
Factsheet:

Starting a New Club

Last updated: December 2020

Introduction

This factsheet provides information to help start a new SSAGO club. Whilst each university/college is likely to have a slightly different system for starting a new society, this factsheet aims to give some generic pointers and to provide information about the requirements within SSAGO.

First steps

It doesn't matter if you're a third year and completely settled at university or a fresher eager to be involved in SSAGO, anyone can start a SSAGO club. If you are thinking of starting a club then get in touch with the SSAGO Members' Officer (members@ssago.org) as soon as possible. They can make sure you receive up to date information on the requirements plus can offer advice and help in the early stages of club development. The SSAGO exec should all be there to help you establish your club and feel welcome in SSAGO. None of them will mind an email asking for information. The more you ask, the more you understand and the easier it will be to set up the club. The exec can be contacted via email (exec@ssago.org).

As well as contacting SSAGO it is also necessary to talk to the Students' Union at your college/university. The union will provide help and information regarding setting up a club. It is worth asking if there is any way to recruit within the college/university, where posters can be displayed, if emails can be sent to students and if any funding is available to help new clubs get off the ground.

Requirements of your union

It is usual that Student Unions require a certain number of people to be listed as 'members' before a new club/society can be registered. They may also require each one of these to pay a membership fee. Find these requirements out as soon as possible so as you know the target number you are aiming for.

Student Unions often have a society constitution that each society must sign up to and abide by. Ask for a copy of this so as there is something to follow and no chance of getting on the wrong side of the union before you even become registered!

Finding information

Most Student Unions have a designated sabbatical officer or member of staff allocated to

helping and supporting clubs and societies. Finding this person is the best way to find out all the rules, regulations and requirements of starting a new club.

Hopefully all the information about SSAGO you need to know can be found on the SSAGO website. The Resources section has a number of factsheets to offer guidance as well as our Constitution and Policy Documents which set out the rules and regulations of SSAGO.

Trawling through all this information when trying to start a club can be a daunting prospect and for simple answers and some guidance contact the national exec (exec@ssago.org.uk). These people are voted in to the positions each year and exist to aid the smooth running of the organisation including assisting those with queries. It is much better to seek advice or ask a question than just to go ahead and hope for the best. The exec much prefers a few questions than having to pick up the pieces afterwards. Ultimately they are there to help so feel free to use them.

It is also advisable to make contact with local Scouting and Guiding in your university/college county. There may be many opportunities open to members by doing this, whether it is finding a regular meeting place, activity provision or volunteering roles. It is also polite to let them know that you are trying to start a Scout and Guide Club at a university/college in their county. Contacting the county commissioners for Scouts and Guides is the best place to start and they can then put you in touch with those more local to the university/college. To get a contact start with a quick internet search, if no luck contact the national exec or give a quick call to Scouting/Guiding HQs.

Recruiting members

The best place to recruit members is often at freshers' fayre. However, many unions will not allow unregistered clubs to attend these. Check out whether they will let you but do not be put off if you cannot have a stall.

SSAGO has posters and leaflets it can send to clubs to help with recruitment. Contact the Publicity Officer (publicity@ssago.org) to ask for some of these. These have a space to add contact details of the club and potentially a meeting time and place. Ask your union where these can be displayed use them to advertise a social that people can attend; this could be a silly games night, a campfire, a cuppa in a local coffee shop or anything that takes your fancy. See if the union will send out an email to all students about this and publicise as widely as possible in university buildings including halls of residence.

It can be off putting for people to be asked to sign up and pay to join a club straight away. Try to get payment from as many people as possible to help towards paying for your union registration (if required) but ensure that everyone's names and contact details are gathered so they can all be contacted about future socials.

If you are struggling to get the money together to pay for the required number of members at your union but have a list of interested people see if you can organise a minor

fundraising event in your students' union. This could take the form of something very simple such as a cake sale. This requires minimum effort, helps to advertise the club as well as gaining the funds to be able to register with your union.

Recruiting members can take time. Some clubs are lucky and get 15 members straight off who attend everything and are very enthusiastic; others get a handful of committed members regularly attending events. Do not be put off by this. Carry on arranging and enjoying events, socialising and publicising both the events and success of them. Get to freshers' fayre the following year with plenty of photos, a few sweets to give away, a decent programme of events and a big smile. This will hopefully attract a number of new and enthusiastic members and within a couple of years the club will hopefully be booming!

Registering your club with SSAGO

Once there are 5 or more people from the same area (does not need to be the same institution) who are meeting and want to join SSAGO they can register as a SSAGO club. This is done through contacting the SSAGO Members' Officer (members@ssago.org). The Members' Officer will require some basic details to register you on the membership system. Once your club is registered you'll be able to put your members onto the system. You should also fill in the other details on the system detailing your club email address, club committee, neckerchief colours, stealable mascot and members' names.

For the first year as a registered SSAGO club there is no requirement to pay SSAGO membership fees. These are covered by SSAGO as a welcome gift and a helping hand to new clubs.

Selecting the club committee

It is a requirement that SSAGO clubs have a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. These may be easy to choose from those who have been involved in the setting up of the club. If, however, there are a number of people interested in each role a simple election can take place with a members' vote. There may be other positions within the club committee ranging from publicity officer, guide/scout liaison officer, social secretary and vice-president. The Students' Union may have requirements as to the positions but once the main three are filled many unions allow for clubs to develop their own committee positions.

The union may well have a job description for committee positions so those taking the roles in the first instance should ensure they have the appropriate skills to fulfil them (ie Secretary able to take minutes, Treasurer able to keep accounts).

Organising socials

SSAGO socials can be near enough anything as long as it does not appear on the 'Banned Activities' List (see banned activities factsheet). It is good to have a range of activities to attract all different people, from treasure hunts to pool nights, campfires to craft! Every

social should be risk assessed to ensure it is safe to carry out, plus each should have a suitable 'InTouch' system laid out for it. For more information about how to run a club night look at the 'Running a club event', 'Risk Assessing an evening' and 'Doing Adventurous Activities' factsheets.

For inspiration of socials have a look at other SSAGO club websites, plus have a look around your town/city, there may be numerous places that have the possibility to be a good night out with friends. Try to find a Scout or Guide hut local to your university/college or a room in the university/college that you can use for socials as well.

Try not to make the first few socials too expensive to attract people to come along and see what SSAGO is all about. Plan a few so as details can be given out at the first social, rather than relying on people checking their emails each week.

Finally, ensure that you are having fun organising and participating in the socials. If you are then the club will be a fun thing to be part of. If they are not enjoyable for you as someone starting the club then it may be that members are not enjoying them either. Consult the members if you're unsure or need some ideas.

Many committees have a social secretary who is in charge of organising the socials on a weekly basis. Additionally having a routine, even if just a weekly pub meeting, can help to get people to stay. A good routine may consist of a weekly pub meeting and a social.

Choosing a neckerchief

Through contacting the SSAGO Members' Officer (members@ssago.org) it can be established if there has ever been a SSAGO club at your university/college in the past. If there has been one they may have had a neckerchief. If this is the case you can either use the colours of that neckerchief or pick another. If there has never been a club in theory there is a totally free choice as to the colours you choose.

Before thinking too hard it is worth having a check of the SSAGO Club Directory on the SSAGO website to ensure you do not choose the same colours as another SSAGO club. Clubs are welcome to choose a neckerchief colour for any reason! It may be that it stands out, that it is their favourite colour or it may be their university colours (check out the sports teams' kits for this).

There are various suppliers of neckerchiefs. If you don't know of any local to you the national exec can give you some contacts (exec@ssago.org).

Finding a mascot

It is usual for every club to have a mascot, often in the form of a cuddly toy. Clubs are free to choose whatever mascot they like, name it and bring it to SSAGO events. It should be pointed out that it is expected that mascots attend national SSAGO events, where they are able to be 'stolen' by other clubs. If stolen a forfeit is required to be fulfilled in order to have

them returned. This is all light-hearted and fun so choose a mascot and bring it along!

Club merchandise

Most clubs have a select amount of clothing that members can purchase, often a t-shirt and a hooded sweatshirt. Some clubs have a club logo such as their mascot and name on it whilst others have their university crest and name of society on it. Before designing anything approach your Students' Union to see if they have any suppliers they use to provide club merchandise. If they do there may be requirements of what you must have on the articles of clothing. Clubs can choose whatever colour of clothing they wish. Feel free to contact the Publicity Officer (publicity@ssago.org) if you require any assistance in designing your logo.

Attending National Events

All clubs are urged to attend National Events wherever possible. These are advertised on the SSAGO website and use rally.ssago.org as their booking and information website. The 'What is a National Event' factsheet explains what these are and the 'First rally' factsheet gives some idea of what to expect and what to bring to rally.

National Events are a chance to meet SSAGO members from across the UK. Having attended one rally many people become hooked. Going home with photos and stories of a fabulous time at rally can be an excellent way to attract and retain members, eager to experience the fun.