

# **RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL SIKH SOCIETY**



**HANDY HOW TO GUIDE**

*BRITISH ORGANISATION OF SIKH STUDENTS*



# Acknowledgements

**vidhiaa veechaaree thaa(n) paroupakaaree ||**

**Contemplate and reflect upon knowledge, and you will become a benefactor to others**

## Guru Nanak Dev Jee: Ang 356

First and foremost, we would like to thank Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee for giving us the opportunity to serve. It is only with the Grace of the Gurus and Vaheguru that anything is at all possible.

There are many people who helped with the completion of this version of the handbook (and more than we will name below). BOSS have been making Sikh Soc guides, packs and handbooks to support and empower students with since 1992. This is an attempt to continue that legacy.



### Gurpreet Kaur Kang

BOSS Intern 2012-13

*Gurpreet Kaur had the inspiration for this handbook and did the vast majority of the work during her internship with BOSS in 2012-2013. This handbook would not have been possible without her ambition and dedication.*

*She served on the University of Birmingham Sikh Society Committee for two years whilst studying law. The land of Canada was her next calling and she is just a short step away from being a qualified Barrister and Solicitor there, as well as being happily married*

Alongside the work of Gurpreet Kaur, many other people have contributed and helped with the completion of this handbook. We would like to credit the generosity of spirit of the following people:

Amarjit Singh  
Armeena Kaur Atwal  
Arjan Singh  
Arjan Singh Bhullar  
Gurpreet Kaur  
Gurpreet Kaur Sidhu  
Harjot Kaur  
Harpreet Singh Butoy  
Jagdev Singh Boparai

Jagroop Singh Bassi  
Jagvir Singh Purewal  
Keerut Singh Oberai  
Rajinder Singh Andev  
Robbie Singh Binning  
Paramjot Kaur  
Phurman Singh Sidhu  
Pooran Singh Gill  
Sanpreet Kaur

May Guru Sahib continue to bless you in your seva. We hope that your hard work inspires others to leave their own legacy too.

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"I'm not telling you it's going to be easy. I'm telling you it's going to be worth it."

*Art Williams*

# INTRO

**The British Organisation of Sikh Students (BOSS) is the official UK Sikh student body & was established to aid and empower Sikh Students. The organisation helps to promote the profile of the community and provides a social network for interaction. BOSS provides resources and consultation for Sikh Societies nationally, as well as providing guidance and support for all those in education.**

## Dear Committee Member,

Firstly – thank you for deciding to dedicate your valuable time towards doing seva for your University Sikh Society. The life of a student is busy enough – we really appreciate you taking some of your time out to make your Sikh Society successful and helping others to learn more about Sikhi. We won't lie to you – it won't always be easy! However, it is one of the most rewarding feelings when members begin to treat each other as family and grow in their own spiritual journeys.

This handbook has been designed to support you and provide useful information to help committees to run a successful Sikh Society. It has information such as guidance on how to fill out official forms, how to organise events & socials and how to run discussion based workshops. A contact list for information on guest speakers/kirtanees/organisations to invite for Sikh Soc events has been developed (so don't forget your copy!).

So... here we go! Don't forget help is always only a call or message away. If in need, please do get in touch.

## What We Do:

- Provide advice and consultation to new Sikh Societies.
- Support existing Sikh Societies.
- Liaise with national and Government bodies in regards to the needs of Sikh Students in the UK & Ireland.
- Write, design and distribute 10,000 packs annually.
- Unite and strengthen Sikh student bodies across the country.
- Work alongside other Panthic bodies to strengthen the Sikh voice worldwide.
- Organise annual youth retreats to encourage knowledge and growth of Sikhi in the UK youth.

## BOSS Facts



**1992**

Established date



**10,000**

Sikhi info packs printed every year



**200+**

Volunteers across the country



*My time at my University Sikh Soc provided me with an opportunity to strengthen my understanding of Sikhi. Before the experience, my knowledge was poor, but during the year and since then, my understanding has deepened. This experience was a turning point, and for that, I am extremely grateful.*

*I also had the opportunity to form some fantastic friendships and meet people I may not have met otherwise. Not only did the year develop my understanding of Sikhi and the acquisition of skills required in the working world, it also allowed me to think extensively about issues and introduce new ways of approaching problems. Meeting new people and gaining their view shaped this personal development.*

*Sikh Soc President: Leeds Sikh Soc*

# Sikh Society Overview

**If done correctly people's lives can change and they will be ever grateful to the university experience that you have provided. It should be a fun time meeting like-minded Sikhs with whom to share the university experience.**

## Goal 1. Lay positive foundations

The foundations of the Society should be laid with a positive, loving and all-encompassing attitude. Individuals should never feel intimidated or hesitant to approach you. Ideal qualities for Sikh Society Sevadaars include:

- Having a drive and passion for Sikhi
- Being enthusiastic
- Wanting to help others
- Wanting to learn more about Sikhi
- Able to motivate and inspire others
- Friendly and approachable
- Non-judgemental

## Goal 2. Become active outside of the Sikh Society

Strive to join in with campaigns that affect society, e.g. Human Rights issues, student finance, politics, environmental rights, animal rights, social welfare, etc. This way you are not only telling people of the Sikh way of life but you are also exemplifying that the Sikh's rich history of activism (Jaito Morcha, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, Punjabi Soba movement, Jallian Walla Bagh, etc) is still alive today. Aim to get members together to join in with protests and discuss issues that are occurring within the Sikh community, and come up with positive action to help overcome these.

## Goal 3. Take advantage of training

Use your local student union as much as possible; take advantage of training days offered for committee members and represent Sikhs in interfaith groups and with the NUS. BOSS offer formal training days and opportunities to work outside of your university throughout the year.

This will not only help you to make the society successful, but it will also allow more individuals to gain an understanding of Sikhi. Such education is key to overcoming prejudices and discrimination.

Remember the goal is not about converting or preaching or making a name for the Sikh Soc committee - enough of that goes on in our community already! It's about bringing Sikh students together and raising their knowledge on Sikhi. Nothing more and nothing less.

# Sikh Society Aims & Objectives

We believe the aims and objectives of a Sikh Society can be broken down into four categories. A strong Sikh Society will be covering all four areas. Where do you think your strengths and weaknesses lie?

01



## Engage, Educate & Entertain

- 1) Promote Sikhi & its values to Sikhs & non-Sikhs.
- 2) Serve/listen to and provide for the needs of the students at your university.
- 3) Ensure students have a fun & enriching experience at University

03



## Welfare

- 1) Provide a supportive environment for Sikh's on Campus - 'A home from home.'
- 2) Pastoral care for fellow Sikhs/non Sikhs
- 3) Welcome to all. Maintaining an inclusive and non-judgemental attitude at all times.

02



## Spiritual Sangat (Community)

- 1) Provide Sikh spirituality that engages and uplifts students in a safe & neutral space.
- 2) Ignite the revolutionary spirit of miri & piri passed down to us through the Gurus (Fight against injustices, human rights abuses, politics etc)
- 3) Focus on quality over quantity

04



## Activism

- 1) Supporting fellow Sikh Societies and Sikh groups that may need your help
- 2) Galvanise support on current Panthic issues
- 3) Work on interfaith activities.
- 4) Through seva, build skills & capacity (e.g. leadership, teamwork,) that individual Sikhs can continue to serve the community with.



Another key to success we've found in recent years is to try and overcome the (usually misguided) 'for religious people only' label that puts potential members off from joining. Be friendly, get involved in interfaith events and hold socials to break down barriers. Also, encourage individuals to ask questions on any topics that they may struggle to understand.

# CASE STUDY

## Top Tips on how to have a successful year

**Our boys at Warwick University (Pooran Gill and Robbie Billing) have some excellent words of wisdom to get your Sikh Soc working well**



### Be Prepared

Plan as far ahead as possible. Why? To avoid any complications occurring within the society and to build up a buzz for the oncoming events planned! Leaving planning to last minute can create tension and stress within the exec which will lead to mistakes being made, this will ruin the hard work you've put in and could potentially reduce your active members.



### Aim for a range of events each semester

Provide a mixture of events and socials for students i.e. meals, sport events, paintballing, eating contest, theme parks. However, keep in mind you are a Sikh Society! So try to avoid events such as nights out. (Unless all members have covered their heads ;P).



### Listen to your members

Keep strong relationships with your members because they dictate whether your society is successful or not. Not every event will be majorly successful but don't be disheartened, and take the advice of your members on what they want to do and when. Accommodating and tailoring events to your individual society will make them the best they can be.



### Be aware of the Uni Timetable

Don't be oblivious to your university timetable. If you know there's a sports ball on the Wednesday don't plan a social for that same day! Use your general timetable (and common sense) to aid your decision of choosing dates. Be aware of events going on during the evening such as big nights out etc. as this can affect your attendance in events dramatically!



### Talk to your members

As a committee you need to encourage people to talk to each other. Some people aren't as outgoing as others, so be mindful of them and try to help them as much as possible. For a lot of people, Sikh Society is a second family and you need to maintain this environment. Having a strong committee will portray a strong image. If you have a poor relationship with fellow committee members this will seem unprofessional & unwelcoming. Even if there is a dispute amongst you, you need to maintain a united front so that you don't pass this tension on into your events and push people away from Sikh Soc.



### Make or break

Your first social could make or break you. If you have done enough marketing through your Meet & Greet then you'll get a solid foundation to start with. **You must make sure that people enjoy your socials** & encourage your non-Sikh friends/members to attend. If non-Sikhs attend events, the Sikh members within the society don't really have any excuse not to! To attract people have a lively event (but one where people can talk too). From our experience, a restaurant meal where you can book for a large number of joined tables works the best. If it doesn't go to plan don't panic, just continue as you are and promote your society more and you'll slowly but surely build your members up.



**ENJOY YOURSELF!** *If you, as a committee member, are running around stressed and panicking you'll feed these vibes to your members. Prepare as much as possible then enjoy your socials. You'll get more out of being part of the Sikh Soc and everyone will feel relaxed too.*

# Points to Remember

The committee of a Sikh Society has the responsibility of upholding Sikhi principles whilst creating and implementing a fun and varied year for all its members. This becomes an easier task when all members understand what to steer clear of from the start. This is done out of respect of love for Guru Jee, we have to remember who we are representing and the lasting impression it can make on attendees. Here are some pointers:

## Gurbani Printing

Gurbani should be handled with utmost respect at all times. Therefore, Gurbani should not be printed onto tops or other distributable items which may find themselves on the floor or amongst dirty washing. A good alternative to printing Gurbani is using the English translations instead.

## Non-Vegetarian Food

The committee should ensure that all food brought into events is in line with the majority Sikh-diet, entailing no meat, fish or eggs. The best way to go about this is to choose shops or restaurants which are solely lacto-vegetarian (places that do not serve meat, fish or egg products).

## Punjabi Culture & Sikhi

Whilst Sikh Society events are not limited to talks and keertan sessions, it is important to keep a clear distinction between Sikhi teachings and other non-Gurmat or cultural traditions. As we often struggle to differentiate between Sikhi and Punjabi beliefs, it is important to keep the two separate, making sure not to exacerbate confusion further by conjoining them - e.g. no bhangra or mendhi events labelled as Sikh Society events.

## Gigs, Bars & Clubs

Committee members should be diligent in regards to where social events should take place, so as not to promote something which is not in line with Sikhi teachings or which reflects badly on the Sikh Society as a whole. As such, gigs, bars, clubs and similar environments should be avoided, even if the intentions are to simply have a meal there.



*Although the above may initially feel restrictive, remember that Sikhi is a religion of inclusivity. There are plenty of things that you can organise as a Sikh Society which is fun and welcoming to all. The success of Sikh Societies across the UK and abroad in the last twenty years is a testament to this.*

*There should be no negative judgement or restrictions for committee members or Sikh Soc members to attend events or places such as those listed above. It is simply that they are not suitable under the banner of Sikhi.*





**“Students may feel lonely being away from home and come to the Society for warmth and familiarity. You must aim to wholeheartedly show the love, acceptance and, most importantly, the non-judgmental attitude that Sikhs and our Gurus are known for.”**

“

**If you build a great  
experience, your  
members will tell  
others about it...**

**Word of mouth is  
your strongest  
marketing tool.**

”

# Marketing

**In order to run the Society successfully, you need to ensure that marketing is done consistently. This will provide members with an awareness of the events going on and will also help with getting the society known around campus. Always ensure that all marketing done is positive and in line with Sikhi ideals and morals.**

## Email

Each university nowadays has a society email given from the Student Union at your University which you can use to fire off emails about your events to your members. It is important to keep a check of this as it is via email that you will receive information on what must be done to meet the Student Union's regulations relating to your faith society, e.g. key dates of interfaith events, committee training or deadlines for specific forms.

## Social Media

Facebook/Twitter/Insta/Snapchat

Social media is one of the simplest and most effective ways to let students know of events/programs/socials – most societies have existing profiles/accounts (ensure the passwords and account names are received during handover from previous committees). Remember: keep these updated and live by posting and retweeting posts that can promote events from other Sikh Societies in the region, kirtan programmes/other Sikhi events/seva.

## Newsletters/ Blogspots

This can be like a group email to all the members that is sent at the beginning of every week with information on events going on in the week and/or a short discussion on those that occurred in the past week. It is also a good way to advertise local programs happening in the area and sharing of Sikhi articles to learn from.

## Posters

Creating eye catching and interesting posters are an easy way to let students know of events taking place – these can then be used on social media & shared via whatsapp. Why not ask your SU to display them on the TV screens or monitors? Maybe your Uni newspaper will advertise the poster for you?  
(Please note: posters usually require approval from the Student Union to gain permission to display around University – please check what the process is in your institution).

## Sikh Channels

It may be beneficial for committee members and students to make an appearance on a Sikh channel with the aim of explaining what the Sikh Society does. This may help give a better and more positive portrayal of Sikh societies in the local community. You could also invite Sikh channels to film events - e.g. Langar on Campus - or discussions on chosen topics.

## Text/Whatsapp

Probably one of the most popular ways to market your society. You can do broadcast announcements with your poster attached to all your members. Don't forget to include non-members and non-Sikhs too. Just be careful you don't spam people with lots of messages. Plan what you want to say in advance.

## Word of Mouth

People often forget how useful and quick this method is! As Sikh Soc Committee Members you are one of the best marketing tools yourself – walking, talking Sikh Soc posters, so use this, take the opportunity to get to know the society members so you can easily advertise events and programs and make them feel comfortable and happy to attend. If you build a great experience, your members will tell others about it... This is your strongest weapon in your marketing arsenal.

## Leaflets

Leaflets are still a tried and tested way of getting the word out about your society. If you have a big event, such as your first meet and greet or Langar on Campus, you can send some people around the accommodation blocks to post leaflets through the doors, place them in pigeon holes or hand them out at busy times around the university.  
**TIP: Don't be** disheartened if you get some knock-backs, even if one person finds out about an event that might not have otherwise it's ultimately worth it.



*Marketing is important. You can have the most awesome and creative events but if no-one knows about them then all that effort goes to waste. If it seems overwhelming, make sure to delegate out responsibilities. Marketing should be everyone's job.*

*Brunel Sikh Soc President*

# Getting Started: June to September

**This time period is crucial. If you can lay solid foundations at this stage then it will make the rest of your time with the Sikh Society much easier to manage.**

## Step 1

### Old Committee Handover

Firstly, the old committee should fill out the appropriate forms from their University's Student Union, so as to comply with regulations.

Secondly, a meeting should be held with members from the new and old committees, so that information can be given to them. This should include the following:

- ☒ What their roles and objectives for the year are
- ☒ What events they can/cannot organise
- ☒ Relevant paperwork for events (risk assessments, external speaker forms, etc.)
- ☒ How to make room bookings - where, how long before, etc.
- ☒ Grants that are available from the University (if applicable) - deadlines, what can apply for, etc.
- ☒ Go through this document and their specific University's Sikh Society manual (if applicable) make sure they are all aware of what needs to be done, and that they understand the commitment that they have made.
- ☒ Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses from last year's society. Share things that worked and look at different ways to approach things that did not.

## Step 2

### Finances

This is a crucial part of running any society. It is vital that you have enough funding so as to be able to organise events that members want.

In regards to funding available for the Society, each University will have different regulations in order to gain money from the Student Union so this should be looked into as soon as possible once the new committee has been chosen.

It is also always good to get external funding (sponsorships, donations from the local community, family members, etc) as this can help you gain contacts in the local community and also allow individuals from the wider community to become a part of the Society.

## Step 3

### First Meeting & Summer Preparation

After the initial handover meeting, the committee should be prepared and have ideas relating to how they intend to maintain and improve the Society. After the academic year has come to an end, the new committee should hold a meeting to review last year's events, set targets for the year ahead, discuss possible events for the following year and any preparation that needs to be done over the break.

Towards the end of summer and a few weeks before the start of term, BOSS should be contacted and a meeting arranged. This is a great chance to get to know us and ask any questions that you have, as well as providing you with an opportunity to voice any ideas that you have for the year. This is also an ideal time to get fresher's packs from us so that you can have them ready for the fresher's fair.

## Getting Started Continued.



### Step 4 Forms

There tend to be several different types of forms that need to be filled out throughout the year depending on the regulations of each individual University's Student Union. Aim to find out what these are as soon as possible. It is vital that you fill these out and adhere to Student Union regulations to assure the longevity of the Sikh Society at your particular educational institution.

Below are examples of some general forms that you may be required to fill out.

Type of form	When it is needed
• Speaker request form	This is to be used for any external speakers that will be coming in to give talks, classes, etc. There is usually a certain amount of time before the event by which this needs to be filled out, so that the student union can make sure the individual coming is suitable.
• Room booking	This is to be used when booking out a room for an event.
• Risk assessment	This is to be used for most events, but usually for external events, e.g. bowling. There is usually a certain amount of time before the event that this needs to be filled out by.



### Step 5 Committee

The best committees are those who are friends, find common interests and learn to work together so that everyone's skills can be utilised in the best possible way. Get together for informal meetings, e.g. lunch or coffee - the better understanding that you have of each other, the more likely it is that you can work together productively.

Although it is deemed most fair to identify new committees through a voting system, it is not the most effective way of creating a successful Sikh Society as it can result in becoming a popularity contest, with the individual with the most friends getting the votes. Below are some tips on how to overcome this:

- ☒ It is never too early to begin to look for those that you think may be able to take over the seva - this can be done as early as the fresher's fair or the first event. Aim to identify individuals who seem most keen to be a part of the society, and that go above and beyond to be involved.
- ☒ Involve new people as much as possible, delegate tasks as and when possible and begin training willing individuals.
- ☒ Seva is bigger than any one person or group of people; the earlier individuals understand the needs of the Society, the more successful they will make it.
- ☒ Growth is key, and this can be achieved by choosing individuals with the right skill sets and drive.

# Events

**It is vital to get a good mix of events throughout the academic year to cater for a variety of different individuals. Examples of the different types of events includes socials, talks, seva events, sports opportunities, discussion based workshops, excursions, yoga and kirtan.**

Do not feel that because it is the Sikh society you need to do lectures and keertan every week, but at the same time do not blur the lines between what is acceptable and what is not. In relation to this, it is vital to keep separate Sikhi beliefs and Punjabi beliefs; we do not wish to confuse individuals even further by conjoining the two.

The events that you decide to hold will vary depending on each Sikh Society in accordance to individual factors that need to be taken into account - such as size, audience appreciation, etc.

Events such as “Fresher’s Fair” and “Meet and Greet” will be something that all societies should aim to carry out; we have therefore provided detailed information regarding these later on in the handbook.

In the next few pages we have compiled a list of possible events, along with details of the organisations that would be needed to make them successful (note: discussing with society members, advertising and filling out the relevant Student Union forms are a must for all events). This list, is not exhaustive. In fact, in our experience it is good to be creative as possible and think out of the box. If you offer new ideas you are more likely to attract more attendees.

*BELOW: Nottingham Trent University's first Langar on Campus. 2015*



“

**YOUR FIRST EVENT COULD MAKE OR BREAK YOU. If you do enough marketing you'll build a solid foundation. MAKE SURE THAT PEOPLE ENJOY YOUR EVENTS.**

**Why not encourage your non-Sikh friends to attend? Then the Sikh members within the society don't really have any excuse not to!**

”

# Ideas for Events

**Remember this list isn't exhaustive, but it is a good starting point.**

## Charity Events

Charity events can be carried out for a charity (eg. fundraising), or can be done in collaboration with a charity (e.g. Mount Snowdon climb, sky-diving, 3 peaks challenge etc).

With such events the first step would be to contact the relevant charity so that they can ensure that they are able to gain the most from your help.

## Seva Events

This covers a variety of possibilities - from volunteering in a soup kitchen, to visiting old people's homes or helping at Sikh events/camps.

Look into causes in your local area that you may be able to help with, and then contact the relevant organizations so that they can gain the most from your help. You can also contact the voluntary society at your educational institution, as they may have something that you can help with.

## Social Events

These can range from small scale events like bowling, ice- skating or a film night to paintballing and visiting theme parks.

Always ensure you contact the relevant companies to ensure there is sufficient availability for members, and to check prices as you do not want to organise something that is not financially feasible.

## Sports Tournaments

You should aim to include both genders in sporting activities and have a variety of sports e.g. football, netball, badminton etc. You can collaborate with other Sikh societies and with other non-societies at your educational institution.

Once the type of sport has been decided, you need to contact the relevant societies to ensure that they are willing to partake in the event - always ensure this is done before any advertising has been carried out.

## Langar on Campus

A major event that many universities have started to organise. This is a brilliant way to give people at your specific educational institution a chance to learn more about Sikhi: Who are Sikhs? What is Langar?

This event requires a lot of organisation but don't let that put you off. A separate section on this topic has been created in this handbook.

## Games Night/ Comedy Night

This can be something relaxing that you do with the members perhaps before revision time begins. Comedy night is great if you have members who wish to get on a platform and perform. You could also collaborate this with other Sikh societies or other societies on campus.

With games night you could encourage members to bring their favourite games, so as to involve all. With comedy night, ensure that you have enough people lined up to fill the evening.



# Ideas for Events continued

## Talks

You can invite guest speakers in to talk on a specific topic, e.g. relating to Bandi Chorr Divas in October/ November time. You could also have a series of talks throughout the year building on a specific topic, e.g. Sikh warriors past-present.

Look through the speaker list we provide and contact individuals to check their availability. Aim to do this as soon as possible so that speakers can make arrangements to attend.

## Inspirations Night / Quiz Night

This is done in a more social environment, almost like a talk-show where guests are invited to speak to Sikh Society members on certain topics or Sikhi in general. You can invite musician or artists, invite other societies, order some food and sell tickets for the event.

The first step is to contact the relevant speakers to see if they are available, then decide on prices for tickets, invite other societies and ensure the food is suitable (lacto-vegetarian only).

## Simran / Keertan Darbars

Holding a keertan event at your educational institution allows members to come together in a peaceful atmosphere and connect to Gurbani. You can also collaborate with other Sikh societies to organise larger keertan events.

In order to make this work you need to ensure that there are members who can use instruments such as vaaja, or those willing to lead the simran.

## Book Club

This can be something that ties in with any talks that you hold; you should encourage individuals to read up on topics discussed to gain a better understanding.

Find relevant books on topics to be discussed in talks and compile a list, making it available to members.

## Sikh Professional Networking

This is something that could be really worthwhile at university as it can help students to gain contacts and insight into different career paths.

Using the wider community, Facebook and us (BOSS), gain details of professional Sikhs before contacting these individuals in order to see whether they would be willing to partake in such an event.

## Discussion Events

This can be run 'in house' by you! In this handbook we have provided you with several discussion 'crib sheets' that empower you to run your own event. Why rely on external sources - you are intelligent and outgoing enough to run the sessions yourself and your fellow students will feel more open and comfortable with internal guests only. Give it a go!



There are many other types of events that you can organise. A mix of regular events and one off events help to make your society strong. Also, don't forget to share good practice with other Sikh Socs across the country, both past and present. Don't forget, you can always ask us if you're stuck :-)

# Fresher's Fair

**Most Sikh Societies start the academic year with the "Fresher's Fair," followed by a quick social event called "Meet & Greet" where the committee is able explain what the Sikh Society is and does.**

The "Fresher's Fair" tends to be run by the Student Union and can sometimes last for several days depending on the educational institution. It occurs before the start of term and involves societies setting up stalls in order to advertise and gain members.

It is important to get information from your Student Union as soon as possible about dates and gaining a stall at the venue, as it is an ideal time to publicise, gain new members and clear up any misconceptions that people may have about Sikh Soc.

Remember to always be friendly, polite and have a winning smile on your face. Talk to people, get them interested and encourage them to come to a few events to see what the society has to offer - even if they do not join straight away.

Below is a short run down of all that needs to be done to ensure a successful fresher's fair.

Freshers Fair Timeline	
Contact your student union to find out about the fresher's fair and book stalls if applicable.	<b>Towards the end of the previous year</b>
Contact BOSS to obtain Sikh Soc packs to hand out to students at the fair.	<b>4 weeks before</b>
Have a committee meeting to discuss all details relating to the fresher's fair - posters, leaflets, price for new members, hoody prices, etc.	<b>2 weeks before</b>
ADVERTISE: GET POSTERS UP (all over campus and halls) * Send messages on Facebook and via the Sikh Society email (if applicable) * Also ask members if they would like to help during the fair.	<b>5 days before</b>
* Have Sikh Society packs & literature made beforehand (150 approx) * Rubber bands for posters * Get sign-up sheets from the Student Union * Have sevadars going around campus handing out leaflets about fresher's fair	<b>2-3 days before</b>
* Get samosas/ sweets/ rubicon mango juice to hand out at the stall - not compulsory if budget is tight	<b>2-3 days before</b>
* Set up stall with free literature and posters (blue tack, sell-o-tape and pins) and a LARGE SIKH SOC BANNER * Make sure have a money tin with enough change in it * A sheet to record hoody orders * Have laptop/music docking station to play keertan * Have laptop for data entry of new members * Have a leaflet advertising your first event (make sure date and location have been pre-booked)	<b>On the day</b>
* Pack up left over material * Transport back to base and return all unused packs to BOSS * Make sure that all member details are logged into an Excel file so that you have contact details and information of all members.	<b>After the event</b>



*Start a social media campaign for Sikh freshers - use your university's freshers tags to grab their attention. Advertise your society on campus / student dorms using posters and flyers. This should contain the date you'll be at freshers fair, the date of the meet and greet & contact details for the Sikh society. Be on campus giving flyers to freshers - a friendly face and smile can make all the difference!*

## Meet n Greet / Cha n Samosa

**This is a very important event as it will be the first opportunity for you to meet new members and for them to get a taste of what the Sikh society has in store. It is vital that you are open and friendly; you will not get another opportunity to make a good first impression - so make it count.**

In order to make the event a success, good organisation is key. Make sure you advertise at least a week or so before - you can even mention it at the fresher's fair to new members if you have the date and time set up.

Make the event as fun and light hearted as possible. Below is an idea for how the day could run:

- o Ensure there are people at the entrance greeting newcomers. There may be potential attendees hiding around the corners, unsure if they will feel welcome – make sure they do!
- o Begin with an introduction to the committee members
- o Summary of the aims and objectives of the society
- o Brief overview of some of the events planned for the year
- o Play a short photo presentation highlighting the events from the previous year.
- o Organise some ice-breaker activities to get members talking. Walk around talking to people, ensuring everyone feels welcome.
- o Inform individuals about the next event.
- o Also encourage people to order merchandise (hoodies or t-shirts), sign up as members and join the Facebook and Twitter pages so that they can be kept up to date with information about the events.
- o Could also serve samosa and/ or springrolls at the end of the event.

It is vital to make a good impression so that people come to future events. It is also an idea to have a suggestion box so you are aware of what kind of events people wish the society to hold.

After this event the committee needs to ensure that they do the following:

- o Process the membership forms, taking key information such as names and email addresses and adding them to the Excel file (the one started after the fresher's fair)
- o Deposit money made from hoodies/ t-shirts and membership

**“It is vital that you are open and friendly; you will not get another opportunity to make a good first impression - so make it count.”**

# Langar on Campus

**Langar on Campus is now the flagship event for several Sikh Societies across the UK. A fantastic way to break down barriers and provide seva opportunities for your members too, more and more Sikh Soc's are looking to arrange similar events at their University too.**

Langar on Campus is the biggest event that most societies will organise, and can sometimes be done in conjunction with nationwide Sikhi/ Seva weeks.

In the academic year 2015-2016 13 different Sikh Socs across the UK organised Langar events. Some were held inside whilst others were arranged in a marquee. Some served 150 people and others served over 1000. The outcome of all these days were the same. An increased awareness of Sikhi on Campus, a general feel good factor and an increased passion for seva and Sikhi from the members.

It has been a successful event at educational institutions and societies have expressed that it is an excellent way to show the university members the Seva aspect of Sikhi. Individuals have, however, also emphasised that it is a long process to ensure the day goes smoothly.

Next you will find a short run down of steps that will be needed for the organisation of 'Langar on Campus' (this list is not exhaustive and will vary depending on your educational institution's procedures).

*The First official UK Langar on Campus held at the University of Birmingham in 2004.*



# 10 Step Langar Timeline

## As soon as a date is set

- \* Speak to your Student Union and/ or Events office about where to place the marquee.
- \* Fill out a risk assessment as soon as possible
- \* Get quotes for the marquee, and ask companies you think may be suitable to come to the University and look at the area where it will be placed.

## 3-4 weeks before the event

- \* Create the Facebook event, send out messages via Facebook and the society email (if you have one) informing people of the event and that sevadars will be required.
- \* Contact the Sikh Channels to inform them of the event, and ask them if they would like to attend.
- \* Give formal invitations to anyone, e.g. people that have given money, alumni, lecturers, etc.

## The eve of the event

- \* Make sure there are individuals to show the tent people where to set up.
- \* Once the tent is up have sevadars ready to help with the set-up (BOSS should have arrived by then with displays). The main set-up is hoovering, sorting out area for shoes, putting displays up, etc.

## At the event

- \* Interact with people; explain to them the concept of seva and why the event is being held.
- \* Encourage people to sign the guest book.
- \* Oversee the day- ensure everyone sticks to their allocated seva roles

## A few days after

- \* Post up media shots & thank you messages
- \* Send out thank you emails to the sevadars, the Gurdwara that provided the Langar, BOSS and all at the Student Union that helped make the event a success that it surely will be.

## September

- \* Contact BOSS and ask them about dates for 'Langar on Campus' - if it is being held as part of a regional or national Sikhi/ Seva week.
- \* Alternatively, decide as part of a committee and with the society members the best dates for holding the event.
- \* Pick a date. The first semester is always the best time to do it.

## 4-5 weeks before the event

- \* Send an email to your local Gurdwara asking them to provide the Langar.
- \* Make an equipment list of everything that will be needed- BOSS provides can provide many of these things. Contact us for further details.

## 1 week before the event

- \* Visit your local Gurdwara in order to confirm how much Langar will be needed, what will be made, etc.
- \* Order samosas for the day as part of the contingency plan - if for any reason the Langar is delayed, these can be distributed.
- \* Get posters created, printed and put up around the campus. Also give to the Student Union to put up.
- \* Carry out a meeting with sevadars, so that roles can be assigned to make sure everything goes smoothly

## The morning of the event

- \* If you are helping with Langar preparation at the Gurdwara ensure you turn up on time.
- \* Make sure everything is perfectly set-up; have keertan playing on a docking system.
- \* Get sevadars to come early so that leaflets can be handed all around campus, informing people of the event.

## At the event

- \* Try and encourage people to take any left over Langar (have plastic containers) as we do not want this to be wasted.
- \* Send some sevadars with BOSS to the Gurdwara so that they can help with washing the saucepans, etc.
- \* Have sevadars to help with the packing up, hoovering again before marquee people arrive.

10



# TOP 10 TIPS FOR CREATIVITY

By Liverpool Sikh Soc - Class of 2015-16

1

## THE MORE IDEAS THE BETTER

Not every idea is going to be perfect so the more you have the more the chance of stumbling across a good one.

2

## BOUNCE IDEAS OFF OTHER PEOPLE

This helps to develop ideas. Each person has their own unique perspective and can have vital input on the creative process.

3

## BE BRAVE! GET OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Why not try something completely out there. So long as it has a purpose and is within reason a whacky idea can create a great buzz around your idea or event.

4

## BE A COPY CAT!

Borrow ideas from others and put your own unique twist or take on it. As the old saying goes "if it ain't broke don't fix it".

5

## BE YOURSELF AND BE PASSIONATE

We believe these two come hand in hand. Do an event you're passionate about and that passion will in turn make others enthusiastic about it too. If you don't believe in what your doing how will others.

6

## BECOME AN EXPERT

If your event is based on a specific topic do your research beforehand. When we did a blood drive event many of the facts we used to advertise the benefits of blood donation were from hours of researching them.

7

## BE AMBITIOUS

Don't limit your ideas because they seem too difficult to achieve. Think big, work hard and no doubt you'll pull it off, with big risk comes big reward!

8

## NEVER BE SATISFIED

Always look to improve and get feedback. If something didn't go well improve it and even if you think everything was perfect push yourself to make it even better.

9

## GET THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE JOB

You can't be good at everything. If you can't execute an idea find someone that can. Whether you need a film maker, a designer or even an acrobat go out and find one!

10

## DO WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU

If you find a method of generating ideas stick with it. The above are merely suggestions from our experience but who's to say we're right. Stick to your guns and have confidence! Good luck.

# Case Study: University of Wolverhampton



**'Inspirations Night' was the culmination of 2 years hard work at Wolves. We basically did an event similar to a talk show where we invited three special guests to speak to the Sikh Society members. We invited several different societies down and had a great turnout.**

I was fortunate enough to have been given the opportunity to do seva with Sikh Societies for 2 years. The majority of the time I spent focused on my home town Sikh Society in Wolverhampton but got the opportunity to travel around the Midlands to do talks at other Universities as well. It was probably the most enjoyable time of my life and I got to meet some really great people.

The situation at Wolverhampton before I decided to help out was quite bleak. Hardly any talks or events, most people didn't even know we had a Sikh Society! However, I bumped into one Singhni who really wanted to start it back up again and also one Singh who was willing to participate. The three of us put our minds, and a bit of money, together and got the ball rolling. The first year we tested out the waters but spread the word quite well and focused on networking.

The second year we tried to achieve as much as possible and with Maharaaj kirpa we succeeded. The semester ran well and we did everything we wanted with a lot of regular members and finished it with an "Inspirations Night". We basically did an event similar to a talk show where we invited three special guests to speak to the Sikh Society members. We invited several different societies down and had a great turnout. It can all be found on our Youtube page under "WolvesSikhSoc".

We focused solely on educating people on what Sikhism actually is but also tried to create a society where people felt welcome. We have many non-Sikhs attend the events which was quite helpful. The most important thing for us was to never forget the Giver who made it possible, so we always made time to go Gurdwara as well. I truly believe anyone with genuine passion for Sikhism and people in general are more than capable of running a successful Sikh Society.

Harpreet Singh  
hsbutoy.tumblr.com/

# Raising Awareness of the Sikh Faith

A great way to raise money for events and to enhance the standing of the society between its members and other individuals from the educational institution is by selling or giving free society merchandise.

Hoodies and t-shirts are products that can be sold; these tend to be specific for each society, representing the Sikh society along with the educational institution it is a part of. It is crucial that the design and wording on the clothing is carefully thought out, as you want something that people are willing to buy and that will portray the society in the correct light. Be mindful that it would be disrespectful to print Gurbani on any merchandise you design as you will not be able to guarantee where the product will end up once sold or given away.

There are many educational posters and leaflets that BOSS provide to Sikh societies, usually during before the Fresher's Fair. You are more than welcome to give these products back to us, but it may be worthwhile keeping a small share so that you can hand out to members, around campus or to non-Sikhs who may attend events. This is a great way for people to continue learning outside of the society environment.

University is an excellent place to raise awareness of the Sikh faith. Try to hold events or stalls that will appeal to non-faith students and staff too. Going forward your fellow students may have careers in influential positions in society. If you can give them a positive view of Sikhs and Sikhi itself it can go a long way to making the lives of all Sikhs in the UK easier, as well as give wider society a chance to experience the message of our Gurus.



*"Our more successful events were the ones which reached out to Non-Sikh Soc members"*

*Armeena Kaur @ Warwick Sikh Soc*





# Case Study: University of Birmingham



Being part of the Sikh Society whilst I was in my second year of university was such an amazing and humbling experience. Not only did it teach me new and wonderful things about Sikhi that I wouldn't have learnt in lectures, it also helped me grow as a person, and gave me skills that I could use in the future.

Hosting Langar on Campus was one of the events that will forever stay in my memory. Not only did we manage to feed 1000 students and lecturers, we also got to tell people about Sikhi and the importance of Seva.

From a social perspective, you meet so many new people from different walks of life. They all bring something different and unique to the society. You tend to become a small family, and when the University experience is over, you keep many of these people as friends for life.

Committee member 2010- 2011, University of Birmingham Sikh Society

During my time as a committee member there were many ups and downs with organisational issues, etc. but we worked together in order to overcome these and do the best that we could do for the society. It was an amazing chance to meet individuals from all backgrounds and just like any social setting you are able to meet like-minded individuals and share a bond that connects you.

In my Sikh society experience, there were many amazing events that I was privileged enough to organise and partake in, an example of these is the Mount Snowdon trek that we did in April 2011 in order to raise money for Khalsa Aid. The event was one that Khalsa Aid organised nationwide so as to raise funds for their charitable work, in line with this we organised transport for individuals from the university and local community that wished to partake in the event. The event went wonderfully well; the 10-12 students that attended from the University alone raised a sizeable sum and it was a wonderful experience for all those that took part.

Gurpreet Kaur  
University of Birmingham Sikh Society

# Student Welfare

**Sikh student welfare is an aspect most Sikh Socs tend to overlook. Miles away from any family and yet to make firm friends, University can be difficult for many students. As Sikh Soc members we are often the only port of call for those with problems. Do we realise the role we play here?**

Depression, conversion, sexual harassment, hate crime. These are just a snapshot of some of the problems Sikh Students face on campus in 21st Century Britain.

The vast majority of universities do not have Sikh chaplains or Sikhi friendly counsellors. Thus, more often than not the role of protector, listener and guider falls onto the shoulders of the Sikh Soc Committee member. Fellow Sikh students may turn to you or look up to you as the person who can help them. Of course, most of you will not be qualified to help (and you should always try to encourage the person to seek professional advice) but you can use the principles of Sikhi to aid them.

Listen. Show love. Support them and be there for them as a brother or sister would.

These skills are just as important as your leadership and organisational skills.

If you are particularly concerned about someone, please do not think you are alone. Give us a call and we can help you help them.

*“Bring others into the fold of Sikhi with love” (Sant Kartar Singh Jee)*

UCLU Sikh Soc at the 2015 Langar event



# Selection / Election

**Historically, leadership roles were picked by selection. Those that were most suited to the job were chosen and carried out their seva with love and humility. The western election process is more difficult for us to adapt to a Sikhi based ethos. Where possible, try to opt for a selection process when choosing the new committee.**

It is important to ensure that the correct individuals are chosen to lead the Sikh Society each year. Selections/elections should be made as fair as possible for members, and the committee should do their best to ensure that the correct individuals are chosen.

A vital aspect of your role is to ensure continuation of the Sikh Society. Pick a good team for next year, instigate a thorough handover process and continue to support them as much as you can. The strongest Sikh Socs are the ones where this continuation process is handled well.

Selections/Elections should be held towards the end of the academic year, ideally before everyone is off doing exam revision and finishing assignments.

Some example roles we recommend are as follows:

President or 2 x Co-presidents  
 Vice President  
 Treasurer  
 Secretary  
 Events  
 Sports  
 Marketing  
 First year rep

(The above list can vary depending on the size of your society. If in doubt, give us a call and we can discuss what may be best suited for you.)

A good way to ensure this occurs is to message all members the roles that are available, asking interested individuals to respond with a copy of their CV & the following information - the role they wish to run for, why they want the position and a brief manifesto stating what they wish to do in/ contribute to the society in the following year.

This information can then be made available to all members a week or so before the elections, giving them ample opportunity to read through all manifestos and decide who they think will be the best possible candidate. If selecting the selection committee can use this information to make an informed and unbiased choice.

**“It is important to stress that although there are specific roles that some societies can use, all members should be treated & act as equals. Running a successful Sikh society involves all members joining in with the Seva and giving as much as possible to everything that is organised by the society.”**

# BOSS LABS

**There are exciting things happening at BOSS headquarters and we'd love for you to bring your energy, enthusiasm and ideas to the table too. Check out the projects we have in the pipeline. Could you contribute or do you have any better ideas? Get in touch with us, we're dying to hear from you!**

## INTERNSHIPS

BOSS has been offering students and recent graduates the opportunity to do an internship with BOSS. We're pretty flexible. It can be as short as a month or as long as a year. Go part time or full time and can work around wherever you are based in the world too.

It's an amazing opportunity to get involved in some seva before hitting the work scene and build up some experience and references too.

## BOSS COOKBOOK

Keerut Singh from Liverpool Sikh Soc has come up with an amazing idea of creating a BOSS student cookbook. Packed full of veggie and vegan-friendly recipes alongside tips and cooking hacks, we're excited to bring a whole new side of student life to you! We'd love for Sikh students across the country to contribute recipes and send us videos and photos of them preparing the BOSS meals. Think about what an awesome library of resources we can provide to all future Sikh students too!

## NATIONAL EVENTS

These can range from small scale events like bowling, ice- skating or a film night to paintballing and visiting theme parks.

Always ensure you contact the relevant companies to ensure there is sufficient availability for members, and to check prices as you do not want to organise something that is not financially feasible.

## VLOGS

We're looking to release monthly vlogs that focus on a different Sikh Society each time. Have you done something exciting? Discovered something new or won an award that everyone would benefit from hearing about? Maybe you'll learn a lesson about marketing or event planning that others could hear about and work into their Sikh Soc too.

Maybe someone has been affected by something at your uni and you want to tell the Sikh student scene? This is your chance to do just that!

## BRIGHT IDEAS

Bright ideas is a treasure chest of information we are looking to compile for future generations and we need ALL of you to take part in it.

If you've held an event recently we want you to add it to the database. Eventually, we will have hundreds of event data in one place that future Sikh students can flip through to use for ideas, inspiration and advice. Head on over to our bright ideas section on the BOSS website and get contributing. It won't take long but you can leave your own personal legacy for future years...

## ACTIVIST WEEKEND

With Guru Sahib's Grace, BOSS is looking to host a weekend away for students who are interested in becoming more active within the community and are looking to become future leaders of the Panth and society.

If you think you have what it takes, have enthusiasm in buckets but not quite sure which way to direct it, this weekend away might be just what you need as inspiration.

# BOSS Sikhi Camp

**Established in 1996 as a retreat for Sikh Students, BOSS Sikhi Camp is one of the most popular Sikhi retreats in the world. Each year, 400 young British Sikhs spend a week getting to meet like-minded individuals and experience Sikhi in its most beautiful form.**

Many students have a fantastic year at University. They love the time they've had a Sikhi Soc and have made some amazing friends in the process. But all too soon June comes and they part for the summer.

This is where Sikhi Camp comes in. August brings a 'back to basics' adult Sikhi-based retreat that has been especially designed to enhance and build on the experiences students have had at their Sikh Society.

Young people from around the UK (and increasingly from Europe, US, Canada and Singapore/Malaysia) spend 6 days in each other's company in idyllic surroundings. There are amazing activities (rafting, canoeing, archery etc) and time for personal reflection and spiritual growth.

We would really encourage you to attend yourselves and to tell your members about the retreat too. It is a great way for individuals to build on the energy and drive you have put into your Sikh Socs.

See [www.sikhicamp.org](http://www.sikhicamp.org) for further information or check out all our social media channels - @Sikhicamp.

Sikh Spirit... Catch it!



# Final Thoughts...

Well done for getting through this handbook! Hopefully you will be feeling more confident and excited about the year ahead. The possibilities are endless... Are you ready for the challenge??

## Tips on effective inter-committee communication



*\*Minimize talking through text and WhatsApp, ring each other or organised meetings instead. You will get more done and have less arguments.*

*\*Whenever an argument pops up I've found that trying to sort it out in an online group chat isn't effective, it may get others involved when they're not needed. It can blow the issue way out of proportion. Instead, ring or speak to them face to face (preferably individually). You will find that people tend to be more reasonable this way.*

*\*Presidents and VPs should try to remain neutral in arguments, this may be hard at times but you need the whole team with you. The team needs to be working together for the society to function properly.*

*\*Banter is good but make sure you get stuff done as well!*

*Jagroop Singh Bassi (president)  
University of Birmingham*

*\*Keep it cool, calm and collective. Keep it fun, engaging and sociable for all.*



*\*Make committee roles exciting and allow people to experiment and input their own ideas and skills into the work you do.*

*\*Have committee meeting every week. Preferable a few days after one event and few days before the next event, so you can all talk about the pros and cons of the last event and learn from them and talk about the next event.*

*\*Plan ahead as much as possible.*

*\*Try have committee socials or even have the meeting at a social, such as a meal about every 2-4 weeks.*

*\*Everyone have their delegated roles but everyone can jump in and help each other as much as they like and when they need it.*

*Manraj Singh (president)  
University of Leicester*

# NOTES



British Organisation of Sikh Students  
(BOSS)  
Est 1992

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