



***HOW TO FOUND A YOUNG
LIBERALS BRANCH AT
YOUR UNIVERSITY***

INTRODUCTION

This guide will provide a basic overview of how to found a new Young Liberals branch at your university from scratch.

It is split into two parts: "Setting Up" and "Growing", each with a clear set of instructions on how to achieve those goals.

Adopting these guidelines will help get your branch ready for the year and flourish.

If you have any further questions, please get in touch with the Membership Development Officer, whose details can be found here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/memdev>

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 1: CONTACT US

Wherever you are in the country, there will be a relevant Young Liberals organisation to contact and help get you started.

If you live in England, there are regional chairs for each region, whose details can be found here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/england>

If you live in either Scotland or Wales, there are state executives, whose details can be found here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/scotland>

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/wales>

Regional and State organisations are the best place to start. They will know your area, and will be able to advise you on local contacts and active nearby branches. Failing that, you can get in contact with any member of the federal executive, whose details can be found here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/exec>

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 2: FIND A COMMITTEE

What roles you need for your committee may well depend on your university or Student Union, so it's always advisable to check details with them (but more on that later).

As a bare minimum, most societies tend to have a President/Chair and Treasurer, as well as other roles depending on the size of the society, such as a Campaigns Officer or Events Officer.

If you don't know any fellow Liberal Democrats at your university, try posting in our official Facebook group, Young Liberals Forum, or asking your State/Regional Chair if they know anyone.

Failing that, you can always ask your friends to help you out! If you've moaned to them about Brexit a lot or they've said some nice things about us, try asking if they'd help set up a branch with you. Alternatively, you can post in any university Facebook groups you're a member of asking for interest.

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 3: MAKE IT OFFICIAL

Once you've got the bare minimum team together to get a society going, approach your Student Union about becoming a registered society.

SUs tend to have a lot of annoying loopholes to jump through when it comes to clubs and societies. It's advisable to dedicate some time to sitting down with your new committee to go through all the regulations and make sure you're compliant, so you don't get any nasty surprises later!

At the same time, approach your local party and let them know you exist - local parties are always happy to have new people on board and, especially in the case of students, often have no idea you exist until you come forward!

SUs might also make you have a membership fee, often around £1. It's worth getting in touch with your local party to see if they'll match this cost to pay for members' party membership too - which also costs £1 for the first year as a student!

If your SU doesn't allow political societies for whatever reason, consider setting up a Local Branch instead (see our *Branch Foundation Guide* for more details).

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 4: GET ONLINE

It's really important to make sure your society has an active and professional-looking presence online. Twitter or Facebook feeds are often the first thing potential new members see, so make sure they look good!

We recommend being active on Facebook and Twitter at a minimum, but Instagram is also useful.

You can use the Young Liberals Style Guide (also in the Documents section of our website) to help make sure all your content on social media looks good and fits the Young Liberals theme.

Make sure to take lots of (good quality) photos at your events and post them online - when potential members check out your feed, they'll want to see real, active people rather than just text, graphics and events.

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 5: ACCREDITATION

Now you're all set up with social media, make sure you let us know you exist by applying to become accredited!

It's not a scary process at all, it basically just means that Young Liberals officially recognises you as a branch of the organisation - and you even get benefits too!

Accredited branches get discounts on orders from Young Liberals, as well as exclusive access to help and guides, and a network of other likeminded Young Liberals branch leaders.

There's more about accreditation on the website here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/accredit>

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 1: PUBLICISE

Okay, now you're all set up properly - but you're probably still quite small at this stage. Now, you need to publicise your branch and attract some attention.

If you haven't already, post about it in Young Liberals Forum (at the very least post your social media there and we'll all give it a like/follow) and talk to our Communications Officer about getting a shoutout in an email.

You can also produce some cheap leaflets using online printers or even your local party's RISO to distribute around your university campus to get some people to some of your events. Try and get an advert in a student newspaper if you can too!

Ultimately, you can't expect to grow suddenly and get a large amount of members - even with the #LibDemSurge - this will take time and patience, likely over several years!

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 2: FUNDING

Sadly, running a society does come with some costs, but we're here to help make sure those overheads don't fall on you personally!

Young Liberals runs the Branch Development Fund, which is a pot of money set aside every year that accredited societies can apply to for up to £50 of funding at a time. That way, you can get us to pay for your leaflets or refreshments at your first few events. More information can be found here:

https://www.youngliberals.uk/branch_development_fund

You can also charge small fees on some events that cost money to put on - say, £3 on the door to help cover costs for food/drink. Don't set entry too high though, otherwise it will turn people away!

Your SU might also be able to provide some money to help societies put on events, so make sure to check with them too.

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 3: EVENTS

This is possibly the most time-consuming bit of the whole process: putting on events. The effort can be shared between committee members though, and we have some basic ideas to help get you going on what events you can put on:

- **Board Game Socials**
- **"Liber-Tea" Coffee House Socials**
- **Drinking Liberally Pub Socials**
- **Bowling Night vs. other political clubs**
- **"Spirited Discussions" Debate Events**
- **Speaker Events**

It's important to put on a variety of different events too so there's something for everyone. Someone who doesn't drink alcohol might not be enticed by Drinking Liberally or Spirited Discussions, but may be more likely to go to a Speaker Event or Board Game Night, for example.

Check out what other branches are doing and see what works - most of these ideas began with one branch but now are done by nearly all!

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 4: CAMPAIGNING

Campaigning is a crucial aspect of every Young Liberals branch, and will help build your profile at your university.

You can campaign in many ways, such as helping out your local party with leafleting and doorknocking, or even travelling to a nearby by-election to lend a hand. Building a good relationship with the local party like this is good and will pay dividends later.

You can also run your own specific on-campus campaigns, in areas where you think your university or SU are failing. Some common examples of this sort of campaign would be: a fossil fuel divestment campaign, a free menstrual product campaign, or a mental health services provision campaign.

If you do decide to run a campaign, make sure people know about it! Get in contact with your local and student newspapers to get some press, and tell us so we can signal-boost it on social media.

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 5: FRESHERS FAIRS

The main opportunity for growing your society comes at your university's annual Freshers Fair. At these events we've seen societies grow from 5 to 105 members in a day, so it's really important to get them right.

Every year, Young Liberals puts on a Freshers Campaign, where branches can purchase packs of leaflets, badges and stickers from us that are designed for maximum effect on a stall.

As well as these, you might want to design a small leaflet about your plans for the next term or year to put on your stall, as well as a "Brexitometer" or some other interactive element to get people to come over.

Make sure you're approachable and friendly at the stall and are proactive in talking to people who look interested but are too nervous to start the conversation - we've all been there!

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 6: HANDOVER

Now that you've secured the next generation of your society through Freshers, you should think about handing over the reins.

This is where many societies fail - there will be a burst of activity for a year or two, but then someone doesn't fill a committee or forgets to re-register after graduating and everything falls apart.

To this end, make sure you plan handover long in advance. Encourage your new members to run for committee if they come to your events a lot - always make sure there's a new generation to pass things on to.

Try to make a document over the year where you write down everything you had to do and every hoop you jumped through. Re-registering with the SU? Booking rooms? Emailing speakers? Don't assume your successors will know these things; make it as easy for them as possible!

If you do succeed, there's no better feeling. Looking back at the society you founded years after you graduated and seeing it still going strong is like nothing else - and it's absolutely doable if you follow this guide!

CONCLUSION

Hopefully this should be enough to get you started with your society.

This guide can't cover everything, so if you still have any pressing questions, please feel free to get in touch with any member of the Executive and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Most of us will have done this before ourselves, or will at least be able to put you in touch with someone else who has.

Good luck!

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