



Societies Handbook

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1. Introduction

Whether you are just about to take on an official role in an already established society or are thinking of starting a new group thank you for getting involved. We are sure that you are looking forward to the year ahead. Hopefully, as a team, we can achieve our goals.

One of the best things about coming to University is the opportunity to become involved in an activity that interests you, at a much cheaper cost and with far greater ease than in the “Real World”.

The Union supports societies by providing general administrative back up such as photocopying/telephone/mailing services. More importantly it provides willing and experienced staff to help sort out those little problems that will inevitably occur. Do not be afraid to come and seek our advice – you can find us in the Union Office on the Treforest City and Atrium sites.

This year, committee training sessions at the beginning of the year will make the running of your society easier. This should help you settle in your role as Chair, Secretary or Treasurer and ensure that your term in office runs smoothly. If it doesn't –let us know why.

This handbook complements the training programme and will hopefully enable you and your members to fulfil your cultural ambitions.

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VP Student Activities

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Societies Officer

Melanie Monks

Societies Co-ordinator

2. *Starting a Society*

It is relatively easy to set up your own society: just follow these pointers and you should be up and dancing, debating or divining in no time!

The very first thing you need to do when setting up a new society is to speak to Rachel or Mel. They will discuss your ideas and ask you to put together a proposal (one side of A4 should do it!) outlining what your society will be all about, the activities and events you plan to hold and how you will fund it all. You will also have to prove that proposed society fits in with the aims and ideals of the Union as a whole and is something that the Union is practicably able to support. This proposal will then need approval from Student Council. Once it has the OK, you're off and you need to find some members; speak to as many interested students as possible put it on social media and recruit, recruit, recruit.

Governing Documents

To be recognised as an official Union Society, your group must be run by students for students and you will need to prove that you are governed independently of any external organisation. There is nothing to stop you being affiliated to an organisation, but you must not be subject to their rules and regulations or decision making processes.

A Society constitution is compulsory: it is the document that determines your objectives, aims and operating procedures. There is a draft copy of a constitution (Appendix 1) at the back of this handbook and you may like to use it. If you want to add other clauses, you must do so when you register your Society with the Union. These additional clauses are subject to approval by Student Council and cannot conflict with those of the Union. The constitution must have a list of the committee officers, whose term of office will run from May to May. The constitution should also include the democratic structure, how often meetings are held, how many members are required to reach quoracy and how easy it is to remove officers. Committee meetings should be held at least three times a term, general meetings once a term and the minutes of all meetings must be forwarded to the Union.

Who can be a member?

There is no minimum membership for a society, but the more members in the society, the better it will be and the easier it will be to share the costs. Additionally, if you sign up to be part of the Societies Award Scheme, you will be assessed according to the number of members you have and any potential grant funding will also be related to this figure.

All members must register their details on your society link on www.uswsu.com. This will create a member database for you that will make administration of your society easier, it gives you the ability to send emails to your members and keep track of who holds which position.

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.

Any group found to be refusing membership will be immediately disbanded.

Who should run the society?

Once you have gathered your members, a committee of three officers must be elected to ensure the smooth running of the society. However, these officers are responsible to the membership at all times.

Chair Person:

Should represent the society to external agencies (i.e. the Union)

Liaise with the Union about Fresher's Fair

Has responsibility to allow only eligible members
Ensure that committee are accountable to the membership
Has overall responsibility for the smooth running of the society

Secretary:

Deals with all administrative work
Responsible for registration of society with the Union
Keeps updated membership list
Regularly checks e-mail for society correspondence
Point of contact between the Union and members
Takes minutes of meetings

Treasurer:

Deals with all the money
Must authorise any financial transaction and ensure that no overdraft occurs
Balance of membership issued to money taken
Keep records of all society accounts
Awareness of VAT, insurance and Union contributions
Liaison with Central Resources Unit

In some instances, usually for societies who have a lot of society equipment, the Union will insist that an Equipment Officer is appointed and all committees must have a First Year Representative. Other than these officers, you are free to make up your committee, as you think appropriate. For example, you might like to have a Social Secretary, Publicity Officer or Training Officer; it's up to you.

3. Health and Safety

The Union endeavours to provide as wide a range of activities as possible, subject to the demands from the student body. However, with increasing calls for ever higher standards of safety during participation, it is becoming more difficult to accommodate all the requests for

new societies and, in some cases, the scope of existing societies may have to be curtailed, in order to comply with health and safety regulations. As it is impossible for the Union to compromise on the safety of its members, it is not viable for the Union to support societies for which there is no available expertise.

Although no code of practice can possibly make provision for all the situations that may arise, the law requires that the Union take steps which are 'reasonably practicable' to prevent death or injury to any of its student members. Therefore, all societies are now covered by specific policies that are intended to ensure that all members participate in their chosen activity, at minimal risk to themselves, to the society as a whole or to anyone else involved.

The committee of your society is responsible for the behaviour and safety of its members and is also responsible for ensuring that safety policies are adhered to. Copies of the appropriate codes of conduct will be made available to the society committees and the whole policy document can be read in the Union offices.

Organising an on-campus activity

This should be relatively simple. To book a room on campus for your weekly meetings, have a word with Mel and she'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 (Appendix 2). 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 like pointless bureaucracy, 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 Mel to help you do this.
- c) If it is a sporting activity, you will need to follow the health and safety protocol for the particular sport.
- d) If you are going by coach or minibus you need to see the Mel 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.

4. *Society Finances*

This is a very important part of this handbook. It is easy for finances to go astray if they are not properly managed.

Any money received by a Society must be paid in directly to the Students' Union. Opening a separate bank account contravenes the Union's constitution and if discovered, will result in referral to the Student Council.

Budget Planning

In order for your society to function properly throughout the year, you will need to have sufficient funds available to support your planned programme of activities.

Societies may decide to charge a membership fee as a way to raise funds. However this fee is subject to VAT, currently at 20%, which goes straight to nice Mr Taxman. So, on subs of £2.00 the society would be left with approximately £1.80 per person. You should think about what you would need to charge to be left with the figure that you want, after the deductions. The upside of charging a subscription is that all members bear the costs of the society.

Alternatively, you could charge by activity. This way, only the people that participate actually pay towards it. The downside of this is that you would never be able to build up a reserve and you would be forever collecting money.

Accounts

Each society has one main account with the Union – a subscription account. Money from subscriptions and fundraising or any other money generated by the society should be paid into your Subs Account. The money is available to you to spend on what your committee deems appropriate as long as it is for the good of the society as a whole.

If you are paying in money for a specific purpose, we will create a linked account, so that the money doesn't get spent on anything else.

Paying money in

The Treasurer will need to complete a pink paying-in slip and take this along to a Union Office, who will pay it in through their till and give you a receipt. Make sure that the information provided on the paying-in slip is accurate so that the money is put in the right account and that no deductions are made.

Statements

If you would like a statement of your society accounts, please order one from the Central Resources Unit allowing at least 24 hours notice. If you are unsure about any of the entries, then talk to Mel who will endeavour to resolve your problem.

How to Spend Your Money

Before you spend any money, you will need to complete a pro-forma order, which must be submitted by your Treasurer and authorised by the Union. You are then allowed to spend the money in one of two ways:-

- a) an official order form can be issued and the invoice will be paid on arrival
- b) you can purchase the goods and then claim the money back on production of a detailed receipt

Remember, if you do not have an authorised pro-forma, **no money will be refunded or invoices paid.**

Cash cannot be released without supporting paperwork.

Payments from the Central Resources Unit take a while to be processed, so do not leave payments to the last minute. It may be the case that the official signatories are not always available.

Raising Money

To finance events or to donate money to charities, many societies need to raise funds. Fundraising could include sponsored events or sponsorship deals. This is all acceptable providing it doesn't contravene any Union policy or working procedure. If you are looking for sponsorship, you must follow the Unions' guidelines, which are available from the Students' Union office.

You may also be eligible for grant aid from the Union. Subject to eligibility, grants are available to part-fund new activities. Applications (Appendix 3) should be submitted to the Student

Council, where each will be assessed on its' merits. Student Councils will be looking for applications from well-organised Societies with a healthy membership base, whose proposed activity/event proves a benefit to the wider student body.

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

5. ***How to Organise a Societies Dinner***

Many societies organise annual dinners or balls or Christmas parties or end of academic year shindigs. In order for you to comply with the Unions' finance regulations, this is how to do it properly.

- a) Before you book any hotels, DJ's etc. you must provide us with complete costings for the event. This should include all outgoings (price of meal, bus hire, VAT, cancellation charges, decorations, etc) and all income (ticket sales, contribution from departments, etc). You should also detail how you are going to promote the event, the deadline for ticket sales and when suppliers are likely to require payment. **Please note** that all such events must be self-financing.
- b) Once this information has been authorised by the Union, you must then ensure that the orders for all goods and services related to your dinner are placed on an official order form and that contracts are drawn up for the use of bands, speakers, DJ's etc. The Union will also open an account, separate to your subs and grant accounts, through which all payments for the event will be transacted.
- c) If you are having a guest speaker, you must submit a completed Speaker Request Form.
- d) The tickets that you sell (that the Union can supply to you, at a cost) must have a receipt stub, which is retained by the treasurer as proof of sale. The number of stubs should then correspond with the amount of money paid into the society account.
- e) If complementary tickets are given, the receipt stub still needs to be kept and needs to indicate that it is a comp. Your dinner organiser and society treasurer will then need to have weekly meetings with Mel to monitor planning and ticket sales. **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.

Failure to comply with these regulations will result in the committee facing disciplinary procedures.

You should also remember that the Union is under no obligation to release funds to pay for anything that has not been officially ordered. This responsibility then lies with the person whose name is the point of contact with the supplier.

6. *Ordering Clothing*

If you wish to order leisure clothing for your society, you should see Mel who will help you establish correct costings for your requirements and open a clothing account, separate to your subs account. It is then up to your Treasurer to collect monies for orders from your society members. The Union will not place the clothing order until the corresponding amount of money has cleared through your account. Once the goods are received, they will be released to a Committee member ONLY. It is their responsibility to ensure the individual members receive the correct item.

7. *Administration www.USWSU.com*

The Union web site has a dedicated page for each society, that allows your members to register (and pay) their membership. It will be up to you to maintain your page; please do not criticise the Union if your page is empty and students cannot find out about you and your activities. The page will automatically create a database for your Secretary to use to keep tabs on people, to set up events, to send emails, etc. If you would like to utilise the website, please contact Mel; information on how to access your page will be provided, but you will need to book a slot for a short training session. In the meantime, any information that you would like added to the page should be submitted to a Union Office.

Photocopying (If available)

If you require photocopying for your society, take the originals to a Union Info Desk and they'll do it for you. You will then be asked to sign for the copies you receive. The charges (15p per A4 sheet and 25p per A3 sheet) will be deducted directly from your subs account.

Booking Rooms

Both Union and University Room Booking Forms are available from one of the Union Offices. It will need to be completed and if an external speaker is going to attend one of your meetings then you will need to be organised as the authorisation process can take two weeks. Hand the completed form back to a staff member in one of the Union Offices, which then will then be authorised by Mel.

Transport

Depending on what your society does, you may need to organise transport. To do this, you can either hire a coach or a minibus: Mel will be able to help and advise with this.

8. *Equal Opportunities*

The Union believes that societies should be open and accessible to all students and every member should be given the opportunity for involvement. Therefore, societies should promote a welcoming atmosphere of non-exclusivity for members and potential members alike.

Societies are responsible for the production of advertising and literature that is non-offensive and sensitive to the diverse make up of this Union's membership. Material produced that contravenes the aims and principles of the Union's Equal Opportunities Policy is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

All society literature **must** contain, in a prominent position, 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 or disability. We are fully committed to upholding the Equal Opportunities Policy of the University of South Wales Union.”

For further information on our equal opportunities policy, please see the President.

9. Behaviour

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 when your society is together as a group, be it in the Union, on minibuses or coaches, at University facilities or at any other external institution or facility. Similarly, neither the Union nor the University condones initiation events for new members/students and any Society found to be organising/running one will be immediately shut down.

Misconduct of any kind will lead to disciplinary action, which can culminate in removing committee members from office, disbanding the society as whole and banning members from participating in any Union society.

In short, when representing the Union/University, please try to behave like adult human beings!

10. What Happens at the End of the Year?

There will come a time when your year in office will come to an end and you will have to hand over to a new committee to take the Society forward.

Annual General Meetings

An Annual General Meeting is held by all societies in May of each year. At this meeting, your committee will/must present reports on the achievements of the previous year, proposals for the future and the financial position of the societies. The members at the meeting must then elect, either by ballot or by a show of hands, the three-committee members who will run the

society in the following year. All members should be given an opportunity to attend this meeting, the minutes of which should be forwarded to the Union

Handing Over

At the end of the committee's term of office, each society has a responsibility to hand over to the incoming committee as smoothly and as efficiently as possible.

The new committee should receive the minutes of past meetings and the accounts book, along with any other additional information that has been gathered regarding the society. All equipment held by the society must be returned to the society locker and, once the inventory has been confirmed with the incoming and outgoing officers and the Union, the log book should be handed to the incoming committee.

11. *The Organisational Structure of Societies in the Union.*

As Society members, you are in the most influential position to change policies affecting societies. This can be done by getting involved in the Union's democratic structure, either by attending the Union's Annual General meeting or submitting policy to Student Council.

Student Councils

As Council decides Union policy that can directly affect Societies in issues such as funding, it is a good idea to get your Society involved via the Societies Officer. The Societies Officer is elected to represent you and your members and will be able to forward and debate policy that directly affects Societies.

Student Council has the responsibility for the allocation of grants to and the discipline of societies.

Annual General Meeting

This is where any student of the Union can voice their opinions to the Executive and contribute to the making of Union policy. Each society is expected to have at least one member at the Annual General Meeting and all three committee members if you would like to apply for grant funding.

12. Awards Scheme

This year, the Union will be piloting an Award Scheme for Societies. The scheme is designed to help Societies develop and grow, making them stronger and more sustainable. If the pilot is a success, we will be rolling it out to all Clubs and Societies next year.

Key Dates

AGM	24.Nov.16
Student Council	18.Oct.16
	01.Dec.16
	30.Jan.17
	28.Mar.17
	22.May.17

Key Contacts

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Mel Monks	Societies Co-ordinator mel.monks@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, jot it down in a letter and send it to the office; we should be most grateful.