



## **CODE OF PRACTICE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Bucks Students' Union (BSU) is the independent, representative body of students at Bucks New University and is so recognised within the College's Articles of Government. As such BSU is the designated students' union at Bucks New University as defined under clause 20 of the 1994 Education Act (part 2).

It is the purpose of this "Code of Practice" to demonstrate that BSU operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances. In particular it will set out how the requirements of the above Act are carried into effect, detailing the arrangements made to secure observance of the Act.

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF BSU**

The aims and objectives of BSU are

- To promote the welfare, academic and social life of the members of the Union.
- To act as the channel of communication between the Union's membership, the College and other bodies.
- To encourage student societies, sports and social activities.

These objects shall be pursued without regard to sex, race, religion, creed, sexual orientation, age, disability or anti-body status, except that positive action may be taken to aid any disadvantaged section of society. Further, BSU shall not affiliate to any political or religious organisation.

### **PRACTICES OF BCSU**

1. BSU has a written constitution which was approved by the Governing Body of Bucks New University, the University Council.
  - 1.1. Any changes to the constitution must be ratified by the University Council.
  - 1.2. The constitution sets out the process for approving amendments. Amendments to the main body of the constitution must in the first place be approved by a two-thirds majority of those voting at a Union Council Meeting. Amendments to the schedules of the constitution must first be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of BSU's Executive Committee. Any such amendments must subsequently be submitted to the University Council for ratification.

- 1.3. The University Council will formally review BSU's constitution every five years with the first such formal review to take place in 1999.
  - 1.4. The constitution and schedules shall be available for view at the Union's offices by any member at the Union's during normal opening hours.
2. BSU's constitution entitles all full members of the Union to stand for election to Union offices and to vote in elections to such offices. The rules governing elections to Union offices are set out in a schedule to the constitution.
  - 2.1. Union elections are overseen by the Returning Officer, who shall be the Union General Manager (the Union's senior permanent employee), subject to direction from the Executive Committee.
  - 2.2. All votes are cast via secret ballot.
  - 2.3. Members of the Union who have a complaint on the conduct of the election shall in the first place put their complaint in writing to the Returning Officer within five working days of the date of the election.
  - 2.4. Ultimately, members of the Union who have a complaint about the fairness or propriety of Union elections rules or regulations, or about the conduct of an election have the right to complain as outlines in section 9 below.
  - 2.5. No member may hold sabbatical office for more than two years in total.
3. The schedules to the constitution contain regulations to ensure proper conduct of the Union's financial affairs.
  - 3.1. A budget estimate shall be submitted to the University Council by the end of May each year.
  - 3.2. Audited accounts shall be presented to the University Council by the end of November each year.
  - 3.3. An interim financial statement shall be presented to the Union Council Meeting and the University Council once a term.
  - 3.4. The Union's financial practices, procedures and regulations shall be incorporated into a Financial Procedures Manual and approved by the College.
  - 3.5. BSU shall be subject to examination by Auditors appointed by the College as and when required by the College.
  - 3.6. The procedures through which funds are allocated to clubs and societies shall be documented and available for view at the Union's offices by any member at the Union's during normal opening hours.
4. BSU may affiliate to external organisations which assist it in providing services, providing that such affiliation is not outside the Union's purposes.
  - 4.1. The decision of the Union's Executive Committee to affiliate to any external organisation shall be notified in writing to the next Union

Council Meeting. This notice will include details of any subscription or similar fee paid or proposed to be paid, and of any donation made or proposed to be made and shall be made available to the University Council.

- 4.2. At intervals of not more than one year and not less than ten months the continued affiliation to any external organisation may be challenged by any two members upon submission of a motion to a Union Council Meeting or by 250 members upon signing a petition calling for an Emergency Union Council Meeting to discuss continued affiliation.
  - 4.3. Any vote on continued affiliation to an external body at either an Ordinary or Emergency Union Council Meeting shall be via a secret ballot.
  - 4.4. Details of all external bodies to which the Union is affiliated along with details of any subscription or donation made, or proposed to be made, shall be incorporated into a report appended to the Union's annually audited accounts.
5. BSU derives its charitable status from Bucks New University and is thus governed by laws relating to educational charities. In particular:
- 5.1. BSU shall not expend funds for activities outside its constitutional purposes.
  - 5.2. BSU shall not make donations to any external organisation except where a specific collection has been taken up for that purpose, the collection accounted for separately, all those making a donation are aware of the destination of their donation, and all reasonable costs associated with collecting the donation are charged against the account (e.g. Rag donations). Notice of any such donations shall be published in accordance with section 4 above.
6. All registered students of Bucks New University are automatically members of BSU. Any Bucks New University student has the right to opt-out of membership of BSU. The procedures for exercising that right are as follows.
- 6.1. The right to opt-out of membership of BSU is available to each student for a period of three weeks after enrolment in any academic year.
  - 6.2. Any student wishing to declare his or her non-membership may do so only during that period, using the appropriate forms. This declaration remains in effect until the end of that academic session.
  - 6.3. Appropriate forms are available for this purpose from the Admissions Office, Student Services, and the Students' Union.
  - 6.4. A list of non-members will be maintained by the President of BSU and by the Head of Student Services of Bucks New University
7. Non-members have the following rights of access to services and activities.

- 7.1. Access to all trading services, facilities and events provided the appropriate fee or charge for the service has been paid, which shall not be higher than that charged to members of BSU.
  - 7.2. Ability to become a member of any Union affiliated club or society, provided the appropriate membership fee has been paid, which shall not be higher than that charged to members of BSU, however restrictions as to elected positions apply (see section 9).
  - 7.3. Access to advice provided by the Union and its Officers in relation to welfare and academic matters.
  - 7.4. Equal access with members to casual employment within Union operated services and facilities.
8. Non-members may not participate in the democratic processes of the Union as outlined below nor may they be involved in any position where they would be in a decision making role involving the Union's funds, policies, procedures, or services.
- 8.1. Non-members may not hold elective office in BSU as a sabbatical officer or non-Executive Committee member or stand for election as a delegate to NUS national conference or similar. Non-members may not nominate candidates for such elections.
  - 8.2. Non-members are not eligible to vote in elections for Union officers or delegates to NUS national conference or similar.
  - 8.3. Non-members may not speak or vote in Union Council Meeting or propose motions to those meetings.
  - 8.4. Non-members may not serve as an officer of any Union affiliated club or society.
  - 8.5. Non-members may not vote in any election or meeting of any Union club or society.
  - 8.6. Non-members may not serve as Union nominated representatives on committees which are part of the governance structure of Bucks New University.
9. Students or groups of students have the right to complain if they are dissatisfied in their dealings with the Union or if they have been unfairly disadvantaged by reason of having exercised their right not to be a member of the Union.
- All complainants should, in the first instance approach the President of BSU, or if the complaint relates to the conduct of the President, the Vice President Education & Welfare, who will advise on the procedure to follow.
  - If the complaint relates to the actions or conduct of an individual officer of BSU the complaint will in the first instance be dealt with by the Union's internal disciplinary procedures. Copies of this are available from the Students' Union Offices.

- If the complainant relates to the actions or conduct of member of BSU staff the President will raise the matter with the appropriate line manager.
- If the complainant relates to the actions, procedures, policies of the Union as an organisation the following complaints procedure will be followed.

9.1. STAGE 1

9.1.1. The President (Vice President Education & Welfare) will discuss the complaint with the complainant and appropriate parties in order to see whether conciliation is possible without further reference. If it is not the complaint shall be referred to the Executive Committee. The complainant must put their complaint in writing to the President who will convene an Executive Committee meeting within 7 days to hear the complaint. The complainant will have the opportunity to put their case in person to the Executive Committee who will give their response in writing within 3 working days.

9.2. STAGE 2

9.2.1. If the complainant(s) are dissatisfied with the response of the Executive Committee, they may appeal to the Head of Student Services at the College.

9.2.2. The Head of Student Services will convene a panel to include herself/himself, a Dean of Faculty, and a member of the College Directorate.

9.2.3. The panel will request a report from the Union on their actions and may undertake any necessary investigation.

9.2.4. The panel will notify both the complainant and the Students' Union of their decision and suggested remedy, if any, within 2 weeks of the complaint being referred to it.

9.3. STAGE 3

9.3.1. If the complainant or the Students' Union is dissatisfied by the panel's response, they may request an independent review. The reviewer, who shall be a person external to the College with suitable experience of students' unions and higher education institutions, will be appointed by the University Council who will make recommendations to the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University.