

RHSU Campaigning and Political Activity Policy	Department: Community Engagement
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1. Purpose of the policy

- 1.1. This policy sets out Royal Holloway Students' Union's (RHSU) approach to campaigning and political activity. RHSU recognises the expectations of their activity in regard to Charity law, whilst also ensuring that RHSU takes into consideration its aims and objectives.
- 1.2. RHSU also recognises that we support students to run their own communities which are set up around their own set of aims and objectives. These aims and objectives do not constitute views of RHSU but should always reflect requirements set by our code of practice and the Law.

2. Scope of the policy

- 2.1. The policy applies to all RHSU activities whether on or off campus, including student community activity.
- 2.2. The policy will provide a framework on how and when RHSU makes public statements in relation to its charitable objects.
- 2.3. This policy should be read in conjunction with the government's guidance on campaigning and political activity for charities.
- 2.4. Failure to comply with this policy may render an individual subject to disciplinary action as defined within the appropriate disciplinary process for their role in the organisation.
- 2.5. This policy will relate to all our activities and consider:
 - 2.5.1. Use of Charity resources and limitation of Ultra Vires.
 - 2.5.2. Legislation that we must abide, including but not limited to the Charities Act and Education Act.
 - 2.5.3. Wider policies of the Union and University and how compliance is managed.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1. The Board will have ultimate responsibility for the activity of the Union but will delegate day to day operational management and decision making to the CEO and Management team.
- 3.2. All employees have responsibility for applying this policy.
- 3.3. All Student Communities must follow this policy within their elected roles and activities.
- 3.4. Line managers should familiarise themselves with this policy and applying it consistently.

- 3.5. The Head of Community Engagement and Chief Executive Officer are responsible for reviewing this policy every two years or upon introduction of new legislation, whichever comes first.
- 3.6. All employees should familiarise themselves with this policy.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. This policy recognises the following definitions that will apply throughout:
- 4.1.1. Campaigning – awareness raising and efforts to educate or involve the members/public by mobilising their support on a particular issue, or to influence or change public attitudes. Campaigning activity also aims to ensure that existing laws are observed.
 - 4.1.2. Political Activity – political activity must only be undertaken by a charity in the context of supporting the delivery of its charitable purposes. It refers to activity by a charity which is aimed at securing, or opposing, any change in the law or in the policy or decision of central government, local authorities or other public bodies, whether in this country or abroad it included activity to preserve an existing piece of legislation, where a charity oppose it being repealed or amended.
- 4.2. Political activity may include some or all of:
- 4.2.1. Raising public support for such a change
 - 4.2.2. Seeking to influence political parties or independent candidates, decision makers, politicians or public servants on the charity's position in various ways in support of a desired change; and responding to consultation carried out by political parties.

5. RHSU Principles

RHSU is often approached to make public statements on local, national and international issues. The following provides broad principles and information about our response to issues that affect students as students, as well as wider crises and conflicts, and how we work with the university to provide advice and support for our student communities and RHSU staff.

- 5.1. RHSU can become involved in campaigning and in political activity which further or support our charitable purposes.
- 5.2. RHSU can, in support of its charitable purposes, undertake a range of political activities. However, these cannot be the only activities that the charity carries out.
- 5.3. RHSU may carry out political activity for a change in the law if it supports their own charitable purpose.
- 5.4. RHSU can campaign on issues related to the operations of the University, these will often be highlighted by activities such as Priority 8, results of our research and outcomes of exercises such as the National Student Survey (NSS).
- 5.5. RHSU can seek to influence central government, local authorities and other public bodies, providing it is in support of their charitable purposes.
- 5.6. RHSU may engage with a political party in ways that supports its own charitable purpose. In doing so, it must remain politically neutral and should consider working with other parties to help ensure public perceptions of neutrality.
- 5.7. RHSU can engage with individual politicians. In doing so, they must remain politically neutral and should consider working with other parties to help ensure public perception of neutrality.
- 5.8. RHSU must not give its support to any one political party.
- 5.9. RHSU can use its charitable funds for campaign activity but there are limits, RHSU will not use resources on:
 - 5.9.1. Activity that falls outside of its aims and objects.

- 5.9.2. Promoting or supporting campaigns on general interest, which do not affect members of the Students' Union.
- 5.9.3. Anything that is beyond our power, remit or legal ability (Ultra Vires).

6. Student Communities

- 6.1. Student communities can become involved in campaigning and in political activity which further or support their objectives outlined in the group's constitution.
- 6.2. Student community activities do not reflect the views or beliefs of RHSU, they can become involved in a range of political and campaigning activity as appropriate for their group.
- 6.3. If a student community engages in activity that breaks the law, they will be subject to our disciplinary process and may be reported to the University and Police as appropriate, the University may also be involved if appropriate.
- 6.4. Any activity undertaken by a student community can be reported to RHSU using the complaints procedure. This can be investigated against our Values, the [Members' Code of Conduct](#) and joint [Freedom of Speech Code of Practice](#).
- 6.5. Student Communities can become affiliated with other organisations that reflect their objectives, but these must be registered with RHSU.

7. Officers

- 7.1. Officers will lead on the Union's Priority 8 and should engage with activities that aim to bring about change on these issues identified by students annually.
- 7.2. Officers will maintain social media accounts related to their roles, these are professional accounts that should reflect the guidance outlined in this policy.
- 7.3. Officers and other elected students will have their own social media platforms, these are not representative of the view of RHSU. If any individual posts content that brings the Union image or reputation into disrepute or receives a complaint about their content, then the appropriate disciplinary process will be identified and followed.

8. Conflict and Crises

We fully recognise the impact global conflicts, geopolitical events and natural disasters have on our student communities and we will always give careful consideration to how we can support students affected.

It is not feasible for RHSU to comment at an organisational level on each crisis. Any statements regarding global crises or conflict will be issued in liaison with the university and within the context of supporting the safety and wellbeing of our students, student communities and our staff. Further information on the law governing charities making political and campaigning statements can be found on the [Charities Commission website](#).

We will provide support to our student led communities who may often campaign on causes that are important to them and their members, as outlined in their objectives (Constitution). RHSU believes in its role to build community, lead change and working with the university, create an environment where complex issues can be explored with respect and empathy, to safeguard the wellbeing of our student community.

9. Further reading

There are further guidance documents that are available that provide context to this policy.

[Charity Commission and Government guidance](#)

