



UWTSD Student's Union

Inclusion Handbook

What is the purpose of this handbook?

This handbook has been created to help clubs and societies at UWTSD SU to be more considerate to inclusion and liberation. This handbook should help guide you to create and run your club/society in a way that all students are able to get involved. You can also learn how to support members of your club/society who may need reasonable adjustments made to increase their ability to participate and enjoy being a member.

Why is this important?

University is an amazing opportunity and can be the best times of a person's life, making new friends, finding yourself, getting your dream degree, activities and events and joining different clubs and societies.

Unfortunately, not everyone's experience is the same and there can be many missed opportunities. Some people feel outcast from their coursemates, from some events run by the SU and University, and many people feel excluded when it comes to participating in sports, clubs and societies.

Nobody likes to admit that they are biased; sometimes we don't even realise we are being biased. Nobody wants to think they are discriminating against others, being sexist or racist in any way. But sometimes our actions can encourage the exclusion of others.

Who are we biased against?

We can be biased against anybody, but usually we are biased towards anyone who is different to ourselves. Research suggests those most likely to be discriminated against are women, disabled students, black or mixed ethnicity students, international, student parents, mature students, postgraduates, students affiliated with religious groups and LGBTQ+ students. It should be reiterated that this list suggests those most likely to be discriminated against; it doesn't mean that everyone who belongs to this group is or feels discriminated against, but it's something to bear in mind. The Equality Act 2010 essentially ensures that everyone is legally entitled to the equal treatment and opportunities. It can be as simple as the way we

communicate with different students when they turn up to our first meeting, right up to the types of activities we put on as a sports club/society. Every interaction we have with students is an opportunity for us to be biased. If we don't recognise these biases and treat people unfairly, they don't get involved with sports or societies, and they come to feel alone, isolated and excluded from their own SU. It can be tricky to override your unconscious biases, especially when you're not sure what they are. It's best to accept that we're all likely to be biased in some respects, and that this will affect our actions and decisions.

There is no need to feel guilty, what is important is that we all take responsibility for monitoring our own actions to make UWTSD SU as inclusive as possible. We're all programmed to subconsciously categorise others, make prejudiced judgements and jump to conclusions. As long as we attempt to recognise when our actions and decisions are unjustly biased, we can prevent students feeling excluded and help to get every student more involved at UWTSD!

The basic tips when it comes to being inclusive –

- **Never leave anyone out**, the easiest way to do this is to always greet everyone in the same way and try to be enthusiastic with every new person you meet. Being open and kind to everyone is a basic way to be more inclusive.
- **Check yourself**, we can all be unconsciously biased, and it is important that when interacting with people we try not to judge and consider reflecting on our behaviour, attitude and way we communicate. An example of this could be: when advertising for new members of the Computer club, you should think about how you can make everyone feel this is the club for them, rather than being too specific of who can join like stating "This club would be better for people who are studying IT or Cloud computing". Instead of being specific and closing the club off to people who are studying something similar, state that the club is maybe more suited to specific courses, but anyone with an interest is welcome to attend a taster session and learn more skills from the current members.
- **Ask yourself: Are we being inclusive?** During the planning process of any event, activity, team meet up etc you should ensure that you are being inclusive. Think about barriers that could face your fellow members; for example if there is a member of your team who has physical disability such as having to use a wheelchair constantly, it wouldn't be the best idea to hold your training session on the 3rd floor of the University, where there is no lift availability. Regardless of if the rest of your team is able bodied, you must think inclusively. Change the room of your training session to somewhere with an active lift, or preferably on the ground floor.
- **Challenge your own assumptions**, as we already said, everyone is capable of being biased, and with that comes assumptions that we make about people based on many different factors. Sometimes an assumption may be correct, but a lot of the time we can be wrong, and by assuming we don't give

everyone and equal chance; as the saying goes: “Never judge a book by its cover”. An example of this is stereotyping. You may be at a Freshers Fair and trying to get people involved in your Cheerleading club; someone is walking towards you and instead of just asking if they're interested, you judge what they look like to see if they would be interested in cheerleading. Someone may dress quite “Goth” and you could assume they will be moody, and introverted, based on what people assume Goths are like. However, that person could have been very outgoing and may have been interested in the club had you reached out to them and treated them inclusively.

The next part of our guide explains some of the issues faced by our students who need liberating, and how you can ensure inclusivity in these areas to allow all students to fit in and be a valid member of your club or society. We focus mainly on students from the four student-led liberation networks.

Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority students.

Racism and prejudice – the appalling reality of these modern times is that Racism still exists. Some people actually think that racism isn't that big, or it doesn't happen around them or to their friends who are Black, Asian or from an Ethnic minority so it can't really be an issue. We have BME (Black and Ethnic Minorities) and Asian people in government etc now so how can racism still be a thing?

Unless you are BME or Asian you are unlikely to have experienced racism or be able to understand the awful affect it has on people. One of the major problems with stopping Racism is first ensuring people accept it is still a major issue, and that they help by not being part of the problem.

So how can your club or society do this?

First of all, some BME and Asian students may feel isolated or uncomfortable in a club or society that has more of one race/culture. If there is a club that has all white men and only one black man in it, he may feel socially isolated and unable to fully participate due to being the only person from a non-white background. How can you combat this? Be friendly and non-judgemental; a person is not defined by their race but by their actions. Be kind to everyone, welcome everyone in the same way, give everyone equal opportunities and make everyone feel involved in the club; that goes for anyone not just BME and Asian students.

When you are recruiting during Freshers, make sure to reach out to people of different races, genders etc, and if you recruit anyone to your club/society who is BME or Asian, then ensure they know that they could make a huge difference as a committee member or if they were to run for part-time officer positions in the SU. There aren't many role models from sport, business etc that are from BME and Asian communities, so having more diverse student officers in position is key to showing other students amazing role models. This can not only encourage others to become

leaders, but also feel confident enough to stepping out of their comfort zone and joining different clubs and societies.

LGBTQ+ Students.

Discrimination is REAL –

Our LGBTQ+ students may be worried about being discriminated against, particularly in activities like sports and religious groups. These worries may prevent them from attending 'Give it a Go' sessions and from becoming heavily involved with a club/society. Lots of LGBTQ+ people have faced bullying at some point in their life, which can have an affect on the extent to which they might want to get involved with a group.

When it comes to preventing discrimination, it is important to be open. Even something said as a joke on the side can have a negative impact on an LGBTQ+ person, so try to be mindful of what you say as a leader, but also call out members who make inappropriate comments.

Facilities -

Sometimes facilities are something we need to consider, particularly for out Transgender students; things like changing facilities can become a huge barrier when it comes to participating in sport activities. If you are ever worried you may not be being mindful about facilities or don't know what should be provided, then please contact the SU for help and advice.

Lack of role models: In the UK there continues to be a low percentage of positive LGBTQ+ role models, particularly in sports. We don't expect you to tackle this issue, but by showing support and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community openly it can help encourage LGBTQ+ students to get involved. You could do this by mentioning in your constitution and on your club/society page that your society/activity is supportive of LGBTQ+ people. At Freshers you could sport a Pride flag and/or you can support the LGBTQ+ Students Liberation Network and ensure you speak up for LGBTQ+ voices by using your platform to raise awareness for issues.

Disabled Students.

Accessibility –

Sometimes to make an activity more accessible, you will need to have equipment that everyone can use; when budgeting it would be a good idea to include an allowance to buy inclusive resources.

Remember that being inclusive of everyone is just not possible, for example if none of the suitable venues are accessible. You don't have to cancel; just make an effort to find a long-term solution and make sure your next activity is accessible to all.

Disclosure & Support –

Students with disabilities (Physical, Mental, learning difficulties or any other condition) do not have to tell you about their condition, but if they want to then it's great that they trust you and want to be open with you! It can be very scary for someone to reveal a disability so try reassuring them that they can have trust in you; also try to be accommodating to their condition with the activities you organise. Remember to keep their disability confidential - they might trust you with the issue or think that you need to know to help them participate, but they might not want every member of the group knowing.

Reasonable Adjustments -

It is a legal requirement to make reasonable adjustments to allow those with disabilities to participate fully in activities. Some common examples of reasonable adjustments are:

- Selecting wheelchair-accessible venues and lecture rooms (If any rooms on campus are inaccessible you should make staff or the SU aware, so the issue can be looked into).
- If you're doing a presentation, don't rely solely on visual aids; printing text on coloured backgrounds can make posters/leaflets/presentations much easier for dyslexic people to read. Some things like flashing images may affect students with epilepsy and certain types of Autism. If you would like to know more about how to do this, you could contact the Study Skills department or ask the SU if they are aware of any helpful resources.
- If offering members food, ask for specific requirements but always try to offer a vegetarian/gluten free option. Also be mindful of reasons why people may not be able to eat, and don't pressure them to attend events etc. If they're not be able to eat, for example someone with an eating disorder may not want to attend an event full of food, then this shouldn't be questioned. Also students who follow Islam may be observing Ramadan and they will not be able to eat or drink during a certain time-frame.

Commitment –

There are many reasons why someone may need to leave any activity you're running, and they may not wish to share those reasons with you. Don't take it personally - they might just come back once they're feeling better. As a club/society leader you should try and make sure students feel they can leave training etc in an emergency or if there is something stopping them from participating fully. You could

say you don't need to know the reason for their absence, but if it is something that will happen often it may be helpful to share some information confidentially with you. The student feeling that they can trust you and share information affecting their commitment could especially be helpful if other team members are judging why they aren't attending etc. Alternatively, you could discuss with your team that sometimes people may need to leave activities etc and that we should try not to make assumptions around that person's commitment.

Spectrum Conditions –

Remember that some conditions are a spectrum, with symptoms that vary from person to person. Do not presume you know exactly what one person's needs are because you have a friend at home with the same condition – their condition could impact parts of their life more or less than you think you know. This comes back down to not judging or making assumptions and treating everyone equally. For example, sometimes people think that if you're in a wheelchair you may also have learning difficulties, but there are many people in wheelchairs who have higher IQ's and common-sense levels than an able-bodied person. Or sometimes people think Autism is the same for everyone, when Autism itself has a huge spectrum in terms of where people fit in, from having slight OCD to having uncontrollable meltdowns.

Odd vs Unacceptable behaviour –

Do not condemn anyone's behaviour simply because it's unusual. If someone's behaviour is disruptive, hurtful or dangerous, be critical on those grounds and not simply because it's unusual. This could mean if someone who has a disability is bullying another team member, you excuse this behaviour based on the assumption the person doing it has a disability; you think they may not know what they are doing, instead of considering the fact they could full well know that what they are doing is wrong. You are not only discriminating, but you are failing to stop something happening to another member, which your constitution states is unacceptable

Social Relationships –

Disabilities can sometimes cause difficult social situations; some disabilities may affect communication or ability to know when someone is joking or not. Try and treat everyone the same to begin with, and adapt your responses based on how a person deals with what you're saying. If in doubt, seek advice from the SU Advice & Representation team.

Women Students.

Lad Culture –

One of the main issues is the idea of 'lad culture'. This sort of attitude can be seen at sports club initiations, and in general is heavily tied in with alcohol-centred events. Examples include sexist and misogynistic jokes under the guise of 'banter' i.e., the idea that sexist comments are okay if you 'just meant it as a joke'. e.g. a player falls and cries because they're in pain and they then get made to feel bad by being told their "acting like a girl". You have to directly tackle sexist language and/or jokes, and try to create events and initiations that are inclusive. Try offering training sessions that are mixed genders, and be ahead of some competitions that still only allow the basic male and female teams.

Events –

Think before you decide on any fancy-dress themes for evenings out; often themes are: a) gender divided and biased towards men, and b) can make women feel degraded and/or sexualised, which can be unnerving and off-putting. Think about using universal themes rather than ones with an explicit gender divide. Not all girls are comfortable in/want to wear dresses.

Language –

Call people out on misogynist language; this might seem petty or prudish, but more broadly it can upset people, and it can begin to change the subconscious beliefs within the group.

Practise time –

Ensure that both men's and women's teams have equal access to equipment and practise slots. Work with different teams and the University/SU to ensure fair allocation of practice time is given.

Visibility –

Make women in your society visible; if you can, encourage them to run for committee positions or to help with activities and at Freshers - this would show you are trying to be more inclusive and appreciate women.

Final points.

To summarise this guide, we would remind you to be considerate and fair to everyone. When drawing up your constitution, work as a team to write down the rules and statements of support for all those student groups that need liberating.

You should also consider the stigma around other students such as postgraduate students, mature students, student carers and parents, students of faith and international students, who may have issues with participating in clubs and societies.

We hope this guide has been a helpful start to becoming more inclusive and diverse as clubs and societies. It's possible that not everything is covered in this guide, and

you're always welcome to reach out to your Student Opportunities Co-ordinators for more helpful advice.

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