

Code of Practice on the Governance of Student Unions

Purpose	To set out the Governing Body's code of practice as to the manner in which the requirements set out in Section 22 of the Education Act 1994 are to be carried into effect in relation to the JCR and MCR of the College		
Responsible Person	Head of Governance		
Responsible Committee	Governing Body		
Current Version	1.0	Date	28 November 2024
Approved by	GB	on	3 February 2025
Next review due	27 November 2025		
Review schedule	Annually, or as needed, by the author; minor revisions to be approved by the Senior Tutor. Executive Body to review and approve every 3 years; Governing Body to review and approve every 5 years.		
Revision history	A history of revisions to this policy is included at the end of the document.		

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 22 of the Education Act 1994 places a number of responsibilities on governing bodies of higher education institutions (as defined by section 21, sub-section 5). Sub-section 3 of that section provides that every governing body shall prepare and issue, and where necessary revise, a code of practice as to the manner in which the requirements of sub-sections 1 and 2 are to be carried into effect in relation to any students' union for students of the establishment, setting out in relation to each of the requirements details of the arrangements made to secure its observance.
- 1.2 The present code of practice is issued by the Governing Body in respect of the College's Junior Combination Room (JCR) for all students and Middle Combination Room (MCR) for postgraduate students, the College's only recognised student unions.

2. General Duty of Governing Bodies

- 2.1 Sub-section 1 requires the governing body to take 'such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that any students' union for students of the establishment operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances'. This requirement is fulfilled through compliance with the requirements of the Constitutions of the JCR and MCR and with the provisions of the present code of practice.

3. Particular Requirements of the Act – Sub-Section 2

- 3.1 Sub-section 2 requires governing bodies to take 'such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that the following requirements are observed by or in relation to any students' union for students of the establishment'. These detailed requirements are dealt with below. The College response to the requirement is in *italics*.
- 3.2 the union should have a written constitution; *both JCR and MCR have written constitutions.*
- 3.3 the provisions of the constitution should be subject to the approval of the governing body and to review by that body at intervals of not more than five years; *the Governing Body has delegated this authority to the Executive Body, and this is reflected in both constitutions; the constitutions require amendments to be approved by the Executive Body. The constitutions require the Executive Body to review the provisions of the constitutions at intervals of not more than five years and when required.*
- 3.4 a student should have the right—
 - 3.4.1 not to be a member of the union, or *the constitutions provide for this and set out the process to follow to opt out.*
 - 3.4.2 in the case of a representative body which is not an association, to signify that he does not wish to be represented by it, *this does not apply.*
 - 3.4.3 and students who exercise that right should not be unfairly disadvantaged, with regard to the provision of services or otherwise, by reason of their having done so; *this is ensured in both constitutions.*
- 3.5 appointment to major union offices should be by election in a secret ballot in which all members are entitled to vote; *this is ensured in both constitutions.*

- 3.6 the governing body should satisfy themselves that the elections are fairly and properly conducted; *the Governing Body has delegated this authority to the Executive Body, and this is reflected in both constitutions; the constitutions require the Senior Treasurer to inform the Executive Body if they are not satisfied that the elections were conducted in a fair and proper manner.*
- 3.7 a person should not hold sabbatical union office, or paid elected union office, for more than two years in total at the establishment; *this does not apply as there are no sabbatical or paid offices.*
- 3.8 the financial affairs of the union should be properly conducted and appropriate arrangements should exist for the approval of the union's budget, and the monitoring of its expenditure, by the governing body; *the Governing Body has delegated this authority to the Executive Body, and this is reflected in both constitutions; the constitutions require budgets and accounts to be submitted to the Executive Body in good time for approval. The accounts are audited via a reciprocal arrangement by another College's Finance Office.*
- 3.9 financial reports of the union should be published annually or more frequently, and should be made available to the governing body and to all students, and each such report should contain, in particular— *the Governing Body has delegated this authority to the Executive Body, and this is reflected in both constitutions. The financial reports are not published to the students until they have been approved by the Executive Body.*
- 3.9.1 a list of the external organisations to which the union has made donations in the period to which the report relates, and *this is made clear in the reports.*
- 3.9.2 details of those donations; *this is made clear in the reports.*
- 3.10 the procedure for allocating resources to groups or clubs should be fair and should be set down in writing and freely accessible to all students; *the constitutions provide for this, as does the agreement of the budgets by the unions.*
- 3.11 if the union decides to affiliate to an external organisation, it should publish notice of its decision stating— *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.11.1 the name of the organisation, and *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.11.2 details of any subscription or similar fee paid or proposed to be paid, and of any donation made or proposed to be made, to the organisation, *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.11.3 and any such notice should be made available to the governing body and to all students; *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.12 where the union is affiliated to any external organisations, a report should be published annually or more frequently containing— *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.12.1 a list of the external organisations to which the union is currently affiliated, and *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.12.2 details of subscriptions or similar fees paid, or donations made, to such organisations in the past year (or since the last report), *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.12.3 and such reports should be made available to the governing body and to all students; *the constitutions provide for this.*

- 3.13 there should be procedures for the review of affiliations to external organisations under which— *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.13.1 the current list of affiliations is submitted for approval by members annually or more frequently, and *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.13.2 at such intervals of not more than a year as the governing body may determine, a requisition may be made by such proportion of members (not exceeding 5 per cent.) as the governing body may determine, that the question of continued affiliation to any particular organisation be decided upon by a secret ballot in which all members are entitled to vote; *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.14 there should be a complaints procedure available to all students or groups of students who— *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.14.1 are dissatisfied in their dealings with the union, or *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.14.2 claim to be unfairly disadvantaged by reason of their having exercised the right referred to in paragraph 3.4.1 or 3.4.2 above, *the constitutions provide for this.*
- 3.14.3 which should include provision for an independent person appointed by the governing body to investigate and report on complaints; *the Governing Body has delegated this authority to the Executive Body, which serves as the appeal body.*
- 3.15 complaints should be dealt with promptly and fairly and where a complaint is upheld there should be an effective remedy. *the constitutions provide for this.*

4. Particular Requirements of the Act – Sub-Section 4

- 4.1 Governing bodies are to bring to the attention of all students at least once a year the code of practice; any restrictions imposed on the activities of student unions by the law relating to charities; and where applicable, the provisions of section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 about freedom of speech in universities and colleges, and of any code of practice issued under it relevant to the activities or conduct of unions.
- 4.2 An account of the restrictions on the activities of student unions, together with information on charity law, and the provisions of Section 43 of the 1986 Act concerning freedom of speech and the College’s code of practice under that section, are included on the student gateway at <https://www.corpus.cam.ac.uk/about-corpus/college-documents/our-policies-and-procedures>. These matters are brought to the attention of students by email once a year providing links to the location of this information on the College website. The responsibility for this rests with the Tutorial Office.

5. Particular Requirements of the Act – Sub-Section 5

- 5.1 Governing bodies are to bring to the attention of all students at least once a year and to include in any information generally made available to persons considering whether to become students of the establishment information about the right of opt-out from union membership (clause 3.4 above) and about arrangements made for services for students who have opted out.
- 5.2 The location of this information on the College website is brought to the attention of students by email once a year and confirmed in core documents provided to prospective students. The responsibility for this rests with the Tutorial Office.

Revision history

Version	Responsible Person	Summary of changes	Review date	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	Head of Governance	Initial Code of Practice	28 November 2024	GB	