

# How to Help Nervous Students

Feeling nervous about engaging with a student group is a common experience. For some students, however, these feelings may stop them from joining and engaging with your student group altogether. This guide aims to help you make your student group easier to access for these students, highlighting potential barriers, suggestions of how to overcome them and the benefits of a more inclusive student group.

## Potential barriers

On barriers to student groups, students have expressed:

- Anxiety surrounding not knowing anyone
- Anxiety surrounding having no one to talk to
- Anxiety surrounding attending alone



In a JMSU survey, reasons given for

**not joining a student group included:**

- 'Wasn't sure what to expect'
- 'Didn't think I would make friends/meet people'

**leaving a student group included:**

- 'Didn't feel included'
- 'Didn't make friends/meet people'

## Reducing barriers

To reduce barriers to joining and engaging with your student group, we suggest the following:

- 1 **Offer students the opportunity to meet with a current member of your student group beforehand.**

Talking to someone from your student group prior to engaging can help reduce uncertainties a student may have and means they will already know someone when engaging for the first time. Provide students with the contact details of your Wellbeing and Inclusion Ambassador and offer one or both of the following:

- The Wellbeing and Inclusion Ambassador can pair them with a current student group member who can answer questions, share their own experiences of the student group and more.

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## 2 Offer students the opportunity to become familiar with the space beforehand.

Provide students with the opportunity to arrive at an event a little early if they are facing a barrier this could help with (this can help with nervousness, but could also, for example, help those with access requirements!). This means the student can become familiar with the space before most members arrive; it also means they won't be arriving when everyone is already there, which can be overwhelming.

If you have a regular meeting space, offer students the opportunity to visit it beforehand with someone from your Committee or a current group member they have been paired with.

## 3 Make sure online information related to your student group is up-to-date and includes all necessary details.

Your student group will likely have social media channels as well as a section on the Students' Union website. Consider what you would want to know if you were a prospective group member and ensure all of this information is available. If you are holding an event, make sure to advertise this and include all necessary details.

### Potential benefits

**Increased student group engagement.** Students who face the barriers mentioned to accessing your group may be more likely to join and continue to engage.

**A more diverse student group membership.** Some groups of students, such as those with conditions and disabilities, may disproportionately face the barriers mentioned. Implementing the suggestions above may help them engage more, leading to a more diverse membership.

**Increased employability skills.** As Committee members, overseeing this is something that can be mentioned in future applications and interviews. Student group members who are paired with prospective members can also mention this on their CV.

