

RUNNING A SOCIETY

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Introduction

Once you have registered your society, established its objectives and elected a committee, there are many things still to be done. A short overview of these tasks is given. Please refer to more in depth publications where appropriate.

Working With A Committee

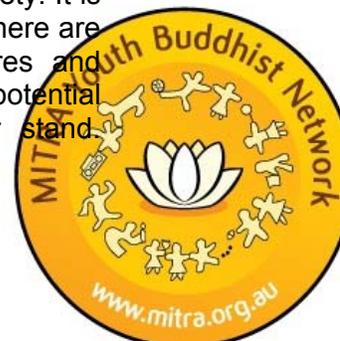
A strong Buddhist society is based upon on a solid committee. For a society to run well there needs to be effective communication between the committee members. Meetings should be held on a regular basis not only to plan events but to have tasks accounted for and updated. An agenda should be prepared beforehand and minutes of each meeting should be sent out afterwards. Ensuring that committee members understand their roles and responsibilities is another important task. Please see the [Committee Handbook](#) for more details on this, including a breakdown of roles and responsibilities for each office bearer.

Funding/Bookkeeping

It is essential for a Buddhist society to maintain effective cash flows. As a Buddhist society, most common activities will not require much money, such as Dharma talks and meditation sessions. However, there are higher expenditures associated with larger events such as retreats, picnics or conventions. These should be planned together with the rest of the committee. Consult your union or student guild for any funding subsidies or opportunities as they can be of great assistance in cutting costs and are normally a large untapped resource. Bookkeeping is also essential for the transparency of all accounts (unions or guilds want to know where money is being spent), and the treasurer needs to be aware of the current state of the bank accounts at all times.

Membership

Orientation is the essential time to recruit members as well as promote your society. It is a very important event and should be planned months in advance. Ensure that there are enough people to be at the stand at the different times, enough brochures and information items. Make sure that everybody is prepared and knows what to tell potential recruits. Try something different and interesting to attract people to your stand.



It is important to keep in track of your members and get them involved. At your events, talk to your members; get to know them as a friend. From time to time, call up your members to see how they are and inform them of what's going on in the society. For more details on running orientation week effectively, see the publication entitled [Orientation Week](#).

Society Renewal

Each year, an AGM needs to be held to renew the committee. Inform all your members of this important event. Look out for active members during the year and ask them to take a position in the committee if they seem suitable. At the AGM, you should report on the years' activities, the budget and the positions available for the current committee. Before the voting process, it is good for candidates to prepare a platform even if there is no one running against them. This way, it shows they are serious about their position. Also consult your union or student guild for details required for re affiliation. Good record keeping during the year will prevent you from a lot of work at this time.

Dharma Activities (organising talks, activities)

Dharma talks are one of the most common activities to Buddhist societies. Plan a timetable of events to be run at the start of the year, and have a list of dharma teachers which you can call upon for activities. If you are uncertain who to contact, many other societies will be willing to help you. You may wish to consult the [Australian Buddhist Directory](#). For a more information on running Dharma events, see the publication [Dhamma Talks](#). For ideas on activities to run for your society, see [Ideas For Activities](#).

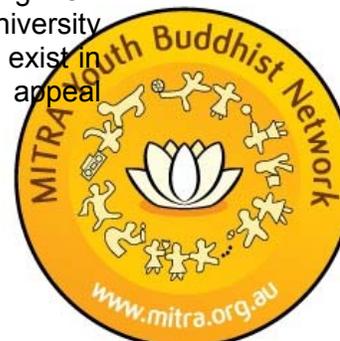
Advertising

Marketing is the way to spread the Dharma across university campus. Different universities have different approaches, depending on what works best at the campus. Common forms of advertising include posters and leaflets. Put them up in areas where they will not be taken down or covered up quickly. You may also try putting posters up at different Dharma centres as well. Word of mouth is very effective especially to get people interested. Using coloured and attractive emails will make them more interesting to read and having a regularly updated website well be beneficial. For more on advertising and getting the message across to members, see the [Marketing and Promotion Guide](#).

Growing Your Society

Once your committee has a grasp on the basic activities it needs to carry out, it may strive towards more ambitious and larger scale projects to provide for its members and community. This includes a greater focus on attracting members, running events on a larger scale and working with other societies.

Orientation week is the most crucial time of the year in regards to attracting new members. This is the time when the society receives public exposure to the university community, thus allowing students to acknowledge that a Buddhist society does exist in the university. In order to attract members, the society must be able to appeal



successfully to its prospective members. Current committee members must be able to practice the Dharma by radiating warmth and metta in order to attract new members.

Other than during orientation week, new members may discover your society well into the semester or year. These members should also be made to feel welcome and encouraged to participate in any up-coming activities. Members who are particularly active should also be invited to help organize events and encouraged in becoming future committee members.

Larger events such as Maitri Night (a concert night with upwards of 300 guests) require an enormous amount of time, effort, organization, enthusiasm and teamwork from all those involved. Such large events provide the society with an opportunity to develop their teamwork skills and closer bonds, as well as skills in areas such as singing, acting, dancing, technical support or marketing. Such large scale events are often publicized in and out of campus, thus not only attracting prospective members and committee members for the society but also the support of other Buddhist organizations and monasteries as well as Buddhist societies from other universities.

Although priority is often given to the successful running of one's own society, working with members of other Buddhist societies can have many added benefits. Quite often, a particular role will be allocated within the executive committee for liaison or outreach purposes with other societies

Benefits of working with other societies:

- forms a network which will be beneficial short term as well as long term
- provides an opportunity for committee members to learn from one another
- smaller societies acquire the support they need
- combined events can be run thus saving resources
- provides an opportunity for friendships to develop
- ideas, resources, information on any up-coming Buddhist events can be circulated

