

TIPS FOR RUNNING YOUR STUDENT GROUP

As a committee member, there are certain things you need to do to ensure your student group runs as smoothly as possible. You will need to know the resources that the Guild provides for you and how we will contact you when we need to. You will have to attend certain meetings, be aware of what your committee role entails, and what you should be doing for your group.



This leaflet explains some of the things you should be thinking about in order for you to make it the best possible experience for you and your members.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Student Development

Tel. 0121 251 2424

www.guildofstudents.com/studentgroupsandvolunteering
studentgroups@guild.bham.ac.uk

Counter opening times
Monday — Thursday 11—5.30
Friday 11—4.30

student_groups@guild.bham.ac.uk

Resources available for your group

As a committee member you are responsible for keeping your group going and publicising your activities to your members. This section will give you all the information you need to do this successfully.

As a Guild recognised student group you have:

- A pigeonhole
- A student group email which will be societyname@guild.bham.ac.uk
- A webpage <http://students.bugs.bham.ac.uk/societyname>
- Access to Student Development staff, services and PCs

Pigeonhole

Every group has it's own pigeonhole located in the Student Development department and this is where we will put important information, including details from students who are interested in joining your group and any post sent to your society. You can also use your pigeonhole for leaving information for other committee members or members of your society.

Email

- Free group email account
- Web access for email at <http://webmail.bugs.bham.ac.uk>
- Email forwarding to external accounts
- External POP3 and SMTP access

Use your email account as your primary means of communicating with your Guild of students and your members. If you don't know what your username and password is or need them to be reset, ask at the Student Development counter; the password needs to be reset every 6 months.

You should check your email regularly to enable people to keep in touch with you and also to offer the best service you can to students, by replying to questions about your group quickly. The Guild will also send you important emails that may need to be communicated to your members.

How do I check my group's email outside the Guild?

- Go to your Guild website **www.guildofstudents.co.uk**
- On the left-hand menu, click on webmail
- Type in your user name, the same as on a computer in the Guild of Students,
- Type in your password (follow the instructions for your computer version)
- Check and reply to emails as normal (calendar functionality is limited)
- Please note that there is a conflict with my.bham; you can't be on the portal at the same time as webmail. If you've been on the portal, we recommend you close your browser and open a new session.

Webpage

- Free web hosting with unlimited storage space & dedicated server for societies
- Support for ASP and PHP
- Access Databases, FrontPage Extensions and Perl available on request

Your web page is an excellent way to promote your society and communicate with members. If you need any more information please let us know at the Student Development counter or email it.helpdesk@guild.bham.ac.uk

Compulsory Stuff

This is some of the stuff that you HAVE to do:

Committee Training

Student Development runs compulsory student group committee training, which you MUST attend at least 4 weeks after you have been elected. This training covers financial forms and procedures, how to organise an event, how to complete risk assessment, promoting your event and working together as a team.

Better Student Group Forums

Each month there is a round of Open or Better Forums, which are for students to ask questions to Officers, make suggestions and discuss any topical issues. There are five of these, but for student groups, it is compulsory to send at least one representative to the Student Groups Forum, to ensure that your members have a voice and that any issues affecting groups can be discussed by everyone. Actions from each meeting will be carried out and reported back so you can see what has happened as a result.

Miniforums

Each group is placed together with similar groups in a miniforums (for example, competitive sports), each supported by a member of staff. Each group of societies meets together once during each of the Autumn and Spring terms to discuss common issues, ideas for cooperation, and also to give and take feedback directly with the VPSAD and to elect two representatives to sit on Guild Council.

Elections and handing over

All groups must hold an AGM (Annual General Meeting) no more than 12 months after the last one. This is the formal meeting of your society where the new committee is elected. You must notify students 14 days before the event as well as emailing the VPAD the time and location of your AGM to vpad@guild.bham.ac.uk so they can attend if they are available. See the committee resources page at www.guildofstudents.com/studentgroupsandvolunteering

Encouraging inclusivity and diversity

It is important that every student group considers how accessible they are to all students. You must ensure that every opportunity you offer is open to all students as far as practically possible. This means going beyond simply allowing all students to participate. It is important that your activities do not create barriers to participation. This may be in the way events are organised or in the actions of other members.

You will need to think about the following types of students and whether your event has barriers for their participation:

- Students of faith
- Students with disabilities
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual students
- Postgraduates
- Mature Students
- Both male and female students

The Guild has Associations that support the above students. they will be able to provide you with advice on how to make your group and its activities inclusive and diverse. You can get contact the associations through our website [www.guildofstudents.com/ studentgroupsandvolunteering](http://www.guildofstudents.com/studentgroupsandvolunteering).

Excluding Students

If your group feels it is appropriate to restrict its membership this can only be done with the approval of both the Student Groups Committee and Guild Council by absolute majority. It will need to be renewed every three years. Currently only certain Volunteering Projects can exclude students who have not completed their training or are not appropriate because of the nature of their activities

Safe Space

Your Guild of students offers a safe space to all student, staff and visitors in all its activities. This means that all should be as comfortable as possible and nobody should be subject to abuse or derogatory remarks. This includes remarks that to one person may seem a joke but to others are offensive such as racist, homophobic, and sexist remarks. These actions will not be tolerated.

Committee Roles

Below are brief descriptions of your committee roles.

CHAIR

As the Chairperson, you are ultimately responsible for the activities, conduct and organisation of your group. This is not only to your members, but also to the Guild of Students, the University, and external parties. This is a responsibility that you need to take very seriously.

COMMITTEE CO-ORDINATION

You are responsible for organising your committee effectively, by calling and chairing regular committee meetings, and ensuring reliable communication channels between your committee members. If your committee are working well, it will take the pressure off you and allow your group as a whole to develop.

FINANCES

You are jointly responsible for the finances, so you should take an interest in your Treasurer's activities and plans.

MINIFORUMS

As a committee member you could attend one of the miniforum meetings held throughout the academic year. Your attendance is compulsory or the group may be subject to disciplinary action or even derecognised. If you cannot attend for any reason, you must ensure that another representative goes in your place.

HANDOVER

You need to ensure that the annual handover from one committee to the next is smooth and effective. You do not want your student group to falter after you let go of the reins, do you? You will also need to arrange a handover meeting with Student Development staff to discuss any issues or needs of the new committee.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE GUILD

Many Chairs don't realise just how important this is. You should read all the emails, newsletters, and posters that you see from the Guild, especially the Student Development team. You need to ensure you have read and understood all of this information, and organised any necessary action by your student group. Equally, you need to ensure your group is communicating back to the Guild: tell us what plans you have for the year, your successes, how your events went and so forth. The more we know about what you're doing, the more we can help you achieve it.

SAFETY

All committee members have a responsibility for safety within your student group. This means completing and risk assessment for each one of your activities and ensuring you follow your risk assessment whilst on the activity.

Treasurer

EXPENDITURE

As Treasurer, the most important thing you need to keep track of is your group's level of expenditure. You should have robust systems in place to keep track of what expenditure you plan for the year, where that money is coming from, how payments are being raised, when paperwork is submitted to the Guild, and how payments are being collected.

INCOME...

You will be responsible for monitoring, and probably sourcing, your group's income. This will cover your grant application, membership fees, kit payments and deposits, sponsorship, and event profits. As you can only spend what money you get in, this is the key to setting your level of expenditure. You will need to keep on top of all your income streams so that you know just how much money your group actually has.



MEMBERSHIP FEES

All individuals who partake in your student group's activities must pay their annual membership fee. That includes all the group committee members as well! Astute Treasurers very quickly realise that getting all their members to pay up is the best way of raising funds for their group which benefits all their members. Work with your Chair to ensure all your members pay up, and don't be afraid to get tough with those that don't. If you need to exclude them from your activities, then that's exactly what you do until they pay!

GRANT APPLICATIONS

Once a year, you will get to apply for funding from the Guild. In effect, you will be putting in a financial plan for what you would like your group to be doing in the year after your term in office (for example, you apply in June 2011 for your funding in 2011/2012). You can also apply for a rolling grant throughout the year if needed.

PAYMENT REQUISITION FORMS AND PURCHASE ORDER FORM

As Treasurer, you authorise all payments out of your student group accounts. Depending on your group's level of activity, this could mean signing a lot of paper. Every time you sign a form, you should add it to your records to show that the money will now come out of your accounts.

Secretary

- Record all group meetings accurately (minutes)
- Maintain the group pigeonhole
- Ensure all committee contact details and members details are up to date and supplied to Student Development
- Publicity –through various means including emails, Facebook, posters, flyers or contacts with Guild media groups.

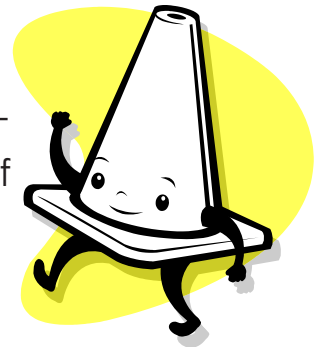
These are suggested committee roles:

Equipment Officer

- Booking out and returning equipment for events (social or sporting)
- Safe storage, maintenance and transportation of equipment
- Recommending new equipment purchases to the Treasurer
- Conducting regular inventories on all kit/equipment

Safety Officer

- Undertake Risk Assessments– these are mandatory for every group! Also ensuring that control measures are carried out fully and that other group members are aware of the information contained in the risk assessment form.
- Ensuring that the level of safety of any equipment, transport, activity or venue is of a high standard, in accordance with the appropriate legislative body i.e. the Guild or National Governing Body
- Producing and maintaining a list of emergency contact numbers to be given to the Guild when required
- Completing a Duty of Care Form prior to departure
- Possessing a relevant level of First Aid knowledge, and to nominate members for First Aid courses in conjunction with the Student Development Department.



Tips for committee meetings

Running a student group can be rewarding, challenging, interesting, educational or simply a fun distraction from the library. To make the most of the experience for your group, your members and you personally, it's worth considering how your group operates and how it can be improved. Many of the skills you develop through running a student group can be used during your studies and after graduation to find a job.

Constitutionally, groups should have at least two Committee meetings per term, although the need for them will obviously vary depending on the nature of your group and how active you are.

The aim of these meetings may be to:

- Make decisions about your society
- Catch up and check the progress of activities
- Generate ideas for new projects
- Evaluate events
- Budget and manage your finances
- Plan handover for a new committee

Try and make them as interesting as possible and maybe hold them before a regular activity or social to persuade all committee members to attend regularly. To make these meetings successful have an agenda to keep you on track and minutes should be taken during the meeting. An agenda should include:

- *Apologies* – a list of who couldn't attend the meeting and notified you in advance
- *Minutes of the last meeting* – agree the minutes are correct
- *Matters Arising* - follow up any points for action and discussion at last meeting
- *Points/ issues for discussion*
- *A.O.B.* – any other business that needs taking about
- *Date and time of next meeting* – arrange it while you're all together

Once you've started your student group you may find that after the initial euphoria you find it difficult to keep people interested, motivated and involved. Spending some time combating this age-old dilemma can be the difference between a thriving group and the almost ran's!

- Try to keep in mind what motivated you to do this job in the first place and use this to understand and motivate others.
- Make sure that members who help out with activities or come up with good ideas are thanked for their work.
- Always remember your successes and promote them to members and potential members.

If you feel that you could do with some support, however great or small, speak to any of the Student Development staff – that's what they're there for.

CONSIDER—you can find information on the below topics on our website

- **Recruitment**, selection and retention of members and committee members
- **Supporting**, involving and monitoring participation of all members
- **Job descriptions/roles & responsibilities** for committee members
- **Equal opportunities** – involve as many people as possible in your group
- **Awards/recognition**—there are several award ceremonies held over the year to reward volunteers and the good things they do
- **Effective handovers** – make sure your AGM follows procedures and you have an effective handover meeting
- **Contact directory** - where/when meetings are, members' contact details, etc.
- **Evaluation** - how well did an event/project go? How could it be improved?
- **Opportunities** for involvement - are they available all year round?
- **Publicising** your success - to members, other groups, the University, external and nationwide groups – see our Pick and Mix guide on *Publicity*
- **Keep copies** of posters, lists, newsletters, minutes etc.

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TIME MORE EFFECTIVELY

- Draw up a daily or weekly schedule of tasks to be completed
- Prioritise the most important work
- Do the most important or difficult tasks when you are at your best
- Work in an environment in which you feel comfortable
- Keep ideas, plans and schedules in one visible and accessible place
- Periodically record and analyse your use of time
- Most importantly – **PLAN EARLY!**

CHAIRING A MEETING

The effectiveness of a meeting and the satisfaction of all its members depend, to a large extent, on the ability of its chairperson. The Chair of the meeting has to keep order so that everyone feels able to contribute. They have a responsibility to help the meeting make decisions and reach conclusions. To do this successfully, a chairperson needs certain skills and attributes.

- Some understanding of the issues being discussed.
- An ability to encourage people to contribute to the discussion.
- Preventing the group from being dominated by any individual.
- Summarising what has been said and drawing together conclusions at various points.
- The ability to keep contributions to the issue under discussion and prevent it from wandering.
- Outlining a problem in a constructive way so people can work with it.
- Suggesting ways to solve a problem or move a discussion forward.
- Good time keeping, especially if there are numerous issues to be discussed.
- Ensuring that the minute-taker has recorded decisions and that the decisions taken state the action to be taken, by whom and when.



A CHAIR SHOULD NOT...

- Be the person who talks most
- Be the person who makes the decisions
- Allow one or two people to dominate
- Cut people out of the discussion
- Lose their temper!
- Be too directive
- Patronise or intimidate contributors
- Take minutes (someone else should do this)
- Put individuals on the spot by asking them to contribute if they haven't indicated they want to

Handy Hints suggested by committee members

- Get to know the people who can help. There are people throughout the Guild who can help make your group successful.
- It is essential that a huge email network is set up and resources such as Facebook, meetings and text messages are utilized. In order to be successful everyone must communicate problems and ideas. Don't be afraid to do so or the entire system will break down.
- Recruit a couple of people to your group who can drive the University minibuses so you can go on trips; other groups may also want to borrow them.
- Keep your activities diverse; sometimes an alcohol-free event can draw as big a crowd as a bar crawl.
- Engage with your members, offer them something that's going to make them want to come back again and again.
- Use your committee at events to ensure that all people who are there are having a good time. Make sure they meet the people who appear to not know anyone else.
- Plan for things to go wrong. Imaging worst case scenarios will help you plan control measures to prevent them happening. Where can you get stewards/CD player/equipment at very short notice.
- Make sure more than one person knows what is going on and at what stage everything is at so that if the organiser is not available on the day then things can carry on.
- A key skill to know is how to delegate to others
- Get your room bookings in early! The Guild can get fully booked quickly. Make sure you let the Guild know about cancellations as early as possible.
- The Non-sabbatical officers are an underused resource in the Guild. Find out what they do and put them to work.
- Always have a supply of chocolate biscuits. No matter what the problem, no matter what the size - they can help.

Pick & Mix leaflets are available on a variety of topics, designed to assist you as thoroughly as possible with running your group or understanding the Guild of Students generally

To find out more information, visit the Guild online:
www.guildofstudents.com/studentgroupsandvolunteering

The Student Development department is located on the ground floor of the Guild of Students, and supports student groups, volunteering and training.

Student Development Counter:

The first port of call for any queries and for any administration regarding your group, volunteering or training. During holidays, we're open 12-3pm Mon-Fri, and our general Term-time opening hours are:

11am-5.30pm Monday - Thursday
11am-4.30pm - Fridays.

The general student group area for committees is open 9am-9pm on weekdays and 10am-8pm at weekends, which you can use for committee meetings, checking emails and organising your group. You have access to computers, a printer and photocopier, workspace and your pigeonholes.

Disclaimer: The information in this leaflet only provides general guidance. The leaflet should not be regarded or relied upon as a complete or authoritative statement. University of Birmingham Guild of Students will not accept any liability for any claims or inconvenience as a result of information in this leaflet.