

# Rethinking Economics

How-to Guide:

...Setting up a student  
society

This guide will show you how to:

- Get people together who want to set up a society.
- Hold your first meeting.
- Turn that first meeting into a long-lasting society.

## Introduction

The idea of setting up a new student society may seem daunting, but it need not be. This easy to follow guide will take you through the basics of how to set one up; we've been through this ourselves, so with the benefit of hindsight we have a good idea of what to do (and what not to do!).

## Step one: getting people together

To start, all you need are a few other people with a similar concern, who want to be involved in a society. This could be as few as yourself and one or two coursemates, or even if it's just you, there are simple ways to get others involved, as we'll explain below.

The exact number of people that you need may differ from university to university; at Manchester you need a chair, a treasurer and a secretary, but your Students' Union will be able to tell you these details for your own University. To start off it's best just to aim for however many interested people you can find!

## Step two: setting up your first meeting

A good way to get your founding members is set up an initial meeting to introduce people to the idea and scope out who is keen. To do this you just need to:

1. **Arrange a time and place;** maybe in your Students' Union or local pub, and advertise it as widely as you can.
2. **Advertise;** write a template email that you can ask course convenors to send out to anyone studying economics (see our "[\*Template Committee Members Call Out email\*](#)").
3. **Advertise;** create a Facebook event, advertise on Twitter.
4. **Advertise;** if you can, put posters and flyers up around economics common rooms and lecture theatres.
5. **Hold the meeting!**

## Step three: holding the meeting

Remember that this is just an initial meeting, so don't put too much pressure on yourself or try to make it overly formal if you don't want to. The meeting can be quite relaxed and could be held in a space where you can just chat. A few things it is a good idea to talk about at your first meeting are:

1. **Introduce the problem;** people attending may have simply seen the advert and be keen to find out more, but have little or no knowledge of similar societies or of why they exist. So, it's good to give a general introduction about why you want to set up the society, why you want to change the economics curriculum, and of the overarching problems in economics as you see them. Our "*Rethinking Economics Key Messages*" might be helpful for this, or simply navigating the website.
2. **Scoping out what others want;** this is an important part of any meeting, and indeed you might want to do this right at the start before any introduction. Some people may come to the meeting with a clear idea of what they want to do or of what they want the society to be about; it's useful if you are open to taking these ideas on board, and shaping the society around everyone's desired aims.
3. **Discuss the society's future aims;** for example your society might aim to lobby your economics department for curriculum change, or to run an alternative economics course, or get together and self-teach pluralist economics ... or all of the above. From our experience, it's far more rewarding to make real progress on one or two projects, than to try to do everything at once. You could take inspiration from other groups' projects, or come up with something entirely different:

- Run a fortnightly pluralist reading group: [RE Oxford](#) runs a series of seminars popular with undergrads and postgrads.
- Invite an economist to speak to your group: [Cambridge Society for Economic Pluralism](#) invites speakers from a variety of schools of thought to speak at its 'Paper O' lecture series
- Hold a screening of the new film on econ education Boom Bust Boom: [Pluralist Economics at Sussex](#) held one, free of charge!
- Lobby your department for curriculum reform. More on this in "[How To... Change the Curriculum at Your University](#)".
- Devise and run your own alternative module.
- Organise a pluralist economics conference. At [Manchester](#), this introduced the public to economics in an accessible way. At [Glasgow](#), economics students were introduced to new ways of thinking.
- Bring a citizen's crash course or schools workshop to your city! We've piloted both events extensively and want to help students across the world deliver them.

Remember that gauging people's reaction to these ideas is important too! This can be as simple as discussing these ideas with everyone at the end of the meeting to make see if you're on the same page.

4. **Don't forget the basics!**
  - If you can, ask someone else to **take minutes** so that you can send these round to everyone afterwards
  - Have a **contacts sheet** ready for everyone to fill in during the meeting so that you can get in touch afterwards
  - Agree on a time and place for a second meeting.

## Step four: Turning the meeting into a society

1. At the end of the meeting, tell everyone who is interested you'll be setting up a Facebook group or Email list for those who want to get involved. Invite them to it later that night or the next day
2. Decide on a name for your group; you might want to use the first meeting to do this, it's a fun first thing to do!
3. Set up as a society with your union; all students union's have different ways of doing this so it's best to drop them an email or go in and speak to them. Being registered with your union can give you access to lots of different types of support - often they have training days for Treasurers or Chairpeople, or pots of money to give to societies and often rooms that you can book for free. Most Unions run 'freshers' fairs' which are a good way to reach out to potential members.
4. Agree on a structure. This doesn't just mean a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer (although that's a good start!). You may also want to designate an events coordinator, someone responsible for communications, or a schools outreach coordinator.