

SOLENT ●●●●
STUDENTS'
UNION

SOCIETIES CONSTITUTION

VERSION 3 June 2018

Introduction

This document is to provide support and guidance with running a society at Solent Students' Union. It is aimed at outlining how societies should run and which rules to follow. This document is not meant to contradict any current or future bye law or article of the Union and as such the Bye-Laws and Articles of Association have overriding authority to any and all parts of this document.

The Constitution was adopted on: November 2015 and will be reviewed annually and ratified at the first societies council of each academic year.

Last reviewed June 2018.

Naomi Fry

Vice President Employability & Engagement 2017 – 2018

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Section 1 – Purpose

1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 This constitution has been produced to support the smooth and democratic running of student societies at Solent Students' Union. This constitution outlines the requirements and benefits of running a society, including the running of Societies Council, Societies AGM and other requirements throughout the year.
- 1.1.2 If you would like any support understanding this constitution, including the processes, the technical terms or accessing any of the policies or documents referred to in the constitution, please contact VP Employability & Engagement.
- 1.1.3 Solent Students' Union is committed to equality & diversity and will try to make suitable arrangements to meet your request. If you require this document in a more accessible format, please contact VP Employability & Engagement.

1.2. Governance

- 1.2.1 This Handbook should be read alongside the Union's Memorandum and Articles of Association and Byelaws, any Union policies and the Societies Booklets. These can be found on the website.
- 1.2.2 This Constitution should be ratified at the first Societies Council of each year.

1.3. Amendments & Interpretation

- 1.3.1 Student Council should be notified of any approved amendments.
- 1.3.2 Date of amendments shall be logged under Appendix F of this document.
- 1.3.3 When Union Bye Laws are updated due to policy change this document will be amended.
- 1.3.4 Amendments can be made by VP Employability & Engagement, Activities Coordinator and Student Involvement Manager and raised by Society Council Members.
- 1.3.5 VP Employability & Engagement has final say on amendments to this constitution.
- 1.3.6 Any dispute of any part of this document should be taken to the VP Employability & Engagement for clarification.
- 1.3.7 Challenges to the VP Employability & Engagement's decision can be taken to Societies Council to be further discussed.

Section 2 – Running a Society

2.1 Membership of Societies

- 2.1.1 Any member of Solent Students' Union (as outlined in the Union's Bye laws 1.1) can join a society by paying the Societies membership fee (if applicable) and registering at Solent Students' Union Welcome Centre (on the first floor).
- 2.1.2 Alumni members must obtain alumni membership from the Union in order to join a society as per Byelaw 1.1.2 (Associate Members). They cannot vote or hold a committee position in a society unless there is an Alumni Committee Member position.
- 2.1.3 Staff members of the Students' Union cannot vote or hold a committee position in a society and are also classed as Associate Members.
- 2.1.4 Carers may accompany members to any society meeting or event however cannot benefit nor take part in any democratic process unless they are also full members of the Union as per Byelaw 1.1.1.

2.2 Recognition of Societies

- 2.2.1 A society shall be recognised by the Union provided that:
 - a. A new society application form is forwarded to the VP Employability & Engagement.
 - b. The aims and objects of a society do not contravene Union policy.
 - c. The aims and objects of a society are not duplicating an existing society.
 - d. It passes ratification at a Student Council/Officer Committee.
 - e. The society has a minimum of five members.
- 2.2.2 As a recognised Solent Students' Union society, there are a number of benefits in becoming affiliated to the Union:
 - a. Free use of bookable Union rooms and support in booking rooms in the University. This should be conducted through the Student Involvement Department (located on the first floor of the Solent Students' Union building).
 - b. A society page on the website.
 - c. You will not have to process your finances. This will all be done on your behalf through the Student Involvement team, who will liaise with the Finance department.
 - d. Support from the VP Employability & Engagement and Student Involvement Department.

- e. A free stall at Fresher's Fayre and any society fair throughout the year based on availability.
- f. Access to any Student Union opportunities.
- g. Potential access to the additional funding.

2.3 Membership Fees

- 2.3.1 Societies are able to charge a membership fee, or run a free society. This excludes liberation societies and RAG. A list of liberation societies can be found in appendix C
- 2.3.2 This decision must be made by the societies committee when filling in the society renewal pack or when the society is founded.
- 2.3.3 The move from paid to free membership cannot be made mid-year.
- 2.3.4 The move from free to paid membership cannot be made mid-year.
- 2.3.5 The membership fee amount also cannot be changed mid-year.

2.4 Membership Refunds

- 2.4.1. In accordance with UK law, those who have purchased a membership to a society have a seven day cooling off period during which they have the right to cancel the membership and receive a full refund. This should be requested through the Student Involvement Department.
- 2.4.2. Within the seven days, no reason is needs to be given to cancel the membership.
- 2.4.3. To receive a refund, a valid receipt must be presented. If there is no receipt, a refund cannot be given.
- 2.4.4. An additional 14-day taster period is offered, the Union may refund up to 75 % of the membership costs within this period. For the sake of clarity the taster period begins 8 days after the time and date of purchase and ceases 21 days after the time and date of purchase. Thereafter no refund will be given.
- 2.4.5. If a member chooses to cancel the membership after 21 days of the original payment (including the seven day cooling off period and an additional fourteen days to allow for taster sessions and trials), then the Union will not refund the payment as it is considered that the individual will have benefited from being an active member by having access to member information, obtaining any associated discounts, and participated in activity.

2.5 Society Finances & Additional Funding Requests

- 2.5.1 Each society's funds shall be processed through the Solent Students' Union finance department. All finance matters, including that received from membership fees will enter this account, along with any additional funding given by Solent Students Union.
- 2.5.2 Monetary dealings should be initially discussed with the Activities Coordinator.
- 2.5.3 To request additional funding from the Union, a Funding Application Form and Risk Assessment needs to be completed and submitted to the VP Employability & Engagement.
- 2.5.4 Requests below £300 will be reviewed by the Student Involvement Manager and Vice President Employability and Engagement.
- 2.5.5 Requests above £300 will be taken to the Students' Union Leadership Team. The Leadership team meet once every 2 weeks.
- 2.5.6 While there is no maximum limit on additional funding, previous funding requests will be considered when approval of a new request is being decided upon.
- 2.5.7 Society members are expected to fund their own kit. This includes personalised clothing. Additional funding will not be granted for this use.
- 2.5.8 The VP Employability & Engagement will follow criterion for additional funding. Please see Appendix E.

2.6 Dissolving your society and forced disaffiliation

- 2.6.1 If you wish to disaffiliate your society, you need to inform the VP Employability & Engagement and the Activities Coordinator.
- 2.6.2 If your society does not have five members or is without a full committee for three months at any time of the year, or if disciplinary action is given by the Union, a society may need to be dissolved.
- 2.6.3 The process of a society dissolving is:
- a. The Societies funds will be frozen for 3 months.
 - b. Withdrawal of free use of Union and University rooms.
 - c. Society will be added to the 'adopt a society' list.
 - d. After 3 months, if a new committee has not been elected and/or the total number of members is below five, the society will be removed from all contacts lists, the account will be closed, refunds (if applicable) will be given, the society will be officially closed and access to additional funding will be denied.

Section 3 – Being Committee

3.1 Your Responsibilities

3.1.1 As an affiliated Society of Solent Students' Union the following responsibilities must be adhered to:

- a. To adhere to this Societies Constitution, the Memorandum, Articles of Association, Bye laws and all other policies at the Union.
- b. Adhere to the External Speaker Procedure.
- c. To ensure a free and democratic election of committee members each academic year, with help from the VP Employability & Engagement or a member of the Solent Students' Union staff.
- d. To send at least one representative to each meeting of Societies Council, in addition to AGM and any called EGM's.
- e. It is compulsory that all money is processed through Solent Students' Union either via the Welcome Centre, Activities Coordinator or the Solent Students' Union website.
- f. To allow for all members of the Union to be eligible for membership.
- g. To ensure that all society members are full members or associate members of the Union.
- h. Complete an annual risk assessment for your society and for each event you hold, with support from the Activities Coordinator.
- i. To pass on any information, to their own society members, received from the VP Employability & Engagement, Activities Coordinator or the Societies Council Chair.
- j. To complete a Society renewal form before the start of each academic year. This form will include all key information the Union needs to know about a society to successfully support it. Failure to fill out the form may jeopardise the societies table at Fresher's Fayre, impact funding requests and ability for Solent Students' Union and new potential society members to communicate.
- k. To attend the annual mandatory societies' training in order to receive access to apply for additional funding. This training must be attended by the top three committee members i.e. President, Secretary, Treasurer (or equivalent).

3.2 Your Committee

3.2.1 Each society can decide upon its own committee structure. However, each committee must have a minimum of 3 positions, which include:

- a. A President
- b. A Secretary
- c. A Treasurer

3.2.2 Only one individual can hold one committee position within that same society, however, if they wish to hold another committee position in different society they are able to do so.

3.2.3 Only full members of Solent Students' Union are able to run for a committee position. Alumni members can run for Alumni Committee positions as per 2.1.2

3.3 Disciplinary

3.3.1 In accordance with the Union's disciplinary policy, all grievances with other members should be brought to the attention of the VP Employability & Engagement, who will inform you of what steps are to be taken.

Section 4 – Elections

4.1 Your AGM

4.1.1 An AGM should have the same structure as other society meetings however there are two additional requirements:

- a. Elections of the new committee.
- b. Year Overview – The committee should give an overview of the last year to attending members.

4.2 Running your elections

4.2.1 Elections for a new committee should take place at an AGM. Any positions not filled or vacated throughout the year should be elected in an EGM later in the academic year.

4.2.2 A returning officer from Solent Students' Union shall be present to return elections. You can contact the Activities Coordinator to arrange this.

4.2.3 Notice of elections must be given to all society members no less than 14 days before the election. This can be communicated via email to the societies' entire registered membership list. It is also advised that supporting posts on the societies' social media and/or webpages are conducted.

4.2.4 Details of the election must be sent to the VP Employability & Engagement and the Activities Coordinator at least 14 days before the election, so a returning officer can be arranged.

4.2.5 Only full society members can vote (excluding associate members).

4.2.6 The option of Re-open Nominations (RON) must be available for each position.

4.2.7 Those committee members who wish to stand down from their committee roles will need to inform the President of their society, VP Employability & Engagement and the Activities Coordinator. Once they have been informed, a re-election can take place.

4.2.8 Voting will be by a show of hands, online vote or secret ballot if requested.

4.2.9 Under exceptional circumstances, if your society cannot hold an AGM to elect a new committee, your society may have the option to hold an election via email. This will be conducted by the Activities Coordinator. This will be at the discretion of VP Employability & Engagement. Please see Appendix D for more details regarding email voting.

4.2.10 Your society must ensure that it runs a fair and democratic election. Every full member of your society is eligible to run for a position.

4.2.11 If two or more candidates running for the same position receive the same amount of votes, the returning officer shall either;

- Re-hold the election at a later date, or,
- Flip a coin to determine the candidate to be elected

If one or numerous candidates tie with RON or more than two candidates tie, the election will be re-held.

The Returning Officer's decision on the action to be taken and announcing of the results shall be final on this matter.

4.2.12 A society election vote will not be valid if it does not achieve Quorum. Quorum is achieved when more than 25%+1 of the members vote.

4.3 Vote of No Confidence (VNC)

4.3.1 A Vote of No Confidence (VNC) can be submitted for any member of a societies' committee.

4.3.2 A VNC can either be submitted by a signed petition (with signatures from either 5 members of the society or 50% of the societies' membership), or by a petition signed by two-thirds of the societies' committee.

4.3.3 The completed petition needs to be forwarded to all the members of the societies' committee and the VP Employability & Engagement.

4.3.4 An EGM must then be called, with the announcement of dates and times to members at least a week before it is due to take place.

4.3.5 The VP Employability & Engagement must be invited to the EGM who shall attend as an impartial observer. If unavailable, another Sabbatical Officer may take their place.

4.3.6 For the VNC to be passed, there must be a majority vote.

4.3.7 If passed, the committee member shall give up their seat, but will still be a member of the society.

4.3.8 If the VNC is not passed, the committee member shall continue in their position.

4.3.9 If the VNC fails, another VNC against the same person cannot be presented until 28 days after the vote.

4.3.10 If a new VNC is introduced after 28 days it must be based on new material. If it is too close in nature to the original VNC, VP Employability & Engagement with the approval of the Union President may dismiss it.

Section 5 – Societies Council

5.1 Societies Council Chair Elections

- 5.1.1 The Societies Council Chair and Deputy Chair positions will be reopened annually at the Societies Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Activities Coordinator will support the running of the annual AGM.
- 5.1.2 Elections should be advertised at least 14 days before the AGM. Manifestos may be submitted to the VP Employability & Engagement in advance.
- 5.1.3 Nominations for positions can still be accepted from the floor prior to the election.
- 5.1.4 Any student who is a full member of a society may stand for these positions.
- 5.1.5 All students who are full members of a society are eligible to vote.
- 5.1.6 Voting will be by a show of hands, or secret ballot if requested.
- 5.1.7 If the Chair position is unfilled then the position must be elected and appointed by the second Societies Council meeting or the VP Employability & Engagement will assume the role of Chair until someone is elected.

5.2 Societies Council Membership

- 5.2.1 The Societies Council Membership consists of these Executives:
 - a. Chair
 - b. Deputy Chair (incorporating Secretarial role)
 - c. Society Presidents'
 - d. VP Employability & Engagement
 - e. Sonar Media President
- 5.2.2 Society members can attend societies council however there shall only be one vote per society. The chair will have casting vote only (i.e. in the event of a tie).
- 5.2.3 The VP Employability & Engagement and Sonar Media President shall have no vote and cannot represent any society at Council.
- 5.2.3 The Deputy Chair cannot vote but assumes the Chair's voting rights when the Chair is absent.
- 5.2.3 Role descriptions, roles and responsibilities of the Chair can be found in Appendix A.
- 5.2.4 Amendments to Role Descriptions can be made by a majority ruling of the societies in attendance.

5.3 Powers and Duties of the Societies Council

- 5.3.1 To communicate with the VP Employability & Engagement to ensure concerns of society members are fully represented.
- 5.3.2 To submit minutes of meetings to Student Council. More details about Student council can be found Bye law 4. This can be found on the website.
- 5.3.3 To ensure that all Societies attend mandatory training.
- 5.3.4 Societies Council will be held at least, but not limited to three times per annum.
- 5.3.5 The chair shall be accountable to Student Council.
- 5.3.6 The chair shall produce a report to be delivered at the Union's AGM.
- 5.3.7 The Societies Council Chair shall have a seat on Student Council.
- 5.3.8 Any member of a society can submit a policy or motion concerning societies to Societies Council by sending it to either the Chair or VP Employability & Engagement.
- 5.3.9 The VP Employability & Engagement has the ability to refer motions to Student Council or the Board of Trustees if relevant. The Chair can also refer motions to Student Council, but not to the Board of Trustees.

5.4 Societies Council Meetings

- 5.4.1 Students (who are not society members), Union staff (with the approval of the Chair) and other Trustees can attend but cannot vote.
- 5.4.2 Any member who cannot attend must submit apologies to the Chair or Deputy Chair (Secretary).
- 5.4.3 Voting (other than elections) shall be made by a show of hands.
- 5.4.4 Meetings may be called by the Chair, 5% of society presidents or VP Employability & Engagement.
- 5.4.5 The Deputy Chair (Secretary) must ensure agendas and copies of the previous meetings minutes are sent out to all members within seven days.
- 5.4.6 The agenda of the meetings should include the following:
 - a. Apologies for absence
 - b. Minutes of the last meeting
 - c. Matters arising from the last meeting
 - d. Report from the VP Employability & Engagement
 - e. Motions and Policy items
 - f. Any other business
 - g. Time and date of next meeting

- 5.4.7 No voting may take place unless the meeting has Quorum. Quorum is achieved when more than 10%+1 of the members attend a meeting.
- 5.4.8 The Societies Chair will take any motions voted by the Societies Council to the Student Council.
- 5.4.9 The Deputy Chair (Secretary) will send the minutes to the Student Council Chair at least 5 days before the next Student Council meeting.
- 5.4.10 The Deputy Chair (Secretary) must also send copies of the minutes to the Activities Coordinator.
- 5.4.11 Training and support for minute taking is available from the Activities Coordinator.

5.5 Vote of No Confidence (VNC) in the Societies Council Chair / Deputy

- 5.5.1 A VNC can be submitted for the Societies Council Chair or Deputy Chair.
- 5.5.2 A VNC can be submitted by a petition signed by 100 society members; or by a petition of 50% +1 of society presidents.
- 5.5.3 The completed petition needs to be forwarded to the VP Employability & Engagement for approval.
- 5.5.4 The vote will happen at the next Societies Council. An EGM will be called if a Societies Council is not due to occur within the following month. The council will hear the VNC and any defence. For a VNC to pass it needs to be voted for by 50%+1 of those in attendance.
- 5.5.5 The person in question has to be given 14 days' notice of the VNC and the vote. If this is not followed, the VNC cannot pass.
- 5.5.6 If passed, the Chair or Deputy Chair is removed from their respective position, but can still be a member of a society, unless any of decisions made by the student disciplinary process dictate otherwise.
- 5.5.7 If defeated, the Chair or Deputy Chair shall continue their position.
- 5.5.8 If defeated, another VNC against the same person cannot be presented until 28 days after the vote unless it is for a new topic. If this occurs, the VP Employability & Engagement can override the 28 days policy with agreement of the President of the Union.

5.6 Societies Council Agenda

- 5.6.1 Union staff support can be given to assist the running and administration of Societies Council at the discretion of the Chair. This can be agreed at the start of each academic year.
- 5.6.2 The Chair of the SC will be the Societies Council Chair. If the Societies Council Chair cannot attend, it will then be the responsibility of the Vice-Chair. If the Vice-Chair cannot attend then the VP Employability & Engagement will assume the Chair role. Finally, a member of the floor will be elected by a show of hands, if none of the above can attend.
- 5.6.3 Apologies should be sent to the Societies Council Chair before the meeting.
- 5.6.4 At least one member of every society should be present. Absences without apologies will be noted and taken into consideration when processing funding requests.
- 5.6.5 Each society will get one vote on motions and elections that occur in Societies Council, regardless of total membership.
- 5.6.6 Voting on agenda items shall be by a show of hands, or a secret ballot if requested in advance of the meeting.
- 5.6.7 The Chair must ensure minutes are submitted to Student Council at least 5 days before the next Student Council.
- 5.6.8 The Deputy Chair (Secretary) must send copies of the minutes to society presidents and the Activities Coordinator.

Section 6 – Society AGM & EGM

6.1 Societies Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM)

6.1.1 A Societies EGM may be called by

- a. the VP Employability & Engagement
- b. the Executive Chair, or 4 society presidents
- c. 20 members of any society as a collective

6.1.2 The meeting will have the same structure as Societies Council, with particular focus made to the reasons it was called.

6.2 Societies Annual General Meeting (AGM)

6.2.1 Societies AGM's are held once a year, usually towards the end of the academic year.

6.2.2 The running of Societies AGM will have the same structure as the Societies Council Meeting.

6.2.3 Notice of an AGM should be given no less than 14 days before the meeting via email to all societies.

6.2.4 The agenda of the Meeting will normally have the following structure unless the Society Council Members agree to change it:

- a. End of year report from the VP Employability & Engagement
- b. End of year reports from the Society Council Chair
- c. Elections
- d. Progress and Implementation Report
- e. Motions and Policy items
- f. Any other business

Appendices

Appendix A – Society Council Roles

Chair

-Open to all members of societies.

This role will involve chairing Societies Council, as well as any emergency councils and the societies wide Annual General Meeting. The role will also involve holding the VP Employability & Engagement to account. The Chair should be willing to get to know Union structures, and will be entrusted with ensuring members of societies have their views represented in the Union.

The Chair will also sit on Student Council, representing the views of Societies to the wider student body. They will also help the Secretary with creating an Agenda for each meeting.

Deputy Chair/Secretary

-Open to all members of societies

The candidate will be responsible for writing up minutes of Councils, EGM's and AGM's. Once written, the Deputy Chair/Secretary must send these minutes to the VP Employability & Engagement to be made available to the wider student body.

The Deputy Chair/Secretary will be responsible for sitting on Student Council if the Chair is unable to.

Appendix B – List of Special Status Societies

The following societies will be deemed to hold special status:

Raise and Give (RAG)

Raise and Give (RAG) is responsible for supporting student led fundraising within the Students' Union. They provide fundraising opportunities to students and can help advise and support societies in running fundraising events. RAG also hold their own constitution which has been put together by the RAG President as a result of

correspondence through Solent University. This is to be signed off by the VP Employability & Engagement and overseen by the Activities Coordinator.

Radio Sonar

Radio Sonar provides students with opportunities to participate in student radio and hold regular shows. Radio Sonar is responsible for the running of the radio studio, which is located on the first floor of the Students' Union. They are also responsible for organising the maintenance of the studio with guidance from the Students' Union staff, who will help to ensure correct procedure is followed. Under no circumstance should any student alter with Students' Union property.

Sonar TV

Sonar TV is responsible for the production office, which is located on the second floor of the Student Union and the recording/broadcast of key events in the Union calendar, such as the Union AGM and the Sabbatical Elections. They are also responsible for organising the maintenance of the office with guidance from the Students' Union staff, who will help to ensure correct procedure is followed. Under no circumstance should any student alter with Students' Union property.

Sonar Magazine

Sonar Magazine is responsible for Solent Students' Union student led magazine. Written for students, by students, they post regular features and articles on News, Entertainment, Sport, Technology, Lifestyle and more.

Sonar Film

Sonar Film is responsible for running the cinema in LT1. The theatre has a capacity of 96 and the auditorium is fitted with a screen, 2K Barco projector, Dolby Atmos immersive sound system and gaming capabilities. They show blockbuster films and provide a venue suitable for socials/events. All the members/staff are volunteers and can choose between working Front of House or Projection.

Appendix C – Liberation Societies

These are classed as Societies that represent characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010. These are age, disability, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion and belief (including lack of belief) or pregnancy.

- a. LGBT+ Society
- b. Solent Feminist Society (FemSoc)
- c. Afro-Caribbean Society
- d. Solent International Society
- e. Mature & Postgrad Society
- f. Believers Love World
- g. Solent East African Society
- h. Solent Sikh Society
- i. The Greek & Cypriot Society.
- j. The Nepalese Society
- k. Norwegian Society
- l. Christian Union Society
- m. Islamic Society
- n. Asian Society
- o. Oriental Society
- p. Erasmus & Exchange Students Society

The societies above can withdraw their status through notification of the VP E&E if their activities are social and not of a proactive, representative or campaigns nature.

Appendix D – Email Elections

If the committee role needs to be filled as a matter of urgency, voting can be conducted via email at the discretion of VP Employability & Engagement. Within the 14 days manifestos should be sent to all committee members, voting will take place on the 14th day (if it is a working day), emails for votes will happen between 10am and 4pm.

- Voting will be open from 10am (emails sent out of these times will not be counted)
- Votes will be made via email to Student Involvement Administrator
- Votes will need to be made clear i.e.
Subject: Pole Fitness: Vote for Social Secretary Committee Position

Body of email: Please write the name of who you wish to vote for

Name of voter (the person who has voted)

Those without this information will not be counted.

- Votes will be counted & announced within a week.

In order for your funding application to be granted the VP Employability & Engagement & Student Involvement Manager will assess your application and will make their judgments based on what they reasonably believe will bring the most benefit to the widest number of students and that the society has evidence of raising funds for themselves through fundraising, membership contribution and sponsorship.

Additional criteria shall be:

- The society is running in accordance with Union policies. i.e. following constitution, holding regular meetings etc.
- The good financial management of the society
- Membership numbers
- Relationship between the constitution of the society and the proposed activities
- Your past applications for Additional Funding and whether you have returned the feedback form
- Have the top three committee members attended society training?
- Is the money being used for society members?
- Is the money being used to benefit the society?
- Will the money be used for anything that contravenes Union policy?

Free societies are unable to apply for additional funding with exception of Special Status and Liberation societies. This does not include Freshers / Re-Freshers additional funding.