

Bringing a psychology society into being

BY ANDREW SCOTT MCLEAN

LOVEABLE academics can often be heard echoing down the corridors of their universities, praising the psychology societies they were part of in their bygone student days. In truth it is probably more of a lament for their youth; the once time-honoured tradition of the student-run psychological society is now not so common. Whatever the reasons are for this demise, they must, alas, be pondered amongst all of you in those same corridors.

Last academic year a group of students, myself included, set about running a psychology society. It has been deliciously fun and a benefit to many, including ourselves. A longing to 'experience' more of our chosen subject than simply the academic work sparked the dawn of the society. However, we soon realised that we had little idea what many existing

societies actually do. To find out, it was necessary to look around to see what other universities were currently doing – the results were impressive.

Those psychology societies that could be found in the UK were mostly on the internet, many with resplendent and detailed websites. These websites held events information, study tips, careers advice, discussion pages, lecture notes, student articles, information about joining the BPS, and so on. With this information we moulded the bones of our psychology society and arranged such things as an online journal, online second-hand textbook exchange, a student area and a careers interview section (see <http://shs.tay.ac.uk/psybertay/>).

However, as was evident with many other societies, we ran into familiar problems. Support for such societies can sometimes be lacking and can result in the society folding

when existing students move on. This can be annoying but should in no way put people off the idea of starting a society. As we found entering into the second semester, support grows.

The rewards for students, both members and those running the society, can be immense. The obvious social benefits are overwhelming – you meet a lot of new students, become known within your department and gain contacts in the outside world. Union nights, pub crawls, assault courses and murder mysteries are tremendous fun and a good way of rewarding yourself for your hard work.

However, the most beneficial points of a society are initially less obvious. An increase in communication is, with little argument, the greatest plus. Many societies have meetings, e-mail discussion forums and online message boards where students can exchange information and

ideas not only about academic work but also about preparations for the future careers. Also, putting together or writing for a journal or newsletter can contribute to your CV and allow you to express your views while helping to build skills.

These benefits are not usually provided by universities. They can often only be harnessed by students giving up some of their free time to run a society. If your university does not have a psychology society, why not set one up? It is not as difficult as you may think, though make sure you have a enough people to help. Setting up takes a little time and thought, and looking at what other societies do is recommended – the BPS Student Members Group is an excellent place to start. It may seem a little daunting at first, especially when trying to recruit, but it is undoubtedly worth it. Bear in mind that your student union should be able to help and it is very probable that your lecturers will give full support and any assistance they can. Good luck! Remember, reap the benefits – you deserve it!

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The Psychologist student page Could you do it?

Are you actively involved in the student 'scene' with plenty of contacts and ideas? Do you have a good idea of what students will be interested in reading about? Then you could join our team.

Working as assistant to Daniela Schulze, the associate editor, you would seek out articles and news items for the 'Students' page, ensuring the deadline is met each month with a supply of quality writing. Next May the assistant could be asked to take over from Daniela, whose term will then be up.

Like all our associate editor posts, this is voluntary. But it is a good opportunity to make contacts in the world of psychology, and useful experience of communicating with a wide audience.

If you think you are up to the job, send the Editor a brief CV and your views (in under 400 words) on how you would improve the 'Students' page. Contact him for more information or with your application on jonsut@bps.org.uk, or at the Leicester address. Deadline is **1 August**.

Associate Editor: DANIELA SCHULZE

Articles, cartoons and other contributions for the 'Students' page are most welcome.

Send to: Daniela Schulze, c/o the Society's Leicester office. E-mail: d.schulze@psy.gla.ac.uk