



## **Byelaw 15**

### **AUSA Equality and Diversity Policy**

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#### **Equality and Diversity Statement**

AUSA is committed to a comprehensive policy on Equality and Diversity (including issues of equality of opportunity) for all its members and staff. AUSA strives to ensure that all our members have equal opportunities and seeks to protect their rights and opportunities, ensuring all members are valued and respected for their differences to enable a climate of greater confidence and one free from hostility.

AUSA shall act without discrimination in respect of: gender, racial origin, nationality, sexual orientation, religious belief, political belief, disabilities, age, marital and civil partnership status, spent criminal convictions, health, HIV and AIDs status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, language, appearance, socio-economic status. This list is not exhaustive.

AUSA recognises that inequality, oppression and discrimination exist and aims to work towards elimination of these for its members. AUSA is committed to a positive policy, instilling a culture of mutual respect and positivity where everyone recognises their personal responsibility to uphold equal opportunities and to act without prejudice. AUSA will not tolerate prejudice nor will it discriminate against its members or others, nor condone bullying or harassment in any form.

All members of AUSA, organised student groups within AUSA, staff members, Officers and any other connected individual, group or organisation shall be required to follow this policy, acknowledging that their responsibilities regarding equal opportunities affect the membership of AUSA as a whole.

#### **Background**

This Equality and Diversity Policy exists to:

- To ensure that equality of opportunity is at the core of all activity, promoting integration within AUSA activities, to further enhance the student experience.
  - To ensure that Aberdeen University Students' Association is proactive in promoting equality of opportunity as well as recognising, rewarding and promoting best practice with regard to equality and diversity issues.
  - To create and sustain a positive and welcoming environment for all members, visitors and
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staff, increasing participation in AUSA's activities by meeting the needs of the diverse membership.

- To ensure that Officers, staff and students are aware of the needs of disadvantaged groups in order to provide more relevant services and activities as well as better representation and to prevent discrimination from occurring.
- To address any attitudinal, organisational and physical barriers that may prevent equality of opportunity.
- To ensure that AUSA meets and where practicable exceeds legislative requirements.

This policy recognises the existence of University Regulations, and in particular the Equality and Diversity Policy, and relevant legislation. This policy exists to supplement, and not contradict these existing rules and regulations.

## **Harassment**

The Association recognises the right of all individuals to live free from harassment and victimisation. AUSA will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of its members in any of AUSA's events or activities. AUSA will fully support those who have been subject to harassment and perpetrators of harassment will be liable to disciplinary or legal action. Attention is also drawn to the University of Aberdeen's policy with relation to harassment and bullying.

AUSA has a zero tolerance to sexual harassment policy. The following behaviours are unacceptable: unwelcome sexual invitations, innuendoes, offensive gestures (both in face-to-face and internet contacting including Facebook messages, Twitter, and e-mails); unwelcome or unwanted touching of your body; having your clothes (skirt, top, kilt or any other item) lifted without consent. No student should be forced to 'put up' with sexual harassment nor is sexual harassment tolerated by AUSA. Those who commit acts of sexual harassment will be stopped and disciplined for their actions within AUSA buildings and at AUSA events/activities. It is also recognised that sexual harassment is not just experienced by women; the zero tolerance policy protects all students from everyone who perpetrates sexual harassment including all students, staff and visitors regardless of gender.

AUSA will not display images in our buildings or use publicity material for any AUSA event, which objectify people.

## **Accessibility**

Facilities/provisions are to be upgraded/introduced (where deemed feasible by the committee), to ensure that full participation is possible. The Association shall make every effort to ensure that all areas are fully accessible. Wherever necessary and possible, aids will be installed to ensure full access (e.g. Handrails, clear signpost, ramps etc). Where this will require the action of another body, such as the University of Aberdeen, AUSA will lobby them to ensure such amendments are made. Similarly, MiDAS drivers should have compulsory training in use of the wheelchair accessible minibus in order to extend our disabled access to student activities.

The Welfare Officer and relevant forum conveners should actively seek alternative provisions for transgender students in the areas of accommodation, changing facilities, toilets, and initiate a dialogue with the University to offer the alternative of a gender neutral option where available.

Further to this Executive Committees within AUSA should receive some basic training or materials on inclusivity, diversity and discrimination for trans\* students. The Welfare Officer should also negotiate with the University to include inclusivity training for staff members.

AUSA recognises that not all students wish to drink alcohol at AUSA events, and that this may be for religious or health reasons, or through personal preference. Events that do not have a non-alcoholic option are creating a barrier for students who wish to attend. As such, all AUSA activities and events where alcohol is provided or available should have a suitable non-alcoholic alternative. This will be the responsibility of the Student Officer or President/Captain/Convenor of the group organising the event. Further to this, when drinks are to be included in the price of a ticket then there must always be a non-alcoholic alternative available at no extra cost, excluding tap water.

## **Campaigns**

AUSA is a campaigning organisation that needs to represent its diverse membership. AUSA recognises that certain groups and individuals in society are discriminated against by virtue of being members of certain groups and we are committed to challenging and removing discrimination and barriers. AUSA believes that matters of equality are far reaching and therefore re-affirms its right to campaign on any issues that may have implications for the equality of opportunity of its membership. AUSA may take positive action where appropriate to increase the representation from people from particular groups that have previously been under represented in the University.

## **Publicising Equal Opportunities**

AUSA aims to have a comprehensive Equality and Diversity policy that is easily understood by its members and can be widely implemented. AUSA recognises the need to actively publicise this policy and AUSA's commitment to tackling equality and diversity issues within the student population, to both members and student groups within AUSA.

In order to achieve this:

- The Equality and Diversity Policy will be readily available and extensively publicised.
- AUSA's Equality and Diversity Policy will be displayed throughout AUSA's premises and will be available online.
- An Equality and Diversity statement will be distributed through various channels such as through Freshers' packs and sports clubs and society handbooks.

## **Services**

AUSA is committed to equal opportunities for all individuals who use AUSA services and access its premises by taking a proactive approach to equality, supporting and encouraging under-represented groups, and promoting an enjoyable, comfortable, inclusive and diverse culture which enhances the student experience, challenging action which is deemed to contravene this ethos.

It is the responsibility of the staff member responsible for that service to ensure that they are fully in line with this policy. All staff will be required to partake in equality and diversity training and should be encouraged to actively engage in addressing barriers that may exist for members in accessing AUSA services.

## **Student Activities**

AUSA aims to recognise the wide-ranging diversity of tastes and interests held by the student body and seek to ensure that services and entertainment within AUSA reflects such diversity and to provide a welcoming atmosphere without fear of harassment to all members of the student body for all AUSA events.

Student groups i.e. clubs and societies and other groups organised through AUSA, are required to agree to abide by the terms of this policy (membership of a group will be taken to imply an understanding to commitment and acceptance of this Policy). More specifically:

- It is the responsibility of that student group's committee to ensure that they are fully in line with this policy in all their activities, communication and publications.
- Part of the responsibility of organised student groups is that at least one member of its governing committee attends equality and diversity training organised by AUSA on an annual basis.
- Student groups should acknowledge that their responsibilities regarding equal opportunities affect more than just their own members but the membership of AUSA as a whole.
- Be open to all members and actively seek to widen participation in their group and to address barriers that may exist in becoming a member of that group.

AUSA has a zero tolerance policy on homophobic, biphobic and transphobic abuse in sport at the University of Aberdeen. Sports teams must make it clear whether, and under what conditions, trans\* students are eligible to participate and/or compete in sport. Efforts should be made to train sports teams, coaches and other sports staff in how to create LGBTQ\* positive environments.

### **Safe Space**

AUSA is committed to ensuring that all of our events and processes are safe, accessible and welcoming to students, in which no forms of discrimination are tolerated. We recognise that systematic oppression excludes certain groups whilst providing other groups with disproportionate power. This is not an attempt to produce an exhaustive, definitive list of unacceptable behaviour and, whilst there can never be an excuse for any of the behaviour outlined here, it shall be up to the discretion of the Trustee Board what other behaviour shall constitute a breach of this policy.

We expect all of our members and guests to always do the following:

- To be aware of the connotations of their language. Many common expressions use discriminatory language or appeal to offensive stereotypes and these should be avoided.
- To not make assumptions about anyone else's gender, preferred pronouns, sexual orientation, abilities, ethnic identity, survivor status or life experiences and to never be derogatory or dismissive about these things.
- To be prepared to challenge hateful, discriminatory or oppressive language.
- If challenged, to not behave defensively or in retaliation, but to listen and think and learn.
- To respect each other's physical and emotional boundaries, always getting explicit verbal consent before touching someone or crossing boundaries.
- To be conscious and considerate of how much they are speaking and to make attempts to avoid dominating discussions. We encourage participants to listen to views which are

different from their own but to feel confidence in expressing opposition in an appropriate way.

This policy shall apply to all AUSA spaces, including but not limited to: Student Council, AGMs, committee meetings, sports and societies, informal AUSA events such as committee nights out or results parties, and on AUSA-related social media such as elections hashtags or event pages and groups.

### **Sensitive Content Warnings**

AUSA strives to be a place where contentious topics can be debated accessibly and with consideration for the needs of all participants. However, we recognise that some topics are particularly difficult or distressing for some members to discuss. To facilitate productive debate while seeking to avoid unnecessarily causing distress for students, we operate a system of flagging up potentially difficult topics to allow members to take what action they see fit in advance of the discussion.

We recognise that it would be impossible to produce a definitive list of what could have a negative emotional or mental health impact on people but we ask that our members use discretion and sensitivity in interpreting this policy.

To this end, we ask that:

- Chairs of meetings, when circulating agendas, circulate detailed items that may be upsetting in a separate, clearly marked, email. For example, in a motions document for Council, a motion with a sensitive content warning would be sent under separate cover.
- Chairs of meetings use their discretion to suspend meetings if upsetting topics arise in order for affected members to have the opportunity to take what action they see fit. For example, pausing a meeting to give time for members to move to theback/leave
- Where possible, triggering agenda items will not be raised as AOCB and if needed to be raised through the chair, who will allow members to adjust for the discussion as above.

### **Enforcement**

While not a definitive list, any behaviour outlined in this policy shall be considered as 'conduct unbecoming of a member of the students' association' and liable for disciplinary action as outlined in byelaw 16 of the AUSA constitution.

Should AUSA groups be deemed to be breach of this policy, it shall be considered as 'deliberate contravention of the policies of the Association' and liable for disciplinary action as outlined in schedule.

### **No Platform Policy**

AUSA is dedicated to keeping its students safe on campus, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or ability, however some 'far-right' groups target students and Student Unions. Any individuals who are known to hold racist, fascist, sexist, ableist or LGBTphobic views are not allowed to speak at AUSA events, nor are they allowed to distribute any written or recorded material in AUSA that expresses those views. Similarly no elected Officer of AUSA will speak on a platform with an individual who is known to hold the aforementioned views. Decisions will be made by the Executive Committee by a simple majority vote of whether or not a speaker should be invited. Appropriate forum conveners will be consulted.

## **Publications, Communication and Marketing**

AUSA aims to ensure that all practice in relation to publications complies with this Policy:

- It is the responsibility of the Editor of any publication to ensure that all articles or publicity abides by the Equal Opportunities Policy.
- All communications must avoid stereotypical, sexist, racist, ageist, heterosexist or otherwise discriminatory images or language.
- AUSA will not allow any external advertising that contravenes the spirit or specifics of this policy to be associated with AUSA or displayed within AUSA premises.
- All documents, reading and other materials produced by AUSA are available in accessible formats. Where possible this should include contrast options.

The Association also recognises the role of language in the shaping and definition of attitudes and behaviour. The Association endorses the use of non-discriminatory language in all Association literature, and by both students and staff.

## **External Contractors**

All external contractors engaged with, advertising through or are in any way connected to AUSA must adhere to AUSA Equality and Diversity policy and ensure compliance with it. Events organised by outside bodies, within AUSA premises, should adhere to this Policy at all times. Staff members, student groups or officers engaging contractors will be responsible for ensuring this.

## **Responsibility**

The Welfare Officer will be responsible for being the primary representative and spokesperson for Equality and Diversity in AUSA and regarding all matters of equality relating to the membership. However, all staff and members are responsible for ensuring that their individual actions and areas of responsibility comply with this policy and the code of practice.

## **Complaints**

Any complaints of unfair treatment in accordance with this policy should be made in line with AUSA's complaints procedure.

Clarification on items held within this document should be addressed to the Welfare Officer in the first instance with final interpretation resting as per interpretation of the constitution as outline within AUSA's constitution.

## **Clarification of terms:**

- **Discriminatory behaviour**

This may be overt, covert or a combination of both and may be displayed as hostile remarks, innuendo, written abuse, physical assault, intimidation, threatening gestures or other ways. It is not the intention of the perpetrator, but the impact on the recipient that determines what constitutes harassment.

- **Discrimination**

To treat one particular group of people/an individual less favourably than others on the basis of gender, racial origin, nationality, sexual orientation, religious belief, political belief, disabilities, age, marital and civil partnership status, spent criminal convictions, health, HIV and AIDs status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, language, appearance, socio-economic status. This list is not exhaustive.

- 1. Direct (including by association and by perception)**

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Where an individual or group of people is treated less favourably than others for a reason related to any of the characteristics described above.

## **2. Indirect**

Where a requirement or condition, or circumstances or behaviour, has a negative or disproportionate effect on an individual or a group of people.

## **3. Harassment**

This occurs when a person harasses another on grounds of any of the characteristics described above, when his or her behaviour is unwanted, and when it has the purpose or effect of violating the other person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment for them.

- **Positive Action**

This takes into account the causes and effects of discrimination and the need to take steps to redress the imbalance and to promote equality of access and opportunity.

- **Racism**

The prejudice that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races or discriminatory/abuse behaviour towards members of another race.

- **Fascism**

A system of government marked by centralisation of authority under a dictator, stringent socioeconomic controls, suppression of the opposition through terror and censorship, and typically a policy of belligerent nationalism and racism.

- **Sexism**

Discrimination based on gender, especially discrimination against women or attitudes, conditions or behaviours that promote stereotyping of social roles based on gender.

- **LGBTphobia**

Extreme and irrational aversion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans\* people.