

# POLICY

TITLE: SOCIAL AND EVENTS POLICY

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## INTRODUCTION

This policy seeks to update and formalise practices that various staff and student groups follow in the organisation and running of student group socials and events. It is designed to enable all student groups to organise and run activities independently and provide a framework that ensures all students are able to engage and enjoy social activities.

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## DEFINITIONS

**Student Group** – any affiliated group of students within the Students Union.

**Initiation** – A (banned) compulsory event run by a student group which members must attend before being allowed to participate in the full activities of the group.

**Welcome Socials** – The first social of the year for a student group, often one of the first experiences of that group's activities

**NUS** – National Union of Students

**BUCS** – British Universities and College Sport

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## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Student groups hold social events throughout the year of varying scale and activity. These socials form an integral part of the offer that The SU have for our members, enabling people to meet, make new friends and generally embrace the student experience.

The SU Bath is committed to ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all members, staff and visitors. <sup>1</sup>

While there are many positive benefits for students in participating in student group socials, they do have the potential to cause problems for the students involved, the organisers, The SU and wider University should they go wrong.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thesubath.com/pageassets/policy/2013-14-1-Equalities-Diversity-Policy.pdf>

In the national context, University social culture is never far away from the front pages, significant work is being done on a national scale especially through NUS and BUCS on the topics of safe alcohol consumption, harassment, inclusivity and initiations.<sup>2 3 4 5</sup>

The SU and the University may be held legally accountable for any activity approved by The SU.

The University Regulation for Students 7.4(n) within the University Ordinances prohibits behaviour that brings the University into disrepute, including that which occurs off campus.<sup>6</sup>

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## THE SU BATH BELIEVES

That social events are important to the student experience and contribute to community building, enjoying success and encouraging socialisation.

Many students join student groups in part, for social interaction.

The University is a multicultural environment and aims to encourage diversity in all its activities.

Fundamentally social activity should be, fun, enjoyable and inclusive. All students should be able and encouraged to participate in student activities, in an atmosphere free from discrimination, harassment or fear of intimidation.

The SU has a duty to protect the interests of its members, and wishes to foster an inclusive environment.

Attendance/non-attendance at social events should in no way influence selection to participate in other activities of the student group (team selection for sports clubs, show selection for arts societies and other examples as appropriate)

The student group committee are responsible for all activities that the group organise.

Due to the national conversation in the media and online, the expectations (founded or not in Bath's case) of first year students joining student groups can be that initiation type activities are the 'norm'.

There is an ongoing concern that initially harmless intentions at social events can evolve to demeaning, felonious, dangerous, and in the worst case, fatal outcomes. Additionally they

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/25/humiliating-initiation-ceremonies-repel-student-rugby-fans/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/nus-condemns-university-initiations/>

<sup>4</sup><https://alcoholimpact.nus.org.uk/research>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.bucs.org.uk/athlete.asp?section=18767&sectionTitle=%23TakeAStand>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.bath.ac.uk/regulations/Regulation7.pdf>

could involve acts which may subject students to be abused, mistreated, degraded, humiliated, harassed, intimidated, or which may in any fashion compromise a person's inherent dignity.

Promoting a positive image of student activity is essential as we continue to lobby internally and nationally for improved facilities, additional funding and increased support for activities.

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## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SU BATH

1. To adopt the 'guidelines on social events for student activities', initially detailed as appendix to this policy. These will also be agreed by the Management Group of The SU and are subject to minor changes as deemed appropriate by that group and approved by Board.
2. To educate committees and members annually of this policy and educate the committees as to their responsibilities therein.
3. At least 2 Student group committee members (usually Chair and Social Secretary) to sign off to confirm that the social events guidelines will be taken fully into account in the planning of any social events.
4. To work with student groups to plan and deliver socials that meet with The SU's core values, with specific focus at the start of the year on 'Welcome Socials'.
5. All student activity members to adhere to the published guidelines and be subject to the following possible consequences should they not:

If any member feels that these guidelines have been breached, they must inform the relevant SU Officer as soon as possible or report the problem via The SU's online reporting tools or through established disciplinary mechanisms of The SU.

The Committee of a student group as a whole are responsible for all group activities, however where an activity has been solely organised by individuals of that committee, or members of the group who are not on the committee they can be held individually accountable.

As such, committees may face disciplinary action if the student group as a whole fail to abide by this policy, or equally individuals where they can be identified as at fault.

This includes breaches of University regulations, and as such may face exclusion from University.

Breaches of the guidelines may result in the following penalties:

- Closure of the activity.
- Activity funding removed or frozen.
- Removal of individuals, team or club from all competition, including BUCS, for one year.
- Imposing fine on the activity group.
- Revoke Union membership.

- Referral to the University.
- Any other outcome that is deemed appropriate through established disciplinary procedures.

The relevant Officer for the student group area may undertake to suspend all functions of an activity group alleged to be in breach of this policy until disciplinary proceedings have been concluded.

If the offence occurs at the end of the playing season/academic year, or the incident is only brought to light at the end of the season/year, the penalties may be imposed for the following season/year.

## **Appendix 1 – Guidelines on social events for student activities**

Many students participate in student groups in part for the social interaction that they provide. Social events can act as a team building exercise, whereby group members can meet and socialise with other members. Club and society committees have a responsibility for any organised activity, including social events.

To aid them with their role, below are guidelines describing good practice and unacceptable behaviour when organising events.

This appendix acts to describe minimal baseline of practice expected by all student groups; it is in no way exhaustive, nor does it attempt to define all possibilities. If in any doubt of the types of behaviour that are unacceptable, please seek clarification from the relevant SU Officer.

### **Responsibilities**

- Recognise and adhere to the Students' Union's Equality and Diversity Policy.
- All social activities should be inclusive to all members of the social group at all times. (For example, it is fine to organise a team social just for members of a particular team, but no one from that team should be excluded, similar for groups within Societies eg 'show social')
- As committee members students are automatically considered leaders within their peer group. Given this position of influence not only should you not engage in activities involving discrimination or harassment, you should actively oppose them if they are observed, to set the example that they will not be tolerated. Alternatively, should you not feel comfortable to do so for any reason please report them to the SU, online or through an Officer or staff member.
- Committee members are responsible for the welfare of all members, and must take the necessary measures to ensure that an adequate level of safety is maintained at all times.
- Although we do not mandate that any particular person be designated as 'sober' for the duration of the event, the responsibilities of the committee should be kept in mind, and as a whole you should ensure that someone in a position of leadership is capable of dealing with a situation should one arise.

### **Attendance**

- All social events to be voluntary.
- Those who choose not to participate should be treated with respect with no peer pressure or 'bullying' to be applied. Non-attendance must not be a barrier to other activities.
- Attendance at socials is to have no bearing on team/squad/selection.

### **Alcohol**

- Alcohol should not be the principal focus of an event, or how an event is promoted.
- Where alcohol is involved, non-alcoholic alternatives must be both provided and accepted as an alternative.
- If concoctions of alcohol are willingly consumed, the individual should be informed of what is in the beverage in order to allow the individual to monitor their alcohol intake.

- If someone has drunk to excess and cannot get themselves home, the organiser should ensure they are escorted home safely. If the individual is in a state where they should not be left alone, help may be sought from campus security, or accident and emergency services.

### **General**

- When participating in games, playing in groups as opposed to singling out individuals is good practice.
- All student activity must show respect towards members of the public and other members of the University at all times. For example, noise should be minimised when travelling between venues or waiting at bus stops.
- Organisers and committee to monitor the state of those who attend social events.
- Social themes are often a fun way to individualise a social and provide variety from event to event. Themes should be carefully chosen to ensure they are not offensive to individuals (including members of the public) especially those that identify with a protected characteristic from the Equality Act. If in doubt consult the relevant area manager or Officer.

## Appendix 2 - Current Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 consolidates previous anti-discrimination legislation and introduces measures that have direct implications for higher education institutions. The aim of the act is to harmonise discrimination law whilst strengthening the law to support progress on equality.

The Act prohibits discrimination, harassment and victimisation by people who supply services. Customers are protected both when requesting a service and during the course of being provided with a service (section 29)

The grounds on which discrimination is unlawful are called “protected characteristics” and are as follows:

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Race, Religion or Belief (including lack of belief), Sex, Sexual Orientation.

Definitions The Act uses defined terms. Their meanings are as follows:

### Discrimination

#### i) Direct Discrimination (section 13)

Direct discrimination occurs when a person treats one person less favourably than they would another because of a protected characteristic.

#### ii) Indirect Discrimination (section 19)

When a provision, criterion or practice is neutral in the face of it, but its impact particularly disadvantages people with a protected characteristic, unless the person applying the provision can justify it as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

### Harassment (section 26)

The Act outlines three types of harassment:

- Unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the complainant, or violating the complainant’s dignity
- Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature
- Treating a person less favourably than another person because they have either submitted to, or did not submit to, sexual harassment or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment.