


Setting Up and Maintaining a Dynamic ISOC!

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Zayd & Sara Saigol.



1. Purity of Intention

Zayd



Purity of Intention

- What does it mean, “Only for Allah?”
 - Expect the pleasure of Allah and rewards from Allah
 - Not to expect and aim for praise and admiration from others
- Avoid fueling the ego and satisfying the hunger of power
- Duaa: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَشْرِكَ بِكَ وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ، وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا لَا أَعْلَمُ
- O Allah! I seek refuge in you lest I associate anything with you while I know it, and I seek your forgiveness for what I do not know.

Interactive Discussion

Why do we even do this work: in Islamic societies in schools, colleges, universities and in any Islamic organisation?



1.1

**Why do we do
this work?**

Zayd



‘Let there arise from you a group which calls to what is good, enjoins right and forbids wrong, and those will be the successful’

~3:104 ~

‘Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best ...’

~16:125~

‘Convey from me, even if it be one verse’

~Sahih Al-Bukhari 3461~



Why do we do this work?

Creating Communities - support and friendship

Education - Quran classes, contemporary issues, life skills

Changing narratives and challenging misconceptions

Building alliances and bridges e.g. working in interfaith

Leaving a legacy - imagine an ISOC you founded as a team... 30 years down the line!

2.

How to Set Up an Islamic Society

Sara Saigol

Setting Up An Islamic Society: First Principles!

Scope out interest

Find a niche

Find a few individuals who will work with you planning the same dream
(a core team)

Gather contact details of people interested in such a society to prove demand.

Contact:

Teacher in charge or Student Union
(as a similar society may exist)

Plan

What is your vision and mission?
Who is your audience?
How will you organise your roles as a core team?

Setting Up An Islamic Society

Universities have unique application processes e.g. number of founders/students interested

Complete legal documents. **Don't worry! Templates are often online and include:**

Aim of society, risk assessment, constitution, budget, equal opportunity policy, AGM to vote executive office bearers, quorum

A constitution is a rule book on how a society is organised and governed eg how are elections conducted?

Once approved, benefits include potential start-up fund, free room bookings, publicity + slot at freshers fair

Most universities insist on open annual elections

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what could cause harm and the precautions to be taken

3. Vision, Mission and Values Statements

Faiz

Vision and Mission Statement: The What? and How?

Vision: an organisation's aspirations

Mission: how the organisation aims to achieve this (i.e. what it does)

Describe the goal of your ISOC, and then how you plan to achieve this goal.

Be concise and precise – avoid generic statements so that the goal is clear to all.



ISB Campus' Vision & Mission

British Muslim youth exploring faith in a contemporary, friendly and spiritual way

A space for young British Muslims to:

1. To develop a deep connection to our faith
2. To cultivate a strong, confident British Muslim youth identity
3. To encourage learning, reflection and self-development
4. To address issues of concern in our communities
5. To provide a friendly, warm and nurturing environment



Other Example Statements



1. Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis. (Vision & Mission)
2. To create a better everyday life for the many people. (Vision)
3. We believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and, ultimately, the world. (Vision)
Spread ideas. (Mission)
4. Create groundbreaking sports innovations, make our products sustainably, build a creative and diverse global team, and make a positive impact in communities where we live and work. (Mission)

Values

- Selection of key values that your I-Soc embodies above others
- Influences your ISOC's nature (i.e. its feel) and how it functions
- Examples:
 - Non-judgemental
 - Respectful
 - Friendly
 - Welcoming
 - Diverse
 - Accommodating
- Lack of clarity in values is where problems arise
- What values do you NOT want to reinforce, e.g. making people feel they aren't good enough in their religiosity.



4. Structure of the Committee

Auntie Sara

Structure of the Committee

The different roles:

Top Tip: Consider having a past head/committee member or post-grad as an adviser on the committee!

1. **Executive members:** “The Executive committee shall be largely responsible for the management and functioning of the society”

Office holders - President, Secretary, Treasurer

2. **Operational members:** “The Operational committee shall be largely responsible for frontline events and activities.”

Operational managers – Charity officer, DIW coordinator, Ramadan Coordinator

Can be structured in different manners (e.g. Sheffield’s USIC – Committee and Subcommittee)

Roles of Committee Members

Defining the roles

- Helps with accountability and respect of each other's roles
- Roles are created depending on the University/Sixth Form nature, needs, skills-set, contacts, resources, timetable etc.
- The different roles may alter after each academic year - see what works best!
- Voting and choosing people is an *amaanah* - a trust. Choose people who have the skills and passion for the task, good time management and good character. Do not choose based on your friendship group alone.



Roles of Committee Members

Role of President: Head of the Society - has final decision when there is a split vote.

Role of Secretary: Managing and maintaining the running of the ISoc and documenting meetings, achievements and membership list

Role of Treasurer: To keep proper records of the society's financial transactions in accordance with current accepted rules and practices. Ensure all projects are run within their allocated budget to accommodate for other projects throughout the year

Elections

- **An Election Chair** (neutral) should be appointed by the committee and shall organise all nominations and the voting procedure
- **Set out a criteria to determine eligibility**
 - Members of the society can vote
 - E.g. to apply for the position of President, a minimum of one term on the society's committee should have been completed
- **Write up a manifesto**
- During the Annual General Meeting (AGM), candidate provides a brief speech
- This elective format can differ
- May not have an election but rather have the committee to hold an interview process -
Check your constitution and more importantly the guidelines governing societies within your institution.



5. Leadership Qualities

Asim



Leadership

Leadership Style

- No one way – some are very personal, some more direct. All have pros & cons but don't try to be something you're not.
- Leading by example
- Good character

People Management

- Make du'a for them
- Assume the best in people
- Set clear expectations & culture at start, e.g. in decision-making, meeting structure, and communications.
- Enforce time off from ISOC so people have a break and don't get burnout.
- Understand & work around people's personal/uni commitments (ask for this info in advance though).

Leadership

Being prepared and informed

- Diverse sources of info so you aren't swamped by loudly/confidently voiced opinions.
- No knee-jerk reactions to situations. Patiently collate information.
- Develop a softer heart & closeness to Allah (try starting with *Secrets of Divine Love* or *In the Early Hours*).
- Trust yourself that you're the best placed person to make X decision. If you **aren't**, then defer to someone who is.
- Ask the right questions.

Heavy lies the head

- You will have internal and external pressure
- But don't worry, you're not an Amir! Only 18-25 years old!
- The experience can be isolating, so find someone who can be an outlet. (mentors are good)
- Self-reflect & ask yourself how you can improve as a group, & personally as a leader.
- Make sure you don't get caught up in operations - maintain the big picture!
- Make time for yourself!





6. Soft Skills

Aadil



Soft Skills

You will find leading Muslims and a Muslim organisation can be a lot different to past experience.

Key is to ensure you are always being open-minded.

One of the clear benefits I found was the ability to be more comfortable in leadership and teamworking roles for the future. The transferable skills you get in the ISOC are invaluable:

- Communication - public speaking, teamwork
- Delegation - leadership and relationships
- Management - projects
- Technology - vital in the 21st Century
- Resource Management - being smart with what you have

The diversity of the job is what makes it so exciting! These are all incredibly useful in future careers. Even having the ISOC on your CV can help enormously.



Soft Skills

Balancing university and ISOC...

Simple rule: shouldn't be a balance. You are there to get a degree. Gaining this is, in and of itself, is ibadah if done with the correct intentions.

How to keep yourself from getting swept away?

- Enforce boundaries (understand when enough is enough)
- Be organised
- Set clear rules and communicate them
- **COMMUNICATE.**

That being said, don't let the fear of procrastination stop you from making the most of university. These are your formative years - **put them to good use!**

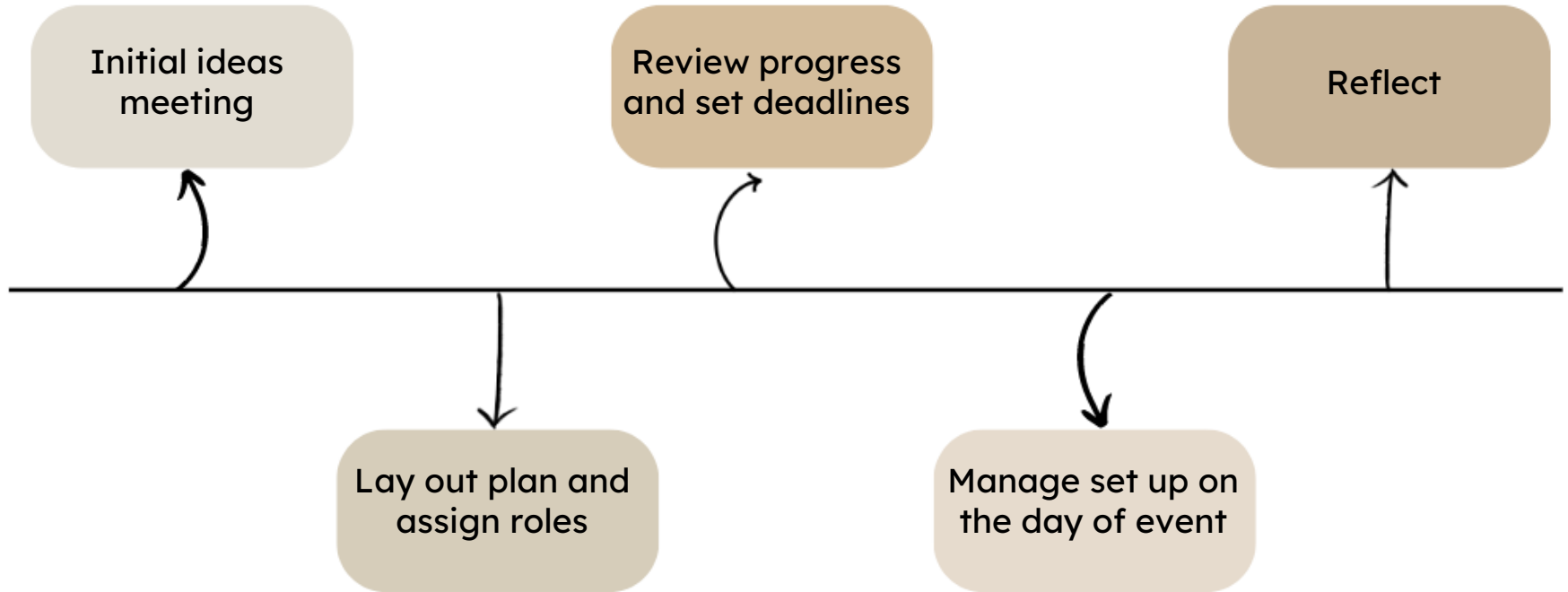


7. How to run a project

Alishba



Key timeline for a project



How to run meetings

- Have an agenda / list of aims
- What is the problem you want to solve?
- Why is this project needed?
- Who will be your team members + roles?
- How often will you meet as a team?
- Year plan/ Milestones

Minute keeping!



- Resources/ Budget
- What will success look like?
- What obstacles might you face and how would you manage them?
- Succession plan
- Evaluation

Islam teaches that every person who has received entrusted things, authority, or power should be *amanah*.

Amanah is honesty, trustworthy, accountability

Goals, Objectives, Strategy

Goals

Mileposts to achieve the vision. What do you aim to achieve?

Objectives

They are like goals but more specific and **SMART**

Strategies

The things we need to do to reach our outcomes

SMART goals - **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound

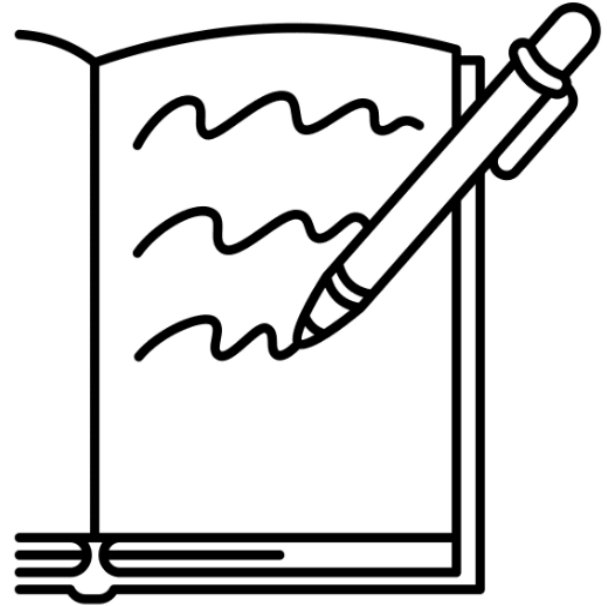
Making decisions

- Shura - consult with all members of the team
- Collaborate effectively
- Listen and consider all ideas



Sub-teams and how to delegate

- Important to create sub-teams, e.g. the Jummah prayer team or the social media team.
- How do you delegate?
 - Base off interests and skills
 - Having a wide range of skills so that there's no skills gap



Other tips

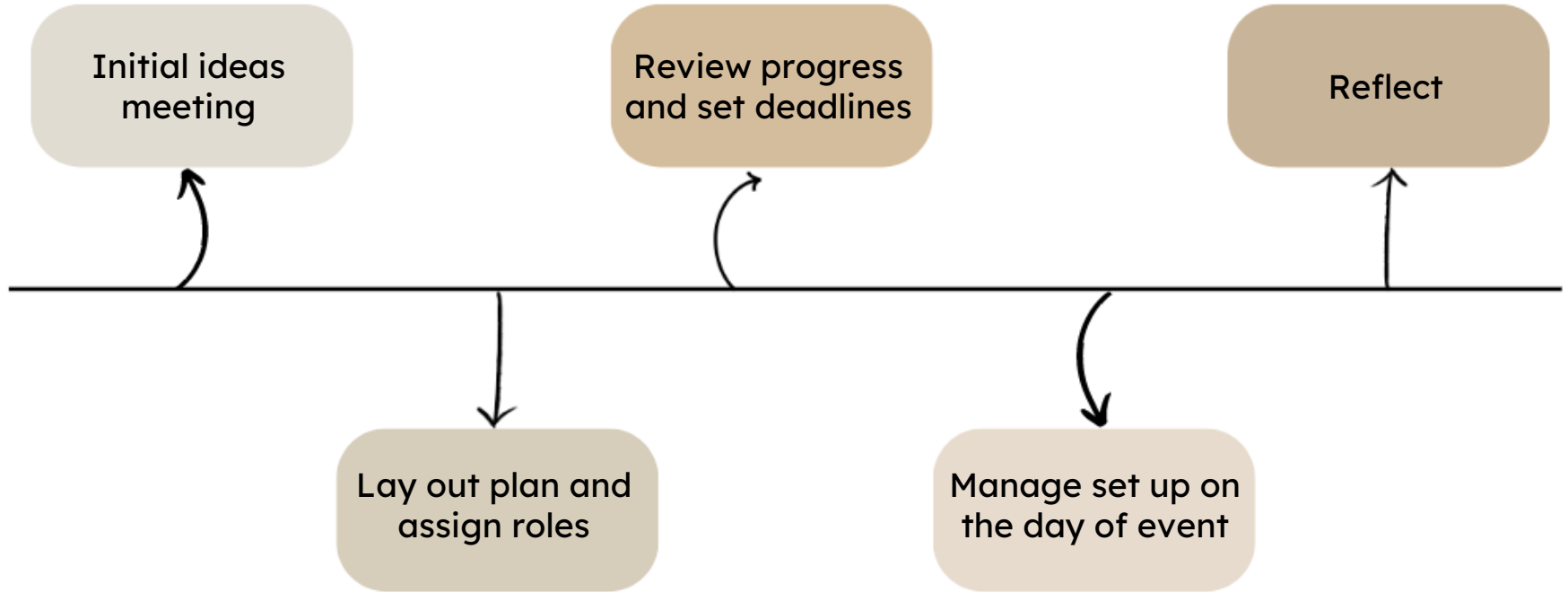
- Nasiha/good advice from each other
- Support each other
- Be willing to adapt to change
- Make a spreadsheet to delegate and keep track of targets
 - Can be used to reflect, + useful for succession planning

Energy + commitment
towards a shared vision

REFLECTION IS KEY

Remember and renew your
intention

Key timeline for a project



Reflection is key to learning from mistakes.

Your notes/spreadsheets will be so valuable to those who take on the task after you - YOUR experiences help strengthen the next team.

8. Practical Ideas for Year Plan

Aadil

Organisation: Needs of Muslims (Spiritual, Social, Political)

Prayer room, Jumu'ah

Learning circles: topical issues that cause confusion

Socials

Tackling misconceptions internally

Be brave but mindful of policy and law

Mentoring

Careers advice

Skills development: public speaking, project/time management, negotiation

Charity work

Convert care

Organisation: Needs of Muslims (Fostering Spirituality)

Invite Scholars, Academics, Specialists and Activists

Invite people with life experience and wisdom

Represent balance and avoid following one view or one group

Make things easy for the people whilst within acceptable Islamic opinions
(even if you want to be hard on yourself)

Ensure provision is equal for attendees and not substandard for 1 group

Organisation: Da'awah/Outreach

Don't forget those who are not Muslim!!!

It is good to balance work with Muslims and with wider society too

Tackling Misconceptions

Building bridges and alliances e.g. debating society, environmental groups.

Be mindful of associations politically

Social justice

Inter-faith

Become a reference point for advice and information

Practical Ideas of Events

The ISOC calendar can be as ambitious or laid back as you want. You just need to make sure you have one.

Important is you focus on building community above all else. By building community, the rest will follow.

Themed weeks are a very good way of doing this. These include:

- Charity (bake sales, hikes, **partnership**)
- Discover Islam Week (Da'wah – but don't confine this to one week!)
- Al Aqsa (or similar – speaker tours)
- Believe and Do Good (FOSIS – what do they do? There is tremendous good will)
- Qur'an (often neglected...)

Ramadan is also a key time to capitalise.



Practical Ideas of Events

Where to get inspiration from:

- Speak to your committee (what do they want to learn?)
- Speak to FOSIS
- ISB Students of Campus
- Instagram and other ISOCs
- Collaboration
- BMS and similar organisations



Practical Implementation of Events

Your General Secretary is the organisational lynchpin of the ISOC (they will need support):

- Making sure people aren't falling behind
- Deadlines are kept
- Organisation is easy for everyone to see

You need to also ensure you have a **balance**. Understand the needs of your community and apply correctly. Don't let one committee subgroup take over or slack...



9. Succession Planning and Handover

Asim

Succession Planning

- The importance of succession planning
- What to look for in a successor
- Development strategies: 1-1 meetings, growth opportunities, insights, and feedback
- Learning logs

10. Benefits of Joining & Common Issues

Faiz

Common Issues around Atmosphere

Welcome people of all personality types, rather than encouraging one type.

1. Ability to attract Muslim students at large

2. Diversity of speakers

3. Avoiding judgemental environments

4. Balancing different views

5. Being welcoming and avoiding cliques

Different speakers appeal to different people! You want speakers:

- Representing different schools of thought
- Different types of speakers e.g. academics, activists, imams
- Diversity in terms of gender & race

Benefits of Joining ISOC: Your Audience

Your company has a huge influence on you and naturally you want people that you will benefit from being around!

Finding Good Company

It's a Halal Alternative on Campus

Gaining Knowledge

Feeling Motivated towards Faith

Putting Faith into Action Together

The company and atmosphere of the Muslim space that ISOCs provide help you to feel motivated in your deen, to gain knowledge and to put it into action.

Benefits of Joining ISOC: You!

