



# Values and behaviours policy

Approved: Sept-23 | Review: Sept-25



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At the OU Students Association our mission is ‘to make a positive difference for all OU Students’. Our vision is that your Students Association will:

- Empower a student voice that is strong and effective in representing the diversity of our members.
- Work collaboratively with the University to ensure that students are at the centre of decision making.
- Build an inclusive community which nurtures a sense of pride and belonging.
- Provide relevant, quality services which enhance 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 comfortable, safe, and secure.

## Our values

We are a dedicated and compassionate community whose values are built on being welcoming, accountable, bold, adaptable, and sustainable. This means we are responsible for ensuring our behaviour models and champions these underpinning values in everything we do and each decision we make.



### 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 the Association and promoting a positive environmental impact.

## Expected behaviours

Alongside our values, the Association also upholds expected behaviours of its members, volunteers and staff alike. We expect those interacting in Association spaces, or on Association business to be honest and respectful in all our interactions. We will hold ourselves and each other to account, while assuming good intentions.

We believe in openness and collaboration - 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. 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.

We nurture a culture of support and inclusion, practising positive intent and seeking to identify the best in each other. 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 Behaviour 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 our [Resolving and Settling Differences Procedure](#) to report concerns.

# 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, Association facilitated spaces 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 in any Students Association space, please refer to our [Resolving and Settling Differences Procedure](#). If your issue occurs within a forum, please report this to the moderators using the 'talk to your moderators' thread in the first instance.

## 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 our [Resolving and Settling Differences Procedure](#), 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](#). If you have experienced any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment you can use the University's [Report + Support](#) system to report your concerns.

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.