

A Guide for



The National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and
Secular Student Societies

1 Gower Street, London, WC1E 6HD

<http://www.ahsstudents.org.uk>

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Welcome!

Welcome to the Regional Development Officer scheme! Thank you for agreeing to take on this role, and we hope we can work together to help strengthen the atheist, Humanist and secular student movement in your region.

The UK and Republic of Ireland are split up into 13 regions. Each Regional Development Officer (RDO) has one region, ideally where they either live or go to University. The RDO helps further the aims of the AHS within that region, acting as a go-between between the societies and the AHS Cabinet.

The RDO searches for, makes contact with and supports student societies in their region, as well as putting the societies in contact with other local groups in their area. The RDO travels to Universities within the region in order to help train existing and potential member societies as well as arrange regional socials and campaigns. The RDO encourages society participation in the AHS and the holding of Reason Weeks.

The RDO reports to the AHS's Head of Membership, keeping them informed of goings on within the region. The ideal RDO must have good interpersonal skills and a willingness to go out there and get the job done.

This guide aims to provide all the information you should need in order to be successful as a Regional Development Officer. If you feel anything is missing, or need any additional guidance, please do not hesitate to contact our Head of Membership at membership@humanism.org.uk.

Initial Tasks

So you've just become an RDO. There are various things you need to do, straight off the bat...

Set up your AHS email address

Each region comes with an email address, e.g. south.west.england@ahsstudents.org.uk. It's worth using this email in all external correspondence in your capacity as an RDO, as this is more professional, and will always be held by the RDO – if you change, the email won't, so people in the region will still know where to email.

The [AHS webmaster](#) will set this up for you. The emails will auto-forward to another address – ideally this should be one that you check regularly. If you're using Gmail you could also make it so that, from within your Gmail account, you can send mail from your RDO address – easy :)

Make contact with societies within your region

You should immediately make contact with societies in your region that the AHS already knows about, plus do a quick search for more:

- Check the AHS collaborative spreadsheets on Google Documents to see which societies we already know about, and to find contact details. Note that all contact details are confidential and should not be shared with anyone outside the AHS Cabinet and RDOs.
- The Head of Membership will report new societies to you, as found through the (Cabinet access only) Facebook Society Searcher Tool on the AHS website. However, you may still from time to time come across a new society we don't already know about. For an up to date list of universities within your region, see the later chapter of this guide, (for the UK) look at [UCAS's University and College Map](#) or (for

the Republic of Ireland) look at the [CAO's list](#) - note however the AHS only supports Higher Education Institutes.

- Look at the Student Union websites for any societies that might be interested in being affiliated to the AHS.
- Search Google for societies. Try lots of variations. For example if you were looking for a society at Leeds University you would try, 'Leeds Humanist', 'LUU Secular', etc.
- When you find a new society, make first contact. If you need help phrasing it just right, see the sample message in the later chapter.
- Make sure you update the AHS's records with any new information you find, and email the Head of Membership so that we know you've done this.

Monitor society activities

You can keep an eye on the websites, Facebook groups and Twitter accounts of all the societies in your region via the AHS's [society hub](#) – for example, [here's the page for South East England](#) – and you can also see more about the region on its [region page](#), accessible via the [members page](#). It's worth interacting with your societies via Facebook, their blogs and, if you use it, Twitter.

Join relevant Facebook groups

As outlined later on, being part of Facebook groups is extremely important. You should join the groups and 'like' the pages of all the individual societies within your region. For the AHS Regional Groups you only need to be in the AHS-wide group and your Region's group, but you might find it helpful to be in all the groups, so you know what is going on in the other regions.

The AHS groups are:

- [The AHS fan page](#)
- [AHS Regional Development Officers group](#)
- [AHS East Midlands group](#)
- [AHS East of England](#)
- [AHS Greater London group](#)
- [AHS North East England group](#)
- [AHS North West England group](#)
- [AHS South East England group](#)
- [AHS South West England group](#)
- [AHS West Midlands group](#)
- [AHS Yorkshire and the Humber group](#)
- [AHS Scotland group](#)
- [AHS Wales group](#)
- [AHS Northern Ireland group](#)
- [AHS Republic of Ireland group](#)

Arrange to meet with society committees

When first taking up this position, immediately get in touch with all the societies within your region, and further try and arrange to meet up with the committees. This will help you build up a relationship with them. The main aim is to find out how we can support them, and if they are not already members, make sure they understand the benefits of joining us (more on that later). The same is the case when first talking to a new society.

You could suggest going along to one of their events, rather than arranging a specific meeting just for them.

You should aim to:

- Find out about their society
- Tell them about the AHS – who we are, what we do.

- Tell them who you, the RDO, is in relation to the AHS, i.e. in the chain of command.
- Discuss how the AHS can help them (guides, directories, access to speakers, website, being part of the AHS movement, etc.).
- Inform them how to apply for membership (if they are not members) – more on that later.

Make contact with local non-student groups

The AHS has in the past had contact with every BHA-affiliated local Humanist group. Many are enthusiastic about helping the AHS. Some were at Freshers' Fairs in September/October 2010 helping set up student societies. We intend to continue to encourage LHGs to set up stalls at or outside their local University's fairs, advertise an upcoming meeting, and this meeting will serve as a vehicle for students coming together to set up a society.

Local Humanist groups aren't the only network of non-student groups that may be of interest to students – there are also the Skeptics in the Pub and Sea of Faith Network groups.

You should:

- Introduce yourself to the groups in your region, and tell them what the AHS is.
- Agree with them to let you know if they hear of any students in the area that are interested in starting up a society, and vice versa.
- Invite them to regional socials.
- Check for any other similar non-student groups.

In terms of finding out who your LHGs/SITP groups/SOFN groups are...

- British Humanist Association-affiliated local Humanist groups are listed [here](#). One of the AHS collaborative spreadsheets in Google documents gives the nearest Universities for each LHG.
- Humanist Society of Scotland local groups are listed [here](#).

- Skeptics in the Pub groups are listed [here](#).
- Sea of Faith Network groups are listed [here](#).

Routine tasks

There are a number of things that will need to be done routinely, as often as possible.

Keep the AHS Cabinet up-to-date on your region

Tell the Head of Membership if there are any changes in your region such as societies folding/forming, an AGM date being set, committee changes or other changes of circumstances. Update the AHS collaborative Google documents, as appropriate.

Regular updates and updates when requested should be sent to the Head of Membership.

Keep your region's Facebook group up to date

- Invite everyone from societies within your region into the group.
- Periodically put new pictures onto the group.
- Arrange regional socials through the group.

Tell societies about the AHS and encourage non-members to join

Any active societies in your region that have not joined the AHS should periodically be encouraged to do so. Remember it is now free to join the AHS; societies just need to fill in the [online form](#), where they can also see the list of benefits (also outlined later on).

The AHS likes to keep tabs on non-member societies, in the hopes that they will one day join!

Keep in contact with the Presidents and AHS Reps of your societies

Try to have at least some communication every few weeks with your societies. This could be by Facebook chat, email, private message, a phone call, a text, Windows Live messenger, Skype or of course, face-to-face. Use your own judgement as to how is the best way to contact them and how often. The method they are most likely to reply to is probably their preferred method of communication.

Try and friend your region's Presidents and AHS reps on Facebook.

Report any feedback from societies

Get feedback from societies as to how beneficial they are finding being a member of the AHS, or any improvements they would like to see. Report this feedback straight to the Head of Membership, no matter how small. This is extremely important, because the AHS needs to offer what its members want, and you are the first point of contact for the member societies.

Termly tasks

It is important the committees of each society in your region know who you are. You should see them each term. This could be in the form a regional social, a committee meet up, campaigning, workshops, during a Reason Week, other society event or helping out at freshers' fair.

Introduce yourself and congratulate any new committee

Find out when the AGMs are and immediately after the next one, contact the new committee saying who you are, a bit about the AHS and congratulating them on being elected. This means that they know about the AHS and that you are in touch with them right away.

Arrange to meet up with committees and attend an event

This is to ensure they are happy with the AHS, we are kept up to date with how the societies are going, and so we can learn how best we can support them.

If a society is just getting started, or even if they're more experienced, it's worth asking them how things are going, getting feedback, and giving them advice where appropriate. If you're not sure what to say, the [AHS's guides](#), in particular the guide, [How to Start and Run a Student Society](#), should help both you and them!

Organise regional socials

Regional socials are a great way not only to get to know the societies in your region, but also for them to get to know each other. This enables them to learn off each other, and to become more engaged in the wider student movement.

- Start by asking societies if they would be interested.
- Find a date all societies are free.
- Set a date and time, and decide on a venue.
- Make a Facebook event.
- Let the AHS know – we can advertise this for you too.
- If appropriate, invite other local groups.

Hold regional workshops

If there is a need, holding regional training workshops on whatever there is demand for can be taken on. The AHS will supply any advice and materials you will need, but the guides on the AHS website are a pretty good place to start.

Help at Freshers' Fairs

Apart from maybe Reason Weeks, Freshers' Fairs are the most important week for a society, and where they will get the vast majority of their members each year. Hence having a successfully run freshers' fair is very, very important. Some societies will be short on members to help at freshers' fairs. They could really benefit from an experienced pair of hands to help recruit new members. Attending a society's freshers' fair is also a good way to bond with the committee, and to get to know the society's size.

The AHS's guide, [*How to Run a Successful Freshers' Week*](#), should help with all things fresher-related.

Some university unions have extra fairs such as a mid-term fair in January, a re-freshers' fair for people who aren't in their first year, and an international freshers' fair. Encourage the societies to attend them too, and offer to help out if you can. They can be a great way to get extra members.

Further tasks

Go to extra society events

If you have time it would be beneficial and enjoyable for you to go to extra events societies in your region hold.

Arrange regional campaigning

If there is an issue you or a society is particularly interested in, you can organise a campaign on it. You will get a lot more attention if the groups work together. You can either organise this yourself or support someone else doing so.

Encourage Reason Weeks, and help with Reason Week planning

Planning a [Reason Week](#) is a big deal – perhaps the biggest thing a society can do. You as an experienced person can really help.

Ways you can help:

- Pass on guides and tips [from the AHS](#) and other member societies.
- Call upon experienced people through the AHS to advise you.
- Attend planning meetings to make sure they are on track
- Help to publicise the week in your region and to the rest of the AHS.
- Attend the week itself.
- If possible, volunteer some of your time to staff the week.

Joining the AHS

Obviously, we want to see as many societies as possible join the AHS! The AHS's members are its societies, and membership of the AHS is free! There are two types of membership for UK and ROI student societies – full membership, for societies already up and going, and associate membership, for societies in the process of setting up. The sooner a society joins, the more help we can give it.

UK members can also separately affiliate to the British Humanist Association for free.

FULL MEMBERSHIP

Full membership is for constituted university societies within the UK and Republic of Ireland of an agnostic, atheist, freethinker, Humanist, non-theist, rationalist, secularist, or skeptic philosophy. A society must earn full membership by demonstrating they are a genuine society. This is at the

discretion of the Executive of the AHS, who will take the following into consideration:

1. Whether the society has a constitution;
2. Whether the society has a committee;
3. Whether the society is holding regular events.

Full members get all the benefits of joining. Benefits include:

- access to the full range of our society running guides
- access to the AHS Speakers Directory
- listing on our website
- events listed in our weekly newsletter
- rights to attend the AHS AGM
- invites to AHS events and training workshops
- free society affiliation to the British Humanist Association (including public liability insurance, web hosting, copies of publications and much more - see below)
- your members can join the British Humanist Association for £10 instead of £20
- right to apply for grants for major events
- receipt of personnel help at major events
- two votes on the AHS Caucus
- support of a Regional Representative
- free hugs from the AHS President.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Associate membership is for non-constituted, non-UK/ROI or non-student societies of an agnostic, atheist, freethinker, Humanist, non-theist, rationalist, secularist, or skeptic philosophy.

Associate members only get some of the benefits of joining. They are eligible for the same benefits as full members, but **may not be eligible for** access to the AHS Speakers Directory; members can join the British Humanist

Association for £10 instead of £20; right to apply for grants for major events; receipt of personnel help at major events; or two votes on the AHS Caucus. Eligibility on these points is at discretion of the AHS Executive.

Ideally, newly forming societies will be eligible for Associate membership as soon as they start to be set up. Associate member societies should graduate to Full member societies once they meet the requirements.

APPLYING FOR MEMBERSHIP

Applications can be made at

<http://www.ahsstudents.org.uk/membership/join/>

Once a society has applied, the procedure for becoming a member is as follows (as quoted from the [constitution](#)):

"All applications that are accepted by the Executive shall be deemed to be ratified by the Caucus in the absence of objections following seven days' notice of the accepted application by email. In the event of objection, the application must be ratified by simple majority of the Caucus."

If you're not sure whether to advise a society to go for full or associate membership, don't hesitate to get in touch with our Head of Membership at membership@ahsstudents.org.uk.

AFFILIATING TO THE BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

When applying to join the AHS, or once already a member, UK societies can also affiliate to the [British Humanist Association](#) for free. The benefits of doing so include:



Resources:

- free web hosting from the BHA
- ten or more free copies of each bi-monthly issue of *BHA News*
- other information and campaigns resources in your bi-monthly pack
- the Groups Network newsletter by email
- a free copy of each new BHA publication

Publicity:

- listing on the BHA website Groups pages
- listing on the public BHA Groups' Google Map
- inclusion in material sent to all new BHA members
- your website or website news feed on our Netvibes page
- promotion of local humanism on BHA forms and publications
- being able to state affiliation to the national humanist organisation on your headed paper and other materials
- use of the 'Happy Human' affiliated group images

Other support:

- cover under BHA Public Liability Insurance for your meetings and events
- discounts on bulk orders of publications and other products from our shop
- advice and support from the BHA as appropriate
- we can work with you to send occasional mailings of your group's material to BHA members and supporters in your area by arrangement

Groups also have the right the right to submit motions to general meetings of the BHA.

If you want to affiliate to the BHA, you can do so when you fill in your AHS membership form, or by emailing BHA Head of Membership and Promotion Bob Churchill, at groups@humanism.org.uk.

AHS Collaborative Google spreadsheets

You should already have access to our shared Google spreadsheets, which serve as our database system. If this is not the case, contact the Head of Membership.

AHS societies

Lists all the societies the AHS has received information about at some point. It is worth checking this document when you start your role so you know what information we have on your region. When you think you have found a new society, this document will tell you whether they are a society that the AHS has already been in contact with, how active they are, etc.

If you update this, please let the Head of Membership know what you have changed.

Committees – former and current

Lists every committee member the AHS has on record, gives contact details, gives past and present positions, and – for present positions – when the committee member holds it until.

Note that all contact details are confidential and should not be shared with anyone outside the AHS Cabinet and RDOs.

Again, if you update this, please let the Head of Membership know what you have changed.

BHA-affiliated local Humanist groups

This lists the BHA-affiliated local Humanist groups, sortable by region, and who their nearest Universities are.

Resources and guides

The AHS has been building up resources and has released a number of guides. These are all hosted on the website. The speakers directory can only be seen by committee members of full AHS societies who have registered for an account, but the rest are available to anyone.

It's well worth registering for the website and familiarising yourself with all of these.

It is important you get as much feedback and ideas from societies as possible, and feed them back to the Head of Membership.

Current resources

- [Society running guides and Top Tips Guides](#)
- [Speakers Directory](#)
- [Film Directory](#)
- [Debate Directory](#)
- [Discussion Directory](#)

Current guides

- [How to Start and Run a Student Society](#)
- [How to Write a Constitution](#)
- [How to Run a Successful Freshers' Week](#)
- [A Guide to Charity and Volunteering](#)
- [A Guide to Interfaith](#)
- [How to Run a Reason Week](#)
- [Top Tips for Fundraising](#)
- [Top Tips for Publicising your Society](#)
- [Top Tips for Running a Successful Film Night](#)
- [Top Tips for Sustaining your Society](#)

If you have any ideas for other resources, or would like to write a guide, please let us know.

Expenses

The AHS does not want you to be out of pocket for any support you give to societies in your region. However we are not by any means a wealthy organisation and therefore cannot guarantee all expenses will be paid. You must apply for funding and then payment will be at the full discretion of the Executive.

Reasonable requests will be return transport for you only (ideally an off peak return train fare using a young person's railcard, but if this is not possible then don't worry) when visiting other societies, and food and drink expenses cost equivalent to a coffee for yourself and up to three members of their committee – once a term, for each society.

If you want expenses paid for a visit to a society and want to ensure you will pay the costs, it would be helpful if you contact the Head of Membership before your visit with an estimate of how much it is likely to cost.

Details of the expenses claims procedure, and the claim form, can be found by logging in to the AHS website and visiting the [documents library](#).

Communication

Communication is a very important aspect of being a Regional Development Officer. We are all spread out across the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and face-to-face contact is often not possible. It is extremely important you keep in regular contact with the Head of Membership and societies within your region. You must have: a Facebook account, a phone, email, Skype and MSN Messenger/Windows Live Messenger. You must also check these on a regular basis. Make sure the Head of Membership has your details up to date.

Facebook

Facebook is widely used by students, and its importance as an organisational tool for student societies cannot be underestimated. The AHS uses it for searching for societies, contacting prospective members, forming working relationships, keeping in contact with societies, arranging events, advertising events, sharing the Resource Directories, putting societies and people in touch and for campaigning.

The '[AHS Regional Development Officers](#)' Facebook group is a secret group that you all should be members of. Only RDOs, the AHS Executive and the Officers are in the group. It was intended as an informal forum for discussion between the RDOs. It is now used as a way to message all RDOs and to invite you to meetings.

Each RDO is an admin of their own Regional Group. This is a way to keep in contact with the societies in your region and arrange events with them. It also brings together different committees in your region.

The [AHS Fan page](#) is used to relay information about the AHS and promote UK/ROI-wide events. It also shows the AHS has a wide membership base.

Facebook chat is a good way to get to know the other Regional Development Officers, the Cabinet and the societies within your region. Use it as often as you can.

Almost all societies have a Facebook group. You should search regularly for groups (more info in section 1) and join any groups in your region. This will keep you up to date on the societies.

Phone

The AHS keeps the phone numbers of the President and AHS Rep of every society. This is a good way to keep in contact with your societies.

The Head of Membership will also ring you periodically to check how your region is going and reserves the right to text you on occasion too :P

Email

Email is the main method of communication. See later for the AHS's email addresses and mailing lists. As a Regional Development Officer you are expected to respond to any emails on the RDO mailing list that require one, and any enquires from societies within your area. You should also welcome any new societies to the AHS and offer your support once the AHS makes contact.

The AHS keeps the details of the committees of our member societies. We like to have their emails for the Newsletter, as we feel it is important that they are all kept up to date with the goings on of the AHS.

Skype

Periodic Regional Development Officer meetings take place over Skype. You therefore need to have it downloaded onto your computer and make sure the AHS has your username. You will not need a microphone as we type.

MSN Messenger/Windows Live Messenger

MSN/WLM is used as a back-up if Skype is not working for online meetings. It is also a good way to get to know other people within the AHS.

Twitter

Twitter is becoming increasingly popular with both students and student societies. If you have time, get involved – keep in touch with both the students and the societies in your region via this new social platform :)

The 13 regions

Region	No	Universities
East of England	9	<p>Anglia Ruskin University, University of Bedfordshire, University of Cambridge, Cranfield University, University of East Anglia, University of Essex, University of Hertfordshire</p> <p>University College: Norwich University College of the Arts</p> <p>University Campus: University Campus Suffolk</p>
East Midlands	9	<p>De Montfort University, University of Derby, University of Leicester, University of Lincoln, Loughborough University, University of Northampton, The University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University</p> <p>University College: Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln</p>
Greater London	37	<p>University of London: Birkbeck, University of London, Central School of Speech and Drama, Courtauld Institute of Art, Goldsmiths, University of London, Heythrop College, Institute of Cancer Research, Institute of Education, King's College London, London Business School, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Royal Academy of Music, Royal Veterinary College, St George's, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, The School of Pharmacy, University of London, University of London Institute in Paris, School of Advanced Study</p> <p>Other Universities: Brunel University, City University London, University of East London, University of Greenwich, Imperial College London, Kingston University, London Metropolitan University, London South Bank University, Middlesex University, Roehampton University, Royal College of Art, University of Westminster, University of West London</p> <p>University Colleges: BPP University College of Professional Studies, St. Mary's University College, Twickenham</p> <p>Foreign University: Richmond, The American International University in London</p>
North East England	5	<p>Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, University of Sunderland, University of Teesside</p>

Northern Ireland	4	Queen's University Belfast, University of Ulster University Colleges: St. Mary's University College, Belfast, Stranmillis University College
North West England	13	The University of Bolton, University of Central Lancashire, University of Chester, University of Cumbria, Edge Hill University, Lancaster University, The University of Liverpool, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool John Moores University, The University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Salford University College: Royal Northern College of Music
Republic of Ireland	8	National University of Ireland: University College Cork, University College Dublin, National University of Ireland, Galway, National University of Ireland, Maynooth University of Dublin: Trinity College, Dublin Other Universities: Dublin City University, Dublin Institute of Technology, University of Limerick
Scotland	15	University of Aberdeen, University of Abertay Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde, University of the Highlands and Islands, University of the West of Scotland
South East England	18	University of Brighton, University of Buckingham, Buckinghamshire New University, Canterbury Christ Church University, University for the Creative Arts, University of Chichester, University of Kent, Oxford University, Oxford Brookes University, University of Portsmouth, University of Reading, Royal Holloway (University of London), University of Southampton, Southampton Solent University, University of Surrey, University of Sussex, University of Winchester, Open University
South West England	12	University of Bath, Bath Spa University, Bournemouth University, University of Bristol, University of the West of England, University of Exeter, University of Gloucestershire, University of Plymouth University Colleges: The Arts University College at Bournemouth, University College Falmouth, University College Plymouth St Mark & St John, Royal Agricultural College

Wales	10	University of Wales: Aberystwyth University, Bangor University, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, University of Wales, Newport, Glyndŵr University, Swansea University, Swansea Metropolitan University, University of Wales, Trinity Saint David Other Universities: Cardiff University, University of Glamorgan
West Midlands	12	Aston University (Birmingham), Birmingham City University, University of Birmingham, Coventry University, Keele University, Staffordshire University, University of Warwick, University of Wolverhampton, University of Worcester University Colleges: Harper Adams University College, Newman University College, University College Birmingham
Yorkshire and the Humber	9	University of Bradford, University of Huddersfield, University of Hull, University of Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan University, University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, University of York, York St John University

Useful emails

Individual addresses

President	president@ahsstudents.org.uk
Secretary	secretary@ahsstudents.org.uk
Treasurer	treasurer@ahsstudents.org.uk
Head of Membership	membership@ahsstudents.org.uk
Press Officer	press@ahsstudents.org.uk
Webmaster	webmaster@ahsstudents.org.uk

Mailing lists

AHS Cabinet (Executive and Officers)	cabinet@ahsstudents.org.uk
AHS Cabinet and AHS Regional Development Officers	rdos@ahsstudents.org.uk
Society Presidents, AHS Reps, AHS Board, AHS Cabinet and AHS Regional Development Officers	caucus@ahsstudents.org.uk
AHS Newsletter	newsletter@ahsstudents.org.uk

Note that Regional Development Officers and Officers are not on the AHS Caucus so cannot vote in any decisions that are put to it. However, RDOs and Officers are on the caucus mailing list, so that you can stay informed on what the Caucus is up to.

Further note that you cannot email the Newsletter mailing list.

Sample messages

Contacting a newly discovered society

Subject: Hello from the AHS!

"Hi Stewart,

You don't know me, allow me to introduce myself. I'm Richy Thompson, the South East Regional Development Officer for the National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies (or AHS for short!), and I'm emailing you because I found the Surrey Secular Humanists Facebook group. Here's the blurb: The AHS, if you're not familiar, is an umbrella organisation which represents atheist, humanist and secular student societies in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Founded in 2008, we aim to provide

support and resources for established and newly-forming societies as well as a national voice.

The AHS is run for students by students, and its leading figures are selected from its member societies. Its governing body is the Caucus, which in turn is directed by an elected Executive.

I am a computer scientist going into my fourth year at Oxford, founded the Oxford Atheist Society back in Trinity (summer term!) 2008 and have now moved onto the role of south-east regional development officer for the AHS. I basically want to use it to be as helpful as possible to societies within the region. Having found your group on Facebook, I wanted to offer the AHS's experience and advice to help you set your society up, if you're still planning to, and invite you to consider joining the AHS. Joining is free! The AHS's website can be found at <http://ahsstudents.org.uk/> and full details on joining can be seen at <http://www.ahsstudents.org.uk/membership/join/>

It'd be great to meet up with everyone from the Surrey group. I see you have an upcoming pub social – would it be okay if I came along and said hi?

Looking forward to your reply,

Richy Thompson"

Getting in touch with an existing society for the first time

"Hey Nick,

I'm Richy Thompson, the AHS's south-east regional development officer, and I thought it was time to establish contact. I am a computer scientist going into my fourth year at Oxford, founded the Oxford Atheist Society back in Trinity (summer term!) 2008 and have now moved onto this role. I basically want to use it to be as helpful as possible to the local societies. I live in south-east Oxfordshire so even when it's not term time in Oxford I should still be available to you guys.

Essentially over the next year I think it will be good to build a sense of community spirit in the region, holding joint events but also working together sharing ideas, workshops, news of local events we might all be interested in, etc. For now though, I'd just like to know firstly who's on your committee and how often you have elections, and secondly when your term starts, and when your fresher's fair is!

If you want me to come and help out during fresher's fair, schedule permitting, I'd like to do that. Also if you need any other advice or help at any stage then please ask.

It'd be great to meet up with everyone from your group. I see you have an upcoming social – would it be okay if I came along and said hi?

Kind regards,

Richy Thompson"

Replying to an enquiry from a potential new member

"Dear Jennifer,

Thanks for your email. It's great to hear that you want to start up a society. I've attached our guide to starting and running a student society. I hope that it is helpful.

I would also like to add you to our weekly mailing list, so you can see what the AHS and other societies are up to.

You'll be pleased to know we have three other societies in the South East of England and a really great Regional Development Officer to look after you. His name is Richy Thompson (copied in); he is also the AHS President and founded Oxford Atheist Society. I'm sure he'll be in touch to offer his support and let you know about regional socials.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Nicola Y Jackson"

"Hey Jennifer!

I'm Richy, the South-East regional development officer and also the AHS President. If you need any advice beyond what's in the guide, feel free to ask me, but I'd say right now you'd be wanting to organise a launch meeting where you can state the aims of the society, start collecting emails and working out who else is going to be on the society committee. If you can have a fully functioning committee by the summer then

you can use it to plan a full term of events for the autumn term, which you can then put on all your leaflets come fresher's fair :)

If you have any questions, I'm the person to ask. And I'd like to come down and visit the Isle of Wight at some point to meet you all and give you more advice- ideally the launch event... if that's possible?

Richy"

Contacting a Humanist local group for the first time

Subject: Hello from the AHS South-East Regional Development Officer

"Hi Hadrian,

I'm contacting you because you're listed on the BHA's website as the person to get in touch with for the East Kent Humanists. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Richy Thompson, I'm a fourth-year computer scientist at Oxford University, member of the Oxford Atheist Society and also the South-East Regional Development Officer for the National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies (AHS). We are the umbrella organisation for non-religious student societies, and are facilitated and supported by the BHA. As south-east RDO, it is my role to oversee AHS societies in the south-east of England; to help new societies get started and ensure existing societies thrive. And one very positive thing would be to work in partnership the local humanist groups in the region towards this end. My job then would be to provide the AHS's wealth of knowledge about running student societies, whereas you could provide some local stability for the prospective groups.

For the East Kent Humanists, your local Universities are the Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent. Unfortunately there are no atheist, humanist or secular student groups here (not uncommon!) - there were signs of something in the University of Kent but nothing came of it. As such, I propose that we agree to work together, if either of us find that one is being set up :) Additionally, we may be looking to work with groups such as yours to help set up new student societies come the next round of freshers' fairs in the autumn - I'll let you know of our plans nearer the time.

Thanks,

Richy Thompson"

Schedule for the AHS year

Event dates

July	Conference and AGM – hosted by a member society. Election of new exec, with new officers to follow shortly. Also training, and all round fun :)
August	'Questival' camping weekend
September/October	Freshers' fairs – prospectively, multi-regional workshops
November	Non-Prophet Week
February/March	Typical dates for Reason Weeks
February/March	AHS Convention – organisations fair, speakers, training, society awards
June	Humanist Week

Administrative dates

Applications to host the AGM, mid March – early April

Host and dates of AGM to be announced, mid April

The period of handover for elected Officers shall run from the end of the AGM to August/September.

Financial dates

The financial year shall run from 1st June to 31st of May each year.

In summary...

Working as an AHS Regional Development Officer, you will meet lots of great people from all over your region and the two nations.

If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to contact the [Head of Membership](#) – they are there to support you.

Good luck and enjoy yourself!

Good luck and have fun!

Written by Nicola Young Jackson

with contributions from
Richy Thompson and Jenna Catley

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