



UEL Students' Union Student Staff Protocol

Approved 15th June 2017
Approved by: Board of Trustees
Review Date: 15th June 2018

Student Staff Protocol

Introduction

UEL Students' Union is a student led democratic organisation which exists to represent its members and provide them with services, support and opportunities for development to enable them to maximise and enhance their student experience.

It is crucial that the Union has a positive and harmonious working relationship between Union members, officers and staff to lead a successful and progressive organisation. The purpose of this protocol is to clarify the relationship between these stakeholders and should be read within the context of the Union's Memorandum of Articles of Association and Bye Laws.

Central to the resources of the Students' Union are the employed staff who undertake its day-to-day operations and implementation of Union policies. The nature of the staff/ student working relationship can be complex and this protocol is in place to provide broad principles to enable best working practice. There is an expectation that all Members, Officers, Trustees and staff are treated with respect and courtesy at all times.

This protocol is intended to complement, not contradict, other Union policies, in particular the Complaints Procedure, the Conflict of Interest Policy, the Grievance Procedure and the whistleblowing policy. Staff members, students and officers are advised to familiarise themselves with the above policies when deciding how an issue might be resolved most effectively.

The Chief Executive Officer should ensure that this protocol is issued to all officers, Trustees and staff.

Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to:

- Clarify some specific aspects of the relationships between the Union's members, staff, elected representatives and others involved in the governance, activities and services of the Union.
- Set out specific guidance and rules of conduct on the relationships between these stakeholders
- To provide procedures for concerns and complaints between stakeholders to be considered and hopefully resolved informally under this protocol without the need to resort to other more formal procedures.
- Provide guidance on the conduct, roles and responsibilities of Union Trustees, Staff, Elected Office Holders and Members

Definitions

In this Protocol, the following words and expressions have the following meaning:

University of East London Students' Union

UEL Students' Union or "Union" is a registered charity. Charity number 1150963

UEL Students Union Members:

Members are students of the University Of East London (UEL) and are who represented by UEL Students' Union. Any student has the option opting out of membership of the Union will not be

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disadvantaged in doing so other than by losing the right to participate in democratic events such as elections. This definition does not include Executive Officers.

Elected Office Holders; Executive Officers

Officers are elected by the members to provide political leadership and to represent the students of UEL throughout the structures of the Union and UEL. Executive officers are employed by the Union. Elected part time officers, NUS delegates, and presidents and committee members of societies are also considered to be office holders.

UEL Students' Union Board of Trustee Members

Trustees are the Executive Officers, student Trustees and the external Trustees who have overall responsibility in law for ensuring that the Union delivers its aims for the benefit of the members

Staff

Staff are individuals employed by the Union and work under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to ensure that the day to day running of the Union is informed and influenced by political and operational policy. This definition excludes Executive Officers.

Student Staff

Student Staff are students at the University of East London who are employed by the Union and work during their period of study, but whose primary purpose at the University is as a student. Permanent staff who have chosen to undertake a course to complement their work will not normally be regarded as student staff.

The distinction between "Staff" and "Student Staff" in this document exists to provide guidance on issues of conflicting priorities. In the event of confusion as to the status of an individual staff member, guidance from the Board of Trustees will be sought.

Political Policies

Are policies led by the executive officers, they are devised, debated and approved by the members through the democratic structures of the Union.

Operational Policies

Are policies led by staff to provide a framework, in accordance with the Strategic and departmental Plans and any legal compliance, for carrying out the day to day running of the Union.

Publicity

Where Union matters are openly discussed or shared such as:

- Union Meetings
- Executive Officer Meetings
- Student Council Meetings
- Societies' meetings and committee meetings
- Student Media Outlets
- In on-line forums, websites (including social media)
- External media

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- At any other meeting relating to the Union's affairs, save where confidentiality is provided for

Principles of this Protocol

The Union shall conduct itself in a fair and democratic manner. Staff should ensure that their actions do not interfere with the democratic processes of the Union.

The Trustees are legally responsible for ensuring that the Union is compliant with all relevant laws. That the political and operational policies of the Union are consistent with the advancement of education of students at UEL for the public benefit. All those acting on the behalf of the Union who are acting in representatives' roles should ensure their actions do not conflict with the law and the principle purpose of the Union as define in its article of association.

The work of staff (including Student Staff) is determined by the CEO and are managed and accountable to their relevant line manager via the organisational staff structure in accordance with the terms of their employment. All those having dealings with Staff should ensure their actions do not interfere with Staff employment or contractual rights.

Conduct, Roles and Responsibilities

UEL Students' Union expects there to be a close working relationship between officers and staff. Staff will be informed of the aims of the Executive Officers by the CEO and members of the Senior Management Team (SMT). This does not mean that Officers may not make minor requests for advice and support from Staff, especially where it may be impractical to consult with the CEO or the SMT first. Staff should respond positively to reasonable requests from Officers. However, Officers should not give direction to staff.

Rules of Conduct Staff

- Staff must not seek to influence the outcome of any democratic process of the Union
- Staff (including student staff) must not comment publicly on Union policy, or on the Union's business or affairs save in carrying out the duties of their roles.
- In accordance with their job descriptions, some Staff will provide guidance and advice to Elected Officers. In providing guidance for officers related to political policy, advice on processes, balanced options and similar policy which may be relevant should be given but must not include personal views and will remain neutral. Similarly, officers will be expected not to encourage staff to become involved in political policy.
- Staff must not comment publicly in relation to Elected Officers on their performance, or Students, either as individuals or collectively.
- Staff must disclose to the CEO a relationship with an Elected officer, fellow staff member or a staff member of the University of East London which may give rise to a conflict or perceived conflict of interest whilst carrying out their role.
- Staff must not criticise or make negative comments against individual staff members or officers publicly these should be treated with STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY at all times. Neither shall staff or elected officers communicate with any media concerning such matters.
- Staff are restricted from replying publicly to comments made about them publicly.

Rules of Conduct Student Staff

- Student Staff may not campaign on an issue or in an election whilst on duty for UEL Students' Union

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- Student Staff shall enjoy the full rights and privileges of membership, save for any restriction placed on that staff member whilst on duty.
- Student Staff may be members of Students' Union committees, but must declare an interest prior to any debate which might directly or indirectly affect their employment terms

Rules of Conduct Elected Officers/Representatives

- All elected officers are expected to work with Staff. In doing so they must not give instructions to Staff unless the matter has been discussed agreed with the staff members' manager. Normally it should be expected that the Manager would inform the staff member of the work required.
- Officers must not interfere with Staff members carrying out the duties of their employment and ensure that their actions/conduct do not amount to unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.
- Officers must not comment publicly on Staff performance, terms of their employment either individually or collectively.
- Officers working with Staff must keep discussions in meetings and papers confidential, unless otherwise agreed.
- Officers must not comment publicly about other Officers or their performance either as individuals or collectively save when speaking on a motion of no confidence or in accordance with authorised Union procedures.
- Officers must disclose to the CEO a relationship with a Staff member, a fellow officer or a staff member of the University of East London which may give rise to a conflict or perceived conflict of interest whilst carrying out their role.

Rules of Conduct All Students/Members

- As Staff are restricted from replying publicly to comments made about them publicly. Students must not comment publicly in relation to Staff about their terms of employment or performance, either as individuals or collectively.
- Students must not interfere with Staff members carrying out the duties of their employment and ensure that their actions/conduct do not amount to unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.
- Students must not comment publicly about the performance of officers as individuals except when speaking on a motion of no confidence or through authorised Union procedures.

Rules of Conduct Board of Trustee Members

- Board of Trustee members must not comment publicly on Staff or Officers terms of employment, responsibilities, performance or conduct. Except when it is a closed item of business at a Board of Trustees Meeting.
- Board of Trustee Members interacting with Staff carrying out their employment or contractual duties must ensure their actions/conduct do not amount to unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.

Failure to comply with Rules of Conduct in this Protocol

Any failure to comply with the Rules of Conduct in this Protocol may give rise to action being taken against the individuals concerned under the relevant disciplinary or other procedures, in or pursuant to the Union's Articles of Association or Byelaws, or under their contracts of employment or contracts for services.

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Protocol procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints informally

The informal procedures set out below are designed to facilitate informal resolution of concerns and complaints relating specifically to:

- Concerns and complaints arising from relationships between Staff, Elected Officers, members and Board of Trustees Members.
- Concerns and complaints relating to consultants and partners of the Union.

Everyone is encouraged to use the processes laid out in this protocol in the first instance. However, Staff are reminded that the grievance, complaints or other procedures under their contracts of employment or contracts for services also contain provisions for dealing with concerns/complaints (both informally and formally), and they may wish to follow these procedures, if more appropriate in the circumstances. Elected Representatives and Students are also reminded that the Union's Complaints Procedure also contains provisions for dealing with concerns/complaints (both informally and formally) and they may wish to follow these procedures.

Staff members concerns or complaints about Elected Officers, Members or Board of Trustee Members

Any Staff member wishing to raise a concern or make a complaint in relation to Elected Officer, Student or Board of Trustee Member, as individuals or collectively, should do so with the Chief Executive of the Union. The Chief Executive will take such action as they considered appropriate in relation to the concern or complaint. This may involve seeking a resolution of the matter, including, for example, through mediation, without recourse to formal procedures. Staff are, however, reminded that the nature of the matter may be such that it may fall to be dealt with under other the Union procedures.

If the Staff member is dissatisfied with the outcome of this Protocol Procedure or the lack of progress in achieving an outcome, and wishes to take the matter further, they should follow the relevant grievance, complaints or other procedures under their contracts of employment or contracts for services.

Elected Officers, and Members concerns or complaints about Staff

Any Elected Officer or member who wishes to raise a concern or make a complaint in relation to Staff as individuals or collectively, should do so with the President of the Union. The President should immediately refer the matter to the CEO who will take such action as they deem appropriate in relation to the concern or the complaint. This may involve seeking a resolution of the matter, including, for example, through mediation, without recourse to formal procedures. If the concern or complaint is in relation to the Chief Executive, the President may consult with the Chair of the Union's Board of Trustees on how the matter should be properly be dealt with.

If the Officer or Student is dissatisfied with the outcome of this Protocol Procedure or the lack of progress in achieving an outcome, and wishes to take the matter further, the Union's Complaints Procedure should be followed. Officers and Members are reminded that, in accordance with such Complaints Procedure, the matter may fall to be dealt with under the relevant disciplinary or other procedures under Staff contracts of employment or contracts for services.

Concerns and complaints about consultants and partners of the Union

Elected Officers, members and staff wishing to raise a concern or make a complaint in relation to a consultant or partner of the Union involved in the activities or services of the Union must raise it with the CEO. They shall take such action as they deem appropriate in relation to the concern or the complaint.

If the Elected Officer or Member who raised the concern or complaint are dissatisfied with the outcome of this Protocol Procedure or lack of progress in achieving an outcome and they wish to take the matter further they should follow the Union's complaints procedure. Staff may follow the relevant grievance, complaints or other procedure under their contracts of employment.

Exceptions

Concerns or complaints relating to elections must be dealt with under the Elections Bye-Laws

Nothing in the Protocol shall prevent or preclude any action being taken in relation to breaches of legal compliance. For avoidance of doubt any action taken in accordance with this Protocol will not prevent any further action being taken should the Union be legally complied to do so.

Interpretation

If clarification or interpretation of this Protocol is required it should be sort from the CEO. If there are any doubts about the interpretation further clarification should be sort from the Board of Trustees whose decision will be final.

Review of this Protocol

This Protocol should be reviewed as necessary but at least once in each academic year.

Approval Date

This Protocol has been approved by:

Board of Trustees – Date