

Volunteer and Student Group Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

Durham SU is committed to supporting volunteers and student groups to fulfil their aims and objectives in a way that is inclusive for all. All students elected into student group committee roles, or who are in a particular volunteer role, have a responsibility to ensure that all students have a fantastic experience and are not exposed to foreseeable harm. Volunteers have a responsibility for ensuring that their behaviour does not put themselves or others at risk. Those groups or members who fail to fulfil this responsibility may be subject to disciplinary action. This policy considers 'student groups' to include Societies, Media Groups, Associations and Durham University Charities Kommittee (DUCK). It also applies to volunteers such as members of Assembly or student representatives on University Committees including Course Reps.

Volunteers may be subject to disciplinary actions for one or more of the below, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Failure to comply with the Durham SU Articles of Association, Standing Orders, Student Group Agreement, Societies Constitution or any other governing document or policy.
- Action which undermines the mission, aims and values of Durham SU.
- Failure to act in a responsible manner when participating in and/or organising student group activities which may lead Durham SU or Durham University to be brought into disrepute.
- Engaging in behaviour that can be construed as threatening, intimidating, offensive or violent.
- Engaging in behaviour that can be deemed as bullying or harassment.
- Engaging in behaviour or organising activities that may be deemed unlawful.
- Misuse or intentional damage of society, Union or University resources, equipment and/or spaces.
- Misuse of funds on expenditure that does not benefit the membership, in line with the student groups aims.
- Behaviour that is disrespectful towards students, staff or members of the public.
- Hosting events with external guests without having guests approved under the Guest Speaker process.
- Failure to undertake risk assessments for student group events and activities.
- Inappropriate communications via social media, emails or on any public platform.
- Breaches of data protection, health and safety, or equality and diversity regulations.

If the issue is considered significantly serious Durham SU reserves the right to suspend the opportunity to volunteer and/or membership of a student group whilst investigations are undertaken in line with this procedure. This may apply to all opportunities, and not just the one which gives cause to a complaint. This is not a disciplinary sanction in itself, and will be subject to regular review by a Durham SU senior manager. There may be reasonable restrictions imposed at this time, such as not making contact with society members or attendance at society events.

Reporting:

Concerns should be initially raised via email to su.admin@durham.ac.uk. The email should include an account of what has occurred, and any supporting evidence. If the issue is considered serious enough that continued membership of Durham SU is in question then this policy may not be appropriate, and the matter may be referred to the Governance and Appointments Committee of the Board of Trustees by the Durham SU Chief Executive.

The Durham SU Chief Executive may also refer a complaint to the University if this is considered appropriate, but will also require the SU to complete its own procedures, to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to protect other student volunteers and the SU itself.

Informal Stage:

Before moving to the formal stage under this procedure an attempt to resolve the issue may be undertaken informally between the person making a complaint and the subject/s of the concern, if all parties are comfortable and willing to do so. If the issue is resolved informally the process will end and will not be progressed any further.

Formal Stage:

If the informal stage of this procedure is unsuccessful or deemed inappropriate for the particular case then the formal stage as outlined below will be used. All issues will be investigated by the relevant departmental manager (or a suitable member of staff nominated by the Chief Executive).

- The subject/s of the complaint will be invited to meet with the manager (or designated staff member) to discuss the issue and provide their version of events. This will be within 10 working days of the formal stage of this procedure being enacted.
- Any evidence relating to the incident will be shared with the subject/s of the complaint in advance of the initial meeting wherever possible.
- The manager (or designated staff member) will make contact with any witnesses to the incident following the initial meeting with the subject/s of the complaint.
- Within 10 working days of the initial meeting the outcome of the investigation will be communicated to the subject/s in writing. If the complaint is upheld, the written communication will clearly outline the reasons why, the sanction/s imposed and the process for appeals against the decision made.
- After 10 working days, if more time is required to investigate the issue this will be communicated to the subject/s of the complaint by the Opportunities Manager.

Durham SU will seek to meet any request for reasonable adjustments to be made for access needs. There isn't an automatic right to be accompanied to these meetings by a colleague or friend, but Durham SU will consider a request to be supported by another student if necessary.

Sanctions:

One or more of the following sanctions can be applied if a complaint is upheld:

- Formal written warning sent to those concerned, warning about future conduct and the consequences of any further disciplinary issues.
- Requirement to write a letter of apology for their conduct.
- Suspension of a volunteer or committee member/s from the activities of the committee (not limited to a particular opportunity or committee).
- Suspension of a volunteer or committee member/s from the activities of the group (not limited to a particular opportunity or group).
- Requirement to make good any damages, including payment as appropriate.
- Suspension of the student group's activities.
- Freezing of the student group's financial account.
- Cancellation of a particular activity or a series of activities as deemed appropriate by Durham SU.
- Removal of a volunteer or committee member/s from their position/s (not limited to a particular committee).
- Removal of membership to a student group (not limited to a particular committee).

Appeals:

If subject/s of a disciplinary case are unhappy with the outcome of the investigation they can appeal within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome to a Durham SU senior manager via email to su.admin@durham.ac.uk.

Durham SU will only accept an appeal on grounds that new evidence which was not previously available has now become clear, or because there has been a procedural irregularity. There is no right to appeal on grounds of disagreement with the findings of the previous stage. The grounds for the appeal should be clearly communicated in the appeals email and any new evidence should be included.

The senior manager will investigate the issue and consider any new evidence submitted with the appeal and may decide to:

- Dismiss the appeal
- Uphold the appeal, and either reduce or remove the sanction.

The senior manager will communicate the outcome of the appeal in writing within 10 working days. There is no further appeals process at this stage.

Records

Durham SU will keep a record of all complaints received, and the action taken, and keep appropriate records until the end of the academic year following the year the complaint was received. All records will be kept in line with Durham SU's data protection policies.