

Bye-Law 8: Protecting Our Members

Fair Procedures for Addressing Member Conduct in the Students' Union

1. Purpose and Scope

This bye-law provides a clear, fair process for raising and resolving complaints about the conduct of individual members or groups within the Students' Union. It ensures that all parties are treated equitably and outlines which types of issues should be raised under this procedure, and which should be addressed through other channels such as staff or university complaints procedures, or the police for criminal matters. It also allows for Trustee Board involvement in cases of conflict of interest or officer employment status.

1.1 When to Use This Bye-Law

- 1.1.1 To complain about the conduct of another Students' Union member.
- 1.1.2 To complain about the behaviour of a group acting for or on behalf of the Union.

1.2 When Not to Use This Bye-Law

- 1.2.1 Political or representative issues (use Student Members Meetings).
- 1.2.2 Complaints about Union staff (use the Trustee Board).
- 1.2.3 Complaints about the University or if disadvantaged by non-membership (use the university's procedure).
- 1.2.4 Criminal matters (report to police).

2. Grounds for Complaint

2.1 Any member, including Trustees and associates, may complain against another member or group for:

- 2.1.1 Wilful/negligent damage or loss of Union property.
- 2.1.2 Conduct affecting others' enjoyment of Union events/facilities.
- 2.1.3 Breaching Union policy.
- 2.1.4 Bringing the Union into disrepute.
- 2.1.5 Offensive behaviour or comments towards Union staff/officers.

2.1.6 Improper disclosure of confidential information gained through elected status.

2.2 The President or another officer may also act on behalf of public or staff complainants at their discretion.

3. Procedure for Making a Complaint:

3.1 Submit the complaint in writing to an officer, preferably the relevant paid officer.

3.2 State which area under Section 2.3 has been breached.

3.3 If there is a case to answer, the complaint is passed to the Disciplinary Committee.

3.4 For complaints against formal groups, a committee member will represent the group.

3.5 The President may temporarily suspend the member or group pending investigation.

4. Disciplinary Committee Composition:

4.1 One officer (not the President or officer receiving the complaint, where possible).

4.2 Two Executive Committee members with no conflict of interest, or two society presidents for group complaints.

5. Disciplinary Process:

5.1 The Committee may first attempt informal resolution.

5.2 If unresolved, the charged party receives written notice of the charges, hearing details, and must provide any witnesses/affidavits.

5.3 Attendance at hearings is required; non-compliance may lead to disciplinary action in absence.

5.4 Hearings follow natural justice principles. Both sides may present and question evidence and be accompanied by a friend.

5.5 The Committee deliberates and decides by majority vote, possibly by secret ballot.

5.6 Verdict and sanctions are communicated in writing within 10 working days, including appeal instructions.

5.7 The Union may inform the University or relevant bodies about outcomes.

6. Possible Sanctions

6.1 Full or partial suspension from Union activities/membership for a set time.

6.2 Suspension of a group's right to represent the university in competitions.

6.3 Order to pay for damages caused.

6.4 Permanently revoke Union membership.

6.5 Refer the matter to the University or other bodies.

6.6 Any combination of the above.

7. Appeals

7.1 Members found guilty may appeal to the President, challenging the verdict or sanction.

7.2 Suspension/exclusion may remain during the appeal process.

7.3 Appeals can be made on grounds of procedural error, inappropriate findings, or disproportionate sanctions.

7.4 Appeal Procedure:

7.4.1 Appeal in writing within seven working days, stating the grounds for appeal.

7.4.2 The President forms an emergency appeals panel (three members, including the President, with no prior involvement).

7.4.3 An emergency meeting is held within 10 working days of the appeal's receipt.

7.4.4 The Disciplinary Committee Chair provides hearing minutes at least three working days before the appeal.

- 7.4.5 The Appeals Panel decides the outcome by secret ballot, and may confirm, reduce, or overturn the original sentence.
- 7.4.6 Outcome is communicated in writing within five working days of the appeal hearing.
- 7.4.7 Confidentiality and attendance rules mirror those of the original hearing.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 Bye-Law 8 provides a transparent, fair process for addressing member conduct within the Students' Union. It ensures complaints are handled with due process, respect for all parties, and a clear path for appeal, safeguarding both individual rights and the integrity of the Union community.