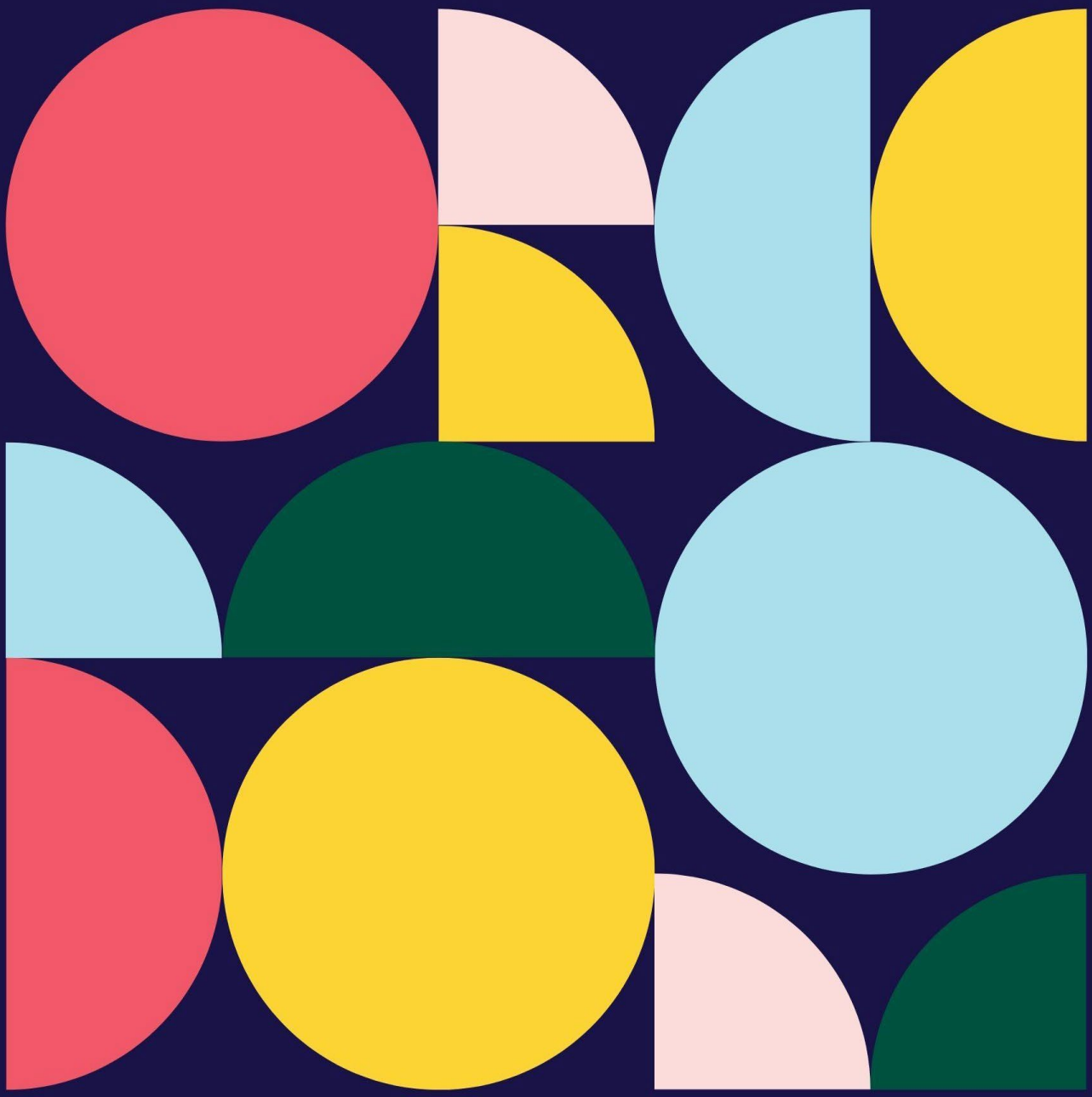

Bristol SU
Member Code of Conduct

Annual Complaints Report

Owner: Director of People, Culture and Organisational Development

Approval: Trustees

Bristol SU

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Member Code of Conduct

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1. What is the Code of Conduct?

This Code of Conduct sets out the standards of conduct and expected behaviours from all members of the Students' Union. It provides examples and is designed to help members understand how they can contribute to a positive and inclusive environment within the University.

Any student at the University of Bristol (UoB) is also subject to the University's Acceptable Behaviour Policy Statement and Student Disciplinary Regulations and Procedure, as well as the law.

When you join the University, you are expected to **be aware of your own behaviour, and how it impacts on others.** You are expected to **conduct yourself in a reasonable and acceptable manner.**

There is useful guidance and examples as part of your Student Community Induction to help you understand these expectations and what they mean in practice.

2. Purpose of the Code of Conduct

Bristol Students' Union is committed to promoting an environment that is inclusive, safe and accountable; one where individuals are treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

We care about the safety and wellbeing of students, our staff and others that engage and interact with the Students' Union. We have an ethical and legal responsibility to the people that are part of our community and therefore it is therefore important that all our members understand the standards of conduct that are expected of them in contributing to this environment.

In particular, we aim to:

- Protect students and others that interact with the SU;
- Ensure the highest possible standards of fairness, honesty and behaviour;
- Reduce the risk of harm, injury, harassment and nuisance to members and the community in general;
- Promote behaviours that are in line with our organisational values;
- Ensure that any student can feel welcomed and included in Bristol SU activities.

3. Scope – who does the Code apply to, and in what situations?

The Member Code of Conduct applies to:

- All members of Bristol SU as defined in Section 11-15 of our Articles of Association;
- People associated with Students' Union activities and events and those that support student groups including, but not limited to, coaches, instructors, administrators etc;
- Elected members of Bristol SU committees, Academic Reps, student group leaders, volunteers or those that hold a representative position within the Students' Union.

The Code of Conduct applies to any action that:

- Happens on Bristol SU premises;
- Is committed while using Bristol SU facilities or attending an SU event / activity;
- Is committed while a member is representing, acting on behalf of or could be perceived to be representing / acting on behalf of Bristol SU at an event, during a trip, online (e.g. via social media) or in correspondence.

There is a separate Code of Conduct for Full Time Officers of the Students' Union, which is more specific to their role; and for SU Trustees.

There is also a separate Code of Conduct for Student Groups which specifically outlines the behaviours and standards expected from students involved in clubs and societies. This is available here.

Full Time Officers, Trustees and those involved in student group activities are still expected to abide by the standards set out within this document. But the separate links give additional information relevant to their context.

4. Expectations and Standards of Behaviour

As a member of the Students' Union, you are expected to:

- Act in accordance with Bristol SU's policies and byelaws and operate within the rules related to the activities in which you participate;
- Always behave in a reasonable and responsible manner and avoid actions which could unreasonably endanger others or bring the Students' Union, University or our partners into disrepute;
- Demonstrate mutual respect and understanding for all members of the University and wider community;
- Ensure all members feel welcome to participate in discussions, activities, services or events;
- Conduct yourself in a reasonable manner relating to language, noise and behaviour;
- Encourage others to comply with the Code and do not pressure or encourage others to breach these standards of behaviour;
- Treat all Bristol SU and University property with respect and not interfere with other people's enjoyment of our facilities, services or activities.

We will not accept or tolerate behaviours that constitutes:

- Bullying and harassment;
- Sexual Harassment and sexual violence;
- Racism;
- Sexism;
- Classism
- Islamophobia and anti-Semitism;
- Homophobia and biphobia;
- Transphobia;

- Domestic abuse (including dating abuse);
- Ableism;
- Any other form of discrimination.

We also acknowledge other definitions or working examples from policy that students have passed though Bristol SU democratic processes (e.g. Student Council), including where we have policy to lobby the university on that point

Page 10 of the University's Student Disciplinary Regulations and Procedure also sets out some examples of the type of behaviour that would be considered to breach the University standards of expected behaviour.

Discrimination

Discrimination can occur in both overt (direct) and covert (indirect) ways, and may be intentional or unintentional. We are committed to identifying, challenging, and preventing all forms of discrimination to maintain a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for all students.

Forms of Discrimination:
• Overt or direct discrimination: Explicit exclusion, slurs, or denial of opportunities based on identity.
• Covert or indirect discrimination: Policies, practices, or behaviours that disadvantage certain groups, even unintentionally.
• Structural/systemic discrimination: Embedded patterns in group decision-making, leadership selection, or allocation of resources.

Discrimination can occur through:
• Excluding members from decision-making, leadership, or group activities.
• Tone-policing or coded silencing (e.g., undermining someone for their manner of speaking).
• Undermining, erasure, or differential scrutiny of contributions from certain members.
• Emotional erasure (ignoring or invalidating a member's feelings or experiences).

Protected and Marginalised Groups & Intersectionality:
Discrimination affects individuals differently depending on their identity, and members may experience multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination (intersectionality).
Groups commonly affected include:
o Global Majority people
o LGBTQ+ people
o Women
o Gender-diverse people
o Disabled people
o Religious people
o Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds

The SU considers the compounding effects of multiple marginalised identities when assessing conduct and providing support.

5. Leadership Roles and Conduct

Many of our members are involved in leadership roles within the Students' Union. This includes

student group leaders, Academic Reps, committee members and other volunteers.

If you are in a leadership / volunteer position within the Students' Union, you are expected to adhere to the behaviours set out in Section 4 of this Code. It is also recognised that you are in a position of responsibility and power, and therefore there are additional expectations.

You will be expected to:

- Fulfil your role and responsibilities to the best of your ability, in line with the role profile for your position;
- Demonstrate accountability for the way that you fulfil your role;
- Ensure you are fully familiar with the policies and procedures that may impact on your role and/or the people you represent / lead / support within your role;
- Ensure you are familiar with our Safeguarding policy and are aware of what to do if someone discloses a safeguarding concern or serious issue to you;
- Actively engage in induction and training to help you understand your role, responsibilities and expectations. If you do not undertake training that is defined as mandatory, you will not be allowed to continue in the role;
- Actively seek to enhance and continue your learning around leadership, inclusion and diversity;
- Be honest and reliable. You should stick to promises and fulfil actions to which you commit;
- Work hard to create a positive and inclusive environment for those that you represent / lead /support;
- Role-model and champion the positive behaviours set out in Section 4 of this Code;
- Actively engage with, and make use of, Students' Union communication channels including emails, website and development meetings;
- Contact the Students' Union if you have any concerns or need support / advice;
- Act as an ambassador and representative of the Students' Union and University in a professional and positive way.

6. Bullying and Harassment

At Bristol SU, we expect all members of our community to treat each other with respect, dignity, courtesy and consideration.

Harassment is unwanted and unwarranted physical, sexual, verbal or non-verbal behaviour which (intentionally or unintentionally) violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Harassment by a group or organisation is unlawful when it targets someone on the grounds of a protected characteristic, this includes: age; sex; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; and sexual orientation.

Bullying is characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or the abuse or misuse of power (which does not always mean being in a position of authority) through means intended to undermine, humiliate, or denigrate a person.

Bullying and harassment are not necessarily related to a 'protected characteristic'.

Examples of bullying and harassment include but are not limited to offensive or intimidating comments; verbal abuse, insults, or jokes; graffiti or vandalism; unwanted sexual comments, groping, touching or stalking; threatening behaviour or physical violence.

Bullying and harassment are not necessarily face to face, it may occur through written communications, visual images, online, email, social media or over the phone. They may be carried out by individuals or groups and can occur in public or in private.

Passionate speech and comment, and legitimate debate can be distinguished from bullying behaviour and harassment. However, care should be taken to ensure that others are not made to feel intimidated.

7. Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

Sexual Misconduct covers a broad range of inappropriate and unwanted or attempted unwanted behaviours of a sexual nature. It covers all forms of sexual violence, including sex without consent, sexual abuse (including online and image-based abuse), non-consensual sexual touching, sexual harassment, stalking or abusive or degrading remarks of a sexual nature.

Sexual violence and abuse is a general term to describe any kind of unwanted or coerced sexual act or activity, including rape, sexual assault, sex trafficking and exploitation, sexual harassment and intentionally causing another person to engage in sexual activity.

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual behaviour which violates someone's dignity, makes someone feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated, or creates a hostile or offensive environment.

- It can include a wide range of behaviours such as sexual comments, noises or gestures, 'leering', sending unwanted sexual content (such as 'dick pics'), intrusive sexual questions, comments about someone's body, displaying or sending sexual images/pornography, indecent exposure and unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature.
- Some forms of sexual harassment, such as stalking, indecent exposure, 'upskirting' and anything involving unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature are automatically crimes.

- Other forms of sexual harassment might also break criminal law, depending on the situation. For example, if someone carries out sexual harassment behaviours on more than one occasion that are intended to cause another person alarm or distress.

8. Definitions

We regularly review and reflect on our definitions of different forms of discrimination and abuse. The working definitions of racism, sexism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, domestic abuse and ableism can all be found on the University of Bristol Student Community Induction.

This site also contains guidance, examples and links to help build an understanding of the types of behaviour that could constitute discrimination and could fall short of our expected standards of behaviour.

9. Online Behaviour

As a member of the Students' Union, you are expected to conduct yourself online just as you would in any other situation, and treat people with the same fairness, honesty and respect as you would in person.

When using online platforms (such as social media, messaging, e-mail, groups and forums) to interact with other Bristol SU members or as part a society, group or event, you must:

- Act in line with this Code of Conduct;
- Not create or share malicious content;
- Be honest about your intent when posting content;
- Avoid actions that might discredit your fellow members, SU colleagues or our organisation;

When using social media or online platforms as part of a formal role with Bristol SU or on behalf of a Bristol SU activity, society or group, always remember that you are representing the Students' Union and University.

Anonymous use of online platforms for the purpose of the bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation of others or to discredit Bristol SU, its staff or members will be subject to disciplinary action.

10. Freedom of Speech

Nothing in this Code seeks to limit your ability to exercise your right to free, lawful speech.

To be a vibrant learning community, we believe that there must be an atmosphere of free and open discussion for students and we actively encourage this. This is an essential foundation for a democratic society. This is applicable not only to information or ideas that are favourably received and uncontroversial, but also to those that have the potential to offend, shock or disturb the listener.

Tolerance and open-mindedness are essential parts of an inclusive, learning environment, and all views, including those that can be difficult to hear, should be able to be expressed and heard with tolerance and mutual respect.

There is no requirement for the Students' Union to permit non-students to use our facilities or engage in activities. However, where students wish to run activities, groups or events we will support this, even where it is controversial, as long as it is deemed to be safe, lawful and in line with our usual policies, procedures and rules.

It is important to note that having freedom of speech / expression should not be equated with having freedom of consequences from your speech. Where your speech or actions are seen to incite hatred, violence or impact on the safety of others, then you may be seen to be in breach of this Code and subject to disciplinary procedures.

Peaceful protest is also a protected form of expression and this Code does not seek to limit your right to engage in peaceful protest. However, protest should not be allowed to shut down debate, infringe the rights of others or cause damage to property, otherwise it would be seen to be a breach of this Code.

You can read here the Bristol University Freedom of Speech Policy.

There is also guidance here from the Students' Union about Free Speech and External Speakers.

11. Breaching the Code of Conduct

If you breach the standards of behaviour set out within this Code (whether intentional or unintentional), this may lead to investigation under the Students' Union's Members Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

If your conduct has also breached the University's standards of acceptable behaviour then this would instead be potentially investigated under the University's Student Disciplinary Regulations and Procedure.

If you believe that another member has breached this Code, you can raise your concerns either informally or formally with a member of Bristol Students' Union staff or submit a complaint following our Complaints Procedure.

12. Reviewing the Code of Conduct

Bristol Students' Union Trustee Board oversees the Code of Conduct and will review it annually to ensure it is fit for purpose and being applied effectively.

Operational management of the Code of Conduct is undertaken by the Director of People, Culture and Organisational Development within the Students' Union.

Case management is reviewed and overseen by a Complaints and Case Review Group, who have responsibility for ensuring that cases are managed in a consistent and appropriate way and that any learning from cases is identified and actioned.

13. Acknowledgements

This policy has been developed by Bristol SU Staff, Trustees, Officers and Students.

Special thanks to Amaan Ali, who supported the review on a voluntary advisory basis, with a particular focus on the addition of a section on discrimination. The review has benefitted greatly from Amaan's inputs and suggestions.