

Policy on Social Events & 'Initiation' Ceremonies for Student Groups

1. Introduction

Birmingham City Students' Union's mission is to "act on our members' voices and cultivate vibrant and united communities for better student life". One of our core values is to ensure 'a safe environment'.

The Student Activities Department has a duty to ensure it upholds the name and positive reputation of the Students' Union and to ensure that it is acting within the best interest of Birmingham City students. The Student Activities Department has a duty to ensure that any member can participate in student led activities in a safe, non-threatening and enjoyable environment whilst removing potential barriers to an inclusive menu of opportunity.

This policy aims to encourage students to have a good time at social events, build strong and active communities and to be open and fully inclusive in terms of participation and involvement.

2. Accountability of Sports Clubs and Societies.

- 2.1. Each Sports Club and Society is accountable to the relevant council sub committee and the relevant sabbatical officer.
- 2.2. Decisions made by the sub committee, the Activities and Sports Officer and Executive Committee are accountable to Student Council.

3. Social Events

Social events can act as a team building exercise where club/society members can meet and socialise with other members as well as building communities and celebrating success. The following regulations must be adhered to in order to encourage a safe, non-threatening, enjoyable environment in which students can enjoy these events:

- 3.1. All sports club, society and activity group members must recognise and adhere to the Student Union's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 3.2. **Challenging Discriminatory Behaviour**
Members have a duty to abide by the equal opportunities policy and the Union will not tolerate any discriminatory behaviour.
It remains the right of staff and members alike to challenge any discriminatory behaviour. Such behaviour may lead to disciplinary measures being taken.
Where a breach of the equal opportunities policy is alleged, and it involves a member of the Union, it shall be the duty of the disciplinary committee to take action. If an incident occurs involving a staff member

then the Unions' terms and conditions of employment shall be implemented.

3.3. Right to withdraw services and disciplinary action

It is our aim to prevent discriminatory behaviour from occurring, but we recognise that this is not always possible and in severe cases, or where behaviour is persistent, the Union reserves the right to withdraw any/all of our services and/or take disciplinary action against individuals or groups.

3.4. Individuals should be made to feel part of the team and celebrations regardless of their willingness to participate in social activities.

3.5. It is intended that all student groups have a good time. It follows that each member will have a different response to activities, and no peer pressure (intended or not) should be placed on any member to do anything that they do not want to do.

3.6. The Committee of each sports club or society is 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.

3.7. Representing Birmingham City Students' Union and Birmingham City University is a privilege for many students. When representing the Union or University it is imperative that you present and conduct yourselves appropriately and spread the good name of the Union and University.

4. Initiation Ceremonies¹

Note that initiation ceremonies are also classed as social events so the previous regulations on social events apply as well as the further regulations below.

A survey carried out at Southampton University in 2003 found that initiation rituals have gained acceptance among a number of students because it is believed to accomplish team building, instil needed humility in new team members, establish a necessary team hierarchy for decision-making, and allow individuals free choice regarding their participation. However, there is concern that initially harmless intentions may frequently evolve to demeaning, felonious, dangerous, and even fatal activities.

Therefore all initiations will have to abide to the following code of conduct:

- 4.1. Any planned initiations must be brought to the attention of the Activities and Sports officer with at least 14 days notice.

¹ **Definition:** An initiation ceremony is an event in which members (often new members) of the club are expected to perform a task or tasks as a means of gaining credibility, status or entry within that club. This may involve peer pressure (though not explicitly) exerted on students, and may compromise a person's inherent dignity as a person by forcing or requiring an individual to drink alcohol, eat mixtures of various food stuffs, nudity and behaviour that may be deemed humiliating.

- 4.2. A detailed risk assessment must be completed by the executive committee of each student group to ascertain the safety of the planned initiation, this will then be passed or declined by the Activities & Sports Officer after consultation with the other sabbatical officers and the student activities department.
- 4.3. All Activities **MUST** take place at one of our venues, in an environment that allows all our members to take part, with at least 14 days notice.
- 4.4. At all times a responsible person or persons will oversee the initiations. This person will be sober at all times, be responsible for any person participating in the initiations, ensure all members participating return home safely and ensure that these regulations are adhered to at all times.
- 4.5. ALL individuals should be made aware that the initiation is **NOT** compulsory and that they have the right not to participate.
- 4.6. Any non-participation should be treated respectfully. No peer pressure or bullying should be applied.
- 4.7. If alcohol is involved in the 'initiation ceremony' then a non-alcoholic alternative should be provided.
- 4.8. Initiations **MUST NOT** have any bearing on team/squad membership or membership of the club or society in any way. All groups should be fully inclusive to ALL members at ALL times.
- 4.9. Breaches of these regulations may result in the following penalties:
 - Activity funding frozen or removed
 - Removal of individuals, teams or clubs from **all** competition
 - Individuals being subject to the Union's disciplinary procedures which can lead to discipline by the University
 - Complete closure of the student group
- 4.10. Individuals who organise events in breach of these regulations will be subject to disciplinary action in line with the Students' Union Disciplinary Procedure.
- 4.11. If a breach of this policy occurs it may also constitute a breach of the University's Student Disciplinary Regulations, the University may decide to take appropriate action against you in accordance with those regulations.

It is the policy of the Students' Union that every student has the right to participate as a full member in all activities without attending any social events. Selection for competitive activities should be based purely on ability, skill, fitness criteria and attendance at training.



All Sports Clubs or Societies and their members must adhere to this policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action. If any member feels that these guidelines have been breached, they must inform the Activities & Sports Officer or any other executive officer as soon as possible.

We want all students that participate and commit their time to groups to have an enjoyable time that they look back on and that helps them to build the foundations of their future.