

**Code of Practice**  
**relating to the operation of the Students' Union**

<b>Approved by</b>	Board of Governors		
<b>Date approved</b>	3 October 2013	<b>Status</b>	Approved
<b>Policy owner</b>	Vice Principal (Student Experience & External Relations)	<b>Impact assessed</b>	YES
<b>Version</b>	3	<b>Date of next review</b>	As required

## **CODE OF PRACTICE RELATING TO THE OPERATION OF THE RGU STUDENTS' UNION**

Under Section 22 of the Education Act 1994 the Board of Governors must approve a Code of Practice detailing the steps taken by the University to ensure that it fulfils its obligations pursuant to the Act in relation to the Students' Union. The Act requires that each university take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that its' Students' Union:

- operates in a fair and democratic manner; and
- is accountable for its finances.

This Code of Practice shall be amended by the Board of Governors, in consultation with the Students' Union, from time to time.

### **Constitution**

The Students' Union shall have a written constitution which is subject to the approval of the Board of Governors. The Constitution shall be submitted for review as required by the Board of Governors and at intervals of not more than five years.

### **Membership**

All enrolled students of the University are full members of the Students' Union as specified under the Constitution of the Students' Union.

Any enrolled student of the University has the right not to be a member of the Students' Union and not to be unfairly disadvantaged by reason of having exercised that right.

Students may 'opt-out' of membership of the Students' Union at any time by completing a form that will be available from the President (Communications and Democracy). Such a decision to 'opt-out' shall remain in place until the student informs through the President (Communications and Democracy) of his or her decision to re-join the Union.

Enrolled students of The Robert Gordon University who have 'opted-out' of membership of the Students' Union shall **not** be:

- Permitted to vote in any Students' Union elections, ballots or referenda.
- Allowed to stand for office in any election in the Students' Union.
- Hold office in any Students' Union club, society or group. Nevertheless, enrolled students of The Robert Gordon University may join any Students' Union club, society or group and participate in their activities. The Students' Union reserves the right to levy charges to such individuals in line with such charges as would be made to individuals who have not opted-out of membership.
- Permitted to use the licensed bar facilities of the Students' Union unless they are signed in by a full member of the Students' Union.

All other facilities and services of the Students' Union would be available to enrolled students of The Robert Gordon University.

## **Elections**

The Board of Governors will ensure that:

- Election to 'major offices' of the Students' Union will be by election in a secret ballot in which all full members are entitled to vote. The 'major offices' of the Student Association shall be considered to be the members of the Sabbatical Executive Committee.
- No person shall hold a sabbatical position within the Students' Union for more than two years. The Constitution of the Students' Union prohibits individuals who have held such sabbatical office for two years from eligibility to stand in sabbatical elections.

The Board of Governors will satisfy itself that elections are fairly and properly conducted.

Candidates who have been disqualified from an Election by the Returning Officer may appeal the decision in writing to the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the university who will nominate an appropriate individual to undertake an investigation into the matter and to report their decision to him within twenty working days.

## **Finance**

The Board of Governors reserves the right to apply conditions of grant to any funding it gives the Students' Union.

The budget of the Students' Union will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Director of Finance who will inform the Strategic Planning and Resources Group of any concerns. Such concerns will be reported to the Board of Governors.

## **Allocation of resources to clubs and societies**

The procedure for allocating resources to Students' Union clubs and societies shall be published by the Students' Union annually. This procedure shall be made available freely to all students through publication on the Students' Union website.

## **Affiliation to external organisations**

The Students' Union shall publish annually a list of the external organisations to which it is currently affiliated. This list will contain the details of subscriptions, similar fees paid or donations made to such organisations in the past year. This list shall draw attention to the name of any organisations and details of any subscriptions or donations made to any organisation that the Students' Union has affiliated to since the previous year.

The Students' Union at each Annual General Meeting will submit the list of affiliations for approval by its members.

Should the Student Association make a decision to affiliate to any further external organisation during the course of an academic session then the Association shall publish a notice on its website and inform the Board of Governors through the Secretary to the Board of the decision to do so, stating the name of the organisation and details of any subscription or similar fees paid or proposed to be paid to that organisation.

A requisition may be made to the Students' Union Sabbatical Executive Committee once a year by at least 5% of the full members of the Student Association that the question of continued affiliation to any particular external organisation be decided upon by a secret ballot in which all full members are entitled to vote. The Board of Governors shall require the ability of members to make such a requisition to be contained within either the Constitution or the Regulations of the Students' Union.

### **Complaints procedure**

The Board of Governors shall require that at all times the Students' Union shall have an internal complaints procedure as one of its Regulations that is available to all students who are dissatisfied in their dealings with the Students' Union or claim to have been unfairly disadvantaged by reason of their having exercised the right to withdraw from membership of the Students' Union. Such an internal complaints procedure shall be fair and prompt in its dealings with the complainant and shall provide for remedies should a complaint be upheld.

Should the complainant remain dissatisfied then he or she shall be entitled for the matter to be referred to the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University. The Principal, on behalf of the Board of Governors, shall appoint an independent person (who may, or may not, be a member of university staff depending upon the nature of the complaint) to undertake an investigation into the complaint and make a report within twenty working days. Where applicable, the Students' Union shall act upon any recommendations or findings within that report to the satisfaction of the Strategic Planning and Resources Group.

### **Compliance with the Code of Practice and Education Act**

One of the Trustees of the Students' Union shall be nominated by the university's Board of Governors. This individual shall have an obligation to report any concern relevant to compliance with either this Code of Practice or the Education Act 1994 on the part of the Students' Union.

Annually the Board of Trustees of the Students' Union will meet with senior officers of the university. Following this meeting a note will be prepared for the Strategic Planning and Resources Group so that it can report to the Board of Governors of annual notice:

- on the conduct of the elections through a report from the Returning Officer;
- of the budget of the Students' Union;
- of publication of financial reports which include a list of external organisations to which the Students' Union has made donations in the period and the details of such donations; and
- of the list of external organisations to which the Students' Union is currently affiliated to and assurance that this list has been made to all students of the university.

### **Annual notifications to the student body**

This Code of Practice shall be made available to all enrolled students of the University and annually the University shall provide notice to enrolled students of their right to 'opt-out' of membership of the Students' Union.

In addition the University shall provide annual notice of:

- this Code of Practice, and any amendments made to it;
- any restrictions imposed on the activities of the Student Association as a result of charity law; and
- the right of freedom of speech in Universities and Colleges, insofar as it relates to the activities of the Students' Union