

## **Socials Policy & Procedure**

**Document Date:** February 2020

### **1. Overview**

- 1.1 This policy sets out Royal Holloway Students' Union (RHSU) commitment to ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all members in relation to student-led socials and particularly the consumption of alcohol.
- 1.2 It applies to all sports clubs, societies, media outlets and collectives.
- 1.3 It covers the principles under which we would expect socials to be organised to ensure both the enjoyment and protection of all members that attend and outlines the consequences of getting it wrong.
- 1.4 It also outlines the ways in which RHSU can support the activities you wish to put on and guides you through the administration procedure in relation to socials that you organise.

### **2. Context**

- 2.1 RHSU is a student focussed organisation with a mission to make student life better at Royal Holloway. Being part of a student group or collective is a fantastic opportunity to network with people that have similar interests as you. While every student group and collective will have a unique core purpose, there is a similarity in which all these groups operate in terms of organising social activities, which play an important role in team building activity and enjoying social time with peers.
- 2.2 A social is defined as an informal gathering and includes events and activities that have the purpose of bringing members together to socialise outside the purpose of the group or collective's core purpose.
- 2.3 For the avoidance of doubt initiations are strictly banned. An initiation is defined as an event in which members of a group are expected to perform a task or tasks as a means to gain credibility, status or entry to the group. This may be achieved by peer pressure and coercion and may compromise a person's inherent dignity by forcing or requiring an individual to partake in activities such as drinking alcohol, eating food, nudity and any other behaviour that may be deemed to be humiliating.

### 3. Key Principles

3.1 There are a number of key principles which inform the outlook RHSU takes towards socials.

i. Values

RHSU's organisational values are at the heart of everything we do and we would expect to see two specific values reflected in the activities and socials that you run.

- Inclusive – This means ensuring every member feels comfortable, safe and respected in the environment of the social. Members should have the ability to engage with your activity despite any differences. There should be no barrier to entry, whether that be alcoholic consumption, cultural nuances, religion, disability, social-economic background etc.
- Student Focused – Everything we do is for students. Therefore, intrinsically, our student groups and collectives should put the needs and wants of their members at the heart of their activity. When planning socials and events, think about the make-up of your members and listen to their feedback.

ii. Alignment with National Governing Organisations Policies

There are a number of national governing organisations (NGOs) which various student groups must affiliate to in order to enable their activity. British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) is one example of an NGO to which many of our sports clubs affiliate. Student groups should be mindful that NGOs have their own regulations and policies which often supersede RHSU's policies and you should therefore familiarise yourselves with these policies. For example, BUCS takes a very strong stance on initiations and anti-social behaviour and "condemns any behaviour that damages students' health and wellbeing or adversely affects the student sporting experience".

iii. RHSU's responsible drinking commitment

As a responsible organisation, RHSU partners with the University to be an accredited alcohol impact institution with the National Union of Students (NUS). This means that we are working hard every year to promote responsible behaviour on campus, improve the health and wellbeing of students, and create a more inclusive environment for our students.

As part of this, our venues (SU, Medicine, Tommy's and the Packhorse) are committed to encouraging responsible alcohol consumption by students and will take action to stop any drinking behaviour not deemed to be inclusive and safe.

As an organisation we are clear that the following should be adhered to for all socials.

- Activities should not be forced, exclusive or alcohol dependant.
- Focus will not be placed on ritual humiliation, drunkenness or peer pressure.
- Participation is not a prerequisite for selection and inclusions within a group.
- Members should be able to opt out of any activity without fear or pressure, reprisal or any form of discrimination.

## **4. RHSU Commitment**

4.1 There are a number of ways in which we can aid the success of your social. We have a professional staff team which facilitates hundreds of events from groups and collectives across the year. We can offer:

- i. Support – We will make you feel valued, with proactive and consistent communication to answer your queries or attend to your specific needs. We want to understand your group/collective, including these nuances which make you unique, this will help us to help you! Of course, we don't want to be intrusive but there are some things we need to know.
- ii. Protection – We know not everything will go to plan and issues may arise in rare occasions, but we have your back! Don't be afraid to talk to us, positive or negative, you can trust us and we will do our best to help. We can also support you by dealing with external stakeholders and point you in the right direction when required.
- iii. Knowledge – We can provide you with expertise, we've been around the block a few times, so know a thing or two. However, we don't know everything and love hearing new ideas, so don't be afraid to ask questions.
- iv. Facilities – We have the tools to facilitate your activity, whether that be money, space or just having time to catch-up. We can help make your event successful and provide advice and ideas you may not have previously thought of.
- v. Training – We will upskill and inform you on various procedures and avenues via regular training, to ensure you know who to contact or where to go. It also means that after organising a couple of socials you should know the process inside out! Student Group training is an example of a time where we will teach you the processes with particular focus on the event proposals and risk assessments.

## **5. Group/Collective Commitment**

5.1 In order to ensure a safe, inclusive and enjoyable event we ask for the following commitment from groups and collectives:

- i. Engage – We want you to engage with us in proactive conversation. Talk to us before the event to give us the relevant details. We want this to be a partnership.
- ii. Responsibility – As a committee of a group and collective, you have a duty of care to ensure your members feel safe in your space and included in what you are doing. No one wants to be on the outside looking in, so make sure you don't allow this to happen.
- iii. Inclusivity – We want to make sure that you step back from the event and see if it is available for all members. Obviously this does not mean running exhaustive events for every member. But be aware of the members you have and ensure they are widely accessible. This will help member recruitment, group development and cultural understandings. A simple way of doing this at socials and at bigger events such as pub crawls, is providing a non-alcoholic alternative for your members.

- iv. Protected – As a committee, you have a responsibility to ensure the group is running in accordance with our processes and governance and that any risks are considered and mitigated. This includes filling out event proposals and risk assessments.

## **6. Process**

6.1 For us to be able to support you in the ways mentioned, we need to be able to understand what your group is planning to organise. We will then be able to inform you of the next steps and make your event the best it can possibly be. The following steps should help you through the year:

- i. At the beginning of the year we ask groups to fill out a General Risk Assessment (GRA), if you are planning on having small socials every week then it can be put in the GRA, rather than you having to fill out a form every week for the same thing.
- ii. If you are looking to run a social or event not mentioned in the GRA then you should fill out the short form located on Freshdesk under the socials solution article.
- iii. A member of Student Opportunities staff will reply to you to let you know any next steps or support that we can offer.
- iv. Risk Assessments will only be required for events that have food, guest speakers, or a performance.
- v. Every group runs a social account which they can use to purchase or claim back expenses on a variety of things to take your social to the next level. This includes pizza, decorations and alcohol. Be aware that claiming alcoholic purchases back will be at the discretion of RHSU staff. When purchasing alcoholic beverages you should also be purchasing non-alcoholic options for members.

6.2 This is our internal Students' Union process, we are also subject to BUCS procedures. BUCS have a process where students are able to report a problem initiation on their website: <https://www.bucs.org.uk/report-an-initiation.html>. Students are able to anonymously report issues, which would then be communicated to their University. All other relevant information is on their website.

## **7. Contravention of policy**

7.1 In order to safeguard the wellbeing of individual members, as well as the success and sustainability of every student group, RHSU takes any breach of this policy very seriously.

7.2 If you are a member of a student group or collective, or not, and you have concerns that the conduct of the group is in breach of this policy, we would encourage you to report it under our Statutory Complaints Procedure (Bye-law K) of our constitution, available on our website.

7.2.1 For the avoidance of doubt, RHSU will also investigate anonymous complaints.

7.3 Where a potential breach is identified it could result in a member's disciplinary investigation under the provisions set out in RHSU's constitution (Bye-law L), which could have consequences for individual and group memberships. In certain circumstances the matter may be referred to the College and/or the relevant NGO

where action may be taken against the individual or student group against relevant regulations.

7.4 Under the terms and conditions of RHSU's Members' Disciplinary Procedure. The penalties for non-adherence to this policy could be, but are not limited to, the following outcomes:

- i. Removal of an individual from a team or competition
- ii. Removal of an individual or team from a competition
- iii. Suspension of the group or collective
- iv. Suspension of an individual from a group or collective
- v. Referral to the University for disciplinary proceedings
- vi. Criminal prosecution

7.5 If you have any questions or concerns about any element of this policy, please get in touch with the Student Opportunities team who will be able to help you. You can also drop us a ticket on Freshdesk at <https://rhsu.freshdesk.com/support/home>.