Being an effective club or society

The purpose of clubs and societies

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Session Planning

Aims of the session

This is the suggested first session of the clubs and societies officer training programme. It aims to put things into context through encouraging participants to share views and allowing you to understand a little better those you will be training.

As many of the participants may not know each other, it is important to give them the opportunity to get properly acquainted at the start.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Identify the value of clubs and societies to students
- Explain the reasons the Students' Union supports clubs and societies.

Method

The exercise will involve a short introduction in plenary, some work in pairs, a brainstorm, group work and feedback in plenary.

Resources required

- Flip chart and pens
- A copy of the Union constitution and / or mission statement

Suggested timings

Introduction	5 mins
Pairs work	5 mins
Debrief	10 mins
Brainstorm	5 mins
Group work	15 mins
Debrief /discussion in plenary	15 mins
Summary	5 mins
Total running time = 60 minutes	

Running the session

Running the session

Introduction

1. Start by introducing yourself, outlining the aims and learning objectives of the session. Explain how the session will run, i.e. the methods you will use and what skills you will be developing.

2. As this may be the first training that the participants have attended it is particularly important to be positive / enthusiastic and emphasise that the training style is participative.

Icebreaker

3. Split the group into pairs. Ensure they are not paired with someone from the same club or society. If there is an odd number of participants have one group of three.

4. Ask them to introduce themselves to their partner. Ask them to tell each other why they joined and became active within their particular society or club.

Debrief/Discussion

5. After 5 mins, stop the pairs. Ask each pair to introduce themselves and explain why they joined their particular club or society.

6. Write each new reason on a piece of flipchart paper.

7. After every pair has spoken, draw attention to either:

   a) The fact that there is a wide range of different reasons that they joined. The list may include:
      - to meet people / make friends outside my course / hall of residence
      - because I wanted to continue playing football/badminton etc.
      - because I wanted to learn how to play football etc. better
      - because I am interested in history/animal rights etc.
      - because the club or society had a reputation for organising good socials etc.

   This should not be surprising as the student body is so diverse, but it underlines the value of clubs and societies in bringing heterogeneous groups together.

   b) The fact that they have largely chosen the same reason (if this is the case it is likely to be either "to make friends" or "to continue playing football etc."). Express a little surprise and ask the group to shout out some other reasons why students might join a club or society. Add these to the flipchart.

8. Conclude the debrief by sticking the flipchart paper on a wall and stating that clubs and societies are clearly extremely important in drawing students from a range of backgrounds and courses together. As many freshers sign up in freshers / intro week they enable students to make friends with others with common interests.

9. Tell the group you would like them to suggest other benefits of clubs and societies to students and to the Union.

10. Write `Benefits' at the top of a piece of flipchart paper and `Students' and `Students' Unions' below it (split the flipchart in half for ease).

11. Ask them to call out benefits, making sure that you thank for each contribution. Encourage them to think of the benefits for clubs and societies officers as well as members.

12. As soon as someone says "it develops skills" thank them, write it down and encourage the group to add specific skills to the list. Point out the difference between a transferable skill (e.g. teamwork, leadership) and other skills (e.g. a particular sporting skill).

13. If no-one mentions skills development then ask the group "what about skills development?" and add this to the list after they have agreed it.

14. The group will probably struggle to identify many benefits to the Students' Union. Once there is a pause, stop the brainstorm and say that you would like them to work in smaller groups to consider this in greater detail.

Group work

15. Split the group into groups of 5-7 and ask them to discuss why they think the Students' Union supports clubs and societies (try and find out the total amount budgeted to be spent on clubs and societies in the current year).

16. Tell them that they have 15 minutes to discuss this (you can trim this to 10 mins if you are over-running) and that you will be coming together to debrief it later.

17. Allow the groups a couple of minutes to get settled and then visit to check that they are underway. If a group is struggling ask them "What is the purpose of the Students Union?"

Debrief/Discussion

18. In order to facilitate discussion, ask one of the groups to briefly summarise their discussion. Write up some key words or phrases before moving on to the next group.

The key point this discussion/debrief needs to bring out is that the Students' Union benefits because students benefit.

Review & Summary

Take 5 minutes at the end to re-cap on the points made and to emphasise how much the Students' Union values Clubs & Societies and the work those attending do in running them. Review learning objectives, and hand out evaluation forms.

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