

York St John University and Students' Union Code of Practice

1. Introduction

York St John Students' Union (SU) is a registered charity in England and Wales (charity number: 1136905) and a private company limited by guarantee (company number: 07250320).

The Education Act 1994 ("the Act") requires governing bodies of universities to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that any students' union operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances. The Act requires universities to prepare and issue, and when necessary revise, a Code of Practice ("the Code") as to the manner in which its requirements are to be carried into effect in relation to any students' union for students at the establishment, setting out in relation to each of the requirements details of the arrangements made to secure its observance.

This Code of Practice has been prepared to satisfy this requirement. It has been issued on the authority of the Board of Governors which, as the University's governing body, is ultimately responsible for implementing and monitoring adherence to the Code.

As required by the Act, the Code is brought to the attention of all students on at least an annual basis through induction material.

The obligations of York St John University and York St John Students' Union under the Act are set out below.

2. Constitutional provisions

- a) *the union should have a written constitution; and,*
- b) *the provisions of the constitution should be subject to the approval of the governing body and to review by that body at intervals of not more than five years.*

The SU is incorporated as a private company limited by guarantee (company number: 07250320) and has Articles of Association as its written constitution.

The Articles are reviewed at least every five years by the University's Board of Governors. The last review took place in July 2025.

3. The right to not be a member of the Students' Union

- c) *a student should have the right:*
 - *not to be a member of the union; or*
 - *in the case of a representative body which is not an association, to signify that he does not wish to be represented by it, and students who exercise that right should not be unfairly disadvantaged, with regard to the provision of services or otherwise, by reason of their having done so.*

The SU's byelaw on Membership expressly states that any student can exercise their right to opt out of membership without affecting their rights of access to services and facilities of the SU. The byelaws confirm that there shall be no distinction between opted out students and members of the SU in accessing Union services, but opted out students will have no right to:

- join sports clubs and societies;
- participate in the governance of the Students' Union; or,
- vote in or stand as a candidate in any Students' Union elections.

4. Democratic provisions

- d) appointment to major union offices should be by election in a secret ballot in which all members are entitled to vote;*
- e) the governing body should satisfy itself that the elections are fairly and properly conducted; and,*
- f) a person should not hold sabbatical union office, or paid elected union office, for more than two years in total at the establishment.*

The SU Articles of Association provide for sabbatical officers to be elected by secret ballot by the members of the Students' Union at an election held in accordance with the byelaws.

The SU reports annually to the University's Board of Governors on the election process and the outcome. Furthermore, the University Secretary & Registrar or nominee is invited to attend the meetings of the SU Elections Committee.

The Articles of Association specify that sabbatical officers shall remain in office for a term of one year and may be re-elected for a maximum further term of one year.

5. Financial provisions

- g) the financial affairs of the union should be properly conducted and appropriate arrangements should exist for the approval of the union's budget, and the monitoring of its expenditure, by the governing body; and,*
- h) financial reports of the union should be published annually or more frequently, and should be made available to the governing body and to all students, and each such report should contain, in particular;*
 - *a list of the external organisations to which the union has made donations in the period to which the report relates; and,*
 - *details of those donations.*
- i) the procedure for allocating resources to groups or clubs should be fair and should be set down in writing and freely accessible to all students (noting the finances for sports clubs are managed by YSJ Active);*

The financial affairs of the SU are conducted in accordance with its Financial Regulations set out in Byelaw 10.

The SU's budget is reviewed and approved annually by the University's Finance & Capital Development Committee on behalf of the Board of Governors.

The SU's annual accounts are reviewed and approved by the University's Board of Governors, which enables monitoring of the SU's expenditure.

The SU publishes its [annual reports and accounts](#) on its website for public inspection

(also available on the Register of Charities), and these contain the required details of any donations made in that period.

The SU's procedure for allocating student resources to groups is set out in section 3 of Byelaw 10.

6. Affiliations

- j) *if the union decides to affiliate to an external organisation, it should publish notice of its decision stating:*
 - *the name of the organisation; and,*
 - *details of any subscription or similar fee paid or proposed to be paid, and of any donation made or proposed to be made, to the organisation, and any such notice should be made available to the governing body and to all students.*

- k) *where the union is affiliated to any external organisations, a report should be published annually or more frequently containing:*
 - *a list of the external organisations to which the union is currently affiliated; and,*
 - *details of subscriptions or similar fees paid, or donations made, to such organisations in the past year (or since the last report), and such reports should be made available to the governing body and to all students.*

- l) *there should be procedures for the review of affiliations to external organisations under which:*
 - *the current list of affiliations is submitted for approval by members annually or more frequently; and,*
 - *at such intervals of not more than a year as the governing body may determine, a requisition may be made by such proportion of members (not exceeding 5%) as the governing body may determine, that the question of continued affiliation to any particular organisation be decided upon by a secret ballot in which all members are entitled to vote.*

The list of external organisations to which the SU is affiliated is submitted at the SU's Annual Student Members Meeting for approval by members.

The SU's procedures for reviewing its external affiliations are published on the [SU website](#).

7. Complaints

- m) *there should be a complaints procedure available to all students or groups of students who:*
 - *are dissatisfied in their dealings with the union; or,*
 - *claim to be unfairly disadvantaged by reason of their having exercised the right referred to in paragraph (c)(i) or (ii) above, which should include provision for an independent person appointed by the governing body to investigate and report on complaints;*

- n) complaints should be dealt with promptly and fairly and where a complaint is upheld there should be an effective remedy.*

The SU publishes its [complaints procedure](#) on its website for public inspection.

Under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, the Office for Students will operate a free speech complaints scheme for staff and visiting speakers. Complaints will be considered at the Office for Students discretion and will not extend to the SU.

Version Control Statement

Version Reference	1.0
Responsible Department	Governance & Compliance
Equality Impact Assessment	N/A
Approved By	Board of Governors
Effective Date	10 July 2025
Next Review Date	July 2026