

RUSU Student Activities Constitution 2020/21

Introduction

The rules and regulations outlined in this constitution apply to any society or sports club (hereby referred to as “student group”) which is to be recognized as an officially affiliated student group with Reading University Students’ Union (hereby referred to as RUSU).

All student groups shall also operate in accordance with the constitution of RUSU which can be found here: <https://www.rusu.co.uk/pageassets/your-union/about-rusu/governance-documents/RUSU-Memorandum-and-Articles-of-Association-2014.pdf>

1. Aims and Objectives

- 1.1 The Aims and Objectives of the student group shall be stated on the relevant page of the RUSU website for all members to view.
- 1.2 The above Aims and Objectives shall not conflict with the charitable aims of RUSU as detailed in the RUSU Constitution. If applicable, the Aims and Objectives shall be in accordance with the guidelines/codes of practice/procedures issued by the governing body stated in 2.3 below.

2. Affiliation

- 2.1 A reaffiliation form shall be submitted each academic year for consideration by Student Activities.
- 2.2 The reaffiliation form shall state:
 - a) The Aims and Objectives of the student group (as in 1 above);
 - b) The Aims and Objectives for the upcoming period in office;
 - c) The full names and contact information of the student group Committee;
 - d) Whether associate membership is available (in line with conditions set out in 3.4 below).
- 2.3 If the student group is affiliated to a governing body or any organization other than RUSU, this shall be stated on the relevant page on the RUSU website for all members to view.

3. Membership

- 3.1 On becoming a member of a student group, the individual should have read, and is automatically agreeing to adhere to, the RUSU Student Activities Constitution and RUSU Student Activities Behavioural Policy.
- 3.2 Individuals (including Committee members) will not be considered members of the student group until they have signed up through the RUSU website, and have paid membership fees where applicable.
- 3.3 Standard Membership
 - 3.3.1 Any current student of the University of Reading shall be eligible to be standard members of any affiliated student group, regardless of age, background, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, course, mode of study, etc. in accordance with the RUSU Equal Opportunities Policy. This list is non-exhaustive but demonstrates RUSU's commitment to a respectful environment for all.
 - 3.3.2 The student group may not restrict membership or activities from any RUSU student member except when complying with UK law, or in line with 3.7 below.
 - 3.3.3 Standard members shall enjoy all rights and privileges relating to membership of a student group, including, where possible, use of the RUSU buildings and its facilities.
 - 3.3.4 Student groups reserve the right to charge fees for standard membership.
- 3.4 Associate Membership
 - 3.4.1 Should the student group Committee offer associate membership, any non-student – including University of Reading staff, RUSU Staff, and RUSU Officer Trustees – shall be eligible to join as an associate member.
 - 3.4.2 Associate members must be aged 18 or over.
 - 3.4.3 Associate members shall enjoy all rights and privileges relating to membership of a student group, including, where possible, use of the RUSU buildings and its facilities, except for the following differences:
 - a) Associate members' rights to participate in competitions representing the University of Reading shall be in accordance with the regulations of the competition's governing body (e.g. BUCS).
 - b) Associate members will have no voting rights at student group meetings nor in student group elections.
 - c) Associate members may not stand for election for a student group Committee role.

- 3.4.4 Associate members must not exceed 30% of a student group's overall membership.
- 3.4.5 Student groups reserve the right to charge fees for associate membership; the fee amount does not have to be the same as that for standard membership.
- 3.5 Membership may be revoked by the RUSU Activities Officer. Membership may also be revoked by majority resolution of the Committee, in consultation with the RUSU Activities Officer. In either case, the period of revocation will be determined by the RUSU Activities Officer. An appeal may be lodged within one week of notification of the decision, by writing to the Chair of the Appeals Committee (the RUSU President).
- 3.6 Membership may also be revoked as a result of a RUSU Disciplinary. In this case, the period of revocation will be decided by the Disciplinary Committee. This process, and the procedure for appealing in this case, are detailed in the RUSU Disciplinary Policy.
- 3.7 The committee may, with the approval of the Activities Officer, bar an individual from becoming a member if the individual has expressed an interest in joining for inappropriate reasons, or has had their membership revoked from another society.

4. Committee

- 4.1 Each student group Committee shall consist of a minimum of President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Welfare Representative (hereby referred to as "core positions").
- 4.2 Every sport club and society must designate one Committee member as the Charity Contact. This can be any committee member, such as the Secretary. This Charity Contact will be responsible for liaising with Reading RAG (Raising and Giving) and co-ordinating any of the group's fundraising.
- 4.3 The Committee shall be responsible for ensuring the compliance of the student group with its Aims and Objectives as outlined above in 1, and for the management and finances of the group.
- 4.4 The Committee shall be responsible for ensuring that all student group events and activities adhere to RUSU's Behavioural Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 4.5 Committee members must not gain financially from their positions.
- 4.6 All contact details for every Committee member must be made available to RUSU. Any changes to these details should be reported to the relevant RUSU Activities Co-ordinator; Committee members must be contactable throughout the duration of their time in office.

4.7 Committee members must attend all compulsory RUSU meetings to which they are invited. This includes, but is not limited to, having one Committee member at every Activity Group Meeting.

4.8 Committee Meetings

4.8.1 The Committee must have regular scheduled Committee meetings.

4.8.2 When voting on issues, each Committee member shall have one vote. In the event of a tie, the President has the casting vote.

4.8.3 If a committee member fails to attend three committee meetings to which they've been invited, the President may request to the relevant RUSU Activities Co-ordinator that the committee member is resigned from their post. The member in question then has the right to appeal this resignation within one week of notification of the decision, by writing to the Activities Officer.

4.9 Change to the Committee

4.9.1 With the permission of the relevant RUSU Activities Co-ordinator, a student group may hold a by-election to add a new Committee member during the year. No appointed individual will be recognised by RUSU as an official Committee member unless approved by the relevant Activities Coordinator.

4.9.2 The Activities Officer shall have the authority to remove a Committee Member if they are found to be acting contrary to any part of this Constitution, the RUSU Student Activities Behavioural Policy, or the RUSU Equal Opportunities Policy.

4.9.3 A Committee Member may be removed as an outcome of a RUSU Disciplinary in accordance with the RUSU Disciplinary Policy.

4.9.4 A Committee member can be removed by the student group's membership by the following process. If 25% of members sign a petition calling for it, then an online Vote of No Confidence will be set up by the relevant RUSU Activities Co-ordinator. The quoracy for this vote will be decided by the relevant Activities Co-ordinator. If a majority of members vote in No Confidence, the Committee Member will no longer hold their Committee position. A Committee member who loses a Vote of No Confidence may not stand again for any Committee positions within the student group.

4.9.5 If a core committee member resigns, or is removed as a result of 4.8.3, 4.9.2, 4.9.3, or 4.9.4, an online by-election must be run in line with section 5 below.

- 4.9.6 If a non-core committee member resigns, or is removed as a result of 4.8.3, 4.9.2, 4.9.3, or 4.9.4, the remaining committee members must co-opt an existing standard member into the role.

5. Elections

- 5.1 All student group elections must take place online, through the RUSU website. Student Activities reserve the right to state whether any elections conducted otherwise are valid or not.
- 5.2 Any student group standard member is permitted to run for any position regardless of age, background, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, course, or mode of study etc., as long as they will be a current student at the University of Reading within the year in office the elections correspond to.
- 5.3 Exceptions to 5.2 may be made in the circumstance that the Committee position in question serves the purpose of representing a specific group of people (e.g. transgender representative; female welfare representative) or a year of study (e.g. first year representative; postgraduate representative). If a role requires specific criteria or self-identification, the Committee must inform Student Activities prior to the nomination period.
- 5.4 Whilst an individual may run for multiple Committee positions, no individual can simultaneously hold two of these core positions within one student group.
- 5.5 Permission for an individual to hold more than one non-core position per student group per year will be at the discretion of the relevant RUSU Activities Coordinator.
- 5.6 Any student group standard member is permitted to vote in the elections regardless of age, background, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, course, mode of study, etc. Should the committee decide, exceptions to this may be made in votes for such positions detailed in 5.3 above, in which only students who are in the relevant group may vote.
- 5.7 Associate members are not permitted to run for Committee positions or vote in student group elections under any circumstance.
- 5.8 A student group election will only be considered valid if 25% of the whole membership vote. For groups with less than 15 members (in line 8.2 *h*) below), the quorum is increased to 50%. This quorum will be rounded up to the nearest whole number (i.e. a quorum of 7.2 becomes 8).
- 5.9 In the event of a tie, the current/outgoing President has the casting vote.

- 5.10 The only exception to 5.9 is in the event of a tie for the role of President when the current/outgoing President is re-running. In this case, the decision will be made on a single coin toss in line with RUSU's Election Bye-Law.
- 5.11 If there are positions unfilled after this elections process, there will be a by-election in line with all of the above procedure. The by-election will run in a timeframe determined by the relevant RUSU Activities Coordinator. If a core position remains unfilled after the by-election, the student group will be dissolved (in line with 8 below). If a non-core position remains unfilled after the by-election, that position will remain unfilled but may later in the year be filled by appointment at the discretion of the relevant RUSU Activities Coordinator.
- 5.12 In the event of any complaints, any member is permitted to raise complaints to Student Activities or/and the RUSU Elections Committee.

6. Annual/Extraordinary General Meetings

- 6.1 Every student group must hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM shall be held at a time designated by the current Committee each academic year, usually in the run up to the Committee elections. The Committee should inform the relevant RUSU Activities Coordinator of the date, time, and location at which the AGM is occurring.
- 6.2 The Secretary shall send a note of the AGM date, time, and venue, with a list of items to be discussed, to all members at least two weeks before the scheduled date of the meeting.
- 6.3 An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) may be called at any time at the request of the committee or 25% of the student group membership. For groups with less than 15 members (in line 8.2 h) below), the quorum is increased to 50%.
- 6.4 The Secretary shall send a note of the EGM date, time, and venue, with a list of items to be discussed, to all members.
- 6.5 Only current standard student group members are allowed to vote at an AGM/EGM.
- 6.6 Quoracy for voting at an AGM/EGM is 25% of the total membership. For groups with less than 15 members (in line 8.2 h) below), the quorum is increased to 50%. If fewer attend, the AGM/EGM must be re-arranged and any decisions made at the meeting are void.
- 6.7 Student group members can appeal the results of votes conducted at an AGM/EGM to the RUSU Activities Officer if they feel that the voting process was unfair or undemocratic.

7. Finance

- 7.1 The student group can be self-funded through membership fees, where appropriate, and through other fundraising. Additional funding from RUSU can be applied for via the RUSU funding structure.
- 7.2 The Treasurer must keep up to date accounts of all financial transactions made by the student group.
- 7.3 The Treasurer must present the student group accounts to all members at their AGM. They may also be presented at Committee meetings.
- 7.4 In order to ensure financial transparency, the student group may hold no other bank account other than their official RUSU account.
- 7.5 All payments for student group activities will be made by RUSU.
- 7.6 The funds of the student group shall only be used for the fulfilment of the Aims and Objectives of the student group.
- 7.7 No payment shall be made to any members except as a reimbursement of expenses incurred on behalf of the student group. Requests for reimbursements to members are at the discretion of the RUSU Student Activities department.
- 7.8 The student group shall not incur debts or liabilities. The members of the Committee shall be accountable for any such debts or liabilities.
- 7.9 Sponsorship by external groups is permitted, providing they meet the RUSU Sponsorship Process Criteria and a sponsorship form is completed and signed off by the sponsor, Treasurer and the relevant RUSU Coordinator before any monies are accepted.
- 7.10 Under no circumstances may any external contracts (e.g. sponsorship contracts, external venue bookings) be signed before being agreed upon by RUSU.

8. Dissolution

- 8.1 Dissolution is the formal ending of a student group and their activities as a recognized and officially affiliated group of RUSU.
- 8.2 The student group may be dissolved:
 - a) If the membership agrees by democratic vote.
 - b) If the RUSU Trustee Board deems that dissolution is in the best interest of RUSU student membership.

- c) As an outcome of a RUSU Disciplinary Procedure.
- d) If the student group fails to arrange an Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- e) If the student group fails to attend compulsory RUSU meetings during the academic year.
- f) If the student group is in a significant amount of debt which the RUSU Activities Officer deems to be unfixable.
- g) If the student group fails to fill the core Committee positions in line with 4.1 above.
- h) If the student group has less than 15 standard members at the end of the Autumn term. Note: This minimum membership requirement is 10 for societies in the Culture & Faith and Campaigns & Causes categories. Furthermore, student groups that were newly affiliated during Autumn term have until the beginning of the Summer term to meet their minimum membership requirement. Other exceptions to the requirement may be made by the relevant RUSU Activities Coordinator with the approval of the RUSU Activities Officer.

8.3 In the case of dissolution, any funds or equipment remaining after all debts and liabilities have been met shall remain the property of RUSU.

8.4 Where dissolution occurs, a proposal for the reaffiliation of the student group shall not be considered for 12 months.

9. Constitutional Changes

9.1 This constitution may be altered only in circumstances whereby the alteration is approved by the Activities Officer. Such alterations to this constitution may not remove any of the fundamental principles outlined above.

9.2 Student groups may have their own additional Constitution on the conditions that:

- a) It is approved by the relevant RUSU Coordinator and the RUSU Activities Officer.
- b) It does not contravene the RUSU Student Activities Constitution or any other RUSU Policy.

9.3 In circumstances in which the resolution of this Constitution is unclear, interpretation of this Constitution is the responsibility of the Activities Officer.

10. Agreements

10.1 Incoming Committees must agree to and sign this Constitution, and the associated Behavioural Policy, at the beginning of their year in office.

- 10.2 By signing this document, you are confirming that all of the above points have been read and understood.
- 10.3 By becoming a standard or associate member of a RUSU student group, you are agreeing to all the points in this document. It is the Committee's responsibility to ensure that all members understand this.

RUSU Student Activities Behavioural Policy

RUSU seeks to ensure that student involvement in activities is safe and secure, as well as enjoyable. Students should understand the behaviour expected when representing their student group at any event, of whatever kind and wherever held.

The Behavioural Policy is applicable to all members of a student group, including the media streams. It is the responsibility of the Committee to endorse the policy and ensure its content is made known to their members.

The underlying principles are that the behaviour of the student group or its members should:

- Not bring the reputation of Reading University Students' Union or The University of Reading into disrepute.
- Not be unlawful.
- Not cause offence, or be disrespectful towards other student group members.
- Not cause offence, or be disrespectful to fellow students, University Staff and members of the local community.
- To not exhibit unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature which could include sexual comments or jokes, touching, exposing yourself to someone without consent or sexual advances without consent, and sexual assault. This is in line with RUSU's Zero Tolerance Policy.
- Not involve any form of bullying or peer pressure on individuals or groups.
- Not carry out initiations. An initiation is an event or tradition in which members of the club are expected to perform any activity as a means of gaining credibility, status or entry within that student group. Examples of such activities might include, the consumption of alcohol, eating concoctions of foodstuffs, nudity and behaviour that may be deemed humiliating, including sexual harassment and/or assault.
- Not lead to financial gain for individuals or Committee members.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Wherever possible, activities should be accessible to all students who wish to participate. This is in accordance with RUSU's Equal Opportunities Policy (as outlined below).

RUSU will not tolerate any form of discrimination, whether direct or indirect, or harassment or bullying based on any random or irrelevant distinction.

Examples include distinctions on grounds of age, disability, ethnic origin, caring or parental responsibilities, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, civil partnership status, nationality, religion or belief, race, political belief, employment status, socio-economic background, full or part time student status, HIV status, irrelevant criminal convictions, physical appearance, medical condition, mental health status and trade union membership or non-membership. This list is not exhaustive but demonstrates RUSU's commitment to a respectful environment for all.

Breach of Policy

If any RUSU Officer Trustee has reasonable cause to believe that a student has committed a breach of this policy they may place that student or student group under an interim ban with immediate effect. Breaches of this policy will be investigated and the matter may then be taken to a formal RUSU Disciplinary.

While a student or student group is under an interim ban, they shall not, except with the prior consent of the RUSU Officer Trustee of RUSU or their representatives:

- a) Enter onto RUSU premises or use RUSU facilities; or
- b) Represent RUSU at any event of whatever kind, wherever held.

An interim ban shall remain in full effect until the later of the following:

- a) The date on which the student is notified of the decision on their case
- b) The date of which the student is notified of the outcome of any appeal

If the incident occurs at the end of an academic year, any disciplinary sanctions imposed may be levied for the following year.