

Alcohol Code of Conduct for Clubs, Societies & Projects

As a Union we recognise that social activities are an appropriate and enjoyable aspect of Club, Society and Project membership, and encourage student groups to hold social activities. Examples of appropriate social activities could include a welcome event for new members, club dinners, social nights and post-match refreshments. However any encouragement of the consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol must not occur. Social activities should not be organised which encourage the excessive consumption of alcohol.

There are serious welfare and health issues associated with excessive drinking, and students can feel extreme peer pressure to take part in order to gain acceptance within a student group. This is particularly an issue with students new to the group, such as first year undergraduates, who want to 'fit in', gain acceptance with the established members and who are potentially less aware of their own limits with respect to alcohol. Consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol in such cases can put students in the way of harm, jeopardising their safety and the safety of others. Social activities must be organised in such a way that no member feels harassed, intimidated or bullied into undertaking activities.

Excessive drinking poses a significant risk to students' degrees and careers. Students who drink to excess and behave irresponsibly as a result can find themselves with a criminal record. In the case of Medical students this breaches the Fitness to Practice Code. In addition the behaviour of students can bring the reputation of both Imperial College London and Imperial College Union into disrepute. This can result in disciplinary proceedings from either body, the most serious of which could result in expulsion from the College.

Furthermore a number of new undergraduates are under the age of 18. The Union will inform Club, Society & Project Chairs/Presidents directly if this applies to any of their members. Student groups have a responsibility to ensure those under the age of 18 are not breaking the law while participating in a Club, Society or Project activity, this applies particularly to activities which are taking place in premises which are licenced to sell alcohol.

It is also vital that activities are accessible and respect the diverse beliefs and backgrounds of our membership. Activities must be inclusive and make allowances for all cultural and personal beliefs. Members should be able to opt out without fear of undue pressure, reprisal, non-selection for teams, embarrassment or any form of discrimination.

Socials

Clubs, Societies and Projects that choose to hold social events throughout the year should adhere to the following principles in order to enable all members to participate in activities safely and enjoyably.

- Members should always know what is in their drink,
- Non-alcoholic options should always be available,
- Club, Society and Project leaders are responsible for considering how members will get home safely,
- All leaders and members should consider how they will maintain the positive reputation of Imperial College and Imperial College Union when in public,
- Members should consume alcohol and food of their own free will, free from coercion, bullying or threat.

Initiation ceremonies

The Clubs, Societies & Projects Policy states that any initiation ceremony, or other compulsory or effectively compulsory degrading ritual, regardless of the name or advertising of the event, which affects the physical or mental well-being of any individual, is not permitted. An event which falls into this category may or may not involve the consumption of alcohol.

Events which are deemed to constitute an initiation ceremony are likely to result in severe disciplinary action being taken against the Club, Society or Project, its committee and any others involved, and may result in the dissolution of the Club, Society or Project.

Breach of Code of Conduct

Breaches of the Code of Conduct can be reported to any permanent member of Union staff or Sabbatical Officer, but should ideally be reported to either:

- The Deputy President (Clubs & Societies)
- The Student Activities Manager

Sanctions may be imposed on any group found to be in breach of this code of conduct.

Breaches will be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary policies outlined in the Bye-Laws of Imperial College Union.

Additionally sports clubs must be aware that British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) has identified Anti-Social Behaviour in Sport to be an area of concern and have a disciplinary policy which includes incidents which may bring the BUCS name into disrepute. Imperial has signed up to the BUCS policy on Anti-Social Behaviour. This contains the expectation that all institutions develop policies and procedures for managing student behaviour and alcohol misuse within sport. The policy states:

Any grievance or complaint regarding student behaviour at its sporting events, fixtures or competitions should be submitted to BUCS and will be dealt with through its disciplinary process.

Penalties can take the form of:

- Deduction of BUCS points
- Fines
- Individual/Team/Club suspension from BUCS Competitions/Leagues

Policy references

The Union has two policies are of note in the context of this code of conduct and two extracts from each are given below. These can be found online at <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/policies>.

The Equal Opportunities Policy states that:

- It is the shared responsibility of all staff and students to help foster an environment free of unfair discrimination and harassment. However the burden falls upon the shoulders of the Union Officers and permanent staff and Union Officers to ensure that Imperial College Union is free from institutional bias, hatred, unfair discrimination and harassment.
- Any club, or society or project which fails to comply with this Policy or which promotes aims and objectives in conflict with this Policy shall be suspended by the process outlined in the Clubs and Societies Policy and will cease to be granted the use of Union resources and facilities, including those under its control.

The Clubs, Societies & Projects Policy states that:

- The Union shall provide a safe environment, free from harassment and discrimination for all Union activity
- Initiation ceremonies, or other compulsory (or effectively compulsory) degrading rituals, which affects the physical or mental well-being of members, are not permitted. Such behaviour may result in severe disciplinary action being taken against the club, society or project, its committee and any others involved, and may result in the dissolution of the club, society or project.

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