



## **Student Groups and Volunteers Disciplinary Policy and Procedure**

### **1. Context:**

- a.** The University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU) is committed to supporting volunteers and student groups to fulfil their aims and objectives in a way that is inclusive for all.
- b.** All students elected into student group committee roles, or who are in a 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.
- c.** This policy considers 'student groups' to include Societies and Sports Clubs. It also applies to volunteers such as members of Student Council, student representatives on University Committees including Course Reps and School Reps.
- d.** Volunteers may be subject to disciplinary actions for one or more of the below, which is not an exhaustive list:
  - i.** Failure to comply and breach of any Policies or Bye-Laws of the Union, Student Groups Constitutions or Student Groups Code of Conduct.

- ii.** Action which undermines the mission, aims and values of UWSU.
- iii.** Failure to act in a responsible manner when participating in and/or organising activities which may lead UWSU or University of Westminster to be brought into disrepute.
- iv.** Engaging in behaviour that can be construed as threatening, intimidating, offensive or violent.
- v.** Any form of behaviour deemed as bullying or harassment.
- vi.** Engaging in behaviour or organising activities that may be deemed unlawful.
- vii.** Misuse or intentional damage of student group, Union or University resources, equipment and/or spaces.
- viii.** Misuse of funds on expenditure that does not benefit the membership or in line with the student groups aims.
- ix.** Breaches of data protection, health and safety, or equality and diversity regulations.
- x.** Behaviour that is disrespectful towards students, staff or members of the public.
- xi.** Hosting events with external speakers without having them approved through the External Speaker Process.
- xii.** Inappropriate communications via social media, emails or on any public platform.

- e. If the issue is considered significantly serious, UWSU reserves the right to suspend the opportunity to volunteer, membership of a student group and/or the activities of the student group whilst investigations are undertaken in line with this procedure.
- f. 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 the senior leadership team. There may be reasonable restrictions imposed at this time, such as not making contact with student group members or attendance at student group events and activities.

## **2. Reporting:**

- a. Concerns should be initially raised by completing the Complaints form <https://www.uwsuforms.co.uk/view.php?id=96435> and should include an account of what has occurred, and any supporting evidence.
- b. The form requires the student complainee to:
  - i. Agree to the Student Data Protection Agreement.
  - ii. Personal details for contacting purposes.
  - iii. Provide a written description of the complaint.
  - iv. Outline the resolution the complainee is seeking.
- c. The Union 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.

### **3. Informal Stage:**

- a. 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. This policy will not be intended to be used to deal with minor issues or disagreements. It will be expected that students should deal with issues informally with the people concerned unless there is a clear reason why this is not possible.
- b. The staff member and officer assigned to deal with the initial report will make the decision on if a complaint should be referred back to the person who made the original report to advise them of this.

### **4. Formal Stage:**

- a. 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.
- b. Upon receipt of a report about a student or student group, one staff member and one officer will be assigned to investigate the report.
- c. The subject/s of the complaint will be invited to meet with the designated staff member and officer to discuss the issue and provide their version of events.

- d. The designated staff member will make contact with any witnesses to the incident following the initial meeting with the subject/s of the complaint if applicable.
- e. 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.
- f. If more time is required to investigate the issue, this will be communicated to the subject/s of the complaint by the relevant department manager. UWSU 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 UWSU will consider a request to be supported by another student if necessary.
- g. The outcomes of the initial investigation will be as follows:
  - i. Take no further action.
  - ii. Determine the report is unproven due to lack of evidence.
  - iii. Make a recorded warning to the volunteer or student group, this will have no impact on the individual's status with the Students' Union or with the group's status, however it will be kept on record for a period of time if there is a future formal disciplinary hearing.
  - iv. Determine that a full disciplinary hearing is required – This will be the case when it is felt that the report and evidence are serious enough that there is the potential for a member of the Students' Union to be

suspended either temporarily or permanently, or when the report and evidence are serious enough that there is the potential for the volunteer or student group that has been reported to: end their volunteering opportunity; members to be excluded; the group to be suspended or disaffiliated from the Union, etc. Please refer to the 'Sanctions' listed below.

#### **5. Disciplinary Panel Process:**

- a. A disciplinary panel will be made up of the following:
  - i. Two Students' Union officers (not including the president).
  - ii. A member of the Students' Union Senior Leadership Team (not including the Chief Executive).
- b. The minutes of the panel and administrative process to arrange and communicate hearing information to panel members and students required to attend will be undertaken by the staff member who performed the initial investigation.
- c. Outcomes of the panel will be as follows:
  - i. Take no further action.
  - ii. Determine the report is unproven due to lack of evidence.
  - iii. Suspend an individual from the Students' Union either temporarily or permanently.
  - iv. Suspend or disband a student group from the Students' Union.

- v. Enforce any of the sanctions listed below.
- vi. In serious enough cases, the panel will recommend that the misconduct is referred to the University.

**6. Sanctions:**

- a. One or more of the following sanctions can be applied if a complaint is upheld:
  - i. Formal written warning sent to those concerned, warning about future conduct and the consequences of any further disciplinary issues.
  - ii. Requirement to write a letter of apology for their conduct.
  - iii. Suspension of a volunteer or committee member(s) from the activities of the committee (not limited to a particular opportunity or committee).
  - iv. Suspension of a volunteer or committee member(s) from the activities and/or of the student group (not limited to a particular opportunity or group).
  - v. Requirement to make good any damages, including payment as appropriate.
  - vi. Suspension of the student group's activities.
  - vii. Freezing of the student group's financial account.

- viii. Removal of volunteer and/or student group privileges (room bookings, emails, training etc.)
- ix. Cancellation of a particular activity or a series of activities as deemed appropriate by UWSU.
- x. Removal of a volunteer or committee member(s) from their position(s) not limited to a particular committee).
- xi. Removal of membership to a student group (not limited to a particular committee).
- xii. Student group disaffiliation from the Union.

## **7. Appeal Process**

- a. A volunteer or student group will have the right to appeal the outcome either of an initial investigation (except when the decision of the investigation is to recommend a full disciplinary panel) or the outcome of the Disciplinary Panel. Appeals of the outcome cannot be made by the individual(s) who submitted the initial complaint.
- b. Appeals will be made in writing to the Chief Executive and will only be considered on the following grounds:
  - i. Failure to follow proper procedure.
  - ii. The discovery of information that it was not possible to submit prior to the submission of the appeal.

- c. Appeals will not be considered on the grounds of dissatisfaction with the outcome of an investigation or the outcome of a panel hearing.
  
- d. The appeal will be considered by the Chief Executive and the President of the Students' Union and will be based only on the written submission of the individual or group that has submitted the appeal.