**How to be a great society captain/chair**

**The Background**

The Guild has over 20 student-led societies, with more signing up every week. Each of these is run by a student committee. At the head of this committee is a Captain or Chair who is responsible for the overall running of the society. Each club or society offers something different to its members and provides excellent social, educational, experiential, cultural and developmental opportunities. We are very proud of all of our student leaders who dedicate their free time to running a club or society for other students.

**The Role of the Chairperson**

If you are thinking about starting a new society, running for Chair or Captain, or you have already been elected - it is very important that you understand your role and responsibility. This is not an exhaustive list – and you may find you do other things too!

* Oversee the running of the Society as the Head of the Committee – this will include delegating duties, overseeing others in their roles and supporting both your committee and the membership in their roles too.
* Set the direction, aims and objectives of the Society after consultation with the Committee.
* Be the first point of contact with your staff and officer leads in the Guild and to pass on all relevant information to the committee and members
* Support the Treasurer and committee in researching and writing the Society Annual Budget
* Attend the Guild’s AGM to represent your society
* Attend relevant Society meetings and training sessions
* Attend monthly Society Forum meetings
* Act as a financial signatory, signing off expenditure for the society **with** the Treasurer.
* Act as the Society representative to all external and internal agencies – this includes setting the standard of behaviour you expect from both your committee and your members

**Working with the Guild**

Every society will be allocated a lead staff member, who will support you with any day to day enquiries, and a lead Officer who will support you with anything politically. In the first instance, just get in touch with your staff member who will be very willing to help!

**What Makes a Strong Club/Society?**

There are two elements to making a strong society – the first are the overall aims, and the second are the building blocks that enable you to achieve those aims.

For example: A society must have a solid membership base of active and engaged students to be operate successfully. To achieve an active and engaged membership base, the society must be friendly and cooperative.

The Guild has some guidelines which societies have to adhere to – this is to ensure that we are helping you to be the best you can be, and creating a strong society which has a positive impact on its student members.

**Societies Must:**

* Be open and inclusive, showing no discrimination towards anyone who wishes to join or participate.
* Be unique – in the same way that businesses must have a unique selling point to survive, societies must offer their members something unique to secure a strong foundation membership.
* Have a solid membership base of at least 10 members – maybe more for example if you’re a BUCS team that needs more players to field a side. This is so that your activities can run well, your finances can be managed and so that you are giving your time to a cause or activity that people want to participate in. If your membership numbers drop, come and have a chat to us for some tips and guidance!
* Provide a good spread of events and activities – your club/society should show variety to your members so that you cater for lots of different students’ needs. This should include a range of social activity as well as achieving your aims and objectives. See how to guides for organising events and trips more information.
* Conduct themselves and their activities in a safe and responsible manner – it is a legal requirement that all events and activities put on by any membership based group are safe and legally compliant. We can help you do this and will always strive to find a way to help! See how to guides for how to be a safety officer for more information.
* Govern themselves in a democratic way – make sure the committee are elected democratically and all decisions are made fairly.
* Follow aims and objectives written in your society’s yearly development plan.

**Societies Forums**

The Guild is student-led and in the students’ best interests. We want to ensure you are all represented in decision making and feel you have a say in how the Guild supports you. As a result, all large decisions affecting societies are passed through the Societies Forum. This forum meets monthly during term time and is chaired by the Student Communities Officer. The Student Communities Officer then reports back to the wider Executive Team about decisions and outcomes.

**The Societies Forum exists to:**

* Affiliate new societies
* Approve society budget applications
* Represent the views of all societies to the Guild
* Share any good ideas/ good practices
* Act as an approval panel for any large decisions
* Provide expert advice and input to any proposed ideas affecting societies
* Act as an information sharing platform
* Encourage joint projects and team working

**Managing Your Society**

There are lots of ways to manage a society – and you may find some of these work better for you than others – but the Guild would always encourage you to:

**Listen**Listening to the views of your members and committee will help you in setting the aims and direction of your Society. Also take note and listen to those involved in other student groups – what works well? What doesn’t work well? What you could you implement in your own group from what they have learnt?

**Plan**Make sure you make a plan for the year, term and each event/activity/project you are planning. Then create a timeline for each of those events/activities/projects – for more information please see the “*How to Run an Event*”, “*How to Organise Trips*” or *“How to Plan Your Year successfully and communicate with your members”* Guides.

**Delegate**Once you have set the timeline and planned what needs to be done – whether this is for your regular activities or your specific one off events, make sure you delegate responsibility to your committee. A good tip, however, is to make sure that:

1. Your committee don’t feel too overwhelmed
2. You try and tailor the responsibilities you delegate to the roles of your committee.

**Support**Once you have delegated the duties, it is important you give your team of committee good support. This can be as simple as checking in and seeing how they are getting on, making sure you respond to their emails quickly, or by helping them with things they are struggling with.

**Monitor**In order to ensure everything is going to plan, you need to monitor the people you have delegated to. Ask for regular email updates; book in meetings on a weekly or fortnightly basis and set targets with specific dates for things to be completed.

**Meet!**It is important that, throughout the year, you hold regular committee meetings to ensure your committee and the society as a whole is staying on track, offering its members variety and completing planning deadlines. These are a great opportunity to keep on top of everything as well as have some time together as a committee

**Minutes**At every meeting, you should ask a committee member to take minutes to be typed and sent round to everyone within 48 hours. These will provide you with a record of who has agreed to do what and prevent anyone not completing their duties or thinking they were someone else’s responsibility. See the “*How to write minutes*” guide.

**Advice**Don’t be afraid to ask for advice! Guild staff members are always more than happy to help with your society management, event and activity planning, committee issues or membership queries. We have experience and if we don’t know the answer we will happily put you in contact with the right person!

**Review**A good society Captain or Chair will always be mindful of what works and what needs improving. With this in mind, try to review your activities and events. What works well? What is not having impact? And what could you change? You should never keep doing something “just because you have always done it”.

**Challenges You May Face**

The following list of challenges has been created to try and help Captains and Chairs be aware of potential challenges and how to overcome them. None of these challenges are insurmountable but may take some work to rectify. Very briefly:

* **Managing time** - This can be aided dramatically by making sure you plan in advance. Write a timeline, delegate and avoid leaving things to the last minute. If in doubt of how long things will take, shout and we can help you to timetable!
* **Managing degree workload alongside society duties –** We understand that you are, first and foremost, a **student.** This means that your course comes first. We will do all we can to help you balance your studies with your society commitments. Also, bear in mind your committee may be struggling too so try and support each other – when someone has a quieter spell, could they do some of another person’s role and vice versa.
* **Maintaining morale and enthusiasm within the Committee as the year progresses –** This can be challenging but, the more the committee feel they are a part of the decision and planning process for your society, the more likely it is that enthusiasm and a sense of ownership will remain. You may also find that social activity within the committee increases, just be careful you don’t get too close and start to exclude your members!
* **Setting and monitoring aims and objectives – I**t is important that you keep your aims and objectives as a society updated. This will help you plan and run your activities but also help to guide you in terms of what you want to do. The best way to set them is to review the previous years- what worked well? What do you want to keep? and what do you want to scrap? At the end of each term, look back and see what you have achieved. This will give you goals to work towards next term.
* **Committee members aren’t pulling their weight –** this is something that Chairs and Captains often face, information to help support you is in the section below.
* **Conflict –** We will look at this in the “Conflict Resolution” section of this document but all conflict is fixable – even if the other parties still do not agree with each other - when managed correctly it can be effectively dealt with.

**Compliance with Guild requirements**

We do our best to keep administration and paperwork to a minimum – we want to make it easy to run a society – but It is important that you stay compliant with the requirements the Guild has so that you are safe, insured, protected and have access to the core services and information you require to be a strong group.

**All Societies Must:**

* Complete a Society Development Plan by the end of this academic year for the next (the exact date will be communicated by your staff lead)
* Inform your staff lead of your Society Officers for the next academic year by the end of this one (the exact date will be communicated by your staff lead)
* Submit a Society Budget at the beginning of each academic year (date to be confirmed each year)
* Complete a risk assessment for every activity, via the Activities Dashboard
* Complete all forms required for each activity, via the Activities Dashboard.

**The Challenges of Being a President**

**Facilitating Conflict Resolution**

This section is all about the way that you, as a Captain or Chair, could work to resolve inter-personal issues, committee arguments or inter-society disagreements in a calm manner. There are different types of conflict but they all have similar ways to resolve them.

Before you start to get involved with any conflict that is brought to you, or that you feel is impacting upon your committee, members, or whole society it is important to establish whether the complaint is “personally impacting on the professional” or “professionally impacting on the personal.”

**Personal impacting on the professional:**

* A couple on the committee split up and no longer like each other. Rather than separate the personal (break up) from the professional (committee duties) they start complaining to you about the other one not pulling their weight/not behaving appropriately/not making good decisions.

**Professional impacting on the personal:**

* One of the committee does not think another member is pulling their weight/behaving appropriately/making good decisions and the frustration surrounding this turns into a personal issue and argument between the two of them.

Whichever situation you are in, it is vital that you, as the Chairperson, remain **professional and impartial -** even if the person being complained about is your best friend/partner/housemate.

Typical sorts of conflict are:

1. Committee member to committee member (personal impacting on the professional)
2. Committee member to committee member (professional impacting on the personal)
3. Committee member to ordinary member (personal impacting on the professional)
4. Committee member to ordinary member (professional impacting on the personal)

**Points 1-2 of these forms of conflict follow the same initial resolution steps:**

**What if someone isn’t pulling their weight?**

You may find that during your time as Captain or Chair someone on your committee is not pulling their weight within their role. This may be something you have noticed or it may be something that someone else has brought to your attention. If someone else has brought this to your attention, stop and think: **is this personal or professional?**

**Before you start:** Look at the role of the committee member; assess what their role actually is and their specific duties. Is it that they are not fulfilling their *role* or are they not fulfilling what you expect of them?

Try to think about why they are not fulfilling their role, is it for personal reasons, or can they practically not perform the role as one person (i.e. is there just too much expected of them?)

It might be worth having a general chat with your committee as a whole. How do they all feel their individual roles are going? This gives anyone you are concerned about the opportunity to air their views or worries without feeling singled out.

* Step One – Informal:
  + Have an informal chat with the committee member. Try to gage how they’re feeling; are they ok? are they enjoying the role? are they feeling overwhelmed with the role? Find out if there are external issues outside of university life.
  + Gently remind the committee member of their responsibilities, ask if they need help with any aspects of the role.
* Step 3 – Final Step
  + At this point you need to assess whether they have acted upon their warning? Do you feel their commitment has improved? Do you feel that there are any more areas for concern?
  + If you feel that they have acted upon their warning, and you have seen improvements, then carry on as normal; keeping an eye on the situation in case they slip back into old habits.

If you feel that they haven’t improved, then come and talk to your staff lead.

* Step Two – More formal
  + Has step one resolved the issue?
  + Talk to them. Set a timeframe for which improvements must be seen. Set out a clear list of what you expect – make sure it is reasonable and not personal. Try and make the objectives that you set ‘SMART’:

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**ttainable

**R**elevant

**T**ime-appropriate

* + Set a date by which you will review their role and participation in the society.

**Using the Guild Website**

As Captain or Chair of your society you will be granted admin access to your societies section of the Guild website. We have lots of how to guides on how to use this on the Guild website, and will provide training too

**Need Help?**  
If you are in any doubt about any element of being Chair or Captain, would like some help with your conflict resolution or would like some advice on running your society, please set up a meeting with your staff lead. We’re here to help!