

University Ringing



Leadership

Produced by the CCCBR Young Ringers Workgroup

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1. Committee Leadership

When running a society, what matters is not just who sits on the committee but how they work together. An effective committee will communicate, delegate and lead collectively.

1.1 Regular communication

Within a committee, it is vital to ensure everyone is kept on the same page. A good way to achieve this is through an active committee chat, which encourages everyone to contribute ideas. Regular committee meetings that include everyone, be that in person or online, are also important to keep all the committee aware of what everyone is working on. You cannot lead a committee if your officers aren't kept informed!

1.2 Include new ringers

While some tasks on a committee might require more ringing experience, others (such as organising socials, managing the social media, etc.) don't require any. Take advantage of this! Try and include a diverse range of ringing experience on your committee, as it will help develop their leadership skills, while also offering the committee different perspectives to draw on.

1.3 Include first years

Students are usually considerably busier in their final years, so bringing people into the committee early on in their degree means they'll have more time to dedicate to the society. Including first years also means you can avoid a situation where the whole committee graduates at the same time, allowing for continuity in the society leadership. New committee members learn from more experienced committee members year on year.

1.4 Delegate

Delegate tasks wherever possible; this will help share the workload and provide valuable experience. Tasks such as organising outings, planning socials, helping with steeple keeping or assisting at Freshers Fairs are good examples for this.



If there are members of your society who are keen to take on responsibility but aren't on the committee, they should still be involved. Some societies dedicate informal roles for this, such as Webmaster or Newsletter Editor. Other societies might have a wider group chat for steeple keeping tasks, for instance, allowing considerably more people to be involved. See the Committee Positions article for more information.

1.5 Planning ahead and handing over

Ensure the new committee have adequate time to shadow and learn from the outgoing members. For example, you might hold the AGM in Spring to give incoming members a sufficient handover period before exam season and the summer break. A detailed handover document could also be produced; this should be kept up-to-date and reviewed annually by each new committee. Not only will this be an invaluable resource for new members, it will also help futureproof the society (for example, if a committee member becomes unavailable mid-year, someone can step into their role and have guidance on what to do). An exemplar handover document, supplied by BUSCR, may be found on the Resources page.



TIP

Sometimes a situation where the whole committee leaves or graduates at the same time is unavoidable. Where this looks likely, take early action to mitigate the impact. It will be even more important to ensure the new committee have a good handover, and that any documentation is reviewed and updated. You may also ask other local ringers to support the society, and the new committee, as they settle into their new roles.

2. Ringing Leadership

Leadership of ringing is a distinct skill from leadership of the society more generally and is covered in more detail in our article on [running ringing](#). It's important, however, to ensure responsibility for leading ringing does not rest upon one individual – here are some suggestions for developing ringing leadership within your society.

2.1 Standing behind

Standing with other ringers to make sure they don't go wrong in a method may seem a very simple form of ringing leadership. However, it marks an important shift in perspective: being responsible for someone else's ringing is a foreign concept after months or years of worrying about your own bell control. It's also central to all other aspects of leading ringing, so encourage others to do it when you can and give them feedback afterwards.



TIP

Encourage your standers to have a debrief with their learners to discuss what went well in their ringing and what could be improved, before coming up with a plan for the next touch with them. This means the learner has instant feedback to work with and might allow the stander to develop a better understanding of what the learner struggles with – easy to forget on a busy practice night!

2.2 Conducting

One way to develop the leadership of others in ringing is to encourage them to learn how to call touches. This applies to ringers of all abilities: learning to conduct call changes once you yourself can ring them is an important first step in leading ringing. Even just asking a learner to call “Stand” in a touch of rounds encourages them to find their voice and increases awareness of the whole change by watching for the treble’s handstroke. This is especially important in a university society where you cannot guarantee the recruitment of existing experienced ringers to conduct in future.

2.3 Organising touches

Another simple practice night method of delegating leadership is by organising touches. If you’re running the ringing, ask another ringer to put together a band for a particular person for the next touch. This helps them develop an awareness about what makes a successful band and build towards running a ringing session themselves. Explaining why a band has been selected and placed in a particular way can also be very useful for allowing ringers to build experience and awareness of why bands are constructed as they are.

2.4 Outings

Outings are a great opportunity to give others a chance to run ringing where they might not have done so before, so make the most of this! Make sure to consider the difficulty of the bells when delegating tower running on outings – for more difficult towers, it’s important to have a more experienced ringer in charge, but easier towers can be a good chance for others to lead a ringing session.



Offer to share running a tower on an outing with someone less confident by alternating the organisation of touches or discussing each touch. Sharing the load is considerably less daunting and can allow the more experienced person to share their thought process when deciding what to ring next.

Conclusion

In a university society, there is a high turnover of personnel so it is vital that leadership of the society is shared across members who will be part of the society in the future. This is true of general running of the society and of ringing itself. While you might have one capable leader in the group, and should take advantage of this while you can, ensure that others are encouraged to develop leadership skills where possible, ensuring continuity in the society for years to come.