

STARTING A SCHOOL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

FAQ on Schools Work & Student Ministry
SCRIPTURE UNION PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

FAQ: What are the procedures involved in the application to start an SCF in a school?

In an ideal situation, parents, teachers and/or students can apply to start an SCF in their school. A letter with this intention could be sent to the *Pengarah Pendidikan Negeri* through the principal of the school. Some of the following documents would be helpful if included in the application

- = a proposed constitution for the intended SCF
- = a proposed teacher who is willing to act as advisor
- = a list of potential members for the intended SCF
- = recommendation or support letter from the PTA

Any effort to apply to start an SCF in a school should only be done after much prayer and thinking. We need to be mindful that an "official" rejection of an application may become a hindrance to the SCF.

Scripture Union is glad to work with any people interested to apply for an SCF to be started in their school. We have a general flow chart for this. In any case, it is good for the interested party to contact us.

Note : You can find copies of these related documents and the flow chart mentioned in this folder.

FAQ: If an application to start an SCF is rejected, what could be the next course of action?

If an application is rejected, the applicant(s) could try to find out the reason(s) for the rejection. (Please note that it is common in most cases that reasons for rejection are seldom provided.) With this, effort could be made to clarify any issues at hand, or to comply with certain conditions required (refer to Q3).

Appeals could be made against the rejection. Often the PTA (Parent Teachers Association) is a good channel to explore. At times, we could work through our Members of Parliament or other politicians. It is also good to discuss the matter with Scripture Union. In the course of the appeal, it is important to bear in mind that any confrontational approaches would usually not be desirable or wise.

In the case of a rejection, the applicant(s) may want to consider starting the SCF in an "informal" way. Such an approach may pave way for an unofficial SCF to exist in the school. Uniformed Christian society (such as Boys Brigade

or Girls Brigade) or Bible Knowledge Class could also be possibilities to explore.

FAQ: If an existing official SCF faces the possibility of being closed down, what can the parents, teachers and/or students do?

First of all, it is important to note that the current directive/policy actually allows for existing SCFs to continue to function in the schools. As such, technically such a scenario should not arise.

In any case, should an existing SCF be asked to closed down, first of all, parents, teachers and/or students concerned should meet to seek a clear understanding of the situation at hand. It is important to clarify as to who has given this closure instruction, and whether there is a written document pertaining to the instruction. With these found out, it will be good to know the reasons) for the closure of the SCF.

The responses to an SCF closure will need to be contextualized to their respective setting. The next course of actions will be dependent on the information above. Some other possible actions are listed below, and we must always be prayerful in all our decisions :

- = arranging for a parents/teachers/students meeting to discuss the matter
- = seeking a meeting with the school head
- = raising the matter with the PTA
- = consult with Scripture Union, or related organizations

We note that in most situations, effort towards resolving the matter is usually best initiated by parents (in consultation with teachers and students), as this would avoid unnecessary pressure on teachers and students.

FAQ: What roles could churches play to support, assist and/or serve the SCF meaningfully?

There are several ways a church can support, assist and/or serve the SCF. In some circumstances, Pastors, elders and church leaders may make visits to the SCF meetings as speakers or to interact with the students. In other circumstances, it may not be appropriate for outside people (especially the clergy) to do so. It is important that we approach this sensitively.

Churches can support the SCF by encouraging and releasing their members who are students or teachers to serve the SCF and participate in their activities. This is needful because there are cases where the SCF cannot function in the school because of poor attendance or no Christian teacher to act as advisor. Nonetheless, it is noted that at times, students and teachers can be torn between the church and the SCF.

Churches can also support Christian witness in the schools by encouraging their members who are parents to attend and/or serve the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) in the schools. Such involvement can be especially helpful in cases where we are thinking about setting up a new SCF or assisting a SCF facing possible close down.

The SPM Bible Knowledge (BK) is another avenue where churches can contribute to a Christian witness in our schools. Churches can support BK by encouraging their members who are students to sign up for BK in the SPM examinations, help recruit BK teachers among their church members and to avail church premises to be used as BK centers if needed.

There are situations where the SCF has to function outside the school. In such circumstances, often the SCF needs a place to meet and adult supervisions to coordinate their activities. Churches and their leaders can play meaningful roles here.

Because the SCF is fundamentally a society in our schools, under the direct jurisdiction of the principal and teachers; churches must be mindful of the sensitivities of this work. In addition, students in the SCF often -come from different churches. As such, denominational issues should be handled carefully.

Churches can be our strategic partners in the school work, and Scripture Union is always ready to work with churches in this area.

FAQ: How is Scripture Union related to the SCF?

SCF and schools work have always been very much a part of the Scripture Union's ministries in Peninsular Malaysia. Historically, when SU first became organized in Malaya (during the 1950s), reaching out to students in the schools was our main concern and ministry.

Today, the SU Youth Ministry and SU Children Ministry play the leading roles in coordinating the schools work in the secondary level and primary level respectively; and staff in all our ministry departments plays a supportive role in the schools work.

Because of our experience and involvement in schools work, Scripture Union continues to endeavor to play a coordinator role to help students to be salt and light in their schools by supporting the school groups or SCFs, equipping students and adults to serve in the school groups or SCFs, and networking with strategic partners towards this aim.

Currently we pursue this ministry by :

- = Research and Data Compilation on Schools Work
- = Visits to the School Groups or SCFs
- = Various Resource Materials

- = Various Camps, Seminars and Training Events
- = The SCF Partner Program
- = Bible Quizzes
- = SPM Bible Knowledge

FAQ: What is an "official" School Christian Fellowship (SCF)?

An official SCF is a fellowship that is recognized by the school. A recognized SCF would usually have one or more of the following:

- = an appointed teacher who acts as the advisor
- = fellowship photographs or articles appear in the school magazine
- = annual reports submitted to the school
- = committee members given testimonial letters when they leave school
- = a notice board in the school
- = news regarding the SCF's activities announced publicly
- = SCF participating in official school functions or activities

It is important to note that official SCF can sometime become an unofficial SCF. This may happen due to our own failures and/or actions by other people. As such, we should be proactive to maintain the status of an official SCF.

FAQ: What is an "unofficial" School Christian Fellowship?

An SCF not recognized by the school would be an unofficial SCF. Such a group does not have what is listed for official SCF as in question 6 earlier. There are cases where an SCF in a school could be tolerated and/or accepted, but not recognized. This may happen when the school authority is not willing to endorse the SCF, but yet at the same time has not taken any action to close it down. In some cases, the school could actually be aware of the existence of the SCF.

FAQ: Can an "unofficial" School Christian Fellowship exist and function inside the school? If so, how?

In some circumstances, unofficial SCFs can exist inside the schools. Such groups usually meet in an unused classroom, or at a corner in the canteen, or wherever suitable and convenient.

The unofficial SCF in school would usually function quite similarly with an official SCF, but in a much more low key or low profile manner. The main concern is not to attract unnecessary attention.

FAQ: Can an "unofficial" School Christian Fellowship exist

outside the school? How would such a group function?

Some unofficial SCFs meet outside the school, such as in the home of parent, teacher or student. Such an SCF may even meet in a church.

The unofficial SCF outside the school needs to be handled with special care. We need to be mindful that the dynamics are very different from an SCF inside the school. In addition, it is good to note that the respective circumstances behind such SCFs are unique.

An SCF outside the school should be clear about its detachment from the school. Linking such a group with any school in any way would be a sensitive matter. As such, teachers and students would be serving and/or attending the meetings in their own personal capacities, and not as teachers or students from any particular school.

In addition, an SCF outside the school in many cases would enjoy greater freedom such as invitation of speakers and the kind of activities that can be run. While this is an advantage, nonetheless, good adult supervision and student leadership are needed so that the programs are conducted properly.

An SCF outside the school meeting would also need to be mindful of other matters such as denominational issues (especially for groups meeting in church premises or under church sponsorships), safety issues (especially as students go to the meeting place and return home), inter-school issues (when there are students from more than one school attending the SCF) and growth or sustainability issues.