

For Student Think Tanks

Everything you need to know before applying for
funding from the National Student Policy Trust.





ABOUT THE TRUST

What is the National Student Policy Trust?

The NSPT is a charitable trust dedicated to advancing education by funding student-led policy research at universities across the UK.

We turn ambitious student societies into fully-resourced think tanks. By providing financial grants, bursaries, and professional training, we give you the tools to shape public debate.

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Real policy impact starts on campus. We're here to make sure you have the resources to be heard.

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What You Get

We fund your educational development through four primary mechanisms, designed to elevate your research and reward your hard work.

Educational Bursaries

Get rewarded for your research. We provide equal, non-exchange bursaries tied to your educational deliverables and training.

Operational Grants

Scale up your ambition. Secure restricted grants for major research events, guest speaker programmes, and high-quality publications.

Professional Training

Build lasting, employable skills through expert-led academic writing, research methodology, and data analysis workshops.

Emergency Reserve

Build with confidence. We fund a 2–3 year ring-fenced runway to protect your society's long-term operational independence.

REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility at a Glance

To qualify for Trust funding, your society must meet specific legal and charitable criteria to ensure every grant serves a genuine educational purpose.

01

Union Affiliation

You must be an officially registered society or group affiliated with a registered students' union at a UK university.

02

Research Focus

Your primary purpose must be producing and publishing research — such as policy briefs, data analysis, or policy reports.

03

Non-Partisan Output

Research must be publicly available, non-partisan, and analytically balanced. (Charity Commission CC9 compliance).

04

Open Membership

You must operate on a transparent, merit-based, non-discriminatory membership basis open to the wider student body.

Five Stages to Funding

The application process is designed to be straightforward while ensuring full compliance with our charitable objects and your students' union's governance framework.

01

Expression of Interest

We'll send you an email document. You'll need to provide easy-to-access info about how you work, your constitution, and past outputs.

02

Assessment

Trustees evaluate your educational benefit, public benefit, and governance capacity.

03

Due Diligence

We verify your union's charitable status and complete Know Your Partner checks.

04

Funding Agreement

A formal legal agreement signed by the Trust and your students' union.

05

Disbursement

Funds are transferred directly to your union's designated restricted-fund account.



OUR GUARANTEE

Our Promise to You

We do not direct or restrict your editorial content. Your operational independence is fiercely protected by our constitution.

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We are proud to provide funding for student-led research, with independence built in.

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30-Day Consultation

Any changes to your bursary conditions require 30 days prior written notice. We will consult with you and design the bursaries in a way that fits your unique think tank. This guarantees that administrative requirements never unexpectedly interrupt your ongoing research projects or student deliverables.

Good-Faith Negotiation

We commit to a written response and genuine negotiation for any substantive objections you raise, ensuring a fair and balanced partnership where your voice is heard. We believe that funding relationships should be collaborative, built on mutual respect and shared educational goals.

No Donor Influence

No donor may preview or shape your research. Our strict CC9 conditions apply to every grant, permanently protecting your think tank from external political pressure. You are guaranteed complete intellectual freedom to explore, analyze, and publish your findings independently.

Fellowship Network

Beyond funding, you gain access to our extensive fellowship network of policy professionals, offering unmatched mentorship, training, and long-term career support. We help your student researchers bridge the gap between university societies and professional policy careers.

The policies that govern our work

A standing set of board-approved policies ensure we operate transparently, legally, and ethically. These apply to all think tanks and unions we fund.

Grant-Making Policy

Sets the categories, eligibility, five-stage process, and conditions under which grants are made via students' unions.

Safeguarding Policy

Protects the students the Trust supports and everyone who engages with its programmes across all universities.

Data Protection Policy

Governs how student and donor personal data is handled, fully in line with UK data protection law and GDPR.

Whistleblowing Policy

Provides a secure, confidential route for students or union staff to raise concerns about wrongdoing without fear of reprisal.

Ethical Funding Policy

Defines excluded funding sources and the Know Your Donor checks that protect the Trust's independence and reputation.

Conflict of Interest Policy

Requires trustees to declare and manage conflicts, backed by a standing Register of Interests.



Get Started Today

Register Your Interest

If you think your society could be a fit, visit nspt.org.uk/contact and we'll follow up with the Expression of Interest document.

This brochure is provided for informational purposes. The Trust is currently awaiting Charity Commission registration. Contact details shown are placeholders pending the securing of official mailing suites.