

How to set up a Student Group for women in science, engineering, technology and the built environment

Interconnect is the Scottish network for women students on science, engineering, technology and built environment programmes. Interconnect supports student groups in colleges and universities across Scotland.



This leaflet gives advice on how to start a student group, including

- The aims of your group
- Membership of the group
- What you need in the way of resources and where to get them
- Activities: examples of the kinds of things your group might do
- Some useful “Next Steps”

Aims

First things first – you need to think about why you are setting up a group. The people setting the group up need to decide what is important to them. You may want to use one or more of the objectives below for your group:

The objectives of the group might be to:

- Build relationships with women in industry who can act as role models, including previous graduates of the department/ college
- Organise social events for women students in the department to give them a chance to meet each other and socialise
- Encourage more women to study subjects where they are under-represented
- Build links with employers and women in industry who can provide encouragement and career advice to women students
- Help women students to prepare for employment in male dominated industries
- Link up with women student groups in other colleges and universities, and to women’s networks in business

Getting people to join

There is no one solution to how to attract people to your group and to events.

Here are some ideas:

- Posters – on notice-boards, in the canteen, in the shop, in the loos. Ask the Students Association for advice on where best to put them up
- Run a stall in the Reception area at lunchtime
- Get other people to help you to advertise the group – the Students Association, sympathetic lecturers, technicians, your friends
- Email all the students in the department.

Here is an email that one group sent to students:

Lunch Meeting for Women Students in Science and Technology

Organised jointly by the Students Association and staff and students in the School of Science and Technology

- Do you want to meet other women studying in Science, Engineering and Technology?
- Would you like to meet qualified women working in your subject area?
- Are you interested in talking to school students about why you chose your subjects?

Join us for a free buffet lunch to talk about how a group can take forward your interests as a woman scientist, technologist or engineer.

Time and Date

Place

Let us know if you are coming to the lunch by emailing XX

Should the group be women-only?

There are many successful women's networks in business and industry. The point of the group is to support women students. Some women feel uncomfortable with the idea of a women-only group. Make it clear that your group isn't anti-men. There may be some activities that you will want to encourage men to come along to.

Who is your target group?

The aim is to support women where they are in a minority. The students you target to join your group will depend on how your college is organised. This might include women studying:

Computing	Built Environment	Physical Sciences
Engineering	Construction	Sports Science
Transport	Manufacturing	Agriculture

For example, at Edinburgh Napier University a decision was taken to make the student group open to all students in the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Creative Industries. This included some courses where women students are in a majority. However, the industries for which these courses were designed are currently male dominated and students said they felt it would be useful to have a women's network.

Getting people involved

Nothing involves people like having a role, and contributing to the group. Find out who wants to –

- Set up a Facebook site
- Send out emails to members
- Write something for the Student Association newsletter or website
- Be photographer at events

When anyone shows an interest in the group, try to get their name, email address and mobile number. This is invaluable for putting out reminders about activities and keeping in touch

Everyone should have a say in what the group does, and what they want from it.

- Do they want social events?
- Career development events?
- Do they have children – and so need to meet in the day or when they can bring kids?

Getting people to feel that the group is for them and about them and needs them, will make the group successful

Ideas for Activities and Events

Social Events	<p>A lunch in the first week of term for women students</p> <p>Invite women former students in to come in and meet this year's students.</p> <p>A quiz</p> <p>Go bowling – or paintballing, or any other activity where participation is more important than skill.</p> <p>A picnic or a barbeque, or just a night at the pub.</p>
Career Development	<p>Visit a Company</p> <p>Organise an event where women come in and talk about their work and careers in the sector,</p> <p>Or invite them in for an informal coffee & donuts</p>
Linking to other groups so you can join their activities	<p>Interconnect will give you info on a lot of other groups such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women In Property • Womens Engineering Society • British Computing Society • Girls in Physics • Girl Geeks <p>Find out about, and join, their events</p>
Making a difference	<p>Help the college/university to organise an introductory day for women</p> <p>Join college recruitment activities – help show prospective students round</p> <p>Carry out a survey – are there changes that the college/ university could make to improve things for women?</p> <p>Train as a STEM Ambassador and visit schools to encourage girls to think about studying your subject – Contact interconnect for details</p>
Getting your college or university involved	<p>Identify someone on the staff of your college or university who is willing to help you keep the group going.</p> <p>The Students' Association have experience in supporting student groups – talk to them.</p>

Next Steps

- Find some friends and allies who will help you get started
- Hold an initial meeting
- Think of a name for the group
- Decide on a president (or similar). And perhaps other roles – eg, someone to look after finances or publicity
- Make a list of all the people and organisations who might help your group
- Set up a Facebook group
- Arrange a regular meeting time
- Join interconnect and find out about activities your group can link up with and the resources available

Money, money...

When you are organising an activity, think about cost. Are there any college funds that you can access to help pay for food, or publicity? A small grant may be available from the Students' Association.

Interconnect can offer a start-up grant of up to £100 to help you get started. It can be used to pay for posters, travel to meetings, catering for events etc. Email Interconnect to find out how you can apply for this.

Tips from other Student Groups

Logo It's useful to have a symbol and logo that are easily recognisable

Funding You will need some money to pay for lunches, travel etc, find out whether you can get any money from the college or university

Communicate Use posters and Facebook so people know what your group is doing and how to get in touch with you

Food Organising good food is a sensible investment. Having food at an event helps to break the ice and give a sense of celebration

Keep in touch You need to have regular contact with members so people know what is coming up and to keep the momentum going

Respond to Feedback Listen to what people say they would like to do. Use post it notes and evaluation forms and email to collect feedback and gather ideas about when and where to meet

Fun You need to try and make sure the group is relaxed, welcoming, unthreatening and enjoyable

For more information

Go to the Interconnect website: www.interconnect.org.uk

Contact Allison Johnstone, Interconnect Co-ordinator:

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