



Student-led Group (SLG) Handbook

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Welcome

Welcome to your Student-led Group (SLG) handbook, this is a tool that you can refer to throughout the year to help you understand all the policies and processes involved in leading your SLG.

You are already part of the SU but taking the time to be a SLG lead means that you have gone that step further to create meaningful experiences in your student community.

We at Open SU are a registered charity, independent of the Open University, and we aim to support students in all aspects of their studying journey.

The people who know their student communities the best are students. So, we need you to take the lead in creating amazing experiences for OU students!

At Open SU, we have 5 values that we are focusing on. They are as follows:

Welcoming

We ensure every student feels welcome and supported whilst celebrating diversity, embracing all backgrounds, and fostering a sense of belonging.

Accountable

We are accountable to our members and actively work toward their best interests.

Bold

Empowering people to be creative and ambitious in their actions, whilst striving to improve the experience of all our members.

Adaptable

We are dynamic in meeting the needs of our diverse members and reactive to changes that affect their experience.

Sustainable

Ensuring we are responsible in our activities, safeguarding the future of Open SU and promoting a positive environmental impact.

SLGs are one of the ways in which we are continuing to work towards these principles.

What is a Student-led Group?

Student-led Groups (SLGs) are at the heart of our student community. They bring people together around shared interests, identities, experiences and goals, helping to create a sense of belonging that goes beyond formal study.

Being part of a group offers a chance to meet new people, explore ideas, build confidence, and feel more connected to the wider student experience. Many students say their groups have become one of the most meaningful parts of their time studying at university.

SLGs are created and run by students, for students. This means that they are shaped by the interests and needs of their members, and every group will feel a little different. Some groups focus on academic subjects or professional development, while others centre on hobbies, cultures, identities, wellbeing, or social causes. What they all share is a commitment to being an inclusive and welcoming space for OU Students.

In many ways, the success of a Student-led Group comes down to its people. When members and leads work together with openness, respect and creativity, groups can grow into welcoming communities that make a real difference.

They offer opportunities to learn, connect, and make an impact, all while being enjoyable and meaningful to be part of.

If you are thinking about getting involved, whether as a member of an SLG or a Group lead, you are warmly encouraged to take that next step with Open SU staff providing the information to help you become confident leaders in your community.

Interested in joining an existing one as a member? The list of them can be found on our website oustudents.com.

If you require any more information, have any questions on your application or just need some help, please do not hesitate to contact us at oustudents-belonging@open.ac.uk!

SLG Key Principles.

- **Community**
 - SLGs will contribute to a more connected, supportive, and vibrant student community and help ensure students have opportunities to influence and improve the student experience.

- **Belonging**
 - SLGs will help students build meaningful connections and reduce isolation by creating welcoming communities based on shared interests, experiences, identities, and goals.
- **Welcoming**
 - SLGs will ensure that every student feels welcomed and supported while celebrating diversity, embracing all backgrounds.
- **Accountable**
 - SLG Leads are accountable to their members. For example, listen to their views, be transparent about important decisions, and follow the group's agreed rules.
- **Sustainable**
 - SLGs are responsible for their activities, safeguarding the future of all SLGs and promoting a positive environmental impact.

Setting up your SLG

If you have an idea for a new group, we're here to help you get set up.

1. Create your volunteer profile: The first step is to create a volunteering profile - all SLG Leads need to do this. Please use this link to create a profile

<https://www.oustudents.com/registration/>

2. Gather at least 2 students (one can be yourself) to run the group.

- a) You'll need at least 2 leaders to gain access to SU grants and funding, but you can have up to 5 leaders in your group.
- b) Choose one group lead to complete the new SLG form **SLG Registration Form**
- c) Once we have reviewed the details of your group, we may contact you to get more information.

3. We will confirm that your SLG can be set up – you then must register as the Student-led Group Lead - [Form](#)

- a. Once we have received the applications from each of your group leads we will send you a welcome email which includes details of your core and role specific volunteer training.

4. Each year we ask you to submit a plan for your SLG. If your plans include any face to face events the EDI & Belonging team will assist with any risk assessments, planning support needed or to include external speakers

Requirements and Expectations.

There are 5 things we require from you before you start leading your SLG. Without these, you will not be able to start. We provide this information to you during your welcome and onboarding; you will also be able to let us know if you have an accessibility requirement so we can support you in your role.

1. Complete all compulsory training.
 - a. Complete all training to ensure that you understand the processes and what it takes to be a Student Group Lead and an SLG.
 - b. To run events, you will also be required to complete the Event and Meet Up Host training before you can host events.
2. Read the [code of conduct](#) for online and in-person events
 - a. Read our code of conduct and ensure you are clear on our expectations of you as a lead and representative of your SLG and Open SU.
3. Agreement to complete our external speaker request form and seeking approval before booking any speakers for any events.
4. Agreement to follow the [Values and Behaviours Policy](#) at all times.
5. All group leads follow the [Volunteer Policy](#) and abide by the [Volunteer Agreement & Guidance](#)

Becoming a Student-led Group Lead – Volunteering with Open SU

Leads within SLGs are Open SU volunteers. This means that they will be receive benefits of being a part of the volunteer community. Volunteers are offered training and guidance that not only relate to their roles but are also transferable outside of Open SU.

Volunteers are invited to Volunteer Socials, to meet others in the community and will be a part of the reward and recognition of volunteers, including the annual Volunteer Awards.

The Core Volunteer Training for all group leads will be shared with you upon successful registration, the topics include

[Safeguarding](#)

Leading a Student-led Group

Once you have an idea of what type of group you would like, now is the time to think about the different Group Lead roles. Most groups will have a lead or co-lead who will help set direction and act as the main contact. We require a minimum of 2 group leads at all times.

Roles and Responsibilities

How you divvy up the roles is completely up to you! Leadership in an SLG is about collaboration! Great group leads listen to their members, encourage participation, and create an environment where everyone feels able to contribute.

We only require a minimum of 2 group leads (with a maximum of 5) and you can divide responsibilities up as fits your activities.

Once you have identified your leads, you may also want to appoint an Events officer to help organise events for your Group.

Responsibilities could look as follows:

SLG Chair

- Acts as main liaison between the Open SU and SLG responsible for providing updates and changes to membership.
- Always represents the SLG and Open SU.
- Coordinates your leads and works with them to set up and run events for your SLG.
- Ensure all leads are up to date with student group training.

Events officer

- Ensures regular activity and events are run to bring a sense of community through student groups, being sure to take in consideration a wide range of student needs and accessibility.
- Find creative ways to collaborate and network with other SLGs and work together to create activities that appeal to a diverse range of students.

Other roles may develop naturally depending on the group's needs, such as; member communication, group admin, or wellbeing.

What matters most is that responsibilities are shared fairly and that Leads work together as a team.

Code of conduct for SLGs

Open SU SLGs are expected to:

- Show respect to group leads, admins, and fellow club members. We want everyone to feel safe and welcome in this space.
- Keep chats appropriate, respectful, and friendly.
- Avoid using language which could upset or offend.
- We have zero tolerance to bullying.

We also expect everyone 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.

Please be aware, Open SU will not tolerate discriminatory behaviour or harassment, whether aimed at its members or by them at others. Every effort should be made to ensure that the activities of the SLG are accessible to all and are planned with this aim in mind.

Core Training for SLG Leads

By creating an SLG, the group leads will automatically become registered volunteers, which will require compulsory training on Safeguarding, GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and Prevent. In turn, this will help group leads be better prepared for any face-to-face or online events they wish to host.

Is it important that you understand your Safeguarding duties as a volunteer with Open SU. Your training should make you aware of these duties but fuller information can be found in our [Safeguarding Policy](#). If you are unsure about your duties or have a question about Safeguarding or need support following an event please contact Verity.Robinson@open.ac.uk who is Open SU's Safeguarding Lead.

If an SLG does not respect the Open SU's principles and code of conduct and cannot be resolved through discussions with the group leads, then Open SU will disaffiliate the SLG and it will be removed from the website and any Student-facing placements.

Building your SLG

Once all your leads are set up, and you've completed all the necessary training, to build up SLG membership and grow your community, you can:

1. Get together and agree a plan of activities for your SLG.
2. Set up a communal space on [OU Students Connect](#) or another approved platform. Please note: If you use Facebook or Discord you will be required to add a staff member as a moderator. As SLG's are for OU Students online, we recommend OU Students Connect as only OU Students have access to this space. The Open SU Team can support if you're not sure how to do this.
3. We recommend starting with consistent small regular gatherings either fortnightly or monthly.
4. Ensure that you engage with the needs of your members. Asking for feedback and suggestions is a great way to do this.
5. Promote your SLG on social media, the Open SU website, and OU Students Connect. You can even get your Faculty Representatives to spread the word and help build early momentum.

Funding & Resources

Funding and resources are available to help support groups and their activities. Rather than managing finances independently, group leads can apply for funding through the Open SU.

To access funding SLG leads will need to fill out an application form and provide information on how the grant will be used and whether it will be used to support which

SLG Key Principles:

- Community
- Belonging
- Welcoming
- Accountable
- Sustainable

Step-by-step process

- a) Submit a [SLG Grant Application](#).

- b) Form is reviewed by Grant Panel (3 members of the Student Leadership Team, Head of EDI & Belonging or Student Belonging Officer will provide administrative support).
- c) Decision Process. Any questions the panel have will be emailed back to the applicant.
- d) If approved, funds will be secured and allocated after 2 weeks.
- e) If unsuccessful, feedback will be provided to strengthen future applications.

SLG Activities

Activities are where Student-led Groups really come to life. These might include informal catch-ups, discussions, workshops, guest speaker events or collaborative projects.

There is no single way to run an SLG, and the best activities are those shaped by members' interests and ideas.

Recommendations

-Thinking about accessibility is an important part of planning, ensuring that as many people as possible can take part comfortably. You should ensure that your activities and events are as accessible as possible.

-For online events, we suggest using Microsoft Teams as transcription and captions are available.

-For face-to-face events, we recommend choosing venues that are accessible, such as the Open University Milton Keynes Campus or a local venue in the town/city of your choice that has for example accessible entrances, lifts and hearing loops.

Booking Activities – Forms and information

1. Decide on what event you want to do and confirm which 2 leads will be hosting together.
2. Fill out the Events booking form online.
 - a. For online events, [use this form](#).
 - b. For face-to-face events, [use this form](#).
3. Staff will review and add your event to the website alongside an accessible image with the details for students to see.
4. If you would like an external speaker to be present at an event you must get approval from Open SU **before** you agree to host the event. You can do this by completing the [External Speakers Request Form](#). For more information on how approvals work, please see the [External Speakers Policy](#).
5. Decide who

Important information

It can take up to **5 working days** for your event to appear on the website and we recommend making your request at least **14 days** before your event to give it plenty of time to be noticed. Every member, every lead and every SLG is expected to follow the code of conduct for events.

Make sure you've completed the Event and Meetup host training before hosting an event. **If either host has not completed the training, the event will be declined.**

Hosting Online Events

At the start of every event, we ask that hosts remind their attendees of Open SU's Code of Conduct for events. The easiest way to do this is to have a slide with the code on at the start of every event. Or drop a link to the [Code of conduct for Open SU events](#) in the chat. The code is copied below too for your reference, so that it's easy for you to share with attendees.

"By taking part in our online and in-person events, you agree to abide by our code of conduct, below. Please take a moment to read it before attending one of our events.

1. We ask you to show respect to your volunteer hosts and fellow attendees - we want everyone to feel safe and welcome to participate in this space.
2. We have zero tolerance to bullying and harassment. See our [Values and Behaviour Policy](#).
3. We are dedicated to providing a welcoming and friendly experience for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion (or lack thereof), technology choices, or any other characteristic or belief.
4. We want you to be aware that the [University's Computing Code of Conduct](#) is applicable in this space.
5. Any views or opinions expressed by attendees and speakers at Open SU-affiliated events are those of the individual, and do not reflect Open SU's organisational position.

Attendees who are not willing to respect the spirit of our events will be asked to leave or removed by our hosts. If you have any concerns about behaviour in an event, or if you'd like to talk to the host, or someone from the staff team before coming to an event, please don't hesitate to contact us at oustudents-belonging@open.ac.uk.

Have fun and enjoy yourselves!"

Health and Safety

As an SLG Leader, you will hold a duty of care and responsibility for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of your members, to ensure that you are able to keep your members safe. It is also worth noting that under 18's are not members of Open SU and should therefore not be attending your events as per our [Safeguarding Policy](#).

Risk Assessments

A risk assessment is required before any in person event or activity your SLG is planning to hold on the Open University campus (Milton Keynes). The EDI & Belonging team will work with you to complete this so please get in touch with the Team on oustudents-belonging@open.ac.uk at least 2 weeks before the event or activity. This must be reviewed and signed off by the Open SU before your event can go ahead.

Member Wellbeing

As a Student Group Lead, there is a good chance that one of your group members will approach you for support at some point in the year. This might be about an issue within the Student-led Group, or it could be about more personal matters such as housing, mental health, student finance, or their course.

As a group lead, you have a responsibility to help create a safe and supportive environment for your members. However, nobody expects you to be an expert in every aspect of student life or put your own wellbeing at risk. Your role is to listen, offer appropriate support where you can and know when to signpost someone to specialist help.

We recommend if you're ever unsure how to support a member to direct them towards the range of wellbeing and support services available through Open SU, the Open University and local community organisations:

Where to find help

[Talk Campus](#)

[OU Wellbeing App](#)

Samaritans

Talk to Frank

LGBT Foundation

Volunteers are a valued and important part of the Open SU, and we love that you've chosen to be a part of the volunteering community. We also understand that sometimes situations arise that require you to take a step back from your role for a period of time, or in some cases to step away from your role completely.

To ensure we're up-to-date on volunteers who are taking extended breaks from their roles, and to fill any areas that may be required during your time away, please let us know by contacting us directly oustudents-belonging@open.ac.uk or let us know here [:Stepping back from volunteering.](#)

Appendix – things need to be added to the website as a separate page

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[Values and Behaviour Policy](#)

[University's Computing Code of Conduct](#)