

## FQA - Academic Societies for University Staff

### What is an Academic Society and who can join one?

- It is a student led group formed and run by students
- Societies are open to all students at the University of Bedfordshire.
- Membership cannot be restricted for a particular course or year group of students. However, if a society is named after an academic course, it is likely that most students who join will also be from that course.

### Are Academic Societies free to join and how do students join one?

- The society reps decide their society membership fee (most are free)
- Membership fees go directly into the society account, if they choose to charge a joining fee, this can be paid through the society web page of their chosen society when a student signs up for membership at <https://bedssu.co.uk/societies>

### Why are Academic Societies Important?

- They help students socialise and make friends
- Academic societies create a sense of belonging across all year groups.
- Support students in their academic performance / career development opportunities.

### Why should you encourage a student to join an Academic Society?

- Students can meet like-minded people and peers from their course, allowing them to feel like they belong and are supported whilst studying.
- Societies can provide a safe social space for students which can help improve their wellbeing at university alongside the opportunity to further their studies and gain transferable skills through various society events, activities, trips, or meetings.

### How can Academic Staff Support Societies?

- The most effective way of doing this is to promote it at the beginning or end of lectures or classes (in person or online). If you prefer, you can invite the Societies Development Coordinator, or another staff member of Beds SU, by emailing: [help@bedssu.co.uk](mailto:help@bedssu.co.uk)
- If there is already an academic society for the course group, you can invite the society's committee to introduce themselves and the society to other students.
- Ask interested students to put themselves forward if they think they might want to be involved with running the society, (these students can be from any year group).
- Your knowledge of industry or subject areas makes you a great source of information for societies, so please suggest events they could run/attend or external speakers they may want to bring into university to give additional lectures. Central to our work is keeping our students safe so please ensure they are following our procedures; we have put them in place to safeguard students at the University.

### **I want to hold an event with an Academic Society what do I need to do?**

- We encourage you to help societies run events however, it is key that societies follow our procedures when planning events as our processes may differ to the University's.
- Please encourage societies to plan ahead and give them sufficient notice if you have an event idea they could undertake. (External speaker will need a minimum of 15 working days' notice to process once a society submits a trip/event form).
- If we do not receive a trip/event form from a society, they will not be insured to run the event which puts students at risk if something goes wrong.
- Activities could include, educational/social events, debates, lectures, charity fundraisers, trips or anything else that members would like to do (if it does not bring the SU or University into disrepute or endanger the safety of students).

### **How does Beds SU support Academic Societies?**

- Every society is provided their own page on the Beds SU website, where we help societies manage their memberships and communication.
- Elected society reps are invited to mandatory societies committee training, to enable them to be able to run their society.
- Additional training for society reps to support their career development.
- Help with organising events and activities, including online activities. (Book rooms and Beds SU Venues for events and activities)
- Access to **FREE** money by way of funding through grants and match funding of membership contributions.

### **Why should you encourage a student to join an Academic Society?**

- Being part of an Academic society, students are less likely to drop out of their studies and complete their course, (great for student retention and your course figures).
- It looks great on their CV, (being a society rep gives future employers insight into additional leadership skills a student may not otherwise be able to evidence).

### **What should you do if a student wants to start a new Academic Society?**

- Any student can apply to start an academic society; however, we would encourage them to have at least 1 other student in mind to help them run the society.
- Students should be directed to the 'Starting a Society' page on the Beds SU website <https://www.bedssu.co.uk/main-nav/activities/societies/starting-a-society> where they will be prompted to fill in a 'New Group Application Form', this will require them to consider the aims and objectives of their society, proposed membership fee, the committee positions they desire and any external affiliations they may want to have. This will then be sent to a member of Beds SU staff to forward on for review by the Be Involved Committee, who will in turn approve (or disapprove) the application and a members of Beds SU staff will get in contact with the student to undertake the next step of filling out a society constitution and attending training so they can formally start their society.

For more information, please refer to the PowerPoint available on the same website page: <https://bedssu.co.uk/staff-resources#student-communities>