

University Buddhist Societies

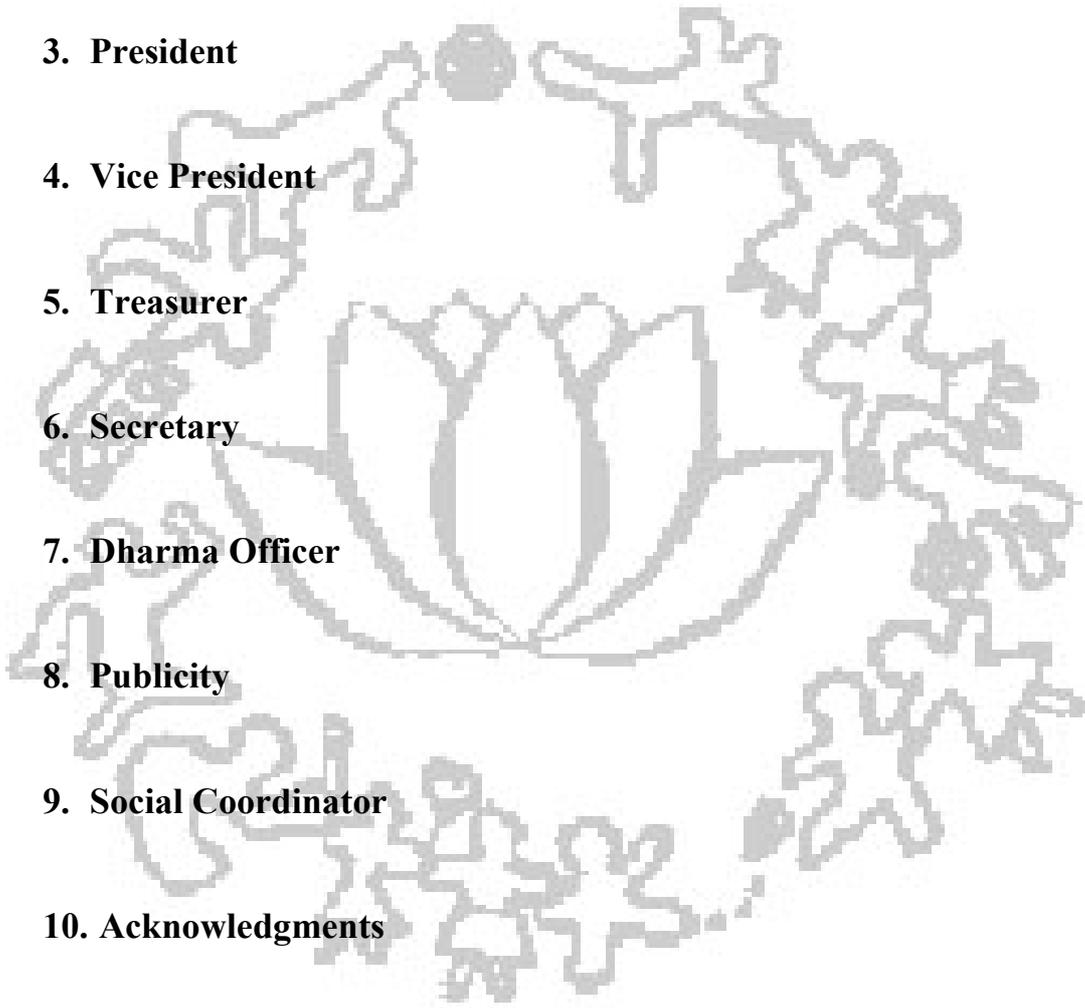
Executive Committee Handbook

1st Edition, September 2003



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FOREWORD

The following has been compiled for the benefit of all participating university Buddhist societies and for any future participating university Buddhist societies. The ideas came from small group discussions consisting of executive committee members from each University Buddhist society group in accordance with their positions within the committee. The aim of the handbook is to guide new committee members into their respective roles. Furthermore, we hope that this document will assist university Buddhist societies in the important task of designing and maintaining the roles and responsibilities of each committee position.

The following document forms a guide to running a committee based on the experience of current and past committee members. Not all of the ideas may be suitable for all committees, especially for example in the case of small societies where committee members may take up multiple roles. The document also does not make allowances for the fact that some people may have particular strengths and weaknesses. What this document does is identify some key areas which should be addressed by a Buddhist society. We strongly encourage that you discuss within your own committee, these roles and responsibilities and other issues that will inevitably arise in the committee situation.

In this edition, we have divided each position into separate sections. The first section, *Roles*, is defined as ‘the characteristic and expected social behavior of an individual’ and is intended to present a taste of what that position encapsulates. It can be thought of as a set of general principles or goals under which to operate.

The next section, *Responsibilities*, is more specific as it systematically addresses the each of the items a position holder may be expected to carry out. *Responsibilities* is further subdivided into categories to make them easier to understand.

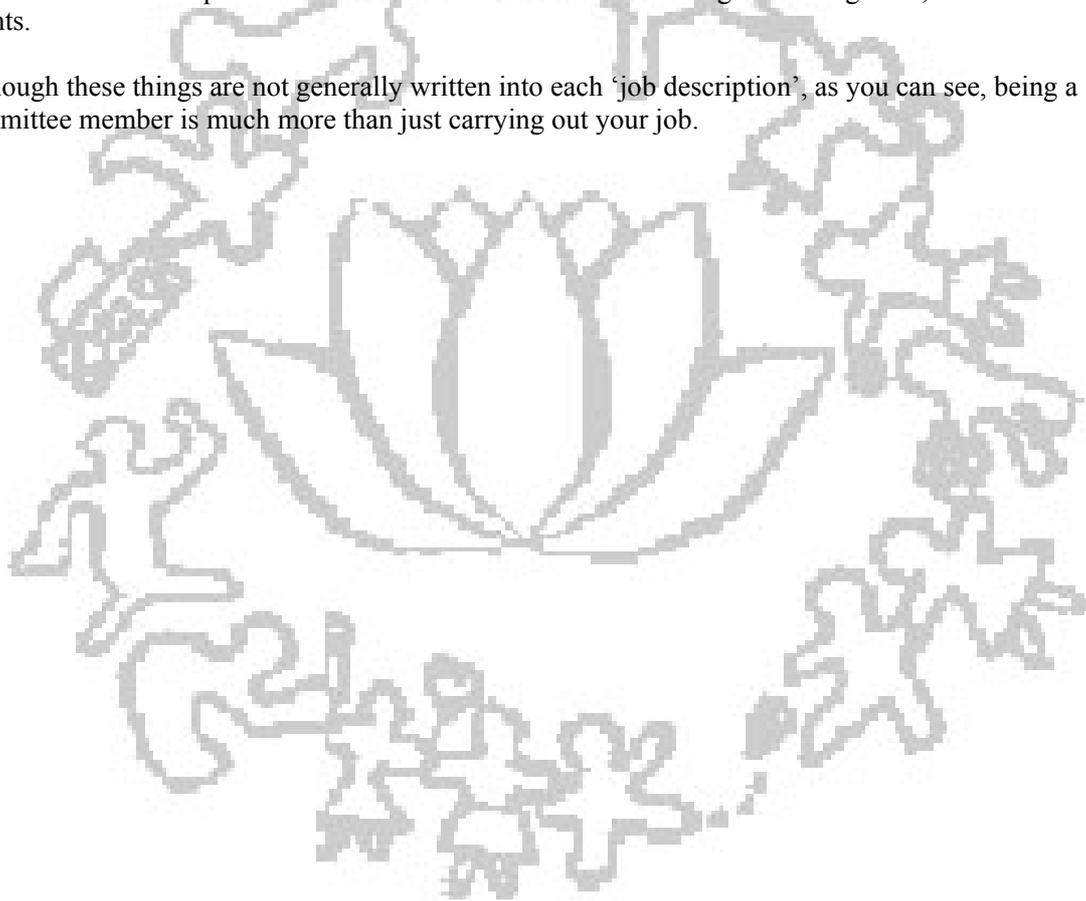
Finally, if there is anything, which you feel in your experience may be noted in this handbook for the benefit of others, please do not hesitate to contact any members of the Mitra committee mitra@yahoo.com.au or contact Lawrence Ong

BEING A COMMITTEE MEMBER

Being a committee member involves much more than just being a Secretary, Treasurer or Social Coordinator. It is important to understand that beyond these specific roles, there are also other aspects to consider. As committee members in a Buddhist Society, we are responsible for propagating the Dharma. As a starting point, this will require us to develop good relationships within the committee. We must be able to support each other as part of a team, striving towards common goals. Developing good relationships with members is also important as it is often difficult for new students and members to discover the Dharma without much support and encouragement.

However, whilst we are responsible for others, we must also have some knowledge of the Dharma. It has been a common experience that often, committee members do not strive to understand that which they represent within the University! Committee members should as much as possible, encourage each other to learn and excel in the practice of the Dharma whether this be through attending talks, retreats or other events.

Although these things are not generally written into each 'job description', as you can see, being a committee member is much more than just carrying out your job.



PRESIDENT

The president is charged with many roles within a Buddhist society. These have to be balanced with the President’s own interests as a student and in other aspects of his or her life. Nevertheless, the President represents a model committee member, and should clearly see the benefits and develop a **passion** for spreading the Dharma and working with people. In seeing the benefits, he or she must have or develop the **energy** to motivate and instill passion in others for the Dharma. These qualities should be balanced with **loving kindness** as an example of putting Dharma into practice.

ROLES

Delegates	Duties to committee members
Responsible	Ultimately for the society, its image and its standing in the Buddhist community
Initiates	Ideas and puts them into work
Vision	For the direction of the society, the committee and the members of the society
Energy	Ability to motivate others to strive for the society and the propagation of Buddhism within and outside the University environment

RESPONSIBILITIES

DHARMA

1. To be able to spread the Dharma, presidents must have a sound knowledge of what it is and how to apply it.

MEETINGS

Prior to meetings:

1. Set times for meetings by surveying availabilities of committee members (give some optional times for committee members 2 or 3 weeks before the meeting). Alternatively, committee members can be asked to submit their availabilities to the president or secretary.
2. Work with secretary to prepare the agenda. If need be, ensure all relevant research is done on agenda items before meetings

During meetings:

3. President is the chair of meetings. He/she must keep track of time and maintain the flow of the meeting according to the objectives/agenda. He/she must ensure committee members are punctual and that as many as possible are in attendance. This is a key to developing strong relationships among committee members.
4. Along with the agenda, committee members who are delegated tasks should be noted (e.g. on a whiteboard) to make sure responsibilities are clearly acknowledged.
5. Subcommittees may be formed to facilitate progress on larger projects

An example:

UNSW 1st meeting: **Handover meeting** takes place where each past committee members passes his/her documents over to the new corresponding committee member. In doing so, each new committee member understands why he/she is in their particular position and what he/she is expected to achieve.

This meeting also sets the mindset of the committee, that is to respect the Dharma, establish etiquette during meetings eg. to not talk when someone else is talking and to get back on track if a tangent in conversation occurs. A motto can also be formed such as to be understanding and compassionate towards others.

2nd meeting: Propose the main events for the upcoming year

3rd meeting: Finalise the plans for the upcoming year

Meetings should be called regularly, e.g. approximately once every 1-2 months or depending on upcoming events. Another example: YBS/BLIAYAD every 2nd Sunday of each month.

COMMUNICATION

1. Information should be shared amongst all committee members (like update what is going on around our society or any news in and out of society.) All committee members must have some knowledge/information of upcoming events and details about its organisation.
2. If this information cannot be accessed through emails, then the secretary should call and update the committee.
3. As a spokesperson, the president should know members and activities of the society well and maintain links with external societies/organisations.

GENERAL

1. Should know/define their role, so there will be no taking up of other committee member's responsibilities
2. Maintain communication with the committee via email, sms, telephone (can be done via secretary as well)
3. Be aware of time management (think ahead of time by setting the activities in advance)
4. Be aware of people management (delegate task to individual committee well in advance, and ensure the suitability of the task to particular individual for the benefit of the society and that person)
5. Be aware of your own emotions and feelings and those of others.

VICE PRESIDENT

ROLES

Delegates	Duties to the committee
Responsible	For the society and its continued growth and success
Initiates	Ideas and puts them to work
Energy	Ability to motivate others to strive for the initiatives of the society
Support	President in his/her roles and responsibilities

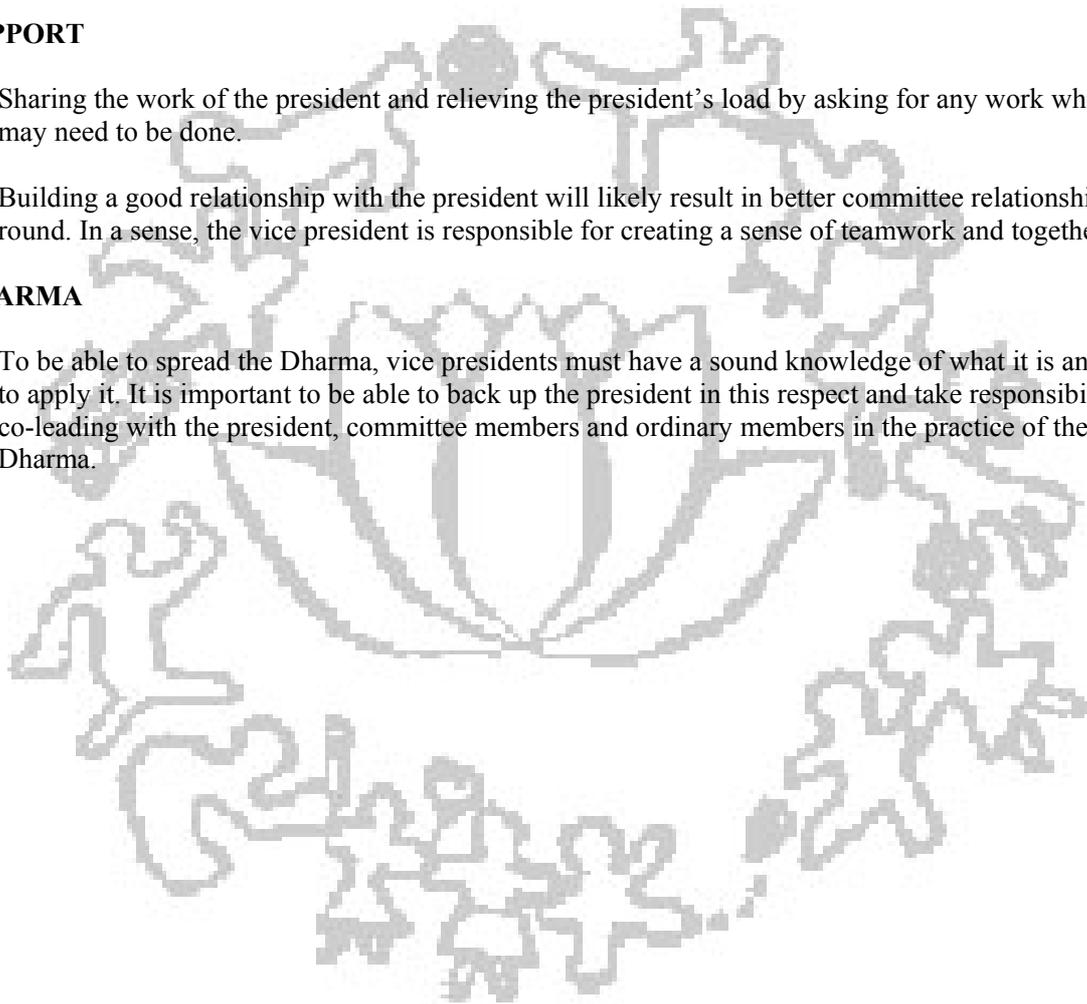
RESPONSIBILITIES

SUPPORT

1. Sharing the work of the president and relieving the president's load by asking for any work which may need to be done.
2. Building a good relationship with the president will likely result in better committee relationships all round. In a sense, the vice president is responsible for creating a sense of teamwork and togetherness.

DHARMA

1. To be able to spread the Dharma, vice presidents must have a sound knowledge of what it is and how to apply it. It is important to be able to back up the president in this respect and take responsibility for co-leading with the president, committee members and ordinary members in the practice of the Dharma.



TREASURER

RESPONSIBILITIES

FINANCIAL

1. **Bookkeeping**, preparing financial statements and keeping accounts of income and expenditure from all aspects of society functioning, including donations, membership, charity work etc.
2. **Liaising** with the auditor and union/guild body overseeing society
3. **Prepare** budgets for events in conjunction with committees so as to understand requirements for each specific event.
4. Apply for **funding** through university unions or guilds by completing appropriate applications/claims.
5. Handle **banking transactions** including keeping bank statements, reconciling bank account balance with accounts and writing cheques for relevant expenses.
6. Informing the committee on any **financial issues** e.g. current financial standing, deciding on society expenditure and budgeting, reduction of expenses and efficient allocation of funds
7. Report at **AGM** on the financial position of the society.

FUNDRAISING

1. Propose activities for **fundraising** (if required) including preparation of pre-fundraising income statement.

GENERAL

1. Be **involved** in society activities such as how all other executive members do. Because treasurers are often indirectly involved with events, it is easier for treasurers to neglect attending Buddhist events that would benefit them.

SECRETARY

RESPONSIBILITIES

SOCIETY RECORDS

1. Keep records of society membership. This includes designing and formatting membership forms and updating membership lists/databases when new members join, or existing ones change details.
2. Obtain feedback from members about society satisfaction and any other requests they may have.
3. Be responsible for society memorabilia such as photo albums, back issues of newsletters etc.

MEETINGS

Prior to meetings:

1. Broadcast meeting details to committee members well in advance.
2. Compile agenda in conjunction with the president. Agenda should take note of any previously unresolved issues.

During meetings:

3. Present unresolved business arising from previous meetings
4. Keep record of meetings in the form of minutes.

GENERAL

1. Communicate activities to members via email, organising phone lists etc.
2. Support President/ Vice President, and other committee members.
3. Coordinate events by working with the Publicity/ Marketing dept.
4. Facilitate communication within the committee.
5. Distribute pamphlets/newsletters to all members.
6. Be responsible for orientation by organising materials required such as a receipt book, promotional materials (newsletters, show bags) and membership forms.
7. Create duty rosters for events.

DHARMA OFFICER

ROLES

Awareness	Promote awareness of the Dharma amongst members and the University community in general. The society may be the first and only point of contact for students interested in Buddhism.
Balance	Within the society, promote balance between both social and Dharma activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

DHARMA TALKS

1. Keep a database of speakers and their contact details
2. As the person responsible for talks, it is important to choose a variety of Dharma topics that will suit the target audience e.g. at the beginning of the semester when newcomers are more likely to come to a Dharma talk, arrange a talk on Buddhist basics or an introduction to Buddhism. Before exam/assignment time for example, speakers could talk about how to alleviate stress, increasing self awareness or how Buddhism can help you in your studies.
3. Choose your speakers who are knowledgeable about the topic concerned.
4. Periodically review the topics chosen. Eg. Through surveys at the beginning of the year and during dharma talks. Try and get a picture of the Dharma talk attendees' opinions of the speakers and the topics. Otherwise try and find out what topics the attendees would like to hear about and what times are most suitable for them.
5. Timing of the talks. Hold the talk on the day and hour, which would be most suitable for the majority of members.
6. Promote the talks every week through posters, university newsletters, emails etc.
7. Organise the speakers well. Preferably with around 4-6 weeks in advance of the dharma talk. At worst, organise a speaker within 2 weeks of the talk or within the same week as the dharma talk (something which should be kept to a minimum).

GENERAL

1. Be ready to consult sources on Dharma when needed, especially when planning Dharma activities such as talks and performances. The Dharma officer should be able to provide a background to participants on the relevant topics.

PUBLICITY OFFICER

ROLES

Dharma	Communicate teachings of the Buddha to members either periodically or when required
Information	Communicate society information such as events and activities to members of society and University if appropriate
Profile	Raise the society's profile through concerted publicity campaigns either when promoting an event or through activities organised by student Union or Guild e.g. Cultural Diversity Week
Outreach	Communicate with new members
Liaison	Work as a link between society and external groups like other Buddhist societies.

RESPONSIBILITIES

PROMOTION

1. Keep members updated about society activities through email, phone, website, posters or newsletters
2. Design and edit promotional materials such as pamphlets, newsletters and merchandise such as t-shirts and caps etc.
3. Actively promote events to generate interest amongst current members and non members
4. Organise orientation week activities
5. Find sponsors who may be interested in supporting Buddhist activities e.g. vegetarian restaurants, Buddhist business owners and alumni

LIAISON

1. Act as the MITRA (Intervarsity) liaison
2. Utilise the manpower and resources provided by the MITRA network
3. Hold joint activities through MITRA at a single, more appropriate venue
4. Co-opting from membership base & MITRA alumni as resources for activities and events
5. Vigorously promote activities planned and held under the MITRA banner

GENERAL

1. Assist in the planning of events and activities
2. Acquire Dharma materials

3. Co-ordinate activities with Dharma & Social officers
4. Develop strategies to help new members to settle in, for example a Buddy system, meetings and gatherings

SOCIAL COORDINATOR

ROLES

Social	To encourage interaction between members of the society which will facilitate the learning of the Dharma
Support	Assist society by conceiving, planning and running activities and events

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. At the beginning of the year discuss what activities the society would like to run for the year. At full committee meetings present brainstormed ideas and discuss a plan for the year.
2. Plan and host an introductory event for new members. This may happen in the form of a welcome picnic, bowling night or something similar.
3. Throughout the year, especially after big events and projects such as retreats where people have had a chance to meet each other, it may be good to reinforce these relationships with social gatherings. This may take place in the form of something as simple as dinner, movies or karaoke.
4. Having built up friendships with other members, encourage participants to attend Dharma activities. Despite the importance of social activities, spreading the Dharma is still the most important task for the society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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