

Student Group Handbook

2022/23



**BIRKBECK
STUDENTS'
UNION**
HERE FOR YOU

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Forward

The purpose of this handbook is to provide an all-in-one resource document, providing all the necessary information an affiliated student group will need in order to successfully operate all aspects of a club or society throughout its life cycle.

Within, you will also find further information and signposting to additional resources pertaining to various policies, regulations, and functions that Birkbeck Students' Union are bound by, many of which by extension apply to all affiliated groups. Should you need clarification over any of the handbook's content, or have a question that has not been answered, then please do not hesitate to contact the Activities Team at su-activities@bbk.ac.uk.

An index is included at the end of this document which contains the links to all documentation referenced within the handbook. For example, the 'Student Group Proposal Form.'

Birkbeck Students' Union

What are we?

Birkbeck Students' Union is an autonomous, charitable organization which sits alongside Birkbeck, University of London with the continuous mission of providing independent support for its members, representing the best interests of the student body, and facilitating activity and opportunity for the community.

It is a democratically led membership organisation, whereby elected students form a team each year to lead the organization and shape its goals and objectives as informed by the student body. The Students' Union also employs a staff team which delivers professional support, administration, and expertise for the services and activity it organises. Democracy is at the heart of a students' union's ethos, and so this is seen right through the organisation – from the part-time paid positions to the student committees of each affiliated club and society.

The Students' Union is funded by way of an annual 'block' grant, which is entirely awarded by the University. It also generates additional funds through limited trading activity such as media sales, clothing and Totum Card commission. Student groups are funded in part by monies allocated from within the Students' Union annual budget, as well as income generated through membership sales.

More information about the Students' Union can be found here www.birkbeckunion.org/your-union

Why do we matter?

The Students' Union is the parent body for all recognised clubs and societies, and its rules and regulations must be observed. As a charity, the Students' Union is required by law to ensure the proper governance and oversight of all charitable work, including events and any money flowing in or being spent.

The Trustees of the Students' Union is the

corporate body responsible for ensuring this happens. As a result, the Board of Trustees delegates authority and power to professional staff to manage the day-to-day administration of Clubs and Societies – this is the Activities Team. We are here to support you in the operation of your student group, and to make sure that all the details are finely tuned throughout the year.

Start Something

Why affiliate?

Becoming an official, affiliated student group comes with several advantages.

- Maximising the student experience
- Ability to book Students' Union/University facilities free of charge
- Staff support
- Potential storage capabilities
- Promotion via official channels
- Financial support
- Opportunities to apply for development grants

The Students' Union has a statutory duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that all risks arising from the Students' Union activities are eliminated or controlled. The management of safety issues is a specified duty of staff, including those at a most senior level.

The Students' Union has public liability insurance

cover for all student groups and their activity. This gives your Society the necessary protection that will cover the majority of your activities.

By affiliating with us, we expect you to comply with the Students' Union and College's rules and guidelines that are expected of you. The Students' Union also expects every individual member of staff and all student members to show high regard for Health, Safety and Welfare and to communicate these standards to colleagues and other persons.

How can I start?

If you have an idea for a new student group for the Birkbeck community, then there is a straightforward process you can follow to make that idea a reality.

See the next page for a detailed step-by-step guide on the process.

- Ensure that the proposed group is consistent with all values, policies, and governance of Birkbeck Students' Union
- Recruit a minimum of 5 students/staff who are also interested in the proposed group
- Complete and return the 'New Society Proposal Form'
- Complete and return a 'Register of Interest'
- With the support of the Activities Team, run a taster event to confirm the register of interest and the quoted interest from the population.

If the aforementioned tasks are completed to a satisfactory standard, then ratification of your proposed student group should follow.

Student Group Lifecycle

It is of paramount importance that once a student group has been established, it remains sustainable. This applies both fiscally, and operationally – being able to remain stable and provide consistent activity for its members from year to year, graduation to graduation. The

Students' Union implements a 'Student Group Lifecycle' to ensure this happens, and it is an obligation that all student groups follow the cycle in synchronization.

February – March: Committee Elections

- This is where all affiliated student groups hold their annual elections to determine who will lead the group for the following year. This is one of two crucial elements to the cycle, as without student leadership, the group can become dormant, and eventually be dissolved

March – April: Committee Handover

- This is the established period in which responsibility for the student group passes from the outgoing committee to the new incumbent. It is also the period in which the majority of committee training takes place, such as Website Administration and Event Planning

May: Students' Union Awards

- We celebrate the achievements of the

community, our groups, and their members!

June – August: Rest and Recharge

- A time to relax, and then plan the student groups activity for the year. Important tasks such as Welcome Fayre activity planning and budget planning take place over these months, in collaboration with the Activities Team.

September – October: Welcome

- The second of the two most crucial elements take place within this period, recruitment. This is where student groups need to maximise their output and activity, and attract additional members to ensure a healthy group size and secure its future

Leading a Group

Communication

We massively encourage you to use official lines of communication with your members where possible. This ensures that that activity remains accountable and transparent, and should anything untoward occur, all parties are safe in the knowledge that any record of communication/interaction is accessible.

Additionally, using your official email function allows you to cut through the flurry of notifications in your members' day-to-day lives, and maximise your impact. You can use your email function via the website, please see the [Website Administration Manual](#) to see a step-by-guide on how to do so!

Promotion

You can also take advantage of our official Birkbeck Students' Union social media platforms to aid in the promotion of your group's events and

recruitment. Simply tag us (@BirkbeckUnion) with what you have in store, and we will post it on our story or Retweet it!

To help you, we will also be sharing all events that are added on the Website on our What's on this Week which will be shared on our stories every Monday (you need to ensure your event is added by the Friday the week before).

Messaging_platforms

We do advise against using unmoderated forms of communication such as popular instant messaging platforms, and you use them at your own risk. The Students' Union does not recognise any unofficial forms of communication, however, should you do so, please include a disclaimer that the platform is unmoderated, and engagement is optional. Member experience must not be negatively impacted through lack of engagement with unofficial channels.

Branding

You are part of Birkbeck Students' Union and as such, should be using our branding.

You can find our Brand guidelines as well as download our logos on our website on the Resources page.

Room Booking

Through the Students' Union, you are able to book and use hundreds of spaces on Birkbeck premises free of charge. This includes classrooms, IT suites, lecture theatres and cinema spaces, in a number of different configurations and times of day. You can do this by submitting a Room Request via our official Room Booking form, found here on the website. Activity or events within these spaces must abide by both Students' Union and Birkbeck University policy.

Events

Events are what makes a student group tick, so it is important the group delivers consistent and engaging activity for all sections of their membership. This can be done either on campus via our Room Booking service, or off-campus at a venue of your choice.

There are funds available each year from the group budget to execute activity, either from your membership or reserve account. Communicating these events to your membership is crucial, and can be done via; official email channels, central promotion, and by creating an 'Event' on the website.

Please see the Website Administration Manual to see a step-by-step guide on how to do so.

Finance

The Students' Union is a registered charity and is committed to showing value for money from its activities and services to its members. All expenditure through Clubs and Societies affiliated with the Students' Union is heavily monitored by Birkbeck, University of London and the Students' Union.

The Students' Union receives a modest grant by the College, which it can allocate and award to individual Clubs and Societies. Impact measurements can demonstrate how efficient our scarce resources are being used and therefore it is vital for the Students' Union to show real value for money and for the Students' Union's ability to request for increases in its funding from the College to support more student activities.

Each year a student group, in collaboration with the Activities Team, will agree upon a budget forecast for the year. This budget includes both the Membership Account, and the Reserve

Account. Please see below for further explanation of the budget breakdown.

Membership Account

- Your membership account is your general P/L account for the year. In this, you will receive your income generated through membership sales, any sponsorship funding, and any funding agreed upon from the Students' Union. This will also be where the majority of your expenditure will be taken from, including all restricted spending such as venues, officials and so forth.

Reserve Account

- This account is less restricted; however, it also serves as a rainy-day fund for your group. Particularly important for our clubs, any overspend on the year will be taken from your Reserve Account to promote healthy financial planning and sustainability within the club. Conversely, 50% of any underspend from your membership account each year will be retained by the group and transferred into your reserve account.

To be eligible for Students' Union funding, you MUST engage with the budget process, and have a signed off and agreed upon forecast by the 31st of August each year.

All detailed information on student group finances can be found on the website here, along with a live document whereby committee members can track their budgets in real time.

Elections

Overview

Democracy is at the heart of almost all decision making at the Students' Union, and this is reflected in the operation of our student groups also. Each year, as per the Student Group Lifecycle, elections are held across all groups to decide on who will take on the committee roles for the year ahead. These committee roles are vitally important in the health and sustainability of groups, and in bringing value and a positive experience for members, as they are effectively responsible for the direction and activity of said group.

Committee structures and the roles available may vary depending on the group in question, but as a minimum all groups must have a Chair and a Treasurer, and with at least 3 of the committee being made up of current Birkbeck students. Associate and Affiliate members may be elected to committee positions, as long as the aforementioned quota is not affected.

Elections are run centrally each Spring alongside our Students' Union Officer Elections. The Students' Union operates the 'Single Transferable Vote' system.

Committee Roles

Chair

The Chair is the leader of the group, who coordinates and oversees all the society's activity. The Chair will need to provide support, advice and guidance to the other committee members throughout the academic year.

Probably the most challenging role on the committee, you'll need experience of what the society does, and a strong belief in the aims of the society.

Key Responsibilities:

- Attend Committee Training and Activities
General Meetings
- Represent the Student Group in an official capacity
- Chairing student group meetings and ensure balance is maintained across the committee

during decision making processes

- Delegation – you shouldn't do everything yourself!
- Understanding the broader picture, always keeping the aims of the society in mind
- Main liaison between the group and the Activities Team

Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair is the backbone of the organisation of any student group and ensures that things run smoothly. As both an independent role and in support of the Chair, the Vice-Chair plays an important part of ensuring the experience of the members is consistent and positive. Ensuring documentation is kept and recorded properly, corresponding with members, and booking rooms are just a handful of tasks entrusted in the role.

Key Responsibilities:

- Attend Committee Training and Activities
General Meetings
- Book rooms and venues for group use

- Keep good and proper membership records and help enforce membership rules
- Administer group meetings, including minutes and agendas where possible
- Main point of contact for members via email/social media (if a Media Officer is not in role)

Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for the health and good planning of student group finances. They set budgets, manage finances and membership sales, and ensure proper fiscal planning for any and all student group activity.

Key Responsibilities:

- Attend Committee Training
- Learn and understand the Students' Union financial system
- Responsible for any grant/development funding applications
- In partnership with the Activities Manager, set and agree an annual membership budget
- Keep track of all income/expenditure

- Key liaison with the Activities Team for all financial matters

Fixtures Captain (Club Only)

The Fixtures Captain is very similar to the role of Vice-Chair, but is a role reserved solely for Clubs due to their sporting nature. Responsibilities therefore are shared; however, the Fixtures Captain is a bespoke club role which sees the incumbent manage the activities of competitive teams in their training and in competition.

Key Responsibilities:

- Attend Committee Training
- Book non-sporting rooms and venues for group use
- Responsible for the conduct of teams in competition
- Responsible for ensuring fixtures are fulfilled
- Ensure training and fixture information is effectively communicated to all members

Index & Essential Reading

Essential Reading

Data Protection

All users of personal information, including students involved in organising clubs and societies, are obliged to comply with the Data Protection Act.

Student societies are themselves responsible for the protection of any data that they process outside the control and responsibility of the University, and for ensuring that the data protection principles are upheld.

When personal information is collected, societies must declare clearly who is collecting the information, the purposes for which it is being collected, and who the data will be disclosed to. Without the written permission of society members, society organisers should not pass on names, addresses or email addresses of their members to any outside organisation. Societies must also be aware of the restrictions the Act places on direct marketing.

The Students' Union has a data sharing agreement with the College. The Students' Union only has information regarding current students and their age, primary contact email, and relevant school or department.

Students have a right to opt-out of this through their MyBirkbeck Profile, so those who have not opted-out of Students' Union membership will only receive email communications from the Students' Union. However, we currently only update our system once a term so if one of your members have opt-ed out of Students' Union membership, they should choose to opt-in. Students with a Students' Union Account can upload a photo and amend details on their account, to their satisfaction. The information used is only for Student Election and communications purposes only.

Freedom of Speech

Recent changes to the ways universities operate in the United Kingdom means that the Students' Union will have to request more detailed

information to ensure that the free rooms provided to your Club or Society is being used appropriately. This may simply mean to write a summary of what the planned event is about and the topic that the External Speaker intends to cover.

Under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 relevant higher education bodies, such as Birkbeck, University of London, must have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. This is known as the Prevent Duty. Whilst the Students' Union has no legal obligation and has policy to comply with the College's Prevent Duty, the College does and in addition, by being a student at Birkbeck, University of London you are agreeing to certain rules and policies on Student Representation and Conduct.

As a student-led club or society, affiliated under the Students' Union, please review separate the Students' Union External Speaker's Protocol. The External Speaker Protocol is designed to ensure that students are empowered to get the most of their University experience, whilst keeping in line

with legislation and policies that the Students' Union are responsible for upholding.

The safety and wellbeing of our members is paramount, and so we will always work with event organisers to balance safe-guarding considerations with our commitment to our members' freedom to express their views.

The following reading is highly recommended, and include some of the most relevant Government legislation and Students' Union and College policies to the procedure:

- The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 S43
- Public Order Act 1986
- Education Reform Act 1988 – Academic Freedom
- Birkbeck, UoL Free Speech Policy & Procedure 2016
- Discrimination Law – Religion & Belief
- Terrorism Act 2000
- Equality Act 2010 S10
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Birkbeck Students' Union Health and Safety Policy

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020 7631 6335
- Oren Flynn - Activities Manager
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- Salomé Doré - Communications Manager
s.dore@bbk.ac.uk
- Yousuf Joondan - Chief Operating Officer
y.joondan@bbk.ac.uk

Useful Forms & Documents

- [Website Administration Manual](#)
- [Room Booking Request Form](#)
- [Event Proposal Form](#)
- [Activities Stall Booking Request Form](#)
- [New Student Group Proposal Form](#)
- [Student Group Budget Tracker](#)



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