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Starting a Society

**New Society Checklist**

When starting a new society there are a few stages you need to follow. Firstly, come into the office to have a chat with the Activities Officer or Societies Co-ordinator, they don’t bite, honestly! If you don’t want to come in, or if you just want to arrange an appointment, their emails are [su.activities@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:su.activities@southwales.ac.uk) and [mel.monks@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:mel.monks@southwales.ac.uk) . They will discuss your idea with you and ask you to write a proposal. Once the proposal is written it is then sent off to the Student Council to approval. Once you’ve got approval, you’ve then got the task of getting members. We recommend finding at least 10 like-minded people before you come in, so you have several members when the society is founded.

**Society Constitution & Proposal**

For the proposal, this only needs to be one side of A4 to save you writing a whole dissertation on why we need G&T tasting society, they taste lovely, we know! In your proposal, you need outline the aims and goals of your society as well as activities and events you plan to host. You also need to let us know how you plan to fund your society; the most common and practical way is to get members to pay subs annually. In the proposal you need you need to prove that your society fits with the aims and ideals of the Union and is a society the Union is able to support.

For the constitution, this is a document that determines objectives, aims and operating procedures of the Society. It is signed by the chairperson, treasurer and secretary of the society. The Union has a template constitution available for your use, but if you would like to add any clauses, you must do so when you register your Society with the Union. These will require approval from the Student Council and cannot conflict with those of the Students’ Union. Committee meetings should be held at least 3 times a term and a general meeting once a term. The minutes of these meetings **MUST** be passed onto the Societies Co-ordinator.

**Who Should Run a Society?**

A committee of 3 people must be elected from the members to run the society. These people are responsible for the smooth running of the society as well as membership of the society. Remember, you’re here to study, not have fun…. Okay, maybe a bit of fun. But don’t let the society take over your life.

**Chair Person:**

President, Leader, Chairperson, Holder of the Iron Throne, whatever you want to call them, they are the overall leader of the society.

They represent the society to external agencies

They liaise with the Union about Fresher’s Fair

Responsible for letting only eligible members join, we don’t want any Swansea spies in our midst

Ensure committee are accountable to membership

Overall for smooth running of the society.

**Secretary:**

Deals with all the paperwork relevant to the society

Responsible for registration of society with the Union

Keeps an updated membership list

In charge of monitoring all forms of communication regularly including emails, the Union won’t normally slide into your Insta DM’s

Point of contact between Union and members, that does mean you have to talk to us occasionally

Takes minutes of meetings

Organises room bookings

**Treasurer:**

In charge of the sweetie or beer fund

Controls all financial transactions and makes sure no overdraft occurs.

Balance of membership issued to money taken

Keeps a record of accounts

Aware of VAT, Insurance and Union contributions

If have lots of equipment we recommend having an equipment officer to look after all your shiny stuff. We also require a first-year representative. You are free to make up your committee as you see fit so if you need a social secretary or training officer that’s up to you.

**Getting Your First Members**

This may seem like a daunting task at first but with modern technology, it is so much easier now we don’t have dial- up or carrier pigeons. Utilise your social media, set up a society account on your preferred platform and advertise! This will certainly get you a few members. Tell your coursemates, housemates, even the random person you met in Icebreaker, they might want to join. Fresher’s Fair is an amazing opportunity to get people, as they can see your stand and what you do and any fancy hoodies you might have. Take this time to talk to people and show how amazing your society is as there will be some people who are interested. Now you’ve got those people, go and have fun in your Society.

Membership of all societies must be open to anyone who wants to join, providing they are:

• Full-time students at the University of South Wales

• Part –time students at the University of South Wales

• Students studying University of South Wales courses at franchise colleges

• Holders of Life membership of the Union

• Holders of Associate Staff Membership of the Union

However, only students in the first 2 categories are entitled to speak and vote at meetings and are permitted to stand for committee positions.

Running Your Society

**Regular Activities**

Make sure you have a regular meeting time and place otherwise this might confuse your members. Try to make sure people from all campuses can attend (Cardiff is a very central location for all campuses), or possibly visit each campus once a month. Regular socials are always fun and there is always Wednesday night at the Students’ Union for a group of you to enjoy a night out. Glyntaff has a great SU area with lots of seating and social space.

**Organising an on-campus activity (including weekly training at USW facilities)**

This should be relatively simple. To book a room on campus for your weekly meetings, have a word with the Societies Co-Ordinator and they’ll contact the relevant University department for you. If you wish to have a speaker at your meeting (either an invited external speaker or a member of your society), then you must complete and submit a Speaker Form. The SU will then assess the form and:

a) sign off the form and the event can go ahead

b) ask you to provide further information and/or impose conditions on the event

c) decline the form and the event cannot go ahead

Whilst this may seem long-winded, both the University and the Students’ Union have a responsibility to ensure the welfare of students, particularly when there is a possibility that you and your members may be exposed to extreme or radical ideology.

**Organising an off-campus activity**

Firstly, you need to decide where you are going, when, how you’re getting there, who is going and how much it is going to cost. If necessary, funding for the event should be collected from society members and paid into your subs account prior to the event.

a) If you will be inviting along a guest and/or speaker to the activity, then you need to follow the procedure above.

b) If you require tickets to events (theatres, theme parks, etc.), the order should be placed on an official order form. Please contact the Societies Co-Ordinator to help you do this.

c) You will need to follow the health and safety protocol for the particular activity and make sure that the instructor/coach to member ratios are kept.

d) If you are going by coach or minibus you need to see the Societies Co-Ordinator about your requirements. The booking will then be made, providing that you have sufficient funds.

e) If you are travelling by car, you must register the vehicle with the Union, providing details of Tax, Registration and Insurance. It is the driver’s responsibility to inform their insurers of the proposed use of the vehicle.

f) You then need to complete a Trip Registration Form and Registration List. These detail your trip, the people that are going and the person who is in charge. The form also gives you an Emergency Contact Number to call in case of accident or emergency.

**Maintaining Member Engagement**

Try and keep your society as engaging as possible. If you do the exact same thing repeatedly some people might get bored. Have specific aims and goals with a progressive pathway per term or academic year, this will keep more people engaged. Have interesting activities such as a summer ball or a society trip to somewhere. We want you to keep as many people as possible so if you are struggling come chat to the Activities Officer or Societies Co-ordinator for advice.

**Managing Conflict**

No matter how nice and polite everyone is, you will always experience conflict at some point in the society’s lifetime. Early resolution is the best way to sort any conflict out. If you want to get the SU to sit in on a discussion to mediate, please let us know. Sometimes conflict can help the society progress especially if there was an obstacle no one could decide how to overcome. If there is conflict in the society act responsibly with no badmouthing, discrimination or threatening behaviour.

**Collecting Membership Fees**

In most societies you will have to pay Subs to make sure you have the funds to continue running your society. Now, we know students like to spend money on the essentials: clubbing, drinks, takeaways, taxis and some nice smelling spray, but if you are a member of a society you are expected to make a financial contribution. The Treasurer is responsible for collecting all funds and making sure the monies reach the Union. The funds you pay in will then only be spent on your society as the committee sees fit.

Freshers’ Fair

**Freshers’ Fair Checklist**

Reply to the Society Co-ordinator’s email by 2nd September. You must also attend the Freshers’ training on the weekend of the 14th and 15th September. With the Freshers’ Fair you must be set up by 0930 at the latest and then staffing your stall from 0950. There is a quiet hour from 1000-1100. We ask that for this you have only one person on the stall. Once the hour is over, you can have an extra one. Make sure you actually have people from your society on your stall, people will drop out last minute so make sure you have plenty of people to do shifts on the stall so you can have time to have food and a break as well as experience the fair for yourself.

**Getting a Stall**

If you follow the above steps, you should be able to get a stall. We are limited in the number of stalls at Cardiff and Newport Campuses so make sure you can commit to these events if you wish to attend. You will also need to attend the Freshers’ training the weekend before, if you don’t attend you can’t get a stall.

**ReFreshers**

Normally held after term restarts in January, this is a smaller more intimate version of Freshers’ Fair. This is a great way to get people who may have started their course this time of year, or even people who took the first term to settle in and are now looking at doing activities with like minded people.

Finances

Finances might not be the most popular topics for students to discuss but this is probably the most important chapter in this handbook. It is very easy for finances to go astray if they are not kept track of. Also, the Union don’t want you to pay out of your own pocket for your society.

**Budgets**

To make sure your society can function you are going to need some finances. The best way to raise these is to charge a membership fee. To work out a membership cost consider the cost of running the society and dividing by a realistic number of members for a figure and add around £5 to that to make sure you will have money to cover unexpected costs. You can also charge per person for extra activities i.e. society trip so only the people going actually pay for it.

**Society Accounts**

Each society has one main account with the Union- a subscription account. Opening an external account contravenes the Union’s constitution and if discovered, will result in referral to the Student Council. Money from subscriptions, fundraising and any other money is to be paid into this account. The money in the account is then able to be spent on what the committee deems appropriate as long as it is for the good of the society.

**Depositing Money**

The Treasurer will complete a paying-in slip at the Union Office or Info Desk and this will then be paid through the till and a receipt will be given. Make sure all information given is correct and you clearly state what society you’re from so the funds reach the right account and no deductions are made.

**Withdrawing Money**

As nice as it is to spend money, a cheeky add to cart here and there, there are certain guidelines to follow when using society funds. You must submit pro-forma, this is then to be submitted by your treasurer and hopefully authorised by the Union. You can then spend the money as follows:

1. Official order form can be issued, and the invoice paid on arrival
2. You can purchase the goods and then claim the money back on production of a detailed receipt.

If you do not have authorised Pro- forma: **NO money will be refunded, or invoices paid.**

**Raising Money**

If you want to finance an event or be a nice human and raise some money for a charity, you will need to raise funds. Fundraising events can include sponsored events such as a sponsored walk, or you can look for sponsorship deals. These must not contravene any Union policy or working procedure. If you are looking for sponsorship, you must follow the Unions’ guidelines which are available in the SU Office.

Funding

**Applying for Funding**

There is grant aid available from the Union if the society is eligible. These are to part fund and not fully cover activities. The application should be submitted to the Student Council, where all applications are assessed. The Student Council will be looking for applications from well-organised societies with a healthy membership base and whose activity can benefit the wider student body.

If the grant is awarded it will be held in a grant account and can only be spent on what it was awarded for. Grant money not spent by the end of the year will be reclaimed by the Union.

**Society Funding Criteria**

If you’re unsure what funding you can apply for, or how you can apply for it, come into the office and we can talk you through the process. If you are unable to get funding for the SU, we will try to signpost you to somewhere where you can get funding.

Using the Website

The website is a great tool to use to advertise your society, each society has its own page on the USWSU website.

**Getting Admin Rights**

To get the admin rights to your page you must attend the relevant training, this will take place on the weekend before Fresher’s. If you are a new society created after this time, information on how to access your page will be provided, but you will need to book a short training session. In the meantime, you can email the Societies Co-ordinator with any information that you would like to add to your page.

**Updating Your Society Page**

It is up to you to maintain your page; so, do not blame the Union if your page is empty and students cannot find out about your society and what they do. Try and make your page as eye-catching as possible and have up to date contact details on there for new members to be able to contact you.

**Membership Database**

Once you have access to the page, the page will automatically create a list of the members who have registered and paid. This makes the secretary’s job a lot easier rather than having a million sub receipts with handwritten names. OK, more like 40, but that's still a lot of paper. By getting members to register online this fits the GDPR policy of the Union.

**Event Listings**

You can advertise your society’s events on your page; it is a good idea to publish your normal meeting time and place as well as one off events. You can also advertise these on your own social media. On the website there is a tab saying you can add an event, not all members check this so it might be worth creating a private Facebook event as well to get as many members as possible.

Organising an Event

**Event Checklist**

When creating an event there are several things you will need to think of. Who? What? Where? And When?

Who is coming? Will there be a guest speaker or is it just for members?

What sort of event is it? Is it a social, or just where your members meet for the society meetings?

Where are you planning on hosting the event? Are you able to host it in this location?

When are you planning on having the event? Have you given enough notice?

**Booking a Room**

For some events you will need to book a room, Room Booking Forms are available from the Union Office. If an external speaker is attending, make sure you are organised well in advance as the authorisation process can take a fortnight. Once you’ve completed the form, return it to the SU and this will then be authorised by the Societies Co-ordinator. When making a room booking you must book your room 48hrs in advance on working days, if you want a room for a Monday you MUST email by 4pm on the previous Wednesday.

**Selling Tickets & promoting Your Event**

The tickets that you sell, must have a receipt stub to be retained as proof of sale. The Union can supply the tickets at a cost. Number of stubs should correspond to the amount of money paid into the society account. If the Union feels that the event is not going to reach its financial targets at any point, the event will be cancelled. All cancellation charges must be borne by the society.

**External Speakers & Performers**

If you are having a guest speaker at an event, you must complete a Speaker Request Form. As mentioned above, this can take a lot of time to process so make sure you do this well in advance.

**Health & Safety**

With the increasing calls for higher standards of safety during society activities, it is becoming more difficult to accommodate all the requests for new societies. This can also mean the scope of some existing societies may have to be changed to comply with health and safety regulations. If we say you can’t do something it is for your own safety and not because we want to wrap another layer of bubble wrap around you. It is impossible for the Union to compromise on the safety of its members, so we will not be able to support societies where there is no available expertise.

Handing Over

**Handover Checklist**

Make sure whoever takes over can do so and won’t drop out. Also, leave a document with the aims and objectives of the societies containing long term and short-term goals. Make a not of any incidents that cropped up and how these were overcame, this may help if a similar situation crops up in the future.

**Society AGM**

Each society must have an AGM. This is normally held in May. Here you must present the following: Reports on the year’s achievements, proposals for the future and the financial position of the society. There must also be a vote for the committee members who will be taking over, this can be either by ballot or show of hands. All members should be given the opportunity to attend and be notified well in advance. The minutes should then be passed on to the Union. You can ask the Activities Officer to sit in on the AGM if you wish, as they will be able to guide the meeting on the right track as well as make sure correct information is then passed on to the SU.

**Tips for a Successful Handover**

New committee should receive minutes of past meetings and account books. One thing that has helped in the past is when a list of issues that were overcome and how they were overcame is a good thing to have. The inventory of any equipment should be taken and checked against the previous year. Make sure the people who are taking over are committed to seeing the society flourish and grow, even if your mate is running for one of the positions there may be a better candidate for the role so make sure all possible candidates have been able to have an election campaign. Don’t leave anything hidden from the new committee, if you put an order in for 500 Airfix kits, let them know before they get more Spitfires than the RAF in the Battle of Britain.

The SU and Your Society

The Union supports societies by providing administrative back up such as photocopying, telephone and mailing services. They also have willing and experienced staff who are able to support your society through its up and downs in the year and they are happy to meet for a chat and a cuppa to see how the society is getting along.

The Union believes that all societies should be open and accessible to all students and every member should be given the opportunity for involvement. All society literature **must** contain the following statement:

***“This society is open and inclusive. We do not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of colour, creed, race, age, religion, sex, sexuality, gender or disability. We are fully committed to upholding the Equal Opportunities Policy of the University of South Wales Students’ Union.”***

In addition, all society members are responsible for upholding and demonstrating their commitment to upholding the values of the Union. In line with the Union’s Standing Orders, a society committee is directly responsible for the behaviour of its members. This applies to all situations where your society is as a group including social settings. Neither the Union nor the University condones initiation events for new members/ students and any society found organising/ running one will be immediately shut down.

Misconduct of any kind will lead to disciplinary action, which could lead to the Society being disbanded. When representing the Union/ University try and behave like an adult human being.

Data Protection

All society members must be signed up online to comply with GDPR laws. The Privacy policy can be found at: <https://www.uswsu.com/privacy-policy>

***Key Contacts***

Katie Davies Societies Officer

[su.socities@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:su.socities@southwales.ac.uk)

Mel Monks Societies Co-ordinator

[mel.monks@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:mel.monks@southwales.ac.uk)

Ollie Banks Activities Officer

[su.activities@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:su.activities@southwales.ac.uk)

So, if you’ve got this far, congratulations and good luck on your term in office. If you have any feedback on how your society ran this year, then let us know. Similarly, if you have any ideas on how things could be better in the future, let us know.