

**The Core Constitution of
The University of Surrey Students' Union**

Approved: 13-JUL-06

1. Name

- 1.1. The name of the students' union shall be the University of Surrey Students' Union, also known as USSU. Throughout this document it will be referred to as the Union.
- 1.2. The Charter of the University [Art.19] provides that there shall be a students' union and that its constitution, powers and functions shall be set down in Ordinances. Ordinance 20: Union of Students, describes the functions of the Union and eligibility for membership; it also requires there to be a formal constitution which has to be reported to the Senate and approved by the Council of the University before it can take effect. This is that constitution.

2. Definitions of Terms

- 2.1. "Union" shall mean the University of Surrey Students' Union.
- 2.2. "University" shall mean the University of Surrey.
- 2.3. "Club" shall mean a Sports Club of the Union properly constituted and run in accordance with the regulations herein.
- 2.4. "Society" shall mean a Society of the Union properly constituted and run in accordance with the regulations herein.
- 2.5. "School" shall mean an academic school as defined by the University.
- 2.6. "Member" shall, unless otherwise stated, mean a Full Member of the Union.
- 2.7. "Constitution" shall mean this document and its associated Rules and Union Policies.
- 2.8. "Rules" shall mean the Union Rules document and its contents.
- 2.9. "Policy" shall mean any policy created by Referenda or the Union Executive Committee as proposed by Union Executive sub committees.
- 2.10. "Working Day" shall mean any Monday-Friday during semester as defined by the University and not designated as a public holiday.
- 2.11. "Quorum" shall be the least number of constituted members whose presence/participation in a meeting/referendum is necessary to make valid decisions.
- 2.12. "Simple Majority" shall mean the majority (50%+) of votes cast excluding abstentions.
- 2.13. "Two-thirds Majority" shall mean at least two-thirds of votes cast excluding abstentions.
- 2.14. "Self-defining" shall mean anyone who can categorise themselves as members of a particular group.
- 2.15. "In attendance" shall mean a non-voting member of a meeting, who shall not be counted when considering quoracy.

3. Aims and Objectives - The Students' Union Mission and Vision

3.1. The 1994 Education Act defines a Students' Union in the first instance as:

- 3.1.1. an association of the generality of students at an establishment ... whose principal purposes include promoting the general interests of its members as students; or
- 3.1.2. a representative body (whether an association or not) whose principal purposes include representing the generality of students at an establishment ... in academic, disciplinary or other matters relating to the government of the establishment.

3.2. The Students' Union's values are encapsulated in its vision statement:

- 3.2.1. The University of Surrey Students' Union's vision is to become a world renowned representative organisation and provider of activities and resources to develop a truly cosmopolitan student experience for our membership. We will achieve this by unifying, supporting, developing and representing the students of the University of Surrey and creating strong social and political relationships on a local, national and international scale.

3.3. The University of Surrey Students' Union mission will therefore be:

- 3.3.1. 'To unify, support, develop and represent the students of the University of Surrey'.

3.4. The Union shall exist:

- 3.4.1. To advance the quality of education for its members
- 3.4.2. To promote and protect the welfare of its members
- 3.4.3. To represent the interests and needs of its members and act as a channel of communication in dealing with the University
- 3.4.4. To develop, support and represent its members on a local national and international scale, creating strong social and political relationships.
- 3.4.5. To promote, encourage and co-ordinate student societies, sports, social, political and cultural activities.
- 3.4.6. To promote the involvement of its members within the local community
- 3.4.7. To take measures to encourage and build a student community that respects and celebrates the diversity of its membership.
- 3.4.8. To provide for the administration, control, usage and development of the Students' Union building and other space rented, owned or given to the Union.
- 3.4.9. To be an employer of people and manager of assets on behalf of its members
- 3.4.10. These aims and objects shall be pursued without discrimination on the grounds of age, colour, ethnic or national origin, race, caring responsibility, sex, marital/partnership status, religion, sexual orientation or identity, socio-economic status or background, physical/mental disability or special need, HIV status, student status, political belief or trade union activity (this is a non-exhaustive list) and independently of any political organisation, except that positive action may be taken to aid any disadvantaged section of society.

4. Membership

There shall be the following categories of membership of the Union:

4.1. Full Membership

4.1.1. Full Members shall include:

4.1.1.1. All students who are registered at the University of Surrey for an academic award to the award of credit, (including those who are suspended or temporarily withdrawn) or admitted as part of an approved exchange scheme shall be Full Members unless they have decided to relinquish their membership in accordance with the Appendix of this Constitution.

4.1.1.2. All sabbatical officers of the Union.

4.1.2. All Full Members shall be entitled to:

4.1.2.1. Attend, speak, present motions and vote at all Student Assembly meetings.

4.1.2.2. Attend and speak and present motions at all other Union meetings.

4.1.2.3. Nominate, be nominated and stand for election to Union office as specified in the Constitution.

4.1.2.4. Vote in Union elections as specified in this Constitution and Rules.

4.1.2.5. Join and participate in the activities of clubs and societies.

4.1.2.6. Enjoy Union facilities and services.

4.1.2.7. Introduce a guest (as a contingent member) to the Union building or commercial facilities (subject to such restrictions as may be imposed).

4.2. Honorary, Life, Associate and Part Membership

4.2.1. Honorary, Life, Associate and Part Members shall include:

4.2.1.1. Honorary membership may be granted to non-Full Members in recognition of outstanding services to the Union.

4.2.1.2. Life Membership may be granted to Full Members (or former Full Members) in recognition of outstanding services to the Union.

4.2.1.3. A recommendation to award Honorary or Life membership shall be submitted as a motion to Student Assembly. Student Assembly may reject the recommendation or approve it along with any conditions as the meeting sees fit.

4.2.1.4. Associate Membership shall normally be open to any current NUS cardholder and Full Members of other students' unions with which the Union has entered into reciprocal membership arrangements.

4.2.1.5. Part Members are all students of the University of Surrey not covered in 4.1.

4.2.2. All Honorary, Life, Associate and Part Members shall be entitled to:

4.2.2.1. Join any Union Club or Society but shall take no part in the decision making of that Club or Society.

4.2.2.2. Attend and speak at any meeting of the Union with the permission of the members of that meeting.

4.2.2.3. Enjoy Union facilities and services in accordance with any rules that may be laid down from time to time.

4.2.2.4. Life and Honorary Members shall be entitled to introduce a guest (as a Contingent Member) to the Union building subject to such restrictions as maybe imposed).

4.3. Contingent Membership

4.3.1. Contingent Members shall include:

- 4.3.1.1. Guests who have registered and been signed in by a Full, Honorary or Life Member to use the commercial facilities of the Union.
- 4.3.1.2. Former Full/Contingent Members of the Union who have paid to have access to the trading areas of the Union (this includes former staff and students of the defunct Battersea College of Technology and Battersea Polytechnic).
- 4.3.1.3. Staff of the University or the Union, who shall be contingent members for the duration of their employment at these establishments.

4.3.2. All Contingent Members shall be entitled to:

- 4.3.2.1. Attend and speak at any meeting of the Union with the permission of the members of that meeting.
- 4.3.2.2. Have access to the trading areas of the Union.

4.4. Membership of any class by any person(s) shall begin/terminate

4.4.1. On the date on which the conditions of eligibility for that class shall begin/cease to apply.

4.4.2. Upon the passing of a motion to award/terminate membership at Union Executive Committee.

5. Union Officers

5.1. The full-time Sabbatical Officers and the part-time Executive Officers shall oversee the running of the Union on a day-to-day basis. The full-time officers are the principal officers of the Union and are also members of the Board of Trustees. They shall be elected in accordance with the election regulations and paid an allowance as laid down in the terms and conditions rules. They shall also be over 18 years of age at the start of their term of office.

6. Union Governance

6.1. The governance of the Union shall be in accordance with the Core Constitution, Rules and Union policy.

6.2. The Union shall have the following bodies responsible for the governance of the Union, which are in the following order of authority

- (i) The Board of Trustees
- (ii) The Annual General Meeting
- (iii) General Meeting

6.3. The Union shall have the following bodies responsible for the running, policy setting and policy implementation of the Union.

- (i) The Referendum
- (ii) The Union Executive Committee
- (iii) Student Assembly, UG Cross-School Representative Committee, PG Cross-School Representative Committee and Activities Board

6.4. Decisions made by a body shall be binding upon all bodies below it and upon all the Union Officers.

7. The Board of Trustees

7.1. The Board of Trustees is the group responsible for ensuring that the organisation acts within the confines of the English law and collectively presides over the activities of the organisation under the requirements of the Education Act 1994 and The Charities Act 2006*

7.2. The Board of Trustees will have the following summarised responsibilities:

- 7.2.1. The Trustees shall be responsible for ensuring the proper administration of the Union
- 7.2.2. The Trustees shall accept ultimate responsibility for everything the Union does
- 7.2.3. The Trustees shall act reasonably and prudently in all matters relating to the Union
- 7.2.4. The Trustees shall safeguard and protect the assets of the Union
- 7.2.5. The Trustees shall act collectively
- 7.2.6. The Trustees shall act in the best interests of the Union
- 7.2.7. The Trustees must avoid any conflict between their personal interests and those of the Union.

7.3. The membership of the Board shall be as follows:

- 7.3.1. The Union President (who shall preside as chairperson) [Elected]
- 7.3.2. The Vice President Education & Welfare [Elected]
- 7.3.3. The Vice President Societies & Culture [Elected]
- 7.3.4. The Vice President Sports & Recreation [Elected]
- 7.3.5. The Union Chairperson [Elected]
- 7.3.6. The Student Experience Officer [Elected]
- 7.3.7. One representative nominated by the University Council from among the members of that body.
- 7.3.8. Four co-opted members, external to both the Union and the University of Surrey, nominated by the Governance Group and ratified by the Union Executive Committee.

7.4. The Board of Trustees will be governed by the Board of Trustees Rules in the Constitution Rules

7.5. The Board of Trustees can veto the actions of any bodies under its governance if the bodies have acted or mandated in an unlawful, unethical and financially detrimental manner.

7.6. The Board of Trustees can not veto the results of any Union Officer election unless it is deemed by the Board of Trustees to have breached any Election Rules

8. The Annual General Meeting

8.1. The sole function of the Annual General Meetings shall be to:

- (i) Receive the Union Annual Report document
- (ii) Receive and Approve the Union Audited Accounts
- (iii) Agree the Union Budget
- (iv) Amend the Union Finance Policy
- (v) Receive an annual report from the Board of Trustees
- (vi) Publicly notify its members of External Affiliations
- (vii) Hold the Union Officers to account
- (viii) Amend the Constitution Rules and Appendices

8.2. The Annual General Meeting shall be held in the spring semester and shall be called and conducted in accordance with the Annual General Meeting Rules.

8.3. Members of the Annual General Meeting shall be any Full Members of the Union, members of the Board of Trustees, Senior staff of the Union and all Union Officers (inclusive of Undergraduate and Postgraduate School Representatives)

8.4. Additional 'General Meetings' can be called by

- (i) A resolution of the Board of Trustees
- (ii) A petition of 150 Full Members of the Union submitted to the Union Chairperson
- (iii) Union President

9. The Referendum

9.1. A referendum may be held on any matter and shall be called and conducted in accordance with the Referendum Rules.

9.2. A referendum is the key policy setting process within the Union. A maximum of eight referendums per calendar year can be held by the Union.

10. The Union Executive Committee

10.1. The Union Executive Committee shall collectively be the elected representative body of students tasked to lead the day to day decision making within the Union.

10.2. The Union Executive Committee shall be responsible for overseeing the running of the Union, with the support of the Senior Managers of the Union.

10.3. The Union Executive Committee shall meet at least once a fortnight and shall be run in accordance with the Executive Committee Rules.

10.4. The membership of the Union Executive Committee, which shall be elected in accordance with the Election Rules, shall be:

10.4.1. The full-time Sabbatical Officers

10.4.2. The part-time Union Officers as defined in Union Executive Committee Rules

10.5. The core functions of the Union Executive Committee shall be:

- 10.5.1.* To implement mandates of its sub-committees, referendums and requirements of the Board of Trustees.
- 10.5.2.* To act on behalf of the student body but to report these actions to the next Student Assembly.
- 10.5.3.* To be responsible for the direction of the Union in accordance with a strategic plan
- 10.5.4.* To be responsible for communication between the membership, the University and Union management and other organisations
- 10.5.5.* To agree and review the Union's representation strategy to the University
- 10.5.6.* To enact a referendum to canvass student opinion and decide Union policy as necessary in accordance with the Referendum Rules.
- 10.5.7.* To ensure that the Union finances operate effectively and efficiently
- 10.5.8.* To establish working groups, where relevant and to receive any reports from working groups
- 10.5.9.* To prepare the Union annual report detailing the activities of the Union and information required under current legislation
- 10.5.10.* To interpret reports from the Finance Committee.
- 10.5.11.* To award/terminate membership of the Union.
- 10.5.12.* To fulfil specific responsibilities as laid down in the Rules

11. The Student Assembly

- 11.1. The Student Assembly shall be an open forum for members of the Union and shall meet at least 3 times per semester; it will be run in accordance with the Union Meeting Rules and the General Meeting Rules. The core functions of the Student Assembly shall be:
- (i) To debate the activity of the Union and issues affecting members of the Union
 - (ii) To propose and ratify policy for the Union and recommend them to the Union Executive Committee
 - (iii) To amend and ultimately interpret the Constitution Rules and Appendices only and recommend changes to the Union Executive Committee as needed
 - (iv) To hold to account the Union Executive Committee
 - (v) To receive reports from the Union Executive Committee
 - (vi) To receive financial reports from the Union Executive Committee and Finance Committee
 - (vii) To co-opt non-voting members onto the Student Assembly when necessary
 - (viii) To approve the Union's annual report
 - (ix) To agree affiliations to external organizations
 - (x) To recommend Honorary and Life Memberships of the Union
 - (xi) To recommend award/termination of membership of the Union
- 11.2. The Student Assembly shall have a membership of every Full Member of the Union who is entitled to attend and have full voting rights. The Union Executive Committee members are required to be at all Student Assembly meetings. Additional rules for membership of the Student Assembly are defined in the Student Assembly Rules

11.3. The Student Assembly may not vote on motions that alters the financial position of the Union unless the item is submitted with the approval of the Finance Committee.

11.4. The Student Assembly may not vote on motions to amend the Constitution Core.

11.5. An Emergency Student Assembly meeting can be called by:

- (i) A vote passed by simple majority of the Union Executive Committee
- (ii) A petition of 150 Full Members of the Union submitted to the Union Chairperson

12. Employees of the Students' Union

12.1. The Union Executive Committee shall on behalf of the Union employ suitable permanent and temporary staff. It shall delegate responsibility for the appointment, supervision and discipline of staff to the President. The President will oversee through the Union's senior member of staff all activities related to employed Staff.

13. Finance

13.1. The Union shall annually receive an allocation of funds from the University sufficient in the view of the University and the Union to enable the Union to pursue its aims and objectives effectively.

13.2. The Board of Trustees shall ultimately be responsible for overseeing the financial affairs of the Union. It shall delegate the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Union's financial affairs to the Finance Committee through the President in conjunction with the Union's senior member of staff.

13.3. The Union acting through the Union Executive Committee shall, with recommendation and approval of the Finance Committee in pursuit of the Union aims and objectives, be empowered to open bank accounts in the name of the Union, lend monies, invest monies, borrow monies, offer its material assets as security and do all other such things as are necessary for the prudent conduct of its financial affairs as though it were a legal person and subject to no other restrictions save any which may be imposed by Union finance policy.

13.4. The Union acting through the Finance Committee shall ensure that proper books of account are maintained and the accounts of the Union shall be audited by an independent audit company appointed by the Annual General Meeting of the Union, after taking into account the views of the Student Assembly.

13.5. Such an annual audit shall include such requirements as the Board of Trustees may reasonably specify having regard to the audit requirements of the University, including a statement from the Auditors that monies derived directly or indirectly from public sources, including all grants made by the University to the Union, have been effectively controlled, duly authorised and properly applied, consistent with the Charter, Statutes and Regulations of the University, the Union Constitution and Regulations and the relevant conditions attached to exchequer, or exchequer-derived monies.

13.6. Such annual audited accounts will be presented to the Board of Trustees and then to the wider membership at the next Annual General Meeting, each academic year. The Finance Committee shall present a current detailed, written report of its activities to the Student Assembly, including current period management accounts, at least once per

semester. The Board of Trustees may at any time alter or reverse any decision made by the Finance Committee, if Finance Committee has breached Union Finance policy.

13.7. The Finance Committee shall ensure that the annual budget, amendments to the budget and all necessary interim financial reports and proposals are submitted to the Union Executive Committee for approval.

13.8. A copy of the Union's budget and the audited accounts shall be given promptly to the University each year in accordance with the code of practice.

13.9. The financial year of the Union shall run from the 1st August to the 31st July. The organisation of the Union finances and systems of control shall be as laid down in the Finance Rules.

14. Operational Management

14.1. The Senior Managers of the Union are responsible for supporting the Union Executive Committee in the running of the Union. The Union shall have operational meetings that all report to the Senior Managers and President. The operational meetings shall have a membership of senior staff of the Union and at least one full-time Sabbatical Officer of the Union. Additional rules and remit are outlined in Operational Meeting Rules.

15. Sports Clubs and Societies

15.1. There shall be Clubs and Societies, the purpose of which shall be to develop sports, recreation, academia within schools and social integration in conjunction with the Union Officers. The Clubs and Societies shall also support the Union Officers in the promotion of diversity, culture and enterprise within the University of Surrey.

15.2. The affairs of the Clubs and Societies shall be conducted in accordance with the Groups Rules.

16. Affiliations to External Organisations

16.1. The Union Executive Committee shall determine all affiliations to external organisations, excepting affiliation to the National Union of Students which shall be determined by Referendum every two years.

16.2. Details of all affiliations to external organisations including the name of the organizations and the affiliation fee in each case shall be included in the Union's annual report which shall be available to students and University Governing Body.

16.3. In the event of a challenge to an existing affiliation to any external organisation, a petition signed by at least 200 Full Members of the Union must be submitted to the Union Chairperson. A referendum shall be held on the issue. The referendum shall be conducted in accordance with the Referendum Rules. A further referendum on the same affiliation cannot be called in the same academic year.

16.4. The Union shall not affiliate to any political party or religious organisations.

17. Companies

- 17.1. The Union shall have the power to establish Limited Companies. The directors of the companies shall be two Sabbatical Officers and a senior staff in the Union, all nominated by the Union Executive Committee.
- 17.2. The Company Secretary shall be a designated member of senior staff in the Union

18. Complaints

- 18.1. Complaints about an individual officer, the Union Executive Committee or any member of the Union shall be dealt with via the Discipline Procedure as laid out in the Rules of this Constitution.
- 18.2. Complaints about the Union in general shall be dealt with via the Complaints Procedure as laid out in the Rules of this Constitution.
- 18.3. Any complaint about a member of Union staff (non-student or student) shall be dealt with according to the Staff Protocol Rules.

19. Removal from Office

- 19.1. Any elected officer or representative of the Union can be removed from their position according to the Removal from Office Rules.
- 19.2. Any elected officer or representative of the Union can lose privileges of membership under the Complaints Rules, and thus would cease to hold Union office.

20. Freedom of information

- 20.1. At all meetings of the Union, minutes shall be taken which shall be read, approved, then circulated, with any necessary corrections, at the next appropriate and relevant meeting. Confirmed minutes shall be displayed on the Union website as soon as possible after confirmation. Copies shall be kept in the Union offices.
- 20.2. A copy of the Constitution, including any amendments, a copy of the annual report and any plan for the Union's activities, including the budget, shall be held in the Union offices.
- 20.3. All meetings of the Union shall be considered open to all unless stated otherwise within the terms of the Rules.

21. Amendments

- 21.1. The Union Executive Committee and Annual General Meeting shall be the bodies competent to amend the Constitution Rules and Appendices.
- 21.2. The Annual General Meeting is the only body able to amend the Core Constitution of the Union.
- 21.3. All amendments to the Core Constitution shall require the support of two-thirds of those present and entitled to a vote at Annual General Meeting or additional General Meetings.

21.4. All recommendations for amendments to the Constitution Rules shall require a simple majority in support of those present and entitled to vote at Student Assembly.

21.5. Any approved amendments to the Core Constitution must be presented to the Senate and Council of the University for approval before they come into effect.

21.6. Any approved amendments to the Rules must be presented to the University Senate for information.

21.7. The Constitution shall be reviewed on a regular basis in line with changing trends and legal constraints by the relevant Union committee.

22. Indemnity

22.1. Every Union Officer, appointee and member of staff of the Union shall be entitled to be indemnified out of the assets of the Union against all losses or liability which s/he may incur in or about the execution of his or her office or otherwise in relation thereto and no Officer, appointee or member of staff shall be liable for any loss, damage or misfortune which may happen to or be incurred by the Union in the execution of the duties of his or her office or in relation thereto; provided that nothing in this clause shall affect their liability for the consequences of any negligent or unlawful act on their part.

23. Code of Conduct

23.1. The Union Executive Committee shall draw up a member's code of conduct, which shall be approved and from time to time reviewed by the Student Assembly.

23.2. All members of the Union shall be required to conform to this code, particularly when on premises administered, or events organised by the Union.

23.3. The code of conduct may include sanctions up to and including the indefinite suspension of any or all of the privileges of membership.

24. Interpretation

24.1. In the event of a dispute as to the interpretation of any part of the Constitution or Rules, the ruling of the Union Chairperson shall be sought. If possible the Union Chairperson should consult with the relevant Union Committee.

24.2. If this ruling is challenged the decision of the Union Executive Committee shall be final.

25. Dissolution

25.1. In the event of the Union being dissolved, the assets shall be sold to first offset any outstanding liabilities of the Union. Any assets partly owned by the University will be returned and subsequent assets will be transferred to an organisation with similar aims and objectives.

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