

2.2 Getting and keeping members

Members are the foundation to the success of any student society. Without enough members your STAR group will not be able to do all the projects and activities you want to. You need to think about how you will attract more members and then maintain high membership throughout the year.

Top Tips for a Fab Freshers

Freshers Fair is quite possibly the most important day of your STAR year. But relax. Here are some basic tips for planning your freshers stall.

- ★ **Book your stall.** You might need to do this far in advance so make sure you're not too late, and that you're in a prominent place with similar societies (not in a cupboard with Engineering Soc). Find out how big your table is, whether you have a noticeboard or a place to plug in your laptop, etc.
- ★ **Order your materials.** Contact STAR national team in advance to get your resources to help promote STAR and refugees (banners, t-shirts, stickers, leaflets, posters).
- ★ **Plan your first meeting.** Meet together as a committee or group and set a date, book a room, invite speakers and decide what you're going to do. Make it interesting, fun, a good opportunity for people to meet each other, and be clear on what they can do next.
- ★ **Now advertise your first meeting or event clearly.** Have a poster or flyer with clear details of how to find out more and what they can go to over the next few weeks (with a set date, time, location, etc).
- ★ **Make your stall stand out.** New students will often have a huge number of societies they can join, so you need to ensure that your stall will get noticed. Put up signs and arrows, give out freebies like stickers or cakes, use the STAR banner, have photos from last year, play music, maybe have footprints leading to your stall...
- ★ **Organise who is on the stall.** Make a rota and have enough helpers so one or two of you can wander around giving out leaflets and directing people to your stall.
- ★ **Easy sign up list.** Make it as easy as possible for people to sign up to your mailing list! If you can use a laptop (or two) then get people to type it straight up – this will ensure you can actually read everyone's email addresses! If you using paper then make sure you've got plenty of sheets with enough space to write, pens that actually work, and that you don't lose them underneath all the leaflets and cookies.
- ★ **Have a small activity on your stall.** Get people involved straight away with a petition, a quiz, a short video...
- ★ **Be friendly and approachable!** Try to be welcoming - if you start to get grumpy after 3 hours then take a break! ☺



Making your group attractive

How are you going to make your society the one that everyone wants to join? And how can you make sure that members stay interested and enthusiastic throughout the year?

Below are some ideas on the 'good' and the 'not so good' for getting and keeping members.

A Good Society will:

- ★ **Have clear aims.** Be clear on why the group exists and what you hope to achieve. Build a sense of identity and set goals for the group to work towards together.
- ★ **Be Active.** Have a variety of opportunities to get involved, follow through on your plans, have regular activities to keep people interested.
- ★ **Be a good way to meet new people.** This means meetings with an opportunity to chat and get to know each other, projects which involve teamwork, and of course socials!
- ★ **Fun.** STAR is serious about improving the lives of refugees, but we can have fun while we do it! Bringing the student and refugee community together is something to smile about.
- ★ **Offer responsibility.** Delegate tasks to the group, offer the chance for new members to join the committee or lead on new events or projects
- ★ **Offer new experiences.** Give people the chance to try new things and gain experience in something valuable.
- ★ **Offer personal development.** If your group offers training, the chance to learn about different issues, opportunities to develop skills, then make it obvious!
- ★ **Provide information on refugees.** Give members the info they need and to help feel confident, either with leaflets or a short talk at your meetings.
- ★ **Make a difference.** Show people what you do, how they can really make a difference, and celebrate your achievements!
- ★ **Be contactable.** It is important that all members of the society can easily contact the committee members so that they feel involved in the running of the group and they can get information when needed.
- ★ **A Society to be Proud of.** A lot of the above adds up to being a group that people want to be a part of – an active, vibrant, fun, unique group that makes a real difference!

Try to avoid:

- ★ **Not keeping commitments.** Don't bite off more than you can chew! If you don't follow through on your plans, members might lose interest and think you're all talk.
- ★ **Being Disorganised.** Any group or organisation that appears out of control and unclear on what it's doing will be off-putting for potential members.
- ★ **Operating 'Top down'.** If all ideas and decisions come from a few people at the top without discussion or consultation then you risk making people feel they are not part of the group.
- ★ **Assuming knowledge or experience.** A lot of members will probably be new to working with refugees or campaigning. Make it clear you will teach members what they need to know and provide opportunities to learn, not one that makes unfair

demands. Help people grow in confidence through encouragement.

- ★ **Demanding too much time.** People will vary in how much they can commit and this will change throughout the year, so give people a range of things to get involved with – some one-off opportunities and other regular requirements.
- ★ **Being Exclusive.** Make sure it's not just a group for you and your friends. Involve everyone in group activities, try to avoid making important decisions or plans amongst yourselves outside of meetings, or having socials with only a select few invited from the group.
- ★ **Being unclear on what you do.** Provide clear information and explain fully in meetings who you are and what you do – don't assume everyone already knows!
- ★ **Being too ideological / political.** STAR is about supporting refugees, but your group should encourage as wide a spectrum backgrounds and opinions to get involved. Don't require that everyone agrees with you about everything!

Raise your profile

You can be the most perfect society in the world but not have enough members if nobody knows you're there! You need to make sure that as many people on campus know that there is a STAR group at their university and that if they are interested in refugees you're the group to contact. Think about these ideas for raising the profile of your group:

- ★ **Facebook.** Start and develop a group. An easy way to advertise, send messages and discuss your plans.
- ★ **Website / blog.** Start your own by trying www.blogger.com or www.wordpress.com
- ★ **Be visible.** Check the Union Diary for events such as "One World Festivals" and "International Weeks" which you could book stalls at and/or organise events for.
- ★ **Use STAR brand.** Put the STAR logo on all your posters, flyers and leaflets so people get to recognise it, and wear your STAR t-shirts and hoodies
- ★ **Build coalitions with similar groups.** Good relationships with other societies can have loads of mutual benefits from free advertising and sharing contacts, to joint events and practical help.
- ★ **Contact with university departments.** See if you can advertise on departmental notice boards or contact lecturers and departments who you think may have a natural fit with your groups aims and interests.
- ★ **Design your own posters.** Make them distinctive and eye catching and display them in novel places. Build a consistent brand, with the same font, your own slogan, a clear contact or place to find more information.
- ★ **Use student media.** Radio, TV and newspapers are always on the look out for quirky or interesting stories. So give them some!
- ★ **STAR website.** Write a news story about your group and send it to students@star-network.org.uk.
- ★ **Student Union website.** Use it to signpost people to your group – make sure to provide contact details and to keep the information up to date!
- ★ **Upload videos** of your events on www.youtube.com and put a link on the STAR website or your own blog / site.