

Southampton Debating Union Constitution

1. Name

1. The name of this society is the “*Southampton Debating Union*” hereinafter referred to as the “*SDU*”.

2. Description of SDU

1. The SDU is a forum for individuals to come to contribute and learn about a wide variety of topics by participating in or observing debates.
2. The SDU hosts a main practice session, as well as another event, every week.
3. The SDU also provides extra debating opportunities in Inter-Varsity Competitions and Opens.

3. Aims of the SDU

1. The SDU should be a forum for the University.
2. The SDU should put on competitions for other Universities.
3. The SDU should provide training to members.
4. The SDU should aim to engage and inform a wide audience.
5. The SDU should provide extra debating opportunities in Inter-Varsity Competitions and Opens.

4. Membership

1. Full membership is open to any registered student who is on the University of Southampton SDU register.
2. An individual must be a full member to be eligible to compete in any competitions.
3. A full member of the SDU, must have either been on the Committee of the SDU, or have attended a minimum of five events within the last year.
4. Membership of the SDU shall not require the payment of a monetary membership, be that for full membership or associate membership.
5. Associate or Temporary members of SUSU may become Associate members of the SDU at the committee’s discretion. Associate and Temporary members shall be entitled to full rights and privileges as members except that they may
6. not (i) hold office, (ii) nominate or vote in elections or (iii) speak or vote at meetings.

5. Officers

1. To be an Officer of the SDU an individual must be a member of the SDU. An individual shall not hold two positions at the same time. If an individual is elected for a second position they are deemed to have automatically resigned from the first.
2. If the President relinquishes their post then, until a new President can be elected, the next in the order of succession becomes Acting President. An EGM to elect a new president must occur within two weeks of the Presidents’ resignation. The line of succession is found in **(12)**.

3. President

1. The President runs the SDU.
2. The President runs all sessions unless delegated. The committee should be consulted appropriately.
3. The President is responsible for any other tasks that do not come under the jurisdiction of other committee members.
4. The President is the chair for committee meetings and in the event of a tie possesses the deciding vote.
5. The President produces the agenda for committee meetings.
6. The President is in charge of calling a committee meeting on the advice of the Vice-President, Secretary, and any other relevant committee member.
7. The President can delegate his powers to other Officers of the SDU. The delegation shall be revocable at the President’s discretion.

8. The President shall have power to fill up all vacancies that may happen during the vacation period of the university, by granting commissions which shall expire 21 days after said period has ended.
4. **Vice-President**
 1. 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 SDU.
 2. The Vice-President shall chair all meetings of the Committee where the President is unable to do so.
 3. The Vice-President shall act as Health and Safety Officer for the SDU and Equity Officer in the event that the Equity Officer position is unfilled.
 4. The Vice-President shall look after the society mascot "Staggy" and ensure it is brought to competitions and other relevant events.
 5. **Speaker Coordination Officer**
 1. The Speaker Coordination Officer will work with the President to coordinate the guest speaker programme.
 2. The Speaker Coordination Officer is responsible for coordinating with any relevant Members with Portfolio.
 6. **Socials Secretary**
 1. The Social Secretary shall be responsible for any task pertaining to improving our engagement with our members or increasing our membership.
 2. They will be responsible for any activity relating to SDU Socials, and for any other issue which may conceivably fall within their remit.
 3. The Social Secretary is responsible for coordinating any relevant Members with Portfolio.
 4. The Social Secretary promotes SDU events in a timely manner.
 5. The Social Secretary is in charge of external events or programmes concerning the image of the society.
 7. **Training Officer**
 1. In charge of the training and delivery program and structure of Thursday sessions.
 2. In charge of internal Thursday debates.
 3. In charge of securing external debaters for any sessions, trials or similar.
 4. Maintain relations in the South West, Welsh and other important circuits.
 5. Liaise closely with Competitions Officer especially for external competitions e.g. Southampton Open.
 8. **Competitions Officer**
 1. Organise teams and judges for competitions that the SDU attends and will be in charge of the delegation at competitions.
 2. Organise any trials or similar for the SDU.
 3. Organise SDU internal competitions.
 4. Maintain relations in the South West, Welsh and other important circuits.
 5. Liaise closely with Training Officer especially for external competitions e.g. Southampton Open.
 6. Liaise closely with the Treasurer regarding grant applications for competitions.
 9. **Treasurer**
 1. The Treasurer shall maintain the accounts of the SDU, which shall be available for examination at the AGM, by the Clubs and Societies Officer or VP Activities.
 2. The Treasurer shall produce budgets for competitions and events.
 3. The Treasurer shall advise the SDU on all financial matters.
 4. The Treasurer shall also apply for SUSU grant funding.

5. Any funds spent or applied for by the Treasurer must obey SUSU and SDU regulations and be authorised by the President.
6. The Treasurer shall keep a record of all payments to or from the SDU.
7. The Treasurer shall produce a budget for each committee meeting.
8. An annual statement of the SDU accounts must be presented at the AGM by the Treasurer.
9. The Treasurer shall be responsible for negotiating sponsorship agreements for the SDU.

10. Secretary

1. The Secretary shall keep minutes of SDU meetings which shall be available to all members of the SDU upon request and to the Clubs and Societies Officer or VP Activities if required.
2. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to deal with the SDU email.
3. The Secretary shall produce and maintain a list of all members, including up to date contact details, which shall be available to SUSU.
4. The Secretary takes minutes at the Committee meetings, EGMs and the AGM.
5. The Secretary shall take the register at Committee meetings.
6. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to update the constitution when it has been amended by the procedure found in **(10)**.
7. The Secretary is the custodian of the Constitution and, along with the Societies Officer, shall retain a copy of the constitution.
8. The Secretary administers the SDU's social media platforms and may send e-mails to members.

11. Equity and Welfare Officer

1. The Equity and Welfare Officer ensures that all SDU events, members, and chairpersons are in line with **(11)**.
2. The Equity and Welfare Officer is the lead officer and all complaints raised must go directly to them.
3. The President shall deputise when the Equity and Welfare Officer is unavailable, or a complaint has been placed against the Equity and Welfare Officer.
4. The Equity and Welfare Officer is also responsible for the general welfare of the society and should take that into account with other committee members when creating and running events.

12. Chairperson

1. The Chairperson shall act as a figurehead of the SDU.
2. They shall advise the officers and committee on matters as directed by the President.
3. The Chairperson shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the committee.
4. The role may be left vacant due to presidential discretion and on the advice of the committee.

13. Member(s) without Portfolio

1. There shall be a maximum of 5 Members without Portfolio with 2 positions reserved for first-year students.
2. In the event that none or one first year student(s) apply, the remaining position(s) will be vacant unless another EGM outside of the dedicated November EGM is called.
3. There is no minimum number of Members without Portfolio required to be elected.
4. The number of positions available will be subject to presidential discretion.
5. The calling of the further EGMs is subject to presidential discretion.

6. Portfolios shall be assigned by the President of the SDU, after discussion with the Committee as a whole.

6. Handovers

1. Upon election of a new officer, the President and outgoing officers are responsible for overseeing the handover of responsibilities for 2 university weeks following the elections.
2. The President must produce a report noting the salient events that have occurred, this must be accessible to any member of the SDU who requests it.
3. The outgoing Vice-President must ensure that hand over any materials they consider useful or relevant or will be of use to the incoming Vice-President.
4. The outgoing Secretary will transfer all agendas, minutes, a copy of the constitution, an e-mail list, computing file store, membership lists, contact details, and any other relevant documentation.
5. The outgoing Treasurer must ensure that the SDU's finances are up to date and in line with SUSU regulations and that the new officer has all bank account details transferred to them, along with all relevant documentation.
6. The outgoing Socials and Publicity Secretary will transfer: all templates, the passwords and all relevant information regarding any social media activities carried out in the name of the SDU, all publicity materials and, all necessary contact details for clubs, public houses and bars to the new officer. The outgoing Socials and Publicity Secretary will transfer all necessary contact details for clubs, public houses, and bars to the new officer.
7. The Speaker Coordination officer shall transfer all relevant documentation and contacts on to the new officer.
8. The British Parliamentary Debating officer shall transfer all relevant documentation and contacts on to the new officer.

7. Meetings

1. Annual General Meeting (AGM)
 1. The SDU AGM shall be held in the spring term.
 2. Notice of the AGM shall be issued at least 10 clear days in advance and advertised to Union members.
 3. Committee members shall be elected at the AGM.
 4. The Returning Officer shall invite nominations at least 10 days before the meeting.
 5. Nominations must be given to the Returning Officer before the start of the meeting.
 6. Each member of the Committee may be invited by the Returning Officer to make a short speech concerning his or her activities during the previous year. This speech must be compulsory for the Treasurer, who must also present the year's accounts for examination.
 7. VP Activities must be sent an AGM invitation
 8. Minutes of the AGM shall be made available at the start of the summer term.
2. Extraordinary General Meetings (EGM)
 1. An EGM can be called by the President of the SDU, or by written application to the SDU President of at least 33% of all members of the SDU, together with a written statement of the objects for which the meeting is being called.
 2. A vote of no confidence in any officer of the society can be called by written application to the SDU President of at least 15 members of the SDU. The vote must take place within seven clear days of the President receiving the application.
 3. At the EGM no business other than that specified in the written statement or the President's communication shall be discussed or voted upon.
 4. At least 24 hours notice of an EGM shall be given.
 5. The meeting must be held within 7 days of the request being given to the SDU President.

6. VP Activities shall be informed of the meeting and the reason for it being called, before it is held.
 7. There will be a dedicated EGM to be held sometime in November of the autumn term to elect the remaining, maximum of 4, Members without Portfolio. Only 1 Member without Portfolio can be elected in the summer term.
3. Meeting conduct
1. Every member of the SDU present at a meeting shall be entitled to one vote upon every voting matter.
 2. Only members are entitled to vote and proxy votes shall be accepted only under accepted circumstances as agreed upon by the Returning Officer.
 3. The elections must be carried out by secret ballot. The voting system to be used will be Alternative Vote. Should there be a tie, the Returning Officer may vote in favour of one of the candidates or may declare the post unfilled.
 4. The Returning Officer and the Deputy Returning Officer will be able to vote in any election in private. They are not permitted to make any public statement or preference towards any candidate in any election.
 5. If any current officer of the SDU runs for another position then it is accepted that they have resigned from their previous office.
 6. If a full committee is not elected for any reason, the President is responsible for co-opting members to fill those positions. These co-options will last only until there is an opportunity to hold an EGM by the end of the first month of the next academic year at the latest.
 7. Results of the elections, together with names, student numbers and contact details of those elected, shall be uploaded onto the SUSU SDU page before the end of the summer term.
 8. The quorum at all meetings (including committee meetings), should be 51% of committee members.
 9. The Secretary shall keep minutes of all SDU meetings and make them available as soon as possible.

8. Disciplinary Procedure for Committee Members

1. The Committee shall have the power to give notice to any Officer of the SDU on the grounds of bringing the SDU into disrepute by means of disciplinary proceedings.
2. The disciplinary procedure will be conducted by a meeting of the committee, with the VP Activities invited to attend the meeting. The meeting will be structured in this way:
 1. The accused shall be given a written formal notice that disciplinary procedure has been instigated against them. This shall be at least 24 hours before the meeting, and shall include a specific accusation(s).
 2. The committee (including the accused) will firstly hear evidence from witnesses about their particular action. If the witness is uncomfortable giving their testimony orally they may do so in written format, this however must be submitted prior to the meeting.
 3. The accused will then be given the right to reply. This right may be exercised by the accused or by a representative on behalf of the accused.
 4. The committee will then hold a secret ballot, in which the accused is not allowed to vote, on whether the accused should remain a member of the committee or not. The accused will be found guilty by a vote 51% majority or greater.
 5. Quorum for this vote will be 66% of committee (excluding the accused).
 6. Where any Officer of the SDU is given notice by the Committee, a report of the matter shall be made to the next General Meeting of the SDU.
 7. Students who are expelled from any SDU have the right of appeal to the VP Activities

8. Students who are expelled from the SDU have the right to request reinstatement to the SDU at the next or any subsequent AGM. Should this occur a vote of only committee members will proceed after a reading of the initial report that was produced at the time of the incident. To reinstate the student(s) a vote in favour must be 2/3 or greater.

9. Affiliations

1. The SDU may affiliate to an external organisation which is in line with the aims of the SDU and which provides a direct benefit to its members. Affiliations must be voted on at an EGM or AGM.

10. Constitutional Amendments

1. The Returning Officer may amend the constitution.
2. All members of the SDU will be given the opportunity to vote on any constitutional amendments unless an alternative structure is accepted by members at an EGM or AGM.
3. Constitutional amendments only come into effect after an AGM and ratification of constitution at the first committee meeting of the new academic year unless an alternative structure has been accepted by members at an EGM or AGM.

11. Equity

1. The underlying principle behind this policy is that no individual should feel unjustly excluded from participating in any SDU event and that all participants are expected to show respect to one another in adherence to our outlined debating standards (see point 2).
2. The society's debating standards are as follows: participants (including: speakers, audience member and chairpersons) are not to use personal attacks, particularly including insults based on characteristics such as gender, sex, sexual orientation, sexuality, disability, religion, race, nationality, ethnicity, educational background, age, appearance, class. Offensive generalisations about such characteristics are equally intolerable. Participants are asked to avoid casual approaches to potentially inflammatory topics, and instead to approach each debate topic with a respectful and polite tone. Participants are to in no way hinder or shut down the speech of other participants. Nor are they to actively call for violence outside of the hypothetical scenarios of the debate.
3. Bias, disrespect, or discrimination towards participants who speak English as a second language will not be tolerated.
4. These standards apply always to all participants of SDU events, attempts to undermine this equity policy will not be tolerated.
5. The debate chair and Equity officer will be in charge of interpreting and enforcing this policy at SDU events.
6. Participants will be given a verbal warning from the event chair or Equity officer should they breach this policy. The event chair and Equity officer reserve the right to expel participants from the event should they continue to breach this policy after such a warning. Additionally, the event chair and Equity officer reserve the right to halt procedures until the expelled participant leaves.
7. Any accusation of a breach of this policy will be reviewed by the Equity officer and potentially trigger the disciplinary procedure against those accused of breaching the policy.
8. it should be noted that all participants reserve the right to file equity complaints about SDU events (and/or participants at events) with entities outside of the SDU (namely the University and SUSU).

9. in addition to this policy, the SDU will endeavour to do the following to ensure that everyone feels welcome:
 1. Directly contact and advertise SDU events to specific groups of interest and work with SUSU towards increasing SDU outreach to the broader student populace.
 2. Provide designated Welfare Area at SDU events of an obviously controversial nature. The SDU defines Welfare Area as an area out of earshot and eyesight of the event for participants who wish to leave the event for any reason.
 3. Provide Trigger Warnings on event promotions and at the start of SDU events.
 4. Directly prompt participants for a verbal acknowledgment of the Trigger Warnings.
 5. Make participants aware of how to contact nightline and other support services.

10. The SDU shall make no law or constitutional amendment respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the President for a redress of grievances.

12. Order of succession

1. President
2. Vice-President
3. Training Officer
4. Socials Secretary
5. Treasurer
6. Competitions Officer
7. Secretary
8. Speaker Coordination Officer
9. Equity Officer
10. Chairperson

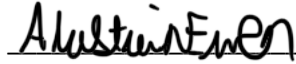
(Where there are only Members with Portfolio that are able to become interim President, then the particular Member with Portfolio who shall become interim President will be decided by drawing a name out of a hat).

Declaration

By signing the declaration, The President confirms that the Southampton Debating Union (its events, members, and chairpersons) is bound to this constitution for the 2024 to 2025 academic year. The Secretary also confirms that they will be the custodian of the constitution.

Date: 24/04/2024

Signature (Incoming President):

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Full Name:

Alastair Ewen

Signature (Incoming Secretary):

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Full Name:

William Pearson