University of Southampton Students' Union
Constitution of: Southampton's Debating Union

Notes

- You should only need to edit the text in the editable fields, including adding or changing the Committee Member roles as you see fit.
- If you want to make any changes other than the highlighted sections, please discuss these with the Union first – suactivities@soton.ac.uk. The constitution needs to remain compatible with the SUSU Articles, Rules and any other relevant policies.
- Your full name will usually start with "University of Southampton …", so for example "University of Southampton Football Club". Your short name or acronym can be whatever you like it to be.
- Your Group must have an elected committee which consists of at least President (or equivalent role), Treasurer and Wellbeing & Inclusion Officer (or equivalent role). The committee must all be full members and there must only be one President and one Treasurer
- This model constitution was last updated and approved by the Union in May 2026.

1. Constitution Scope and Responsibilities

1.1. All aspects of the Group will be delivered in accordance with this constitution and the Committee is responsible for ensuring this happens.

1.2. The Committee is responsible for ensuring the group meets and maintains the conditions for affiliation, as defined in Rule 8 'Student Groups' in the Union's Rules.

2. Name

The association's name is Southampton's Debating Union also to be known as SDU and from now on the 'Group'.

3. Group Objectives

3.1. The Objectives of the Group are:

3.1.1. Objective one: The Group should be a forum for the University

3.1.2. Objective two: The Group should put on competitions for other Universities

3.1.3. Objective three: The Group should provide training to members

3.1.4. Objective three: The Group should aim to engage and inform a wide audience

3.1.5. The SDU should provide extra debating opportunities in Inter-Varsity Competitions and Opens

3.2. The Group is to be operated solely for the purpose of the above Objects.

3.3. If an Objective becomes unlawful for any reason, then it will automatically cease to be valid and the Committee must promptly update the Objectives by following Clause 15 'Changes to the Constitution'.

4. Membership

4.1. Only the following people may be members of the Group:

4.1.1. Full Members of the Union (as defined in the Union's Rules) may become Full Members of the Group; and

4.1.2. Associate Members of the Union (as defined in the Union's Rules) may become Associate Members of the Group.

4.2. Membership is not transferable.

4.3. Only Full Members may:

4.3.1. be elected to the Committee; or

4.3.2. vote at a General Meeting.

4.4. The Group may charge a fee for admission to Membership, which may be set by a Meeting of the Committee. Different categories of membership may exist, but conflicts of interest must not result in higher or lower fees being charged to any individual member.

4.5. The Committee must keep a register of members (the 'Register') on the Student Groups Hub provided by the Students' Union at www.susu.org.

4.6. The Committee may not refuse an application for Membership unless they have demonstrated to the Union that the applicant:

4.6.1. is not eligible for Full or Associate membership;

4.6.2. is not eligible for membership following a disciplinary process conducted by the Union or the University; or

4.6.3. has been barred from membership by the Group as per Clause 13 'Disciplinary Action'.

4.7. The Committee may limit access to some activities to make sure the student experience comes first.

4.7.1. Some activities, or types of activities, may be limited to Full Members only; or

4.7.2. Full Members may be given first access to activities, with any remaining places offered to Associate Members.

4.7.3. This may apply to activities such as sessions, classes, competitions, events, trips, or tours.

4.7.4. The Committee must apply any limits or prioritisation fairly and consistently.

4.7.5. Any change to how activities are limited or prioritised must be agreed by a vote of the Committee.

4.8. Membership ends:

4.8.1. immediately if the Member wishes to leave the group and gives written notice to the Committee;

4.8.2. immediately upon a Member no longer qualifying for their category of Membership; and

4.8.3. immediately when membership is revoked following a disciplinary process as per Clause 13, 'Disciplinary Action', or following a disciplinary process undertaken by the Union or the University;

5. General Meetings

5.1. The General Meeting is the Group's highest decision-making body, as long as it follows the rules in this Constitution.

5.2. The Group must hold an Annual General Meeting ('**AGM**') between 1st February and 31st May in each academic year, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Union.

5.3. A General Meeting that is not an Annual General Meeting is called an Extraordinary General Meeting ('**EGM**').

5.4. The Committee may call an Extraordinary General Meeting at any time.

5.5. The Committee must call an Extraordinary General Meeting if requested to do so in writing by at least five Full Members of the Group. This ensures Members can collectively challenge non-disciplinary decisions and uphold democratic accountability.

5.5.1. The Members' written request must include an agenda for the matters they wish to be raised at the requested EGM.

5.5.2. If the Committee does not announce an EGM within seven days of their receipt of the five of more Full Members' written request, the Members may proceed to hold an EGM as per Clause 6 'Proceedings of General Meetings'.

5.6. The Committee must call an Extraordinary General Meeting if the Union requests them to do so.

6. Proceedings of General Meetings

6.1. Notice:

6.1.1. The minimum period of notice required to hold an Annual General Meeting is ten calendar days. The minimum period of notice required to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting is three days.

6.1.2. The notice must specify the date, time and place of the General Meeting, and an agenda for the General Meeting.

6.1.3. If the General Meeting is an AGM, the notice must say so and must invite nominations as per Clause 9 'Appointment of the Committee'.

6.1.4. Written notice must be given to all Members and to the Committee.

6.1.5. Reasonable steps should be taken to ensure Full Members can attend and participate in person or online.

6.2. Chairing:

6.2.1. General Meetings will be chaired by the President.

6.2.2. If the President is not available, or is not present within fifteen minutes of the time appointed for the General Meeting:

6.2.3. if notified in writing to the Committee ahead of the General Meeting, the President may appoint another Committee Member to act as Chair;

6.2.4. otherwise, the Committee Members present may choose a Committee Member to act as Chair;

6.2.5. otherwise, the Full Members who are present may choose a Full Member to chair.

6.3. The quorum for a General Meeting will be a simple majority of the total number of Full Members of the Group, not including Committee, unless otherwise agreed with the Union.

6.3.1. Associate Members may speak at General Meetings at the Chair's invitation.

6.4. Voting on matters related to the Group:

6.4.1. Every Full Member present at a General Meeting, with the exception of the Chair, will be allowed to cast one vote upon every voting matter. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair will have a casting vote.

6.4.2. Decisions may only be made by at least a simple majority of votes at a quorate General Meeting.

6.4.3. All votes, except for Committee elections (Clause 9), will be decided by a show of hands or secret ballot, as chosen by the Chair.

6.5. The Committee is responsible for ensuring that:

6.5.1. accurate minutes are taken of the General Meeting, including the decisions made and where appropriate the reasons for the decisions; and

6.5.2. the minutes are made available to all Members within 14 days of the General Meeting.

6.6. Reports:

6.6.1. If the General Meeting is an AGM, the Chair should invite the members of the Committee to present a report of their activities whilst in office.

6.6.2. The Treasurer must present the Group's accounts to the Members at the AGM.

6.7. Resolutions:

6.7.1. Any Full Member may propose a decision to be discussed and voted upon at a General Meeting by giving at least one day's written notice in advance.

7. Officers and the Committee

7.1. The Committee, made up of officers appointed under Clause 9, will manage the day-to-day operation of the Group and its property.

7.2. The Group must have the following officers:

7.2.1. President.
The President will oversee the organisation and management of the Group and the Committee as a whole; ensure the officers' accountability to Members, the Committee, and the Union; and represent the Group to all external interests. The group must have only one President.

7.2.2. Wellbeing & Inclusion Officer.
A Wellbeing & Inclusion Officer will work to create a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment across the Group, to act as a welfare contact for the group in case of any concerns, and to guide Members toward the appropriate support services when needed.

7.2.3. Treasurer.
The treasurer will oversee the financing of the Group, set the Group's budget, and maintain the accounts of the Group. The group must have only one Treasurer.

7.3. The Group has the following officers in addition:

7.3.1. Vice President.
The Vice-President shall be responsible for no single task, but instead look after non-specific areas and manage the day-to-day running of the Group. The Vice-President

shall chair all meetings of the Committee where the President is unable to do so. The Vice-President shall look after the society mascot "Staggy" and ensure it is brought to competitions and other relevant events.

7.3.2. Social and Events Secretary.
The first Social Secretary shall be elected at the AGM as the Socials and Events Secretary. They shall share all general responsibilities of the Social Secretaries with the Socials and Speakers Secretary. The Socials and Events Secretary shall be responsible for any non-British Parliamentary debate activities. The Socials and Events Secretary shall be responsible for any activity relating to Group socials and events. They shall be responsible for external events or programmes concerning the image of the society. They shall coordinate with relevant Team Representatives and other Committee members where appropriate.

7.3.3. Social and Speakers Secretary
The second Social Secretary shall be elected at the AGM as the Socials and Speakers Secretary. They shall share the general responsibilities of the Social Secretaries with the Socials and Events Secretary. They have the responsibilities previously held by the Speaker Coordination Officer. The Socials and Speakers Secretary shall work with the President to coordinate the guest speaker programme. They shall be responsible for coordinating with any relevant Team Representatives or other Committee members. They shall be responsible for tasks pertaining to improving engagement with members or increasing membership. The Socials and Speakers Secretary shall promote SDU events in a timely manner.

7.3.4. Secretary.
The Secretary shall keep minutes of Group meetings which shall be available to all members of the Group upon request and to the Clubs and Societies Officer or VP Activities if required. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to deal with the Group email. The Secretary shall take minutes at Committee meetings, EGMs and the AGM. The Secretary shall take the register at Committee meetings. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to update the Constitution when it has been amended by the procedure found in Section 10. The Secretary is the custodian of the Constitution and, along with the Societies Officer, shall retain a copy of the Constitution. The Secretary shall administer the Group's social media platforms and may send emails to members.

7.3.5. Training Officer.
The Training Officer is in charge of the training and delivery program and structure of Thursday sessions. In charge of internal Thursday debates. In charge of securing external debaters for any sessions, trials or similar. Maintain relations in the South West, Welsh and other important circuits. Liaise closely with Competitions Officer especially for external competitions e.g. Southampton Open.

7.3.6. Competitions Officer.
The Competitions Officer will organise teams and judges for competitions that the

SDU attends and will be in charge of the delegation at competitions. Organise any trials or similar for the SDU. Organise SDU internal competitions. Maintain relations in the South West, Welsh and other important circuits. Liaise closely with Training Officer especially for external competitions e.g. Southampton Open. Liaise closely with the Treasurer regarding grant applications for competitions.

7.3.7. Advanced Training Officer
A new position on the Committee shall be established under the provisional title of Advanced Training Coordination Officer. This role with have the following responsibilities : In charge of the structure of the advanced training program for Monday sessions. In charge of organising Monday debates. In charge of delegating who delivers Monday advanced training sessions. Liaise closely with Training Officer and Competitions Officer. Admission to advanced training will be up to the discretion of the advanced training officer and IV team. This new position will join the intervarsity team. This new role will replace the Member without Portfolio that is elected at the AGM. There will still be a maximum of 5 Team representatives (i.e. to be elected in EGM). This role will be 6th in the Order of succession (everything else moving down). This role will be voted on 6th in the AGM (before Vice-President).

7.4. The number of Officers on the Committee must not be less than three. There is no maximum number. There must always be:

7.4.1. one President;

7.4.2. one Treasurer;

7.4.3. at least one Wellbeing & Inclusion Officer

7.5. An officer or ordinary member of the Committee will cease to hold office:

7.5.1. immediately if they are no longer a Full Member of the Group;

7.5.2. with effect from their resignation by written notice to the Committee;

7.5.3. with effect from being removed from office as an outcome from a disciplinary process, as per Clause 13, 'Disciplinary Action'; and

7.5.4. with effect from being removed from office as an outcome from a disciplinary process by the Union or the University.

8. Meetings of the Committee

8.1. The Committee can manage their meetings as they see fit, as long as they follow the guidance outlined in this section of the constitution and adhere to the Union's Code of Conduct (Rule 7 in the Union's Rules).

8.2. Any member of the Committee may request the President (or the Secretary, if the Group has one) to call a meeting of the Committee.

8.3. The President or Secretary must call a Meeting of the Committee within 14 days if requested to do so by a member of the Committee.

8.4. Meetings of the Committee will be chaired by the President.

8.5. If the President is not available, or is not present within fifteen minutes of the time appointed for the meeting:

8.5.1. if notified in writing to the Committee ahead of the Committee meeting, the President may appoint another Committee Member to act as Chair; and

8.5.2. otherwise, the Committee Members present may choose a Committee Member to act as Chair.

8.6. The quorum for a meeting of the Committee will be a simple majority of the total number of members of the Committee in office.

8.7. No decision may be made by a meeting of the Committee, unless a quorum is present at the time the decision is made.

8.8. Members with a conflict of interest must not vote on the decision and must not be included when calculating the quorum for that decision.

8.9. Every member of the Committee, with the exception of the Chair, will be allowed one vote on every voting matter. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair will have a casting vote.

8.10. All Committee decisions must be made by a simple majority of votes at a quorate meeting of the Committee by show of hands or secret ballot at the Chair's discretion.

8.11. Only Committee members present (in person or online) may vote.

8.12. Minutes must be taken of all meetings at a meeting of the Committee, including the decisions made.

9. Appointment of the Committee

9.1. The Full Members of the Group in General Meeting will appoint the officers and other members of the Committee by election within the AGM window of 1st February until 31st May.

9.1.1. Elections for the Committee will be held before the Annual General Meeting. By-elections for vacant roles will be held before an Extraordinary General Meeting. Elections will be held electronically through the Union.

9.1.2. A Single Transferrable Vote (STV) system will be used for all elections.

9.1.3. In the event that the Union's online election system is inaccessible, a First-Past-The-Post system may be used by the Group's Committee with approval by the Union.

9.1.4. In all elections Re-Open Nominations, 'RON', will be a candidate. An election yielding a result of RON will be re-run as a by-election.

9.2. The Chair of the General Meeting will publicly announce election results and must do so accurately. If members believe the count is wrong, they can request a recount by the Union.

9.3. A member of the Committee will assume office with effect from the 1st of July of the year they were elected, unless another date is agreed with the Union.

9.4. A member of the Committee will retire with effect at the end of the day 30th June of the academic year in which they have held office, unless another date is agreed in writing with the Union.

9.5. The committee information will be updated on the Student Groups Hub provided by the Union at www.susu.org.

9.6. The retiring Committee must notify the Union within seven days if they wish to run any by-elections for unfilled positions.

9.7. If the President role, Wellbeing & Inclusion Officer role, and/or Treasurer role is vacant following the committee election (AGM), this automatically means a by-election (EGM) should be run.

9.8. If the President, Wellbeing & Inclusion Officer, or Treasurer for the following academic year is not appointed before the AGM window has closed, or after one by-election has been held within the AGM window, the Group will disaffiliate from the Union (in line with Rule 8 'Student Groups' of the Union's Rules).

9.9. A retiring Committee member must give all relevant information and documents to their successor or the incoming President before their term ends on 30th June.

9.10. A Member may not be appointed a member of the Committee if they have been barred from becoming a member of the Committee following a disciplinary procedure by the Group as per clause 13 'Disciplinary Action' or following disciplinary action by the Union or the University.

10. Financial Management

10.1. The Committee shares responsibility for managing the Group's finances properly.

10.2. The Group's finances will be run through the Union's digital Money Hub system. The Group may not hold a bank account with an external bank or building society.

10.3. All income and property must be used only to support the Group's Objectives.

10.4. Committee members can be reimbursed for reasonable expenses they incur while working for the Group but should get approval from the Treasurer beforehand whenever possible.

11. Irregularities and Saving Provisions

11.1. Committee decisions remain valid provided that, at the time the decision was made, a sufficient number of votes were cast by members who were eligible to vote.

11.2. Any vote cast by a person who, at the time of voting, was:

11.2.1. disqualified from holding office;

11.2.2. retired or required to step down;

11.2.3. not allowed to vote due to conflict of interest

must be disregarded and does not count towards the decision.

11.3. Members can challenge a Committee or General Meeting decision through a Point of Order only if a procedural error clearly harmed a member of the Group.

12. Conflicts of Interests and Conflicts of Loyalties

12.1. A Member of the Committee must:

12.1.1. declare any personal interest in decisions or transactions that hasn't already been disclosed.

12.1.2. step away from discussions where a conflict between their duty and personal interest might arise.

12.1.3. not vote on, or be counted in the quorum for, a decision connected to their conflict of interest.

13. Disciplinary Action

13.1. The Committee cannot commence disciplinary action without approval from the Union.

13.2. The Committee may take disciplinary action against any Member of the Group as a consequence of conduct by the Member which is:

13.2.1. detrimental to the reputation of the Group and/or the Students' Union and/or the University.

13.2.2. incompatible with the Objectives of the Group (see Clause 3, 'Group Objectives');

13.2.3. in contravention of any provision of this Constitution; and/or

13.2.4. in breach of the Union's Code of Conduct (Rule 7 in the Union's Rules).

13.3. Any disciplinary hearing must be conducted in an impartial, balanced, and fair manner, considering all relevant representations on the matter. The Committee must follow the Union's disciplinary action and processes guidelines for Groups throughout the process.

13.4. Members subject to disciplinary action by the committee have the right of appeal to the Union. The appeals process is set out in the disciplinary guidelines.

13.5. A full report of all disciplinary action taken by the Group in the previous year must be presented at the AGM. The preparation and presentation of this report must follow the Union's disciplinary guidelines.

13.6. The outcome of any disciplinary action must be shared with the Union within 7 days of the Committee's decision.

14. Affiliation to External Organisations

14.1. The Group can become an affiliate of an external organisation if:

14.1.1. the aims of that organisation are in line with and relevant to the Objectives of the Group;

14.1.2. the Members derive a material benefit from the affiliation;

14.1.3. no Policy of the Union or law is breached by the affiliation; and

14.1.4. a decision to affiliate is passed by the Members in General Meeting.

14.2. The Group's affiliation to an external organisation will end immediately:

14.2.1. at the conclusion of each Annual General Meeting after affiliation, unless the Members in General Meeting agree to re-affiliate at each AGM as per sub-clause (14.1); or

14.2.2. if a decision to disaffiliate is passed by the Members in General Meeting.

14.3. All external affiliations and disaffiliations must be reported to the Union within seven days.

14.4. The Union reserves the right to reject external affiliations that don't meet the requirements under 14.1, or if the affiliation brings, or risk bringing, the Union or the University into disrepute and/or that are incompatible with the Union's charitable objectives. The Group must obtain the Union's prior approval before voting on affiliation with an external organisation.

14.5. For the avoidance of doubt, the Union and the University are not external organisations for the purposes of this Clause 14.

15. Changes to the Constitution

15.1. The Group may make changes to this Constitution provided that changes:

15.1.1. are provisionally agreed to by the Union in writing in advance of the changes being put to a General Meeting for approval;

15.1.2. do not change the Objectives in a way that undermines or works against the previous objectives of the Group;

15.1.3. do not invalidate any prior decision of the Members in General Meeting or a Meeting of the Committee;

15.1.4. are agreed to by at least a two-thirds majority of the Full Members present at a quorate General Meeting;

15.1.5. receive final formal approval by the Union.

15.2. The rules of this Constitution will be subordinate to those of the Union's Articles, Rules, and Policies.

15.3. The Committee and the Union will retain a copy of this Constitution, which the Committee must make available to Members upon request.

16. Dissolution and Disaffiliation

16.1. An affiliated student group may dissolve or disaffiliate from SUSU at any time and for any reason as long as their members have voted to approve this.

16.2. Dissolution or disaffiliation could happen in the following ways:

16.2.1. The Group agrees to dissolve. This means the Group will cease to exist.

16.2.2. The Group agrees to disaffiliate from the Union. This means the Group continues to exist as an unaffiliated student group.

16.2.3. The Union disaffiliates the Group because of a disciplinary decision, or because it no longer meets the Union's affiliation requirements.

16.3. If the Group is dissolved or disaffiliated, the Committee stays in charge until all of the Group's affairs are properly wrapped up.

16.4. To dissolve the Group or to disaffiliate the Group from the Union (16.1.1 or 16.1.2), at least two-thirds of the Full Members at a General Meeting must agree.

16.5. The Committee must gather all the Group's assets and make sure all debts and obligations are paid.

16.6. Following dissolution or disaffiliation of the Group, any leftover money or property must, with approval from the Union,

16.6.1. transferred to another group within the Union similar aims, or

16.6.2. if possible, be used for the Group's original purpose, or

16.6.3. used in another way approved in writing in advance by the Union.

16.7. Members can decide (before or at the time of dissolution or disaffiliation) how the remaining assets should be used, as long as it follows the rules above. The Committee must follow that decision.

16.8. Members cannot receive any of the leftover money or assets personally.

16.9. The Committee must securely destroy the Group's register and all other data when the Group is dissolved.

16.10. The Committee must inform the Activities Team within seven days that the Group has been dissolved or disaffiliated. If required, they must also send the Union the Group's final accounts for the last accounting period.

17. Interpretation

In this Constitution:

17.1. '**Committee**' means the officers of the Group who are appointed per Clause 9.

17.2. '**The University'** means 'the University of Southampton'.

17.3. '**University term'** and '**academic year**' have the definitions set out in the University Calendar and Almanac.

17.4. '**Financial Benefit**' means a benefit, direct or indirect, which is either money or has a monetary value.

17.5. The '**Union**' means 'The University of Southampton Students' Union', operating as '**SUSU'**.

17.6. '**Articles'**, or '**Articles of the Students' Union**' mean the Students' Union's Articles of Association, accessible on the Students' Union's website.

17.7. '**Union's Rules**' and '**Policies**' have the definitions set out in the Articles, accessible on the Students' Union's website.

17.8. 'Simple Majority' means more than half of the individuals referenced.

18. Declaration

The Members of the Group in General Meeting Adopted this Constitution:

Date: 03/10/2026	**President Signature: Amelia Baker** **Treasurer Signature: Jamas Hodivala**

The Union will approve this Constitution by accepting its upload on the Student Groups Hub provided by the Students' Union at www.susu.org.