



# Bristol SU Student Code of Conduct

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# What is the Code of Conduct?

This Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of all members and affiliated groups when participating in any activity under the name of Bristol Students' Union (Bristol SU), both in-person or online.

This Code of Conduct and the process set out within it is applicable to all complaints made to Bristol SU with regard to the conduct of its members or groups.

Please note that any student at the University of Bristol (UoB) is also subject to the University's Code of Practice and disciplinary procedures, as well as the law.

## Why does the Code of Conduct exist?

- To protect Bristol SU's members
- To protect others that are potentially affected by members' actions
- To ensure the highest possible standards of fairness, honesty and behaviour
- To reduce the risk of harm, injury, harassment and nuisance to members and the community in general
- To ensure that any student can feel welcomed and included in Bristol SU activities

## To whom does the Code of Conduct apply?

- All members
- All persons associated to a student group including, but not limited to, associate members, coaches/instructors and administrators

# Expected Behaviour

All members must abide by the rules outlined below:

- Adhere to the Bylaws and policies of Bristol SU
- Behave in a manner which does not endanger or is anti-social towards other individuals and to abide by Bristol SU's [Health and Safety](#) policies at all times
- Do not bully, harass, discriminate against or victimise others
- Ensure all members feel welcome to participate in non-judgemental and non-threatening discussions, activities, services or events
- Act responsibly at all times when participating in activities and avoid actions which could bring the group, the Students' Union or sponsors, funders or partners into disrepute
- Conduct themselves in a reasonable manner relating to language, noise and behaviour
- Not encourage or pressure others into acting against the Code
- Operate within the rules that govern the activity or the facility in which it is taking place
- Not carry out initiation ceremonies as detailed below
- Student leaders (i.e. representatives, student group committees) have a particular responsibility to uphold the Code of Conduct in the areas of activity that they lead

# Bullying and Harassment

Bristol SU does not tolerate bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation of any kind. 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 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 is 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, over 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.

More examples of behaviours that may constitute bullying and harassment can be found in Appendix 2.

# Initiations and Peer Pressure Situations

In line with the majority of universities and as a result of a number of very serious incidents at other institutions, Bristol SU and UoB do not permit "initiation ceremonies".

For this purpose, an initiation ceremony is any event at which members of a group are expected to perform an activity as a means of gaining credibility, status or entry into that group. This peer pressure is normally (though not explicitly) exerted on first year students or new members and may involve the consumption of alcohol, eating various food stuffs, nudity and behaviour that may be deemed humiliating.

In the past, students at UoB and elsewhere have caused criminal damage, been seriously injured and, in at least three cases, died as a result of having to take part in an initiation. As well as this, initiation ceremonies are intimidating, humiliating and can amount to bullying. They do not encourage the welcoming and inclusive student groups that Bristol SU wants.

Social activities such as welcome evenings, team meals, social nights, trips away and celebration events that welcome new members and offer a positive first impression of university life are encouraged. The following rules must be followed:

- All activities must be opt-in and have no bearing on the acceptance into the student group or team/squad selection etc
- Peer pressure must not be exerted on individuals
- Activities must not be humiliating, unlawful or degrading
- Activities must not involve the forced consumption of any fluid/substance
- Taking of alcohol to the activity/event must not be made a condition of attendance
- If activities involve alcohol then non-alcoholic drinks must be made available
- Activities must not bring the reputation of Bristol SU, UoB or the student group into question or disrepute

The organiser of the event, individual Club Captains or group Presidents and/or the groups as a whole may be held responsible for an "initiation ceremony" and may have University disciplinary action taken against them (including suspension or expulsion).

# What happens if the Code of Conduct has been breached?

Bristol SU is committed to addressing all breaches of the Code of Conduct and maintaining a safe and inclusive environment for members to participate in.

If you are aware of a breach of the Code of Conduct, please inform a member of Bristol SU staff (you can find [contact details here](#)).

## Informal

If it is safe and appropriate to do so, Bristol SU staff will work with students to resolve the issue. This might include recommending support services, mediation or training for those who have breached the Code of Conduct or been affected by a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Student Leaders (e.g. club and society committees) should not investigate a breach of the Code of Conduct on their own and should not remove group members at their own discretion. Student Leaders should work with Bristol SU staff to resolve breaches of the Code of Conduct.

## Complaints

If you are not satisfied with the response or if it is not safe to resolve the issue in this way, please submit a complaint using the [SU Complaints Policy](#). An SU member of staff can help you to do this and explain what will happen next.

If a serious breach of the Code of Conduct has taken place, Bristol SU may refer the complaint to the University of Bristol or the police.

## Review Group

If the complaint investigation finds that a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred, the issue will be referred to a Review Group for consideration. This group will receive a report from the investigating officer and will include at least one student representative and one member of SU or University staff. The Review Group will make a ruling on the breach and issue sanctions that are proportionate to the breach of the Code with reference to the decision matrix in the Appendix.

## Appeals

Decisions made by the Review Group can be appealed using the process outlined in the complaints policy.

# Appendix 1: Suggested Sanctions for Breaching the Code of Conduct

Review Groups who are considering sanctions against those who have breached the Code of Conduct will give consideration to the matrix below. The matrix details the decision-making process and potential sanctions.

## Code of Conduct decision matrix

Breach of the code of conduct	Risk of harm to individuals and/or organisation			
		Slightly harmful Risk of minor injury/risk of minor reputational damage	Harmful Risk of external intervention (e.g. hospitalisation or other) / local level reputational damage to Bristol SU	Extremely harmful Risk of serious physical or mental harm / national level reputational damage to Bristol SU
	Minor breach	1	2	3
	Moderate breach Organisational rules broken	2	4	6
	Major breach Civil/criminal law broken	3	6	9

Any breach of this Code of Conduct may result in one or more of the following sanctions (please note that this is not an exhaustive list) and that sanctions are decided at the discretion of the review panel. It may also be possible that both group and individual sanctions are deemed necessary in some cases:

## Group sanctions:

1	Warning
	Letter of apology to be written
2	Fine
3	Removal of (one or multiple) privileges for less than a month (may include SU/UoB funding, room bookings, accreditations, welcome fair stall, etc.)
4	Removal of (one or multiple) privileges from 1 month (may include SU/UoB funding, room bookings, accreditations, welcome fair stall, etc.)
	Removal of grant funding and/or the ability to apply for funding in the future
6	Removal of (one or multiple) privileges for 1 year (may include SU/UoB funding, room bookings, accreditation, welcome fair stall, etc.)



	Refer to University disciplinary action
	Disaffiliation of student group for 1 academic year
<b>9</b>	Refer to University disciplinary action
	Disaffiliation of student group for 3 academic years

**Individual sanctions:**

<b>1</b>	Warning
	Letter of apology to be written
<b>2</b>	Ban from some or all Bristol SU activity for 1 week
<b>3</b>	Ban from some or all Bristol SU activity for 1 month
<b>4</b>	Ban from some or all Bristol SU activity for a period greater than a month
<b>6</b>	Ban from some or all Bristol SU activity for 1 year
	Refer to University disciplinary action
<b>9</b>	Refer to University disciplinary action
	Lifetime ban from Bristol SU activity

## Appendix 2: Examples of behaviours that breach the Code of Conduct

Behaviours not listed may still be bullying or harassment and/or breach the Code of Conduct.

### Harassment includes –

#### Age

Age related harassment refers to unwanted behaviour relating to a person's age or perceived age. Examples include:

- being patronised as being 'too young' to understand or do something;
- being isolated or excluded from a student group because you're 'too old'.

#### Disability

Disability related harassment refers to unwanted behaviour related to disability, impairment or additional need, and can include perceived disability. Examples include:

- Giving demeaning uninvited or un-necessary assistance;
- patronising or 'talking down' to someone with a disability.

#### Gender Reassignment or Gender Identity

Harassment on the grounds of gender reassignment or identity refers to unwanted behaviour related to transgender identities. 'Trans' is an inclusive term used to describe people who: have undergone, are undergoing or will undergo gender transition (commonly called a 'sex change'); identify as someone with a different gender from the sex that they were ascribed at birth, but who may have decided not to undergo medical treatment; or someone who chooses to dress in the clothing typically worn by a person of another gender. Examples include:

- inappropriate moralising about a person's gender identity;
- being ridiculed for wearing clothing traditionally associated with another gender;
- persistently using the wrong pro-noun when addressing a trans person or non-binary person (misgendering).

### **Marriage and Civil Partnership**

Discrimination on these grounds refers to unwanted behaviour relating to your marital or civil partnership status. Examples include:

- being isolated or excluded from a student group because you are married or in a civil partnership.

### **Pregnancy and Maternity**

Discrimination on these grounds refers to unwanted behaviour relating to being pregnant or having recently (within 26 weeks) given birth. Examples include but are not limited to:

- being told to stop breastfeeding in public.

### **Race**

Racial harassment refers to unwanted behaviour related to race or ethnic background, which can include nationality, citizenship and language. Examples could include:

- ridiculing racial, ethnic or cultural differences;
- using racist symbols (for example Nazi swastikas);
- ridiculing someone for their use of language.

Antisemitism and Islamophobia are both rooted in racism and Bristol SU has adopted specific definition to help us tackle antisemitism and islamophobia within our communities.

### **Antisemitism**

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, towards Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. Examples include:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews

- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust)
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel

### **Islamophobia**

Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness. Examples include:

- Stereotyping Muslims by assuming they all think the same
- Holding debates about Muslims with which they could not join in
- Accusing all Muslims of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Muslim person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Muslims

### **Religion or Belief (including Non-belief)**

Harassment on grounds of religion or belief refers to inappropriate and unwanted behaviour related to someone's religion, or lack of religion, or any religious or philosophical belief including a lack of belief. Examples include:

- ridiculing items worn for religious reasons;
- denigrating cultural customs;
- derisory comments against an individual's beliefs.

## **Sex**

Sexual harassment can occur in a variety of ways but always has a distinctive feature: the inappropriate and unwanted introduction of sexual comments or comments that relate to a person's sex (including intersex people). Examples include:

- comments that emphasise the gender or sexuality of an individual or a group;
- sexually provocative remarks or jokes;
- persistent unwelcome requests for social or sexual encounters and favours;
- display of, or electronic transmission of, pornographic, degrading or indecent pictures;
- unnecessary and unwelcome physical contact with non-intimate areas of the body.

## **Sexual Orientation**

Harassment on these grounds refers to unwanted behaviour relating to a person's known or presumed sexual orientation. For Bristol SU's purposes, sexual orientation means attraction towards people of the same sex or gender; attractions towards people of another sex or gender, attraction towards people of all genders, and all minority sexual orientations including those who feel no or limited sexual attraction (e.g. asexual). Examples include:

- intrusive questioning about a person's domestic circumstances and/or sexual preferences;
- excluding same-sex partners from social events and student groups;
- actual or threatened unwanted disclosure of sexuality, i.e. 'outing'.

## **Class or Socio-economic background**

Although class is not a protected characteristic by law, Bristol SU will not tolerate victimisation or discrimination based on someone's socio-economic background or class. This means treating someone unfavourably due to their own or their parents' income, occupation or social background. Examples include:

- Stereotyping someone because of the school they went to
- Mocking someone based on their accent or occupation

**Bullying includes –**

- shouting and sarcasm;
- verbal and physical abuse;
- public humiliation;
- belittling about abilities, personality and/or personal appearance;
- persistently ignored and/or talking down to;
- subject to practical jokes;
- subject of malicious rumours or gossip;
- excluded or ostracised.

## Appendix 3: Suggested sanctions for breaking the code of conduct in relation to the coronavirus outbreak

Breaches to our Code of Conduct in relation to the coronavirus outbreak (Covid-19) will be recorded and we will keep a cumulative score of these breaches. At the point where thresholds are met, sanctions will apply to the group.

**Covid-19 Code of Conduct Decision Matrix**

Code of Conduct relating to Covid-19		Unintentional (not on purpose, accidental, misunderstanding)	Intentional (done on purpose, deliberately, with planning)
	<b>Minor Breach</b> (accidental breach)	1	3
	<b>Moderate Breach</b> (Bristol SU, University, External Venue, NGB rules broken)	4	6
	<b>Major Breach</b> (Government regulations breaches and/or law broken)	6	9

### Thresholds and Sanctions:

3	Formal warning
4	Removal of one or more privileges until a new risk assessment is submitted and/or action plan is put in place to prevent further breaches
6	Removal of one or more affiliation privileges for 4 weeks or revoked eligibility for SU groups grants for one term
9	Removal of all affiliation privileges for 4 – 8 weeks, revoked eligibility for SU group grants for one year, group referred to University for disciplinary action which could result in disaffiliation

### Example of Code of Conduct breach in relation to Covid-19

You are running your regular activity in the Stephenson Room in the Richmond Building, the capacity for this room is 18 people and social distancing must be in place between those from different households. 21 people arrive at the session.

- **Minor breach/unintentional** – People have turned up without booking. Those not booked onto the session are asked to leave and reminded of the booking process
- **Minor breach/intentional** – you have allowed more people to book on to your session than allowed because you don't think they will all turn up but they do.
- **Moderate breach/unintentional** – You have not checked that everyone in the room has booked on to your session or done a head count before you begin, and the activity runs with 21 people.
- **Moderate breach/intentional** – you consciously allow everyone who booked on to attend the session knowing you are over capacity.
- **Major breach/unintentional** – attendees at your session hug each other on arrival but do not live with each other and then move to hug more people and nothing is said to stop this.
- **Major breach/intentional** – you ask all attendees hug each other as part of a planned ice breaker knowing that people do not live with each other.