

How to be a President:

The President is the person with the most authority and responsibility. As President, it is up to you to lead the Society. The role is essentially two-fold: communication and delegation. You will spend a lot of your time liaising with your committee, and possibly staff in the Students' Association, the University and elsewhere. The President is, more than anyone else, personally responsible for the conduct of the Society, and must ensure it is following its own and the Students' Association regulations.

Being President does not mean you get to make all the decisions yourself. You should coordinate, rather than dominate the proceedings. Delegation is an important part of Society management. Fundamentally, the role of President is to get the best out of the committee and the Society, rather than doing everything yourself. You should endeavour to spread the workload fairly amongst all committee members; each covering their individual remit, and whatever else is necessary.

Key responsibilities:

1. Managing Change.

As a new and enthusiastic President/Chair, you will probably want to bring in some changes, some small and others which may be fairly fundamental. It is worth bearing in mind that people often find change very stressful — you will need to take your team with you, at a pace that is manageable, rather than force them to follow.

As Societies are run democratically, it is best practice to put any proposed changes to the vote. That way, you will have the backing of the majority of your committee and change will then be easier to manage. Remember to consult your constitution to see which changes are possible within the current governance, and which changes would require more fundamental reform.





2. Delegating Tasks.

Presidents/Chairs often feedback that delegation is the aspect of leadership that they are the most worried about. Many Presidents/Chairs (unfortunately) try to do everything themselves or want to control all matters. This has the dual effect of leaving you exhausted — but also leaving the rest of the committee aimless and frustrated.

While it is the job of the President to liaise with the Secretary and the Treasurer regarding the overall running of the committee, you are not required to know, for example, how the Students' Association finance system works, or how to keep membership records. These finer details are embedded within your committee members' roles, but you should ensure that the committee know what they are doing. Encourage them to contact the VPSA for help if they need it.

It is important when delegating a task to somebody to explain to them why they have been chosen. Ideally, they should have the skills and enthusiasm for the task. If they don't, they could work with someone else who is better skilled; or undertake some training.

Setting a good example is crucial. Presidents/Chairs need to ensure they complete their own tasks on time and be prepared to apologise if not. You also need to thank everyone for their contribution, no matter how small!

3. Motivating the Committee.

A President will always have the central aims of the Society or committee at the forefront of their mind — but this is not always shared by all the members. It can be particularly difficult to motivate the committee if you are low on numbers, if cliques form, or if people are disheartened for some reason. However, there are lots of ways to keep everyone excited and motivated (see section on Problem Solving below).

Being available to provide advice and support for members throughout the year where necessary is crucial in helping them feel motivated. Indeed, encouraging an atmosphere of





thoughtfulness and care will make the committee a better place to be a part of. Presidents should encourage their committee members to tell them when something is going wrong. If you have a VP, liaising between disgruntled committee members and yourself may be a key role they could play. Open and transparent communication systems tend to mean that people feel motivated for longer.

Make sure you run team-building sessions and activities (see below for ideas) but also committee socials. These can be delegated to the Social Secretary, if you have one.

Remember that, for the purposes of Society or committee's reputation and inclusion, socials shouldn't always involve alcohol.

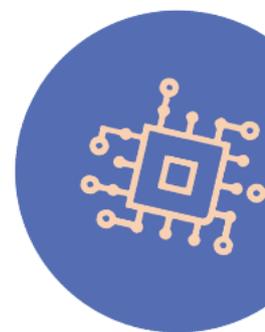
Reward committee members whenever they do something to contribute. You don't buy gifts — just an encouraging word can have a positive effect.

4. Calling and chairing meetings.

Chairing committee meetings is a main activity of the President although it is usually Secretary who pulls together the agenda before committee meetings, and writes and out the minutes afterwards. Meetings are the perfect opportunity to inject enthusiasm the committee members and discuss what events are coming up, as well as a time to provide feedback on previous events and activities. It is important to learn what worked well, and what could be improved upon. It is also a brilliant chance to make sure everyone is able to have their say in an open and safe atmosphere, and that all members are having fun, practising their skills and developing their roles.

Stick to the agenda to keep the meeting on-topic, ensuring that relevant discussions take place, and appropriate decisions are made, and the meeting is run efficiently. Ensure all points on the agenda are covered, and that if they are not, a time is arranged to reconvene. Points to be covered and the date chosen to reconvene must be noted in the minutes.

Ensure all members have the opportunity to voice their opinions, whilst avoiding irrelevant small talk. No one person should dominate. It is the duty of the Chair of the meeting to enforce democracy and ensure that quieter committee members have a say. If it is a topic in which many people have a point to make simultaneously, it is a good idea to jot down





their initials on some scrap paper as you go along so you can keep track of who is yet to speak.

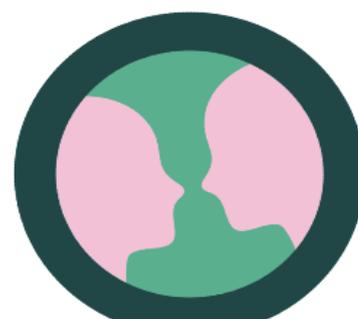
It is essential in meetings that the President/Chair ensures all identified tasks are clearly delegated to someone or a small team, so as to fulfil the role of overseer of all activities. You must manage the committee members in a way that ensures they all pull their weight and have a chance to get involved and demonstrate their skills. It is also a good idea to make sure that everyone has a diary, or at least notes down what they are supposed to do and by what date. By doing this it reminds people what they are doing, but also allows you as a President/Chair to know things have been noted down by both the Secretary in the minutes and also by the individuals.

The President/Chair must pursue delegated tasks to ensure they have been carried out sufficiently, in meetings or in between. It is important to remember that the buck stops with you. Yet, by encouraging a vibrant committee spirit and making sure all members are properly trained, a feeling of empowerment and inspiration will serve to partially release the pressure resting on your shoulders. Committee members must be aware that if they cannot complete a delegated task, due to other commitments, they must inform you, so that it can be re-delegated.

Post-meeting socials are usually well received. They will help your committee to bond and work well as a team. Communicate with your Social Secretary to arrange such events and ensure they are as inclusive as possible.

1. Risk Assessment/Insurance.

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. Anyone who creates 'hazards' needs to be responsible for managing them. So, it is crucial for Societies to be in control of their activities, particularly in relation to insurance. Find out more about this by emailing ypsa@dusa.co.uk





Problem solving:

Below are some suggestions that you can try if you feel that things aren't quite going as planned:

1. DUSA support
2. Committee bonding and re-training
3. Holding members to account
4. Rewarding members



- **DUSA support:**

If you are struggling at all with any aspect of leading your committee, come and chat to the VPSA and Clubs and Societies Co-ordinator. It's best to do this as soon as something looks like it might be an issue in the future.

It's natural to want to keep issues within the Society until it's necessary to ask for outside help, but in our experience the most successful resolutions are those where action (such as DUSA assistance) has been taken early on.

There's no shame in keeping the VPSA informed of what's happening, and we'd much rather help with something that turns out to resolve itself, than firefight later on.

- **Committee Bonding and Re-Training:**

Whether you are experiencing problems or not, it might be a good idea to think about having a bonding session, such as a Committee Development Day, to plan the semester ahead.

Get everyone enthused about the projects ahead and clarify everyone's roles and responsibilities on the committee and what is expected from them, so everyone feels in the know and comfortable.

To start off the committee bonding training, why not run some games to get to know everyone a bit better? It would be great to plan these in between other exercises you run –



like setting the constitution, strategic planning, team values and planning the semester ahead. There are loads of creative things you can do – a simple Google search will give you lots of ideas.

Incorporate a fun activity into the day so everyone has a chance to talk socially and make friends. Snacks and soft drinks go down well if you are able to organise refreshments.

A) Constitution and roles.

Your constitution allows you to define the make-up of your committee and aims and objectives, but this is a starting point. Empowering your committee to define the detail of what they look to achieve over the year will mean they are more likely to achieve it!

You can decide the aims and objectives together: get out some big sheets of paper and pens and break the committee down into little groups, throwing out ideas of what they think your committee should be aiming to do, what the basic reasons are for existing. Then draw out the different committee positions and how they work together to achieve this — so that everyone writes out their roles and all the details that entails. This gives you a description of roles that everyone can sign and knowingly agree to what they are signing up to. This doesn't have to be too formal or off-putting, it just gives every committee member the security to know what responsibilities lie with them. If this differs markedly from what is in the constitution, you can look to amend it.

B) Team values.

In addition, set some 'team values' — values you think the committee share to make working together easy: e.g. phones off in meetings; listen to one another; don't be afraid to ask for help; be creative etc.

Remember, it is best if values come from the committee itself, so let them throw out these ideas, and from all the ideas formulate the list you then circulate to everyone. It might be best to do this in small groups that feed back together.





C) Plan the semester ahead.

As mentioned already, the role of the President is to think of the bigger picture and to coordinate all the activities of the Society or committee. However, your committee members will be so much more on-board if they are the ones driving the vision. Ask your members what they would like to see their Society committee provide for them, why did they join in the first place?

Perhaps go back to basics and run an exercise to get everyone thinking creatively about the semester ahead and plan what you would like the committee to achieve. Set goals and targets, plan dates of socials and think about how everything you do can be inclusive and welcoming.

- **Holding Members Accountable:**

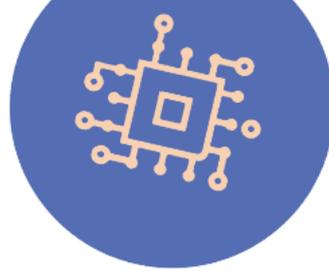
A) Hold to account through discussion.

A great product of creating team values and going through everyone's assigned roles together is that you know that each committee member is fully aware of what is expected of them. Therefore, if you or any other committee member feel that others are not upholding their role or the values, you can hold them to account by discussing this with them, but not in a public or personal way.

Focusing on undesirable behaviour rather than the person stops discussions dissolving into an argument. Discussion should be based on specific constitutional points, or team values. This depersonalises the process. It is important that the committee feel comfortable enough to raise (in confidence) when they feel others are not contributing what they should, and you should make everyone aware of this from the start.

If previously assigned tasks are not completed, apologies should be raised in meetings, or in discussions, so tasks can be taken forward and a 'no blame' culture is established. After an apology is given, a way forward should be found e.g., "Sorry, I had a deadline — the minutes will be done in three days next time."





B) Be positive!

The best thing to do is to think about the future after issues have been resolved. This process will only be successful if everyone is willing to put all the previous bad feeling and incidences behind them and move on.

The best way to attack a new semester is with enthusiasm, boosting up the members of your committee. If you are not excited about the challenges, aims of the group and events ahead, no one will be. YOU can turn this around.

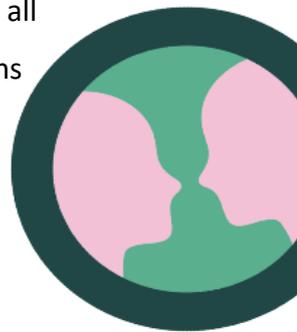
- **Rewarding Members:**

You can never say 'thank you' enough as a leader. As you are not able to give financial awards, there might be other things you can do, like bringing cakes to a meeting or getting the VPSA to provide committee certificates to everyone at the end of the year.

Don't forget to apply for the Dundee Plus Award for yourselves and get involved in the DUSA Annual Awards too! This aims to recognise the hard work of as many Societies and their committees as possible: not only for the winners; but with a special evening for all nominees. Every Society can nominate themselves, so keep a look out for nominations opening.

- **Conduct Appraisals:**

Conduct (at least once a term) a one-on-one review/appraisal with each committee member. Provide them feedback as well as accepting feedback on your own performance and offer constructive criticism or helpful assistance where necessary. Remember when conducting appraisals that committee members are volunteers - the aim is to improve their experience, as well as that of the society, as a whole.



How to be a Vice President:

Your job is to help the President on an operational level – while they lead the development of the society, you make sure things are operating as they should. You'll also need experience of what the society does, a strong belief in the aims of the society, and a comprehensive understanding of how societies operate within the Union.

Key responsibilities:

- Know everything the chair does and support them every step of the way
- Make sure your committee members know what they're doing
- Be impartial
- Understand all of the committee roles and adapt to support other roles accordingly
- Helping the President with anything they're up to and stepping in to lead when they're not available

The Vice President doesn't have any *specific* role so it's really important that you talk with the President and the rest of the Committee to outline exactly what you both want and need to do for the committee.

Read through the How to be a President section above (especially the problem-solving part) as most of this will be relevant to you too!

