

Thinkers' Corner – It's Time to Embrace Generation Think

By [Richard Crawshaw](#)

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Across the country and across the world, a new student movement is beginning to take shape. Student think tanks are rapidly increasing in popularity, scale and impact. By offering a non-partisan evidence based approach to politics, research and discussion, student think tanks have carved out a niche on campuses across the UK, a niche which is now being picked up across the globe.

York is one of many campuses in the UK to have a student think tank. Edinburgh, Warwick, Cambridge, Imperial College and many others have all seen the rise of the movement. Student think tanks are not just a UK phenomenon; in Europe, groups like the European Student Think Tank work to involve students in the EU policy making process. In Australia, students at the Australian National University are in the process of setting up their own think tank.

In the UK, these societies have formed nationwide networks and organisations, the latest of these will be Generation Think, aimed at creating a network to share successes, create collaboration and coordinate the movement.

This year will be an important year for student think tanks, there are now serious efforts to work together, not just through events but also research. By working together, student think tanks will be able to produce research on a national level, drawing a sample from university campuses across the country, which will enable us to produce research to rival real think tanks.

It's time we all embrace Generation Think and the important contribution student think tanks can make to society. Universities should embrace the societies they have on campus, not only as means of gaining greater insight into issues that matter to students on campus, but as an educational tool. Where else on campus can a student run their own consultation or research project? Or run a policy lab on an important topic to them?

It's not just about boosting skills and CVs, think tanks have real impact. Here at York, we've exposed issues around racial discrimination, sexual harassment and mental health services on campus, and offered implementable improvements.

Think tanks also have an important contribution to make beyond campus. Groups such as the London Forum for Science Policy have produced research on Alcoholism Amongst Youths, The Wilberforce Society at Cambridge have produced policy papers for members of the House of Lords.

Student think tanks have never been in a better position to shape and influence policy, and that's true here in York. This year, we've already achieved record memberships, secured a range of policy labs and are planning to drastically expand our consultation and research output for the rest of the year.

It's more important than ever that the contributions student think tanks make are not wasted or ignored. It's time to truly embrace what Generation Think can offer, it's time for student think tanks to collaborate and work together in order to share our insights on a national level.

Richard Crawshaw is the Chair of York Student Think Tank



One comment

Anonymous

1 Nov '15 at 11:44 pm

Like any other organisation think tanks are intensely political and anyone interested in critical debate and interrogating bias shouldn't fall into the trap of giving them a pass just because they claim to be clear-sighted in a subjective world.

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