Motion to introduce a revised Safe Space Policy

This Union Notes:

1. The Annual General Meeting of the 2014/15 academic year voted to adopt the original Safe Space policy, as presented by the then Co-President (Welfare & Diversity).
2. The original Safe Space motion stated that "we need a practical guide and policy to instruct best practice for clubs, societies and executive officers. The following is a draft proposal after much work. "
3. The original intention of the previous Co-President (Welfare & Diversity) was for this draft policy to be reviewed and updated by the succeeding Co-President (Welfare & Diversity), based on the usage, understanding and relevance of the policy across the 2015/16 academic year.
4. Due to changes to the Students' Union constitution, many aspects of the previous policy had become redundant or incorrect.

This Union Believes:

1. That a Safe Space policy, while not necessarily always easily applicable to all Students' Union activities, is important for students who hold protected characteristics to feel confident and comfortable when engaging in debates and activities.
2. That current thinking within the movement about safe spaces is emergent and still developing, and so it is appropriate to update and review this policy on a regular basis.

This Union Resolves:

1. To adopt the updated Safe Space policy.

Proposed: Jack Kilker – Co-President (Welfare & Diversity)

Seconded: Brianna Middleton Macpherson – Co-President (Societies & Media)

Alex Reilly – Co-President (Sports & Development)

Brianna Middleton Macpherson – Co-President (Societies & Media)

Laura Lewis – Co-President (Welfare & Diversity) Elect

Pippa Gentry – Co-President (Societies & Media) Elect

Students' Union Safe Space Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. As outlined in our Equal Opportunities Policy, the Students' Union, Royal Holloway, University of London (referred to as the Students' Union throughout the rest of this document) is an organisation that values inclusivity. As such we are committed to creating a positive environment in which all members and students are treated fairly, equally and with dignity and respect. Our core purpose is to represent all of our students and endeavour to ensure their time at university is as enjoyable and rewarding as possible.

1.2. To help achieve this, many Students' Unions have created their own Safe Space Policies inspired by the NUS. These policies apply to all of their events, spaces, activities and services.

1.3. This policy seeks to enable equal participation by creating a safe, tolerant and inclusive environment where all students are free from bullying, harassment, intimidation, aggressive, violent, oppressive and discriminatory behaviour.

1.4. The aims of this policy are to:

      1.4.1. Define a safe space, and who it affects (our members)

1.4.2.   Set out the Students' Union's commitment to safe spaces, and to guarantee members that concerns around safe spaces will be taken seriously

1.4.3.   Set out how and where the responsibility lies so that safe space concerns can be raised and resolved

1.4.4.   Provide guidance on how to run a Safe Space

2. What is a Safe Space?

2.1. Our Safe Space Policy means that every member should feel welcome to participate in empowering, non-judgemental and non-threatening discussions, activities, services and events. Members should be free from intimidation, harassment and the deliberate, or negligent, creation of unsafe or unwelcoming conditions.

2.2. All students should be free from prejudice or discrimination regardless of identifying with any of the protected characteristics established in the Equality Act 2010 (race, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, maternity and paternity, marital status and civil partnership, religion and belief) but also including mental or physical health and/or ability, HIV status, political beliefs and affiliation, socio-economic status or any other form of distinction.

2.3. Safe Space does not mean "no debate" - it means discussing issues so that individuals or groups don't feel threatened or unsafe. Upholding a safe space policy means that all students can have their say without intimidation. The Students' Union believes strongly in the right to free speech, but acknowledges that this shouldn't be to the detriment of the rights of other individuals and groups. Intention to incite hatred is never acceptable.

2.4. Having a Safe Space Policy suggests that there will be incidents where people do not feel safe. It is important to recognise that there will be limitations, and that the policy on its own is no guarantee to automatically creating a safe space. All members are covered by this policy, and it is therefore encouraged to be mindful of the barriers members might face

around raising issues, and that discrimination can occur whenever it is not consciously challenged.

3. **Responsibilities**

3.1. This policy is applicable to all Students' Union members participating in any group, event or forum associated or affiliated with the Students' Union, or a Students' Union representative group, both physical and online.

3.2. Every member of the Students' Union has a responsibility to challenge unacceptable conduct, whenever they feel safe, able, and informed enough to do so. Members should respond constructively whenever challenged.

3.3. All members of the Students' Union are accountable for their own language and behaviour. If behaviour is reported that is not in accordance with this policy, members may be asked to leave a physical space or online forum by the moderator or event organiser.

3.4. Students' Union elected representatives will receive specific training on the Students' Union Safe Space Policy at elected representative training. Representatives will sign this policy on behalf of their club, society or representative group, along with the Sabbatical Officers.

3.5. The event organiser is responsible for upholding the Safe Space policy at any event, and for informing speakers of the policy beforehand. If the event is a discussion or debate panel, the responsibility for maintaining a Safe Space lies with the event organiser and/or the chair of the discussion.

4. **Communication**

4.1 All Students' Union members are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy.

4.2 The Students' Union will highlight this policy to students and others through:
    4.2.1   Policy available on the Students' Union website
    4.2.2   Training and Information provided for all elected representatives
    4.2.3   An announcement at the start of each democratic meeting (including Councils and All Student Meetings) and debates or discussions

    4.2.4   Any other appropriate method

4.2 If an event organiser or moderator is seeking to introduce a space as safe, they might refer to the following as a suggested introduction to the implications of the Policy:

"Student's Union Royal Holloway has a Safe Space Policy. This means that every member should feel welcome to participate in an empowering, non-judgemental and non-threatening space. By being in this space, you are agreeing to abide by this policy.
If you feel that this Safe Space Policy has been breached, please bring this to the attention of the moderator/event organiser, who will treat it seriously and confidentially. A full copy of the policy is available on the Students' Union website (link)"

5. Content Warnings

5.1. Content warnings are considered good practice, but should only be used if the event organiser or moderator fully understand them. Contact one of the Sabbatical Officers, as appropriate, for more information about content warnings and how to use them effectively.

5.2. Online Moderators should encourage members to use content warnings before posting comments or links which contain potentially harmful terms or acts, such as references to abuse, prejudice or acts of violence (non-exhaustive list). An initial warning should be issued to any member failing to use content warnings after these have been sufficiently explained, in the event of a complaint being made.

6. In the event of a breach of Safe Space Policy

6.1. An individual seeking to raise an issue should initially seek to speak to the offender, if they feel comfortable and able to do so. If this is not the case, the complaint should be made to the online moderator or event organiser.

6.2. Upon receipt of a complaint of a breach of the Safe Space Policy, the online moderator or event organiser should issue an initial warning to the individual accused. If the behaviour persists, the online moderator or event

organiser may ask the individual to leave the physical space, or remove them from the online space.

6.3. Whenever an initial warning is issued by an online moderator or event organiser, the individual should be made aware that a second warning will result in them being asked to leave the space on either a temporary or permanent basis, as decided by the online moderator or organiser.

6.4. If the matter is still not resolved, or individuals wish to pursue it further they should raise it as a complaint, via email, with the Students' Union President, who can trigger the Members Disciplinary Process, in line with the Students' Union Constitution.

6.5. In the event of a warning issued against an individual, or of that individual being removed from an online or physical space, and the individual believes that this has been issued unfairly, they may have grounds for an appeal. They should, first and foremost, contact the Students' Union President, who can refer to the Students' Union Constitution and the Appeals Processes.

Appendix A: A Guide for Facilitating Safe Spaces

Language
Some instances of language can make others feel uncomfortable and create an intimidating space, due to having negative connotations for the individual or being of a discriminatory nature.
It's important that online moderators or event organisers give an initial warning, as an individual's use of language may not be with malicious intent. Members should be given the benefit of the doubt and be allowed to justify or readjust their language in order to ensure comfort and the ability to participate for all Members.

Running Events: External Speakers
Before the event
Any panel intended to hold a debate should have balanced representation across varying viewpoints, and be appropriately chaired.
Organisers should brief speakers regarding the Safe Space Policy
If a space is intended to be self-defining, this should be widely advertised before the event.

During the Event
The chair should mention the Safe Space Policy at the start of the event, and make it clear who will be responsible for receiving any complaints throughout the event.
The chair should explain "Content Warnings" (see point 5) if topics will refer to upsetting content.

Social Media
Moderation
Assign at least one online moderator from your student group committee. They will be responsible for monitoring comments, issuing warnings and seeking appropriate support from the Students' Union President.
Post a link to the Safe Space Policy in the description of the group, with a short explanation of how the Policy affects this online space, and how warnings will be issued.