



Starting your Humanist Students Society

So you've decided you want to start a Humanist society at your university. This guide will help you to think about all of the steps you need to go through to start your society and make it a success. Remember, even after you have read through the guide and got an idea of what you want to do make sure you speak to our Student and Youth Coordinator first, as they can offer you advice and support, and contact any existing Humanists UK members who are already studying at your university.

What is Humanist Students?

Humanist Students is the student section of Humanists UK. Humanist Students works under a direct membership model. Students can sign up for free membership for the duration of their course and this gives you access to a range of resources, two national student events and discounted access to all Humanists UK events. The section is supported by a dedicated member of staff, the Student and Youth Coordinator. A trio of student leaders advise on the direction of the section forming the Humanist Students Board, chaired by the Chief Executive of Humanists UK.

How do we support you?

The section exists to support all student members with any Humanist related activities on campus. Including creating and maintaining societies, events, campaigning and securing non-religious pastoral support. As Humanist Students is a new direction for Humanists UK's work with students the onus is on you to come to us with your ideas. If you bring us something we think will work at lots of different universities in the UK we're happy to support you.

Humanist Students national events

Twice a year we bring together all of our student members for exciting conferences on all things Humanism. It's a chance to meet your fellow Humanist Students from around the UK, hear from inspirational speakers and plan and troubleshoot all the things you want to do on campus. At the first of these events we'll provide you with the training and support to make things happen, the second will focus on building for the future and what happens after you graduate.

Recruiting members

Freshers is the perfect time for you to recruit new members. We'll be able to send you lots of materials for any event or fair you're involved in this will include roll banners, t-shirts membership packs, badges, pens, introductions to Humanism and flyers about different programmes and services Humanists UK runs.

If you've started after your freshers fair don't panic. Some universities hold refreshers fairs so find out when that is and we can send you materials for that too. If there isn't a refreshers fair coming up



there's still nothing stopping you from booking a stall in a busy place in your students' union and getting people to sign up there.

Request your supporting materials from Humanist Students [here](#).

Your first meeting

The next step after you've recruited some members and got them excited is to hold your first meeting. It's a good idea to hold the meeting as soon as possible after freshers or after you've recruited members at your first events. In some instances we can send a speaker so let us know when this is happening.

Try to cover the following:

- An introduction to Humanism
- Why you wanted to set up the society
- Why others have joined the society and what roles they might take on
- Brainstorming 1 or 2 ideas about events and activities to get you started

All you'll need is a bit of flipchart paper, some pens and some enthusiasm. Remember to think about somewhere nearby where you can go and relax and socialise after all the planning.

Planning your activities

Humanists UK does lots of things that you can get involved in. Here are some examples of things our societies have done in the past:

- Running lectures and seminars with leading figures from Humanism
- National campaigning and lobbying - check out Humanists UK's current campaigns [here](#)
- Local campaigning - lobbying your university or students' union
- Fundraising for social causes related to Humanism
- Think and drink events - discussing contentious issues over an informal drink
- Film screenings and reading groups
- Secular brunches with people from the local community around your university
- Holding dialogue or debate events with other societies
- Attending Humanist UK's national events

Support

So you have some ideas and people who want to make a change. Where do you go to if you need support? The first thing to do is to contact Sean, Humanists UK's Student and Youth Coordinator: sean@humanism.org.uk who can direct you to different people who can support you. Below is a brief list of other support we provide



Humanist Students Board

The Humanist Students Board are three elected students who devise the strategy for Humanist Students members and affiliated societies. They are on hand to hear your concerns, speak at certain events and to support Humanists to thrive wherever they are on campus. Contact them [here](#).

Local groups

Often there will be a local Humanist group near you who will be willing to run joint events, support you at freshers and provide speakers. You might also want to join your local group after you've left university. The more connections you make with local Humanists the more likely it will be that your society keeps going as they can help to continue to run activities until a new committee is in place. You can find your local group [here](#).

Community services

Humanists UK's Community Services team provides the following which can be useful for your society:

- Education resources, for introducing and teaching Humanism
- A school speaker programme
- Provision of Humanist ceremonies
- Training and development of non-religious pastoral support

Remember once you've signed up members of your society, sign them up to be members of Humanists UK straight away after all it's free and you'll get to attend 2 very special student conferences every year. You can join and get others to sign up [here](#).

Contacting your students' union

Every students' union administers its societies in different ways so the first step if you want to affiliate your society to the university is to contact your students' union. Most students' unions will have an elected student officer or dedicated staff member who supports and administers affiliated societies. You'll find their details on your union's website or by visiting the activities office at your students' union. They'll be able to give you the most up to date information on how to affiliate your society.

Usually the students' union will require you to have between 3 - 5 members to officially become a society. This differs at some bigger universities where they can ask for up to 10 members and some smaller unions who may allow you to set up a smaller group. The roles you're most likely to be asked to set up initially are President, Vice-President, and treasurer. You'll also be asked to write a constitution for your society detailing the purpose of the society. Your union will give you a template to complete this. Once you've got to this stage, remember you'll need to have to include the two Humanist Students clauses in your constitution in order to be affiliated to Humanist Students, you can see these below.



If for any reason your union denies you the right to affiliate your society with the university, don't worry, we can still support you with what you want to do on campus as a Society of Humanist Students.

Good luck and make sure you get in touch.

Humanist Student Society Clauses

1. Name clause

The name of the society shall be '[university name] Humanist Students Society',

OR

The name of the society shall be '[university name] Humanists'

OR

The name of the society shall be 'Humanist Students [university name]'

2. Aims clause

The vision of the society is to see a thriving humanist community in the university. It aims to support and represent atheist and humanist students; promote the understanding of humanist approaches to life and ethics; and organise and join campaigns that will promote human rights and equality for the non-religious. Its work will be facilitated and supported by Humanists UK.