



Thursday 4th October 2018
Societies Forum: Networking Special
Minutes

Presence

The Societies Forum was chaired by the following panel:

- Amal Jolly | *President Activities*
- Samantha Gibson | *Student Engagement Coordinator*
- Sarah Bennett | *Events Coordinator*
- Natasha Capal | *Student Activities Manager*

All society committee members were invited to attend the session.

We had students attend from a range of society categories, including Academic, Cultural and Music.

Agenda

The agenda was created by the Student Activities Team and sent out to all society committee members in advance. Hard copies of the document were also provided at the Societies Forum.

We ran through the agenda together and received the following feedback.

Freshers' Fair	Societies have requested more printed barcodes. Perhaps 3 or 4 sheets per table. We provided 2 sheets of each type of barcode but lots of societies ran out.
	The concept of grouping societies in their categories within the marquee was good. However, the societies felt that the allocations didn't completely stick to these groupings in reality.
	Societies feel it would be useful to have a map at the entrance of the marquee which lays out where all of the societies are located. This could help students that already know which societies are of interest to them to find them more quickly. It will also be beneficial for society committees when they come in to set up their stall.
	Academic societies found it hard to attract too many students at Freshers' Fair. The Students' Union mentioned the potential for some pop up events in the coming months designed specifically for our Academic Societies, due to University support.

Taster Memberships	<p>Generally taster memberships were well received by our society committees. They understood why they were necessary and feel it's given them a good opportunity to promote their society to prospective members.</p>
	<p>It was noted that while the society committees understood the function of the taster memberships, the student population at large weren't familiar with them.</p>
	<p>A discussion was had around whether taster memberships should be free. One student recommended introducing a small fee as this will help societies with little money be able to buy refreshments and the like for their taster sessions. A small charge would also act somewhat as a filter, decreasing those coming through the doors simply because it's free, meaning you're more likely to meet students that have a real interest in your society and are therefore more likely to commit to a full membership later on. A criticism against introducing taster membership fees is that this would likely put off lots of students and therefore be an obstacle to gaining any new members.</p>
	<p>Questions arise as to whether the Students' Union could offer loans or grants during this time of year to cover costs of taster sessions. This would be especially helpful for new societies who don't yet have any money in their account.</p>
	<p>The potential for the Students' Union to run larger taster events was proposed, whereby lots of societies can use our platform to run their own pop-up events. This could attract a larger crowd and potentially lead to more members in the long run. Attendees were on board with this.</p>
	<p>When asked if two weeks was a long enough duration for taster memberships, a society remarked that they noticed there were many overlaps during the two week taster period whereby lots of societies run their welcome events at the same time. While there was a general understanding that there are lots of societies and clashes are therefore inevitable, a third week would allow more time for students to check out more societies' taster sessions. It was noted that a third week of taster memberships would also give new societies a bit more of a chance to find their feet and get on top of everything, allowing them to put on a better taster session.</p>
Society Training	<p>Generally the students in the room felt that there was a good range of times/dates offered and were happy that we had equal provisions for training on both campuses.</p>

	<p>We asked if students would be happy to go to training after they have been elected in Spring but before they disappear for Summer.</p> <p>Some students admitted that if they were trained before the summer break, they would have forgotten it all by the time they're back for the new academic year.</p> <p>Others felt that it might be useful for the societies that do tend to stay active during the summer months.</p>
	<p>When asked if they like the format of the training – face to face – one student proposed that video training might be useful.</p>
	<p>One suggestion made by a student that was well received by all was that the essential information could be delivered on an online training platform and then the specialised society workshops could remain face to face. The good thing about online training in the first instance is that committees can do this remotely and therefore be ready for the start of term.</p>
	<p>Another suggestion was that we could categorise the society training sessions so that the content is more relevant to those societies (i.e. for Faith societies we would go into more detail about the Key, whereas other societies wouldn't need to know about this facility). This was well received.</p>
Specialised Society Workshops	<p>One student attended our Design Workshop last year and found it really beneficial. They felt that more sessions like this would definitely be valuable for committee members.</p>
	<p>The question was raised as to whether we could offer any photography or videography related workshops.</p>
Any Other Business	<p>Could a platform be set up whereby society committees can connect with one another?</p>
	<p>One society asked if we could get some noticeboards whereby societies can put flyers for their upcoming events. Due to limited space, it was suggested that perhaps the Society of the Month could be offered this space, as opposed to all societies.</p>
	<p>Could we run a week where societies get together and raise money for charity? The Student Activities Team mentioned RAG and how they often run a RAG week which would be able to facilitate this.</p>
	<p>Could we look into developing a Students' Union app? This can display all societies' events.</p>
	<p>One issue mentioned surrounding EleHouse & Forum bookings. This was dealt with privately as it was a one-off problem.</p>

	<p>Some students feel that unless you're part of a society, the Students' Union isn't for you.</p>
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