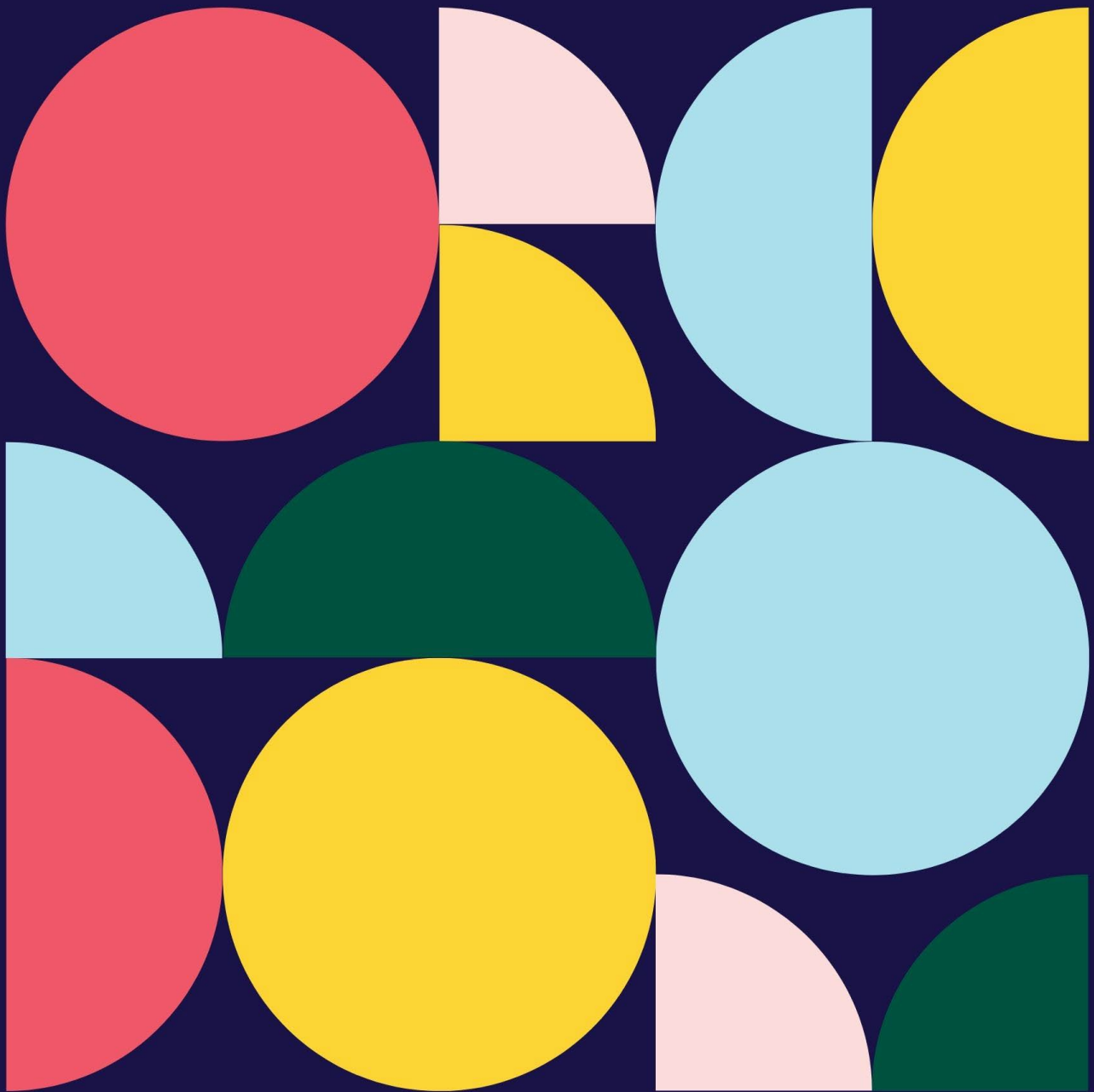




Student Group Code of Conduct

Student Group Code of Conduct

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1. What is the Student Group Code of Conduct?

This document sets out the standards of conduct and expected behaviours from all student groups that are affiliated to the Students' Union. It provides examples and is designed to help student group members understand how they can contribute to a positive and inclusive environment within their club or society and the University as a whole.

This document is designed to complement the [SU Member Code of Conduct](#) (which sets out the standards of behaviour for all members). Any student at the University is also subject to the University's [Acceptable Behaviour Policy Statement](#) and [Student Disciplinary Regulations and Procedure](#), as well as the law.

2. Purpose of the Student Group Code of Conduct

Bristol Students' Union is committed to ensuring that our student groups and activities are fun, inclusive and safe. Thousands of students participate in student groups and we strive to ensure that our activities take place in a way that is respectful of the University and local community.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

There are several key roles within this policy:

- **Supervising Trustee** – appointed by the Trustee Board to oversee the Code of Conduct framework and approach, to make decisions as to whether complaints / allegations fall within the scope of this policy and to sign-off any precautionary measures.
- **Reporting Party (or Complainant)** – person or persons raising complaint / allegations.
- **Complaints Officer** – manages complaints and casework, convenes risk assessment panels, appoints Investigating Officers and makes decisions on whether cases should proceed to a disciplinary panel.
- **Investigating Officer** – carries out investigations and produces investigation report and recommendations. May be a Students' Union staff member, University colleague or independent person dependent on the risk and complexity of the case.
- **Risk Assessment Panel** – panel of three people appointed to carry out risk assessment of serious cases and to make decision about any appropriate precautionary measures.
- **Disciplinary Panel** – panel of three people appointed to make any disciplinary decision(s) and determine appropriate sanctions.

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

The Student Group Code of Conduct applies to:

- Student group members;
- Student group leaders;
- People that work with, or are connected to, student groups i.e. coaches, instructors etc;
- Spectators / supporters of student groups.

The Student Group Code of Conduct relates to behaviours, complaints or issues which are connected specifically to the activity of a student group. This could be:

- On- or off-campus;
- As part of a formal student group activity, social or anything seen to be linked to a group;
- Whilst a member is representing, acting on behalf of or could be perceived to be representing / acting on behalf of their student group.

There is a separate Member Code of Conduct which is focused on the behaviours of individuals, which [can be viewed here](#).

If a complaint is made about the conduct of a student group, it is possible for this Student Group Code to be applied to the group as a whole and for the Member Code of Conduct to be applied to individuals that have potentially breached our acceptable standards of behaviour.

5. Expectations and Standards of Behaviour for Student Groups

As an affiliated student group, you are expected to:

- Ensure (and actively encourage) members conduct themselves in line with the [SU Member Code of Conduct](#);
- Act in accordance with Bristol SU's policies and byelaws - operating within the published rules related to student groups;
- Comply with all SU policies, rules and good practice including those around data protection, health and safety, finance and equality and diversity.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of group members, spectators and others connected to your activity. Group risk assessments should be undertaken and followed. Appropriate safety briefings and instructions should be given and followed.
- Not undertake any action which could bring the reputation of the student group, Students' Union, University or external partners / sponsors into disrepute.
- Operate within the rules, including national guidelines, which govern your activity.
- Declare anything to a Bristol SU staff member which might cause (or has caused) damage to people or property, within a reasonable timescale.
- Not misuse or intentionally damage student group, Students' Union or University resources, equipment and/or spaces.
- Ensure that socials (and any related activity) are opt-in only and have no effect on eligibility to hold membership of the student group or a committee position.
- Ensure that members are not pressured or coerced into any action with which they feel uncomfortable.
- Ensure that members are aware of how their actions may be perceived by others.
- Be respectful of the University community, local community and teams / groups from other institutions, including that members conduct themselves in a reasonable manner relating to language, noise and behaviour.
- Not carry out initiation ceremonies (*see Section 6*).
- Ensure that members are not unduly intoxicated at any event or activity where their behaviour could be deemed unacceptable or unprofessional.
- Not consume alcohol whilst being transported to or from any activity organised under the umbrella of the student group, Bristol SU or the University.

- p) Take all reasonable steps to ensure that your activities, and all aspects of your group, are inclusive and accessible to all members of the Students' Union.
- q) Ensure that external speaker events are approved through the Bristol SU External Speaker process and that the group complies with the Students' Union's Freedom of Speech policy and Joint Bristol SU and University of Bristol External Speaker Code of Practice.
- r) Not give any religious instruction or advice (specifically for religious / faith-based groups).
- s) Ensure that expenditure of funds is ethical, appropriate and beneficial to the membership or in line with the student groups aims.
- t) Encourage members to undertake the [University of Bristol Student Community Induction](#) (if they haven't done so already).
- u) Use this Student Group Code of Conduct and the [SU Member Code of Conduct](#) to set and manage expectations of behaviour. Student groups should not create their own Codes of Conduct or disciplinary procedures and can speak to staff in the SU around any concerns about how conduct is managed within group activities.
- v) Take responsibility for your own understanding of this Student Group Code of Conduct and the repercussions of any breaches - seeking further information or guidance if you are unsure about how it should be applied.

We will not accept or tolerate language, behaviours, policies and/or structures that constitute bullying and harassment, sexual harassment, sexual violence, racism, sexism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism or other forms of discrimination.

6. Initiation Ceremonies

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 or Society Presidents / Captains, committees and/or the groups as a whole may be held responsible for an 'initiation ceremony' and may have Students' Union or University disciplinary action taken against them (including suspension or expulsion).

7. Bullying and Harassment

At Bristol SU, we expect all members of our community to treat each other with respect, dignity, courtesy and consideration. Our definition of bullying and harassment is included within the [Member Code of Conduct](#) and student groups are expected to promote and nurture a culture and environment which is free from bullying and harassment. If members or leaders of a group have a concern about bullying or harassment, this should be shared with a staff member in the SU.

8. 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.

Student groups can provide an excellent environment to role model inclusive, positive, respectful behaviours to others. They also have the potential to cultivate toxic, sexist, misogynistic, predatory and abusive attitudes and behaviours towards others. The SU expects student groups to adopt a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and misconduct. Members should 'call out' inappropriate language and behaviours or raise concerns with the SU where this is not possible.

9. Definitions

We regularly review and reflect on our definitions of different forms of discrimination and abuse. The working definitions of racism, sexism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, 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.

10. Freedom of 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 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 student groups wish to run activities 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.

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](#).

Student groups are expected to encourage and enable lawful freedom of speech and to follow the Students' Union External Speaker process.

11. Complaints or Concerns

A case can be logged and an investigation started if concerns are brought to light about the conduct, behaviours or culture associated with a student group. This can be initiated by:

- A formal complaint through the [SU complaints process](#); or
- Concerns or issues coming to the attention of the Students' Union in any other way.

Once a complaint or concern is logged, an Investigating Officer will be appointed to oversee the case. This will usually be an appropriate staff member within the Student Opportunities team or a member of the SU Senior Leadership Team. In potentially serious cases, an external party or University colleague can be appointed as Investigating Officer.

12. Precautionary Measures

In a situation where serious concerns come to light about the conduct of a student group, a risk assessment will be carried out and consideration given to whether precautionary measures are required whilst an investigation is carried out. Precautionary measures could include a temporary restriction from undertaking group activities. This could be in situations where, for example:

- There is a risk to the health and safety of members;
- There are cultural concerns including bullying and harassment within the group;
- There are allegations of sexually inappropriate, abusive or predatory behaviours that are linked to the culture of the group (not just an individual member);
- Allowing group activities to continue could hinder an investigation i.e. misuse or student group funds.

Precautionary action is not a sanction or penalty. It is to be used only where following a risk assessment it is considered necessary to prevent harm or mitigate risk.

Risk assessments (including decisions about precautionary measures) are carried out by a small panel selected from a pool that includes: The Students' Union Senior Leadership Team, the Complaints Officer, SU Full Time Officers and members of the Student Opportunities team. All

potential panel members will be fully trained in the Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Policy and Risk Assessment methodology. Risk assessment panels will usually involve 3 people from the pool and will normally always include either the Director of People or the CEO.

Any decision to temporarily restrict a student group from undertaking their activities will be signed-off by the Supervising Trustee.

13. Informal Resolution

Before considering formal investigation and disciplinary proceedings, the Complaints Officer and Investigating Officer will determine whether there are opportunities, and whether it would be appropriate, to resolve the matter informally.

This could include discussing the matter with the student group committee with the objective of helping them to make appropriate improvements to conduct. At this stage the group committee will be made fully aware of the expectations, what steps need to be taken to address the issue and when this will be reviewed. Additional coaching or training may also be recommended.

An informal resolution will not be taken if:

- Group conduct has not improved following a previous informal discussion or warning;
- It is more appropriate to deal with the situation formally, due to the potential seriousness or risk of the issue.

Sometimes an informal discussion may not resolve the issue or be appropriate. In this case, the relevant procedures outlined in the remainder of this policy will be applied.

14. Investigation

Any investigation under the Student Group Code of Conduct will be concluded as quickly as possible and normally within 30 days from the start of the investigation.

The Investigating Officer will contact the relevant committee members of the student group to outline the concerns / allegations and provide a summary of the nature of the allegations.

The Investigating Officer has the power to carry out the investigation as they deem appropriate, including interviewing the reporting party and witnesses and collecting any available evidence.

When the Investigating Officer is satisfied that sufficient evidence has been obtained, they will prepare a report containing all of the available evidence and summarising the facts and any potential misconduct - giving their view as to whether or not there is a case to answer.

The Investigating Officer will share their report with the Complaint Officer for consideration.

15. Consideration by the Complaints Officer

The Complaints Officer will review the Investigation Report prepared by the Investigating Officer and may:

- Request that further investigation be carried out;
- Decide that no further action should be taken;
- Require informal action to be taken including an informal conversation, warning, training, guidance, mediation and/or requesting an apology;
- Decide that the matter should be dealt with formally.

The Complaints Officer may be advised by the Director of People, members of the Senior Leadership Team, colleagues from the Student Resolution Service (SRS) and/or external legal / HR advisors.

16. Disciplinary Panel / Meeting

If the Complaints Officer decides to refer the matter to a Disciplinary Panel, they will convene a panel and arrange a meeting as soon as possible.

The Panel will be made up of three people who have had no prior involvement with the case and will be drawn from a pool that includes:

- the Students' Union Senior Leadership Team, Head of Student Opportunities, Student Opportunities Managers, Advice Service Manager, SU Trustees, SU Full Time Officers and University Staff. All potential panel members will be fully trained in the Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Policy and Risk Assessment methodology. Disciplinary panels will normally always include either the Director of People or another member of the Senior Leadership Team.

One of the members will be appointed as Chair of the Panel.

The order of the disciplinary meeting, evidence to be considered, and witnesses to be called will be at the discretion of the Panel. The Panel may ask questions of anyone present.

A member of the People / Governance team will usually act as Clerk to the Disciplinary Panel. The role of the clerk is to assist the Panel, take note of the proceedings, and advise the Panel. The Investigating Officer will usually present the evidence found in their investigation.

The committee of the student group will be invited to attend the meeting. The hearing may take place via digital conferencing and not in person. The Panel may invite witnesses to give evidence to the hearing if they feel it is appropriate and beneficial.

The Panel will rely only on evidence presented at the meeting, either orally or in the evidence bundle. Committee members in attendance will receive a copy of the evidence bundle and will be invited to respond to the allegations regarding the conduct of the student group.

The Panel may find the student group guilty of misconduct if it's satisfied on the balance of probabilities, of guilt. Once a finding of guilt has been established, the Panel can impose any of the penalties listed at Annex 1 using the guidance provided.

If the members of the Panel cannot agree, the decision of the Panel will be that of the majority of its members.

The student group committee and members of the group will be informed of the decision and sanction imposed usually within 14 days of the hearing. The student group has a right of appeal, as set out in *Section 17*.

The reporting party / complainant will receive an outcome letter from the Investigating Officer. This will provide a summary of the response and any action taken.

17. Appeals

A student group may appeal against a finding of guilt or against a sanction imposed. The appeal must be made to the Students' Union within 7 days of the outcome letter being issued. Appeals should be made via email (bristolsu-complaints@bristol.ac.uk). The respondent must set out in writing the grounds on which the appeal is based.

The appeal will be heard by a member of the Students' Union Senior Leadership Team.

The potential grounds of appeal are:

- That the decision was not reasonable;
- That the procedure was not correctly followed when making the decision;
- That new evidence has come to light that was not available to the original decision maker which may have materially affected the decision.

There is no entitlement to a rehearing of the case. The committee members of the student group may present the appeal in person or in writing.

The Senior Leader considering the appeal may:

- Reject the appeal and confirm the original penalty;
- Uphold the appeal and revoke the original decision and penalty;
- Partially uphold the appeal and confirm the finding of guilt but amend the penalty to impose a lesser or greater penalty.

ANNEX 1: Suggested Sanctions for Breaching the Student Group Code of Conduct

A disciplinary panel that is considering sanctions against those who have breached the Code of Conduct will give consideration to the matrix below.

Student Group Code of Conduct Decision Matrix

Breach of the Student Group 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. Conduct may suggest poor culture.	Extremely Harmful Risk of serious physical or mental harm / national level reputational damage to Bristol SU. Conduct may indicate toxic culture.
	Minor Breach	1	2	3
	Moderate Breach Organisational rules broken	2	4	6
	Major Breach Civil / criminal law potentially broken	3	6	9

Any breach of this Code of Conduct may result in one or more of the following sanctions (this is not an exhaustive list) and sanctions are decided at the discretion of the disciplinary 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.
	Requirement for committee and/or members to undertake training.
2	Financial penalty.
3	Removal of (one or multiple) privileges for less than a month (may include funding, room bookings, accreditations, welcome fair stall, etc.)
4	Removal of (one or multiple) privileges for 3-6 months (may include funding, room bookings, accreditations, welcome fair stall, etc.)
	Removal of grant funding and/or the ability to apply for funding in the future.
	Required to perform unpaid services for the University or local community.
6	Requirement for removal / replacement of some / all committee members.
	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 or Students' Union Member Code of Conduct.
	Suspension / disaffiliation of student group for 1 academic year.
9	Disaffiliation of student group for 3 academic years.
	Permanent exclusion of student group.

Any of the above penalties may be suspended for a fixed period of time. If the student group is found guilty of subsequent misconduct, or does not comply with improvement requirements, within that period the suspended penalty will immediately take effect.

Sanctions / penalties can be applied on a cumulative basis. For example, if a student group is found to have breached the Code of Conduct at level 6, then all (or some) penalties could be applied at any level up to 6.