black LGBT visibility, housing, homelessness and estrangement to name but a few. Having been the NUS LGBT Officer for the last year and now in my second year I believe I have a lot to bring to IGLYO as a prospective board member especially in regards to the topics I have briefly listed. I have a large amount of passion and experience in organising and managing national campaigns in order to engage the masses and bring about change, awareness and advocacy. I believe these would be an invaluable skill set as an IGLYO board member. I would also love to have the opportunity to give something back to the wider European LGBTQA+ movement that I belong to and I believe IGLYO would be a perfect opportunity for me to do this if you elect me as a board member.

Q4: Tell us about your experience in LGBTQI activism (including any involvement with IGLYO, if applicable). Please include details about projects and events you were involved in, detailing your role and responsibilities in them.

Currently I am the NUS LGBT+ Officer for the National Union of Students which is an organisation that represents over 7 million students in the UK. My job is to 'promote, defend and extend the rights of LGBTQIA+ students nationally'. My job takes on many forms and commitments which has given me a large skill set to draw upon as an LGBTQIA+ activist. I develop and lead campaigns that create awareness and change and I lobby the UK government in order to for LGBTQIA+ students to have equality and liberation. I run training for students, students' unions and universities on how to support and improve the lives of LGBTQIA+ students. I manage a group of volunteers which form my national NUS LGBT+ campaign committee and they in turn assist me in the campaigns I want to run and I in turn support them in their own activism projects. I also oversee and chair our national NUS LGBT+ campaign conference every year where we discuss and debate policy in order to decide the political priorities and direction of the NUS LGBT+ campaign. For the rest of the year I sit on the national executive committee of NUS and decide interim policy, and help inform and shape national policy for the whole of the national union of students.

In my role last year I lead and hosted an campaign and event called StandingOUT: LGBTQIA+ women in leadership where we discussed the unique difficulties women in leadership face and how to tackle them. In the run up to the UK's government election I wrote and published a LGBTQIA+ manifesto for MPs to sign up to (unfortunately we ended up with a Conservative party government). I also helped set up a NUS LGBTQIA+ Black working group who then hosted a panel at our national conference talking about their unique experiences of their intersecting identities and racism in the LGBTQIA+ community. I helped conduct research into the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in further education in the UK. Finally I lead a campaign at NUS national conference for NUS to create a full time and paid NUS Trans officer which would be the first of its kind. We didn't win the campaign but it opened NUS as an organisation and our student members to think about trans issues far more seriously than they ever have done before and NUS is now acknowledging and discussing potentially creating a NUS Trans officer with their own campaign explicitly dedicated to representing, campaigning for and fighting for trans students quality and liberation!

This year, in my final year as NUS LGBT+ officer, my main focusses are: LGBTQIA+ student sex workers and their experiences. We will soon be launching a survey and after Christmas we will start interviews. The research will form a small piece of research but also recommendations for how students, students' unions, and universities and support LGBTQIA+ student sex workers. Also, focusing on LGBTQIA+ student experiences of housing, homelessness and estrangement and LGBTQIA+ student domestic violence experiences and how students' unions and universities can work to support them more. Finally, working within NUS to campaign for a NUS Trans Officer and I have also just recently launched our first ever democratic NUS Trans Conference where trans students will be invited exclusively and given the safe space to debate and decide the direction the NUS LGBT+ campaign should be taking in regards to fighting for trans rights and liberation.

This year I was part of the work force that worked to update the IGLYO statutes and governing documents which was really interesting. I'm a big geek for policy! Also, I have been selected to go to Bucharest in October for the IGLYO and European parliament study session Down and Out: talking about LGBTQIA+ housing and homelessness in Europe.

Q5: From the list below, please select your top three skills and explain why you have chosen them in the next question.

Leadership, Public Speaking/Presentations,
Campaigning

Q6: Please give one real life example for each of the choices above to demonstrate your experience in each.

Leadership – being the NUS LGBT+ for the last year and now entering my second term has taught me a lot about leadership. I had lead projects and campaigns before as grassroots activist but leading a national campaign was very different. I think one of my proudest moments and when I really felt like I became a leader was when I lead the campaign for a paid NUS Trans officer. I think that campaign was the making of me as a political leader within NUS. The organisation has always been against the idea of a Trans Officer citing financial costs and some abhorrent transphobia from within NUS and the student membership. I galvanised an entire group of activists to lead a campaign at our national conference where we has submitted a motion to create a Trans Officer. It didn't pass (we got a majority yes vote but fell short of the two third quorum we needed for it to pass) but the campaign we ran really challenged peoples' ideas and misconceptions about trans issues and now NUS is reconsidering its position and the possibility of creating a NUS Trans officer.

Public speaking/presentations – I often go to conferences, students' unions, and government meetings where I deliver research or workshops and talk about how we can improve the lives of LGBTQIA+ students and challenge ideas and misconceptions people might have. I recently spoke twice at a series of seminars about LGBTQIA+ experiences at university and presented NUS LGBT+ research called: Beyond the Straight and Narrow. The attendees were mainly from third sector LGBTQIA+ organisations and university staff members. The presentation of the work was received really well and a lot of the attendees found the recommendations very helpful.

Campaigning – I think one on the best campaigns I ever ran was the StandingOUT: LGBTQIA+ women in leadership event where we talked about unique issues facing queer women and how to tackle them and challenge the sexism and homophobia we face in our everyday lives. We had a panel at the beginning where we invited various influential LGBTQIA+ women leaders including Claire Harvey a Great Britain Paralympian, and Helen Belcher from the UK's Trans Media Watch. Both of who have been listed in the UK's pink list of influential LGBTQIA+ people. Hearing their experiences really helped a lot of the attendees find the strength to speak out about their experiences as LGBTQIA+ leaders and this formed the basis of how we could go on to campaign nationally to smash the double glass ceiling for queer women.

Q7: Being on the IGLYO board requires a commitment of around 10 hours a week for two years. How would you manage this role on top of other commitments and continue to contribute for your full mandate?

Currently I am writing up my PhD in chemistry whilst being in this job and will submit in December 2015. Working and completely a PhD simultaneously has never been easy but I have good time management and organisational skills. I have passion and drive and I really want to work as part of the IGLYO board to help improve the lives and lobby for equality of LGBTQIA+ young people in Europe. Whilst I was a student I often volunteered for my students' union, worked as a volunteer at my local LGBTQIA+ switch board or was organising feminist demonstrations such as Reclaim the Night. I have always been dedicated to working and volunteering for LGBTQIA+ rights in my spare time and working for IGLYO will be no different to that I imagine. I like to be kept busy and if I wasn't working or IGLYO I'd probably be volunteering somewhere else!
