How to be a Secretary.

CONGRATULATIONS on being elected to the role of Secretary on your Society, Working or Representative Committee! The Secretary is the backbone of any student group and ensures that everything runs smoothly, both in terms of administration and communication.

This guide covers your main duties:
1. Creating an agenda and taking minutes
2. Booking rooms
3. Your email account and keeping membership/mailing lists
4. Post collection
5. Taking care of administration
6. Marketing & Publicity
7. Organising your Society/Committee Election
8. Any other business (AOB)

1. Creating an Agenda and Taking Minutes
Creating an agenda involves drawing together what needs discussing. You’ll need to ask committee members if they have anything to add and email the agenda round before the meeting, to make sure all members can prepare for the meeting ahead. We suggest using this simple format:

1. Name of society/committee
2. Type of meeting
3. Date/time/place
4. Chair/recorder of minutes
5. Apologies
6. Minutes of last meeting (update on actions taken)
7. Exact wording of each agenda item; vote scores (if applicable); whether motions are passed or failed; actions agreed – preferably with name and date attributed.
8. Any other business (AOB)

Taking minutes involves typing up a short summary of what was discussed in the meeting and including (most importantly!) the action points which were decided, and who needs to carry them out. Minutes shouldn’t be a transcript of what everyone said. You’ll also need to email the minutes out to other committee members, preferably within three days of the committee meeting. If for some reason, you aren’t able to meet your deadlines, set a good example and apologise.

Top Tip!
- In the email with the minutes attached, write the list of actions for committee members into the email itself. People are more likely to read these as, unfortunately, not everyone reads the minutes!

2. Booking Rooms (for meetings, socials, events, rehearsals…)
As your Society/Committee’s Secretary it is primarily your responsibility to book the rooms you’ll need. All committee members who submitted their Part B Committee Details form are eligible to book rooms
in the Students’ Union and University and most of these are free. You can view the many rooms and spaces that are available for you to book by visiting the ‘Bookable spaces’ webpage of the SU website: http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/sheffield-su/bookable-spaces

The SU Room Bookings team can be contacted at: su-roombookings@sheffield.ac.uk

University Room Bookings are administered from the Information Desk on first floor of the IC from 11am to 2pm, you can also contact them at: roombookings@shef.ac.uk

or visit: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/cics/roombookings/rooms

Top Tip!
- Make sure you have all information about your requirements ready, or it will be difficult for SU/University Room Bookings to help you find the best room for your group.

Accessibility and Inclusion
The Inclusion Officer’s role is to ensure that any student feels comfortable to get involved in your group’s activities. Keep this in mind when booking rooms and spaces: does it have disabled access; is it in an alcoholic environment; is it safe to walk home? Liaise with your Inclusion Officer for further advice.

3. Your Email Account and Membership/Mailing Lists

Your Email Account.
As Secretary you are the registered keeper of your society or committee’s email account through MUSE – this is separate from your personal MUSE login. E.g. for Dance Society, the account is dance@sheffield.ac.uk.

Every society and committee has an email account set up for them. If you’ve lost the login details for your account, email Patrick in our Tech Dev team: su-itsupport@sheffield.ac.uk.

As the registered account keeper, you’re in charge of managing the society or committee email inbox, ensuring that everyone who has emailed you is replied to, and that you adhere to the University’s IT Code of Practice (as you need to with your personal MUSE account): www.sheffield.ac.uk/cics/codeofpractice/index.

Remember, if you’re a society you can also use these account details to check your society’s online finance statement at any time through: http://statements.union.shef.ac.uk.

Top Tips!
- It can be useful to ‘block out’ time (e.g. 2-3 times per week) for you to check your email account.
- You may need to pass some email enquiries from students to other committee members – but always make sure that these are followed up.
• If a student has emailed you, respond to the student, letting them know if you need to liaise
with other committee members, and that someone will get back to them soon.
• If the Activities Zone Desk has emailed you (activities@sheffield.ac.uk) or any other Activities staff members, make sure you read the email thoroughly, passing on information to relevant committee members.
• The weekly Society/Committee Bulletin (from activities@sheffield.ac.uk) is sent to committee members. However, as Secretary, you will need to read the newsletter and decide how best to pass the most important and relevant information on.

Membership/Mailing Lists.
If you're a society, it’s vital to keep track of your membership and who has (and hasn’t) paid. Even if you don’t have a ‘membership’, it’s likely that you’ll still keep a mailing list of people who are interested in your group, so that you can send out group emails.

How should I keep track of my members or mailing list?
We’d recommend that you ask your members to sign up through your society webpage on the SU website – this means that members can pay for membership online, with money going straight to your society B-account, and get added to your mailing list. While we recommend that all societies charge at least £3 membership, you can set the membership price at ‘£0’ if your group doesn’t charge.

To find out how to set up membership lists in this way, read ‘Edit your society webpage’ under the ‘Digital Societies’ page: http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/get-involved/zone-online-society-support

Top Tips!
• If you’re using the SU website, you will be able to send out group emails to your whole mailing list. But if you’re sending out a group email directly from your email account, remember to put the email addresses in the ‘bcc’ box - this means that people won’t be able to see each other’s email addresses.
• Don’t pass email addresses onto anyone else without people’s permission.
• Consider setting up a ‘google group’ to help you send group emails to your committee – e.g. for sending out meeting agendas and minutes.

4. Collecting Post from the Activities & Sports Zone.
Pigeon holes with a cardboard folder for each society are located in the Activities & Sports Zone. You may be surprised how much post you have, so check it regularly! Boxes/packages will also be left for you here. Please ask at the Activities Zone Desk if you can’t find them.
5. Taking care of Administration.

a) Committee Detail Google Forms – for when a new committee is elected:

- **What for:** The details you provide mean we can register you as a committee member, contact you with essential information, and potentially gain HEAR recognition for your position (Higher Education Achievement Report).

- **When:** These online forms will be emailed out from the Activities Zone Desk to the former committee via the Society/Committee Bulletin. Your President/Chair should complete Part A, and ALL committee members should complete Part B.

**Confidentiality:** You choose whether to make your details accessible to other students/members of the public. Making them accessible means we can provide interested students with a contact number. We do not give out your details to external organisations. We may contact you to pass on relevant messages from external organisations.

**Responsibility:** As Secretary, it is your responsibility to inform any committee members who are elected late/ not at your normal AGM (e.g. at an EGM, or election for a first year rep in October) that they must register their position within one week of election by submitting a Committee Details Part B form. Remember, Societies staff cannot contact committee members until they have submitted their Committee Details Part B form.

b) Society/Committee Constitution:

- **What for:** This lays out the specific aims and objectives of your group, and details all the rules relating to committee structure, election, membership etc. It can be useful in sorting out internal disputes, clearing up confusion, and ensuring you are functioning in accordance with Students' Union regulations.

- **When:** This is usually only filled in once, at the time of becoming an officially approved society/committee. However, we ask you to review it each year in case you need to make any changes. To view a copy of your latest Constitution, just visit: bit.ly/201718Constitutions. If you want to change your Constitution, please see the guide the ‘How to Run your Election’ (Society Support Hub) to find out how.

c) Risk Assessments:

- **What for:** Those running a society or committee have a **duty of care** in law to ensure the safety of its members and any other people who may be affected by its activities and events. Therefore, if you organise an activity for people, you need to take the necessary precautions to keep the activity safe otherwise the society could be liable for any accidents and injuries which occur as a result. As Secretary, it is important that you file any important paperwork, particularly if it relates to safety.

- **When:** If your group is known as a ‘red’ (priority) society/committee
where your activities are deemed to be of a higher risk, you will need to complete an annual risk assessment for your routine activities. Any society or committee which is organising an activity or event which is not part of your usual activities or which carries an enhanced risk must complete a risk assessment (e.g. trips, large events).


If your society does not have a Publicity Officer, as Secretary you may need to take charge of the publicity!

Top Tips!

- Make sure your webpage on the SU website is up-to-date as many prospective members will visit this page to find out information about your group. You’re automatically a group administrator for your page, so just login to the website (using your personal MUSE login) to edit. Please refer to ‘Editing your society webpage’ on the Society Support Hub for further information.
- Read the ‘Marketing & Publicity’ guide on the Society Support Hub to find out how to market your group and events. This covers 20 marketing methods, from social media to poster-boards.

7. Organising your Society/Committee Election.

It is usually the responsibility of the Secretary to organise your society or committee’s election which must be done at your AGM (Annual General Meeting). All societies and committees must hold their AGM/election during ‘Society Election Fortnight’.

Next year, Society Election Fortnight will run from in March/April.

You should:

- Read the guide ‘How to Run your Election’ (Society Support Hub);
- Inform the Activities & Sports Zone of your ‘Election Date’ in advance (we will send you an online form nearer the time);
- Review your Constitution and assess committee roles;
- Along with the committee, choose a ‘Returning Officer’ for the election: an unbiased person to oversee the election, decide the rules and how the election is organised. If you’re not standing for committee again next year, this could be you;
- Support your Returning Officer in the logistics of the election (e.g. booking an accessible room and publicising it to all members);
- Read the guide ‘How to Hand Over to a New Committee’ and coordinate your committee handover.

8. And…the skills you will gain.

What skills do you expect to gain as a Secretary? This is a very broad role, so hopefully lots! Below is a list to get you reflecting on the work you will have done:

General Organisational Skills:
Working independently, taking initiative, managing your time, balancing academic and social commitments.

Specific Secretarial Skills:

Researching – keep up to date with information, developments or issues which could impact on your role, society or committee.

Prioritising – identify critical tasks, arrange tasks in a logical order, be adaptable and adjust plans if necessary.

Record keeping – make sure you keep accurate records so you know what needs doing, when and (if applicable) by whom; make sure you also record what has already been achieved or agreed; keep copies of the society or committee’s governing documentation.

Time management – you need to be able to estimate the time and effort required to complete a task, and be able to manage your own time effectively so you can meet all your commitments.

The ability to multi-task – you have to be able to deal with more than one thing at a time, and be comfortable with challenge and variety.

Interpersonal skills – to organise anything effectively requires the ability to work well with other people. You need to have good communication skills and be confident and assertive, without being confrontational or aggressive.

Any questions? Contact the Activities Zone Desk:
activities@shef.ac.uk
0114 222 8620