

# LGBT+ Society Freshers' guide

**Freshers is an important time in any students' union** or student society, but especially for LGBT+ students and LGBT+ societies. Moving away from home for the first time, or entering college is a scary enough prospect, but often for LGBT+ students, it can be even harder.

## Introduction

LGBT+ societies are an important function of a students' union; providing support, social activities, and campaigns for LGBT+ students.

Freshers is a brilliant opportunity for LGBT+ societies to showcase what they do and increase their membership.

Are you an LGBT+ society president or LGBT+ officer? Preparing to run a stall or some events around freshers? Then this guide is for you!

Each students' union will have different specifications regarding Freshers' events. Some might have a Week, others maybe just a day or nothing at all, but the ideas here should be easy enough to adapt to whatever format your university or college do throughout freshers.

**This guide contains ideas, planning strategies and tips that should give you a little help in organising and implementing an interesting, exciting and hopefully successful Freshers' event.**

These tips are not only relevant when running events in September or October, but whenever your students' union has a societies fair, re-freshers, or even when your society is just looking to get more members.

## Planning and Preparation

The most important thing to do is make sure you plan in advance any events or activities you wish to carry out. So make your message clear and publicise, and here are our 5 top tips!

1. Get some **posters and flyers** printed. These can be used to advertise your first event, your stall at freshers' fair, your website, or anything else! On posters use a large font so that people don't necessarily have to make a point about viewing the poster in order to read it (some freshers may not be 'out' and others simply may not want to make a big issue about their sexual orientation or gender identity at such an early stage in their time at college or university)
2. **Online advertising** is key during freshers, as many new students will look up the LGBT+ society before they arrive, or prefer to find out information online rather than in person at a stall or event. It's a

good idea to have a website, blog or section of your students' union website which details who you are, what you do and any other information about events you are running.

3. If you have a bit of money to spend another option you have is to buy some form of **promotional material** (e.g. pens, lollipops, keyrings or business cards) and attach the contact information for your LGBT+ society to it, that way people can pick one up at your Freshers' Fair (or wherever you chose to distribute it) and can then look into it further in their own time and privacy.
4. Wherever you publicise, make sure you have **clear and easily accessible** information about the LGBT+ society. You should include contact details (e.g. website, publications, Facebook groups), meeting times, why you exist and what you do.

## Freshers' Fairs

Most of the time, especially in university students' unions, the highlight of freshers is the societies fair, where clubs and societies can recruit new members, advertise themselves and their events, and showcase what the society does.



If you do have some form of societies fair, then booking a stall with your students' union is the first step. When planning your stall, there are a few things you should consider –

1. Try and arrange an **easily visible stall** and if possible consider the location carefully e.g. near like-minded societies or other liberation groups. If this is not possible try to secure a central or easily accessible location, again so that freshers are not forced to actively seek out the society stall.
2. Make sure that you have any **materials** you require for the event prepared well in advance. A wide range of campaign material can be requested from NUS LGBT+ directly and often local authorities and LGBT+ organisations are more than happy to provide information (e.g. Your local Terrence Higgins Trust)
3. **Recruit volunteers!** There is nothing worse than having to sit behind a stall all day, on your own! Make sure you get people to help you, and draw up a rota. It's also useful to have a diverse range of people helping out on your stall to create the most welcoming atmosphere possible.
4. **Be enthusiastic!** No-one wants to sign up to a society with a couple of people behind a stall that don't look excited to be a part of it. So make sure you talk to as many people as possible, be nice, and smile – many freshers will be nervous to sign up to the LGBT+ society.
5. Make sure you **have things to give people or have people sign up to** when they arrive at your stall. A mailing list or membership form, a flyer or leaflet about the

society, or why not have a campaigning action going on, like a letter writing campaign or petition to get people involved.

## Your first event or meeting

Following the arrival and potential initial introduction to your freshers it is often a good idea to organise some kind of informal non-alcohol friendly social event where they have the opportunity to meet each other and to meet the people who will be heading up the society for the following year.

It is also a chance for you as a society to introduce the ideas that you have for the year in terms of social events and campaigns as well as finding out if there is anything your membership would be particularly interested in seeing.

This event doesn't have to be some boring sit down discussion; in fact, it would probably be more beneficial if people could get to know each other a little better whilst having fun.



You could try having **an icebreaker game** so people can learn each other's names or a bit about themselves.

Here are two example of Icebreakers:

### People Bingo

Design and print grids on A4 paper. Each grid square should contain a fact such as "can speak more than one language",

"likes spicy food" or "has been to America". Each person gets a sheet of paper and the aim of the icebreaker is to find a person that has completed each of the facts within the grid. This gets your freshers moving round the room and speaking to each other.

### The Map

Inform everyone that the room you are in represents a map of the UK (so one end of the room will be Scotland and the North, the opposite end of the room will be the South etc). Then get all your freshers to move to a place in the room that corresponds to where they were born. Once everyone has found their place, go around the room and get each of them to introduce who they are, where they're from and an interesting fact about themselves.

Other ideas for Freshers' events include:

- Inviting local LGBT+ organisations/groups/bars etc to an LGBT+ welcome event
- Bowling
- Film Nights
- Quiz Nights
- A night out on the local LGBT+ scene

## "But we don't have any money!" – Freshers on a shoestring

Many LGBT+ societies have little money or resources, and this can be particularly frustrating around freshers. Here are a few hints and tips aimed at making the most of what you've got!

1. Don't have money to produce your own posters and flyers? Then use ours! You can order generic posters from us or even print them from the template on our website, just email [LGBT@nus.org.uk](mailto:LGBT@nus.org.uk) or check

out

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/winning-for-students/lgbt>

2. Don't have the cash for a website?  
Then set up a blog instead.  
Websites such as [www.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com) or [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) allow you to create online resources which are easily adapted and edited.
3. No money for events? You could try and get sponsorship for your LGBT+ society from your local trade union branch or LGBT+ organisation.  
Some LGBT+ societies get sponsorship from local LGBT+ businesses, bars and clubs. If you are looking into sponsorship, make sure you approach your students' union to give you advice or support before entering into any agreements.
4. As a society in your students' union, you should receive financial support, or resources from your students' union such as staff support and help organising events.  
Check with your union executive to see what kind of support your students' union can offer.

One of the best things about running an LGBT+ group is meeting lots of new people and getting involved in events and campaigning activities - so remember to make the most of it and try not to get bogged down in the organisation of everything.

Finally, remember that NUS LGBT+ is here to support you - so if you need advice over the freshers' period, don't forget contact us and we will do our best to help!

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**Above all,  
make sure you  
and the other  
volunteers have fun!**

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