



**BRIGHTON**  
STUDENTS' UNION

# SOCIETIES POLICY

## BYE LAW of UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON STUDENTS' UNION

<b>Policy Version Number</b>	002
<b>Changes since previous version</b>	<p>Front page</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Title changes from Societies Association Policy to Societies Policy</li></ul> <p>Page 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated definitions including adding definition for society activities.</li><li>Changes to Membership section.</li></ul> <p>Page 2 to 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>New section on Formation and Disbanding of Society.</li><li>Updated section on Society Leadership.</li></ul> <p>Page 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated Finance section</li><li>Updated section on Representation and Governance.</li><li>Updated section on Disciplinary and Complaints.</li></ul> <p>Page 4 to 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated section on Political Activity.</li><li>New section on Guest Speakers.</li></ul> <p>Page 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>New section on Society Activities</li></ul> <p>Page 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated Other Policies Section</li></ul>
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<b>Policy Owner</b>	Director of Membership Services

## 1. Introduction and Definitions

- 1.1. Brighton Students' Union (BSU) defines a society as a group of people, which is student-led, who meet regularly for a shared purpose.
- 1.2. Society names must be representative of their affiliation with BSU. (e.g., UBSU Chess Society and not UOB Chess Society). Society names cannot consist of anything that may bring the University of BSU into disrepute. BSU will have the final say on society names
- 1.3. Societies must have an annually updated annual plan which states the Society aims and objectives, as well as a risk assessment for the Society's regular activities.
- 1.4. For the avoidance of doubt society activities include any meeting on or off campus as a group, including social activities. Therefore, all activities where members of the group meet are subject to BSU policies.

## 2. Membership

- 2.1. All full members, as defined in the BSU Membership Policy, are eligible to be members of all societies.
- 2.2. The following may also become members of a society but will not inherit voting rights, nor be able to be a member of the committee:
  - 2.2.1. University of Brighton International College students (UBIC)
  - 2.2.2. University of Sussex students
  - 2.2.3. BSU staff
  - 2.2.4. BSMS staff
  - 2.2.5. University of Brighton staff
  - 2.2.6. Alumni of University of Brighton
  - 2.2.7. Students from other local Higher Education providers such as BIMM, WaterBear or other local Higher Education providers.
- 2.3. BSU Full-time Officers are automatically members of all societies but cannot be members of the committee.
- 2.4. To be officially recognised as a society member, individuals must obtain the appropriate membership. Memberships are valid annually from August 1st to July 31st and can be activated at any time. Renewal of membership each academic year is required.
- 2.5. All society memberships are free. Societies may charge for specific additional activities such as specific events, clothing, and equipment. However, the inability to purchase these voluntary additions will not hinder membership.
- 2.6. At least 50% of each society must consist of full members of the students' union, and the committee must comprise 100% full members of the students' union.
- 2.7. All full and associate members of each society must adhere to the policies and procedures of Brighton Students' Union.

## 3. Formation and Disbanding of a Society

- 3.1. Societies are formed when a student completes the online society registration form

available on the Brighton Students' Union (BSU) website.

- 3.2. To form a society, there must be a minimum of 5 students, 2 of whom must become the lead committee members: the President and the Finance Officer. These positions must be listed on the registration form.
- 3.3. BSU reserves the right to make the final decision on whether a society can be formed. This decision will consider
- 3.4. BSU supports the principles of free speech as outlined in our Code of Conduct and is committed to ensuring that all students have the opportunity to establish societies. However, BSU will not permit the formation of societies that:
  - 3.4.1. Violate legal requirements or University policies.
  - 3.4.2. Incite violence, hatred, or discrimination.
  - 3.4.3. Endanger the safety or well-being of students and staff.
  - 3.4.4. Contravene the principles outlined in the BSU Freedom of Speech Code of Conduct or any other relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.
- 3.5. Societies are considered disbanded under the following conditions:
  - 3.5.1. If, at the end of an academic year, the society does not participate in the society leadership elections, BSU will attempt to find new students to adopt and take over the society.
  - 3.5.2. If, by the end of the next academic year, no students have taken over the society, it will be officially disbanded. Upon disbandment:
    - The society's content will be removed from the BSU website.
    - Any remaining society funds will be returned to the central society funding.
  - 3.5.3. BSU also reserve the right to disband a society with immediate effect should they break Union policy.

#### **4. Society Leadership**

- 4.1. Each society must appoint a President and Finance Officer, as these roles are essential for managing the society's finances. Other committee roles such as Social Officer, Welfare Officer, and Communications Officer may be established by individual societies, but they are not mandatory.
- 4.2. Established societies are required to conduct annual elections to elect the committee members. The elections will be facilitated by BSU, and the processes will be clearly explained in advance of the election period.
- 4.3. Newly formed societies are exempt from holding elections for their committee in the academic year in which they were formed. The founding committee may continue until the subsequent academic year, when they must participate in the election process.
- 4.4. Society committee members accept responsibility of adhering to all society's policies, rules, and guidelines.
- 4.5. All elected committee members will receive training and will produce/update their Society's annual handover document.

## **5. Finances**

- 5.1. All societies are required to follow the BSU Financial Procedures, which are given to society committee members during training and will be available throughout the year on the societies' online training module.
- 5.2. The society committee members (The President, Finance Officer plus any other committee positions the society creates) take joint responsibility for the finances of the society during their elected term.
- 5.3. No society may use external bank accounts for society's business; all financial transactions must be directed through BSU.
- 5.4. Dormant society funds will be reviewed at the end of each financial year and returned to central society funding. Legally restricted funds will remain held by BSU for the restricted purpose.

## **6. Representation and Governance**

- 6.1. Society committee members are integral to the democracy and governance of the Students' Union as set out in the Student Voice Policy. They will actively participate in the decision-making process, influence Students' Union decisions, and shape projects and campaigns.
- 6.2. Society committee members will engage with BSU Full-time Officers and staff during termly meetings. These discussions provide a platform for sharing insights into society management, updating the progress of Union campaigns, and addressing any queries or concerns related to the wider student experience.
- 6.3. Society committee members are required to attend meetings with BSU Full-time Officers and staff three times a year.
- 6.4. The Students' Union will provide training for all society committee members to enable them to effectively scrutinise BSU activities and contribute to shaping future plans.

## **7. Disciplinary and Complaints**

- 7.1. BSU encourages informal resolution and will facilitate conflict resolution where appropriate.
- 7.2. All complaints regarding conduct within a society, including violations of any BSU Policies and Procedures, must be addressed in accordance with the BSU Complaints Policy.
- 7.3. The society committee is responsible for promptly reporting any complaints to the Students' Union to ensure efficient and fair resolution in accordance with the Union's policies and procedures.
- 7.4. It is important to note that society committees do not have the authority to revoke membership of other society members.
- 7.5. Throughout the complaint handling process, utmost importance is placed on maintaining confidentiality and privacy of individuals involved to safeguard the interests and reputations of all parties concerned.

## 8. Political Activity

- 8.1. All societies within the Students' Union are permitted to campaign on issues that directly affect "students as students," such as matters impacting student status or relevant to the student community.
- 8.2. Issues considered to affect "students as students" include:
  - 8.2.1. Those directly impacting students due to their student status.
  - 8.2.2. Issues relevant to students within the community.
  - 8.2.3. Matters likely to affect current or future students in the near future, such as graduate unemployment or changes in funding policies.
- 8.3. Societies may also organize and promote political activities if their aims and objectives expressly state their purpose to engage students in political activity.
- 8.4. If a society's purpose is to engage students in political activity, it may hold a vote within the society to establish a stance on political issues. Members must be given at least three consecutive working days to vote in this scenario.
- 8.5. All political activities organised by societies must be peaceful, legal, and comply with University and Students' Union policies and procedures. These include, but are not limited to:
  - 8.5.1. Having an up-to-date risk assessment for the specific activity.
  - 8.5.2. Ensuring all required approvals and assessments are completed whether the activity takes place on campus or off campus.
- 8.6. Societies are prohibited from promoting personal political views through their communication channels unless members have voted on the subject.
- 8.7. Fundraising activities conducted by societies must only benefit the society it's self e.g. raising funds for a society trip or equipment or charities registered with the Charity Commission for England & Wales. Societies are not allowed to donate funds to political parties.
- 8.8. Societies cannot use any society funds, including grants or funds raised themselves, to support or campaign for a political party (e.g., printing political party literature for canvassing).
- 8.9. Societies may not endorse individual candidates in BSU elections unless they have conducted a vote among their membership to ensure alignment with their members' views.
- 8.10. BSU ensures that all activities and policies respect the principles of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, the Education Act 1986, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, the Charities Act 2011 and other relevant legislation. This includes balancing the duty to promote free speech with obligations to prevent discrimination, harassment, the promotion of terrorism and adherence to charity law regarding political campaigning restrictions.

## 9. Guest Speakers

- 9.1. Societies must submit a guest speaker request to the Students' Union at least 3 weeks in advance of the event. The Students' Union will then forward the request to the University Registrar and Secretary for approval, in accordance with the University of Brighton External

Speaker policy and the BSU Societies Policy.

- 9.2. An external speaker is defined as any individual who is not a current student or staff member of the University and who is invited to speak at a society event.
- 9.3. If a guest speaker request is not submitted at least 3 weeks in advance:
  - 9.3.1. The Students' Union or University may refuse to process the request.
  - 9.3.2. The event may not receive the necessary approvals in time, potentially resulting in the event being postponed or canceled.
- 9.4. All guest speaker events must comply with the BSU Freedom of Speech Code of Conduct, which includes:
  - 9.4.1. Adhering to the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom as outlined in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and the Education Act 1986.
  - 9.4.2. Ensuring that all opinions, even those that are controversial or unpopular, can be heard lawfully and respectfully.
  - 9.4.3. Preventing any speech or expression that constitutes unlawful discrimination, harassment, or incitement to violence.
- 9.5. The Students' Union reserves the right to deny permission for a guest speaker if there is reasonable cause to believe the event may:
  - 9.5.1. Violate legal requirements or University policies.
  - 9.5.2. Incite violence, hatred, or discrimination.
  - 9.5.3. Endanger the safety or well-being of students and staff.
  - 9.5.4. Contravene the principles outlined in the BSU Freedom of Speech Code of Conduct, including the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, or other relevant legislation.
- 9.6. All guest speaker events must be:
  - 9.6.1. Peaceful, lawful, and compliant with University and Students' Union policies.
  - 9.6.2. Accompanied by an up-to-date risk assessment for the specific event.
  - 9.6.3. Supervised by a responsible committee member from the society, who will ensure adherence to all relevant guidelines and policies during the event.
- 9.7. The Students' Union will provide training and resources to societies on how to effectively and responsibly host guest speakers, ensuring compliance with all relevant policies and legislation, including the BSU Freedom of Speech Code of Conduct.

## 10. Society Activities

- 10.1. All activities organised by societies must be legal, comply with University and Students' Union policies and procedures, and align with the society's purpose.
- 10.2. All society activities must:
  - 10.2.1. Have an up-to-date risk assessment specific to the activity.
  - 10.2.2. Obtain approval for any guest speakers by submitting the guest speaker request form to the Students' Union, which will forward it to the University Registrar and Secretary for final approval.
  - 10.2.3. Be advertised on the Students' Union website to inform members and other students, thereby encouraging increased participation.
  - 10.2.4. Comply with the Finances section of this policy.

10.3. These must be in place whether the activity takes place on campus or off campus.

## 11. Other Policies

11.1. Societies must comply with all BSU policies. Particular attention is drawn to:

11.1.1. BSU Data Protection policy.

11.1.2. BSU Health & Safety Policy.

11.1.3. BSU Equality & Diversity Policy

11.1.4. BSU Safeguarding Policy

11.1.5. BSU Student Voice Policy

11.1.6. BSU Financial Procedures

Code of conduct