CLUB GUIDELINES

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2022

OU CLUBS
STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

GETTING STARTED

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About our clubs

Clubs are an amazing way to meet new students, express your interest in various topics or hobbies, and develop a sense of community. Since clubs were introduced in 2018, they have grown exponentially with club members now in the tens of thousands! Here are a couple of quotes from our club members:

"I'm alumni but still help to run the OU Students Association Language Club. I asked a question the Facebook page & I've had so many wonderful answers from our linguistically diverse community. I'm very grateful to the…and the OU Students for our clubs".

"The hosts are very approachable, they are knowledgeable about OU matters and can always direct to the solution for problems, conversations are always light hearted and everyone is made to feel very welcome." Becoming a club lead offers benefits to the individual, with multiple transferrable skills such as communication, presentation and collaboration just to name a few. To find out more information on how to set up a club, please see our guidance on clubs, which is detailed below.

Core principles

Please see below the Association's current code of conduct, as well as the wider guidance to clubs, followed by the support clubs are offered from the Association:

1.Core principles

OU Students Association clubs are separate legal entities, however when associated with the OU Students Association, club members are expected to:
• Show respect to clubs leads, admins and fellow club members - we want everyone to feel safe and welcome in this space.
• Keep the chat clean and friendly.
• Avoid using language which could cause upset or offence.
• We have zero tolerance to bullying – see our Values and Behaviour Policy.
• Be aware that the University's Computing Code of Conduct is applicable in this space.
In addition to the updated core principles, we also expect you to:
• Act in an open and responsible manner. Take care when discussing things where emotions run high (e.g. politics and religion) and show respect for others' opinions.
• Be transparent, have fun, and connect with others.

2. Equal opportunities and discrimination

Whilst promoting free and open discussion, the OU Students Association will not tolerate discriminatory behaviour or harassment whether aimed at its members or by them at others. Club membership must be open to any member of the Association. Every effort should be made to ensure that the activities of the club are accessible to all, and are planned with this aim in mind. If you need further advice in this respect, please contact us at oustudents-clubs@open.ac.uk.

3. Environment

These clubs are designed to create a positive and welcoming space to all. By setting up the club, you are acknowledging that it is being run for the benefit of students. The Association expects the clubs to be run for students in an appropriate manner. This includes no money or data being exchanged between the club leads and the club members.

4. Individual opinion

The OU Students Association values and respects that OU Students Association club members are independent and free to offer their opinions on issues, but in doing so, are expected to bear the core principles in mind. Considerable care needs to be taken to ensure that the OU Students Association is not brought into disrepute in any publicly accessible media.

5. Purpose of the club

We will not accept applications from clubs that are too similar in purpose/intention to existing clubs, societies or groups.

6. Application

At the application stage, we will ask the club lead to complete the club application form, along with submission of a logo if they wish (a logo will be provided by the Association otherwise). Clubs need to have a second club lead assigned at the point of application and need 5 members before their application will be considered. Other criteria includes: the club lead and second lead need to be a current member of the Association, as well as providing a link to their platform they intend to use as their main source of communication with the other club members.

7. Club applications which relate to protected characteristics

When assessing a club's application, if we deem it to relate to one of the 12 protected characteristics, the Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) will be invited to be part of the Clubs Application Panel and the EDI and Student Welfare Team will be consulted. DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks and additional training and support will be considered where it is deemed necessary.

8. Volunteers

By creating a new club, the club lead and second lead will automatically become registered volunteers, which will require compulsory training on Safeguarding, GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and Prevent. In turn, this will help club leads be better prepared for any meet ups or events they host. This will need to be renewed every year, in order to validate volunteer status.

9. Contact information

We will ask each new club to create a separate club email, as opposed to having a personal email as the mode of contact. This will let other members of the club team access and respond to emails more quickly, streamlining the administrative progresses.

10. Data and Finance

It is not envisaged that clubs would ever store or exchange data or finance with members. The Students Association would strongly discourage this. Any exchange of data or finance is entirely at the risk of those involved and the Students Association takes no liability.

11. Social media

Please adhere to the core principles when communicating on any social media platform. If a mistake is made (e.g. spelling/grammar mistake or incorrect event date) correct it immediately and be clear about what you've done to fix it. Be transparent when using social media, however be aware of your privacy. Do not put up any contact details that you do not wish for anyone to know. Please refer to the Social Media Guidelines 2021-2023 document for more information and guidance.

12. Maintenance of the club

Clubs will be required to have annual checks, which club leads/second leads/administrators will need to complete. This includes verifying their Personal Identifier numbers, to check they are still members of the Association and renewing their volunteering training. These annual check-ins will also help determine whether any clubs will need to be removed from the Association website. If there has been no response from a club for an entire academic year, we will assume the club is no longer functioning. We will also be holding regular meetings with club leads and second leads, to give them an opportunity to share what they have been up to, as well as networking with other clubs and sharing best practise.

13. General application of this code of conduct

This code will apply to OU Students Association club leads, second leads and members whilst the club is still associated with the Association. The intention is to ensure that the standard of conduct expected from students is consistent throughout the OU Students Association.

14. Disciplinary action

If a club does not respect the Association's principles and code of conduct and cannot be resolved through discussions with the club leads, then the Association will disaffiliate the club and it will be removed from the website.

The support offered to clubs

Contacting the Students Association
If the club encounters any difficult issues, whether this is through social media or in person it is important to know that the OU Student Association is here to support you. Please do not hesitate to contact us for guidance. The Association has a zero tolerance to bullying, either online or in person. If you feel uncomfortable at any point with a comment that another person has posted, please feel free to get in contact with the Association at oustudents-clubs@open.ac.uk. If the issue persists with no sign of improvement and new boundaries are not respected, then that member should be removed from the club and blocked.

Useful tools for getting started
Once your club is associated with the OU Students Association, we will post your club details and contact on our website, and can update these details as your club grows. As well as uploading your club on the Association website, the Association will provide you with a starter pack of useful templates, links, hints and tips. This will help create a starting point for the first steps to take as a new club. As well as the fundamental, compulsory training each club lead will need to take, there is additional support and training provided to clubs that have a purpose related to students with protected characteristics. New club leads will be added to a club lead chat group. This is a space designed for discussions between club leads to share anything you have been working on or ask any questions/take suggestions from other club leads. It's a great opportunity for clubs to branch out and share best practise with other club leads.

Branding
Once associated, clubs are welcome to use the official club logo in their communications to help students identify associated clubs. We ask that clubs do not alter the proportions of the logo or any of the colouring, and make sure it's placed on a background where it is legible. The OU and OU Students Association logos are subject to copyright and should not be used.

Social media

The Student Community Team at the Association can also provide support in the initial set up of clubs social media pages, if required. A club may benefit from setting up a Twitter, Facebook, and/or Instagram account, as this helps to create and strengthen a community for the club. Always be clear and concise in communications and try to respond promptly. The OU Students Association also has a newsletter and magazine (the Hoot) that can be used to promote your club, as well as on all our social media channels. We are always keen to know what you've been up to, and showcasing it on all our various platforms. Email oustudents-community@open.ac.uk to find out more. Collaborating with other clubs is a great way to reach a new audience with your club and the Association can help to put you in touch with other associated clubs.

Unacceptable behaviour

If you are having issues within your club, whether it be bullying, harassment, or any form of unacceptable behaviour, please reach out to the Community team at the Association. They are there to help you with these issues and empower you to take necessary steps to reclaim a safe environment for your club. Both the Values and Behaviour policy and our Resolving and Settling Differences Policy apply within your club. Similarly, if there is a change of circumstances and it is no longer sustainable to keep running the club, then please reach out to the clubs mailbox at oustudents-clubs@open.ac.uk to see if there's anything we can do to help.

A club may want or need to close for the following reasons: your club has been very successful and you want to become a society; your club has not been as successful as you hoped and you now need to close it; the leads have finished with the Open University; there has been significant inactivity for more than a year in the club; or there has been a consistent breach of club guidelines and disciplinary issues.

Moving on from a club

Clubs can also act as a springboard if they wish to become a Society or Group. In addition, clubs have provided a way for struggling societies to maintain their link with the Association and their members. The Association is able to facilitate both these transitions when required.

Closing down a club

Depending on the circumstances, we encourage the club to see if there's anything the Association can do to support you. If you are certain that you want to close the club, then please email the clubs mailbox to notify us, so that we can remove your club from the Association website. Alternatively, we will be emailing the club and its club leads to notify them that their club will shortly be removed from the Association website.

Data storage

We will be keeping your club's information for a year, in case anything is to change, before we delete it from our records. We will send through a confirmation email once it's done.