



## **Policy: Social Events**

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### **UC Notes:**

1. Various student groups hold social events throughout the year
2. Often the largest and highest profile event is an initiation ceremony into a club or society
3. The Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary are legally responsible for all club activities
4. The SU and the University may be held legally accountable for any activity approved by the SU
5. Some students' unions have banned initiation ceremonies; most notably at Southampton after a high profile incident where two members involved in an initiation ceremony narrowly escaped death
6. NUS and BUCS advocate the banning of initiation ceremonies
7. A report produced by Southampton Students' Union (2003) found that "initiation rituals have gained acceptance among a number of student athletes because it is believed to: (a) accomplish team building, (b) instil needed humility in new team members, (c) establish a necessary team hierarchy for decision-making, and (d) allow individuals free choice regarding their participation"
8. The Union has a safe space policy, stating that that "every member of BUSU has the right to enjoy a safe and comfortable environment free from harassment of any kind or on any grounds". This policy includes anyone representing the Union through its activities
9. The University is a multicultural environment, and the SU aims to encourage diversity in all its activities
10. 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

### **UC Believes:**

1. Social events are the least structured and regulated events of all union activities, and thus have the potential to get a little out of hand
2. At some social events, members (often new members) of a club are expected to perform a task or tasks as a means of gaining credibility, status or entry within that club. This has in the past involved peer pressure (though not explicitly) exerted on an individual, and may compromise a

- person's inherent dignity by forcing or requiring an individual to undertake certain activities that may be deemed humiliating
3. In October 2005, the male rugby players held an initiation ceremony. The event resulted in damage to private property, two individuals hospitalised, and both campus security and the police being called
  4. Freshers joining sports clubs face immense peer pressure to conform to club traditions of initiation ceremonies so as to become accepted within the club
  5. There is growing concern that initially harmless intentions at social events could evolve to demeaning, felonious, dangerous, and potentially fatal outcomes. Additionally they 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 as a person
  6. There have been incidents in the past where both social and elite sportspersons have refused to join teams due to fear of having to undergo an unwelcome initiation ceremony
  7. That all students should be able and encouraged to participate in student activities in an atmosphere free from discrimination or fear of intimidation
  8. That BUSU has a duty to protect the interests of its members, and wishes to foster an inclusive environment
  9. Attendance/non-attendance at social events should in no way influence team selection
  10. Many students join sports clubs in part for social interaction
  11. Many students will, for the foreseeable future, choose to congregate in groups and consume alcohol
  12. Social events can be held to encourage group cohesion and foster team spirit
  13. Promoting a positive image of student sport is essential as we continue to lobby internally and nationally for improved facilities, additional funding and increased support for sporting activities

**UC Resolves:**

1. To adopt the 'guidelines on social events for student activities' as detailed below
2. To educate committees and freshers annually of this policy and the safe space policy, and educate the committees as to their responsibilities therein
3. For the VP Welfare and Diversity to organise specific training for committee members relating to the roles and responsibilities they will uphold pertaining to safe drinking
4. For the VP Welfare and Diversity to run an annual campaign to promote 'safe drinking'
5. Club and society officers (chair, treasurer and secretary) to sign off to confirm that the social events guidelines have been taken fully into account in the planning of any large social event
6. All student activity members to adhere to this policy

- If any member feels that these guidelines have been breached, they must inform the VP Sport, VP A&D, or the SU President as soon as possible
- The Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary are responsible for all club/society activities, and as such may face disciplinary action if the club fail to abide by this policy. 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 (maximum £500)
  - Revoke Union membership
  - Referral to the University
- The VP Sport, VP A&D, or the SU President 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

## **Guidelines on social events for student activities**

Many students participate in student in part for the social interaction. Social events can act as a team building exercise, whereby group members can meet and socialise with other members. Club and society officers have a responsibility for any organised activity, including social events. To aid officers with their role, below are guidelines describing good practice and unacceptable behaviour when organising events. This document merely acts to describe examples of both good practice and unacceptable practice; 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 SU President.

### **Good Practice**

#### Responsibilities

- Recognise and adhere to the Students' Union's Equal Opportunities Policy and Safe Space Policy.
- All activities should be inclusive to all members at ALL times.
- At large social events, a 'responsible person' or persons (depending on numbers) should oversee socials. This will consist of being sober at all times, monitoring the state of those who attend social events, advising organisers of activities, and ensuring any severely intoxicated participants are escorted home

- Committee officers 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

#### 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 'responsible person' 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, residential tutors, or accident and emergency services

#### General

- When participating in games, set tasks for groups as opposed to singling out individuals
- 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
- Organisers and responsible person(s) to monitor the state of those who attend social events

## **Unacceptable behaviour**

### General

- All members will have a different response to activities; as such no 'peer' pressure (intended or not) should be placed on any member to anything against their will
- Damaging peoples property (including clothing)

### Alcohol and food stuffs

- Forced consumption/pressure to excessively consume alcohol
- Creating concoctions with potentially harmful ingredients (e.g. large quantities of chilli, nuts, numerous shots) or ingredients designed to humiliate (e.g. mix beverage with body fluids) an individual

### Ritualised nudity

- Forced nudity in public

### Task performance

- Pressurising individuals/groups of individuals to perform tasks, whether degrading/humiliating or otherwise

### Physical and Psychological abuse

- Causing harm to an individual
- Physical abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Violent behaviour, or threats of violence
- Harassment of any kind, including but not exclusively racial and sexual harassment