

# 7. Committees

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## Why have a Committee in the First Place?!

Having a committee will give the group greater stability, better decision-making ability and will ensure no one ends up stressed out with all the responsibility. Generally it is also a requirement of Students' Unions for there to be certain elected officers in order to become a recognised society. And being a registered society means you are entitled to Union funding.

## If you are starting a new STAR group... (see also first meetings)

Use an early term meeting to open up nominations for the new committee. Talk to the group about which positions are usually on offer and ask people how many officers they think there should be.

- E mail out info about the committee roles in advance
- Explain to members what they can gain from being on the committee and what a wonderful experience it can be! (the chance to lead the group, a great addition to your CV and a chance to find skills you never knew you had!)
- Explain what support they will receive in return (National Office Summer Training for example)
- Let them know that they are not signing their lives away by becoming a committee member! Every small contribution counts and makes a difference.

## Committee Roles

STAR groups across the country work in many different ways. They have different needs and different structures to meet those needs. Therefore the size and make up of STAR committees vary. It is therefore worthwhile extending the committee beyond the three required officers (President or Chair, Treasurer and Secretary).

Whether your STAR group has elected a committee or not, there are certain responsibilities that it is good to know are being taken care of!

### Chair / President

- Book a stall for freshers fair
- Keep in touch with societies sabbatical officer
- Support the other committee members
- Chair regular committee and group meetings
- Stay in regular contact with STAR national office
- Receive and pass on the STAR quarterly newsletter
- Represent STAR at required Students' Union meetings
- See that STAR is (re-)registered as an official society annually
- Be the first point of contact for speakers and invited guests
- Make sure committee members do what they say they agreed to do
- Keep in touch with volunteer coordinators / project workers at local refugee projects

### Publicity Officer

- Write press releases
- Liaise with local and student media
- Keep a scrapbook of all your activities
- Design Publicity: posters/flyers/newsletters/displays
- Organise to receive information and mailings from relevant organisations
- Keep an eye on the local press and facilitate responding to articles as a group
- Ensure that there is always new and interesting stuff on your STAR notice board

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## **Secretary**

- Check your union pigeon hole, notice board
- Forward any E mails or updates from STAR to the rest of the group
- Respond to any enquiries and keep in touch with other STAR groups
- Keep a record of contacts made by the group
- Look after STAR resources and pass them onto next committee
- Get a permanent email for your group through the students' union
- Collect term-time and permanent contact details for committee and members for your records and to send to the national office
- Communicate with other student societies at your University to organise joint meetings/events
- Record and circulate minutes of committee meetings with action points for people
- Stay in regular contact with STAR nationally: Inform them of group activities and plans

## **Treasurer**

- Record donations/money raised
- Make sure the STAR affiliation fee is paid
- Order STAR merchandise from the national office
- Prepare any budgets/grant application forms for your student's union
- Organise floats for stalls/activities

## **Tasks for all committee members**

- Communicate with members
- Evaluate events you have to make the next ones even better
- Attend committee meetings and STAR group meetings
- Plan termly programme, decide on speakers, events, and activities
- Run the stall at Freshers Fair
- Keep an eye on the local press, facilitate responding to articles as a group
- Make sure that committee decisions, direction and method of operating are inclusive and reflect what the STAR membership wants
- Be familiar with aims and objectives of STAR National and of the group, the constitution and ensuring that the group acts under the guidance of these principles

## **Other possible tasks for committee members:**

- Book equipment, rooms, etc for meeting and events
- Look into updating or developing a website / Face Book, etc
- Organise who will attend freshers fairs
- Arrange group socials
- Arrange fundraiser events
- Keep in touch with all members who volunteer on refugee projects
- Get the group involved in campaigning activities
- Keep the group updated on asylum issues

## **Other possible committee roles:**

- Vice Chair / Vice President – To help the Chair / President with their role
- Events coordinator
- Campaigns coordinator
- SU / other societies liaison officer
- Volunteer coordinator or individual coordinators for each volunteering project
- Social secretary
- Web editor
- Journey to Safety / schools outreach coordinator

## Top Tip

Being on the committee can enable new members to feel valued, add to their feeling of organizational ownership and ultimately develop stability in the group. Invite first years or newer members to join the committee in less demanding roles, such as Social Secretary or Students' Union liaison officer so they get a feel for direct involvement.

## Making a Success of Your AGM

Having a committee handover is the best way to ensure your group continues. If the outgoing committee is in their final year it is particularly important to make sure new committee members have time to take over the roles for a while and settle in before you go. Elect the new committee at your group Annual General Meeting (AGM).

**An AGM may sound grand but it can be as simple as a regular meeting down your local café.**

## When to hold the meeting

- The best time to hold committee elections is at the end of the second term. This might seem early, but would you want to sign up for more responsibility in the middle of your exams? Get the elections out of the way before the exam period.
- Arrange a meeting specifically for committee elections and make sure the current committee can attend the meeting

## Drumming up interest for the meeting

- Let members know in advance what to expect: what positions are available? What will each role entail / how much of a commitment is it (E.g. perhaps you can rate the amount of commitment required to a scale of 1 to 5)? How they can nominate themselves?
- Advertise. If you have a My Space or Face Book page, advertise your AGM on it.
- Target members! Let them know that you think they would be great on the committee. However, remember there is little point in forcing someone to join if they don't want to!
- Speak to your Societies sabbatical officer or similar who may be able to help you with organising your election.

## During the meeting

- Remind members what they can gain from being on the committee and what a wonderful experience it can be! - The chance to lead the group, a great addition to your CV and a chance to find skills you never knew you had!
- Explain what support they will receive in return (1-2-1 committee handover and National Office Summer Training, for example) and that they won't be simply dumped in the deep end.
- Let them know that they are not signing their lives away by becoming a committee member!
- Involve 1<sup>st</sup> years. Being on the committee can enable new members to feel valued, add to their feeling of organizational ownership and ultimately develop stability in the group. Invite 1<sup>st</sup> years or newer members to join the committee in less demanding roles, such as Social Secretary or Students' Union Liaison Officer, so they get a feel for direct involvement.

## After the elections

- Let the National Office know the new committee members contact details so that we can make contact with them and offer our support.

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## Getting the most out of committee handover

**Ask yourself 'What would really help my successor to get going?'**

- Aim for a face to face handover
- Start to involve him/her in your work straight after the election and...
- Set a date when your successor will take over from you completely
- CC your successor into E mails and forward other useful correspondence
- If you have archived files, etc make sure they are easily accessible and suitably labeled
- Let him/her know where you keep STAR resources and where useful documents such as logos, old posters and contact lists are kept
- Let your union volunteering bureau know of the volunteering projects you are involved in as they may be able to offer some structural support as well as more volunteers, which in turn may help to provide long-term support for the group and the project in the next year.
- Let your Union Societies Officer or similar know of the changes to your committee.

### Things new committee members may want/need to know

- Basic facts about the group (number of members and the activities they are engaged in); about the STAR network as a whole (30 student groups; 350 youth members, etc)
- What role you do, what responsibilities you have and how that fits in with the other committee members
- What you consider to be a priority for the next year
- Which other societies, groups, departments and organisations you work closely with
- Responsibilities as a member of the national organisation (such as how to pay the STAR affiliation fee)
- What the STAR National Office can offer (see below)
- Challenges & successes, hints & tips

Info from MedSin, 2006, [www.medsin.org](http://www.medsin.org)

### What to do if you can't elect a committee

In an ideal world you would have hundreds of members desperate to be elected onto the committee. However, we don't always live in an ideal world! So here's how to ensure all your hard work continues after you have graduated if you haven't been able to elect a new committee.

- Consider holding a repeat AGM. Ask yourself why you think the previous AGM didn't work and try to address those issues. Speak to your **Regional Coordinator** or the national office for support in organising another meeting or a final 'big bang' event
- Get in touch with your **Union volunteering bureau / Student Community Action** – They are there to support students in volunteering in the community. So if you have been working on volunteering projects, speak to them about STAR and keeping those opportunities open to students for next year.
- Get in touch with your **Societies sabbatical officer** or equivalent. 'Handover' your society to them for safe keeping; Speak to them about the work your society has done throughout the year and the resources and contacts you have. They may be willing to hold a freshers stall and recruitment meeting next academic year and take on the role of promoting STAR temporarily
- Is your society 'friends' with other societies in your Union? Let them know the situation of your society. They may be willing to offer some support until a new committee is elected.
- Speak to **STAR national office**. We will be able to provide advice and support to you. We will work with your Union to support the continuation of the group and get involved drumming up interest
- Don't be disheartened - Perhaps you have a number of committed members but nobody wants to take the step of joining a committee. As long as you have members that care about STAR, who want to be involved next year and who are informed about the situation for the coming year, then they will be in a position to take whatever action is required to keep the group going next year – to be the caretakers for the group until a committee can be elected after freshers fair has drummed up more interest