



**Students**  
ASSOCIATION



# VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR POLICY

APPROVED: OCT 21 - REVIEW: OCT 23



# OU Students Association Values and Behaviour Policy

## Introduction

At the OU Students Association our mission is ***'To make a positive difference for all OU Students'***.

Our vision is that we will achieve this by supporting, encouraging and empowering students by:

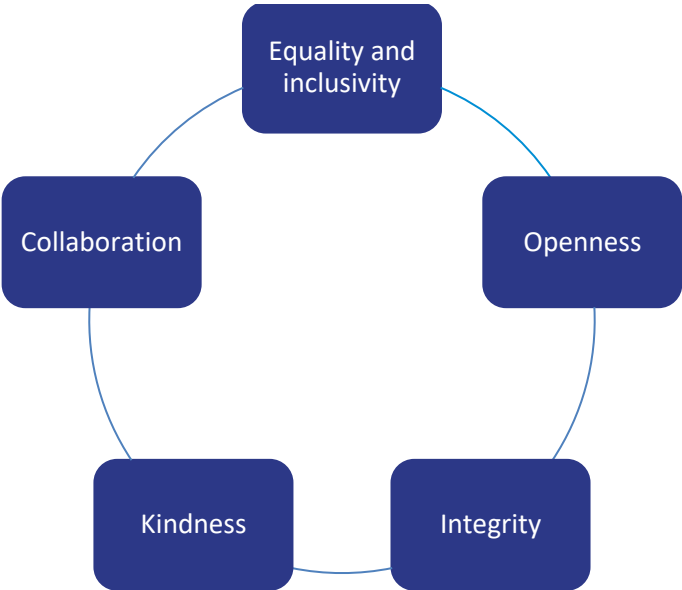
- offering students the support services that they need.
- creating opportunities for students to engage in a vibrant and inclusive student community.
- being a strong, effective and accountable representative body.
- working in partnership with the OU to enhance all aspects of the student experience.

We want every member, including volunteers, staff, and those elected, selected, or appointed to positions of responsibility, to feel valued and respected. This includes the partners we work with from other organisations.

This policy document is designed to support the way all Association members, volunteers and staff work together and represent the organisation. It aims to promote an environment where we are living our values and in which everyone feels happy, safe, and secure.

## Our values

We are a dedicated and compassionate community whose values are built on integrity, equality and inclusion, openness, collaboration, kindness and compassion. This means we are responsible for ensuring our behaviour models and champions these underpinning values in everything we do and each decision we make.





## Integrity

We will stay true to our vision; we will uphold the founding mission of the Open University and we will maintain an independent and fair representation of the student voice.

**What does this look like?** This means we stay true to our vision and are honest and respectful in all our interactions. We will hold ourselves and each other to account, while assuming the best intentions.

## Equality and inclusivity

We are committed to equality of opportunity for all in an inclusive and diverse student community that values, respects and celebrates difference.

**What does this look like?** We are self-aware and are always seeking to understand our differences. We take time to learn, building and nurturing personal connections.

## Openness

We believe in open, transparent and accessible democratic structures that are led by students and welcome new people and new ideas.

**What does this look like?** We work together to proactively share information and celebrate each other's successes. We make it easy to engage with one another, especially with regard to new voices.

## Collaboration

We seek to build inspirational relationships and partnerships based on mutual trust, respect and shared goals.

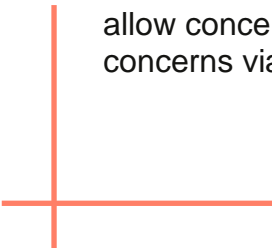
**What does this look like?** We seek contributions from others, recognising the impact collaboration can have and valuing their input. We are open minded, empower new voices and practise active listening.

## Kindness and compassion

We nurture a culture of support and inclusion, practising positive intent and seeking to identify the best in each other.

**What does this look like?** We take time to consider others, and model kindness through all our interactions. This includes being kind to ourselves by being mindful of our wellbeing and encouraging others to do the same for themselves.

It is important that the Association treats all members fairly and applies this Values and Behaviours Policy in a consistent way. We are responsible to each other for creating the positive culture that will support us in achieving our mission; this means we must be committed to feeding back and reporting issues in a timely manner to allow concerns to be addressed. Please refer to section 12 of the Bye-laws to report concerns via our complaints procedure.



## Zero tolerance of bullying and discrimination

The Association has a zero-tolerance approach to both bullying (behaviour repeated with the intent to harm) and to discriminatory behaviour (direct, indirect, harassment, victimisation and microaggressions) relating to a person's protected characteristics. These characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, political beliefs, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

This zero-tolerance approach extends to all places and online platforms where Association members may be found, including but not limited to: in person, social media groups, the volunteer Slack channel and via direct messaging and email.

According to the Equality Act 2010, bullying is a form of harassment, which can be defined as behaviour that is meant to or has the effect of either:

- violating an individual's dignity, or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour may include persistent and aggressive questioning of individuals; private messaging or emailing another member in a manner that is unkind, unhelpful and upsetting to the recipient; making comments that are designed to undermine an individual based on a protected characteristic; belittling the contribution of a volunteer; using discriminatory language or swearing excessively.

The OU's [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#) poses the question 'Would a reasonable person think that the behaviour amounted to bullying or harassment?' and answers it 'In most cases people know, or should know, that remarks or actions are causing offence, and that this is unacceptable.' We abide by that and all associated OU policies.

To report inappropriate behaviour, please refer to section 12 of our bye-laws. If your issue occurs within a forum, please report this to the moderators using the 'talk to your moderators' thread in the first instance. To escalate anything that happens on the OU Students Association forums, please refer to section D of the 'Comprehensive guide to the Association Forums' (complaints and disciplinary procedures) found within our bye-laws.

## Volunteer behaviour

Our expectations of volunteer behaviour (either elected, selected or appointed) is no different to that of any other member, or that of staff, but there are potentially more areas where volunteers could encounter conflict, so within our Volunteer Policy we commit to supporting volunteers to help them understand what behaviour is expected of them and how to report poor behaviour as part of their inductions.

If a volunteer is reported via section 12 of our bye-laws, they could be suspended or removed from their role as a result.



## Reporting issues which occur outside of Association spaces

Any incidents that occur during Open University events should be reported using the [OU dignity and respect policy](#).

Regardless of the platform used, if a member's behaviour is such that it brings the Association into disrepute, disciplinary action may be taken. For instances occurring on unofficial social media groups, pages or accounts, the Association encourages its members to follow the appropriate complaints procedure as indicated by the provider or as defined in Open University Policy.

## Review period

This Policy will be reviewed at least every two years and changes will be approved by the Board of Trustees.

## Special thanks

To all the current and past OU Students who shared photos to feature on the title page. This celebrates what it is to be a student at the Open University: we all come from different backgrounds and have different barriers to overcome but with one shared goal, to learn.

