

HWUNION MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

1. PURPOSE

1.1 Heriot-Watt University Student Union (hereafter HWUnion) is committed to providing experiences which are inclusive, safe and fun; at the same time, we have an ethical and legal responsibility to the people who are part of our community. We have a duty of care to each other as a community that can be made clear by this Code of Conduct. This care extends not only to physical health and safety, but emotional, social, psychological and cultural safety too.

1.2 In order to be proactive members of our community, students must understand how HWUnion expects its members to behave, interact, and look after each other. This Code of Conduct outlines the standards of conduct (i.e., baseline of acceptable behaviour) that are expected of HWUnion members to act as common ground between students from diverse backgrounds so that everyone can be on the same page about what is and is not acceptable for them to do.

1.3 HWUnion, through this Code of Conduct, aims to deliver the following three key tenets:

1. Promote behaviours that reflect our values, i.e., Student Focused, Fun, Brave, Welcoming, Empowering (See Section 3. Expected and Prohibited behaviours).
2. Transparency in how we operate and deal with any breaches of the Code (See Section 4. Code Breach).
3. Provide environments and spaces which reduce the risk of harm, injury and harassment to our members and the wider community.

2. SCOPE

2.1 The Code of Conduct affects all members of HWUnion as outlined in [Byelaw 1: Membership](#). This, by extension, is every enrolled student in our UK campuses. This includes:

- Our elected Full-Time Officers;
- Society Leaders;
- Academic Representatives, and
- Any Volunteer who is representing HWUnion in their activities within the HWUnion, Heriot-Watt University and/or wider community.

Full-Time Officers also have a further series of expectations on their behaviours specific to their role as a member of Staff and as a Trustee.

2.2 The Code of Conduct applies to any action that:

- Happens on HWUnion premises;
- Is committed while using HWUnion facilities or attending a HWUnion event and/ or activity;
- Is committed while a member is representing, acting on behalf-of or could be perceived to be representing and/ or acting on behalf of HWUnion in person and/ or online, e.g., at an event, during a trip, via social media or in correspondence.

3. EXPECTED AND PROHIBITED BEHAVIOURS

3.1 HWUnion is committed to providing experiences which are inclusive, safe and fun. This section outlines the HWUnion Code of Conduct; it describes behaviours we expect to see and outlines explicitly behaviours we will not tolerate. Paragraphs 3.2 to 3.6 will document this as objectives.

3.2 Objective: Freedom of Speech

In accordance with the [Office for Students' Regulatory Advice 24](#) related to Freedom of Speech, we:

3.2.1 **Expect:** HWUnion members respecting others' right to express their views, even when they disagree.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members mocking someone's identity.

3.2.2 **Expect:** HWUnion members challenging ideas, not people.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members interrupting or dismissing others when they disagree.

3.2.3 **Expect:** HWUnion members expressing their own opinions respectfully.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members using hate speech of any kind.

3.3 Objective: Anti-Discrimination

In accordance with [Heriot-Watt University's Global Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#), we:

3.3.1 **Expect:** HWUnion members being inclusive of everyone.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members excluding others because of any of the nine protected characteristics as specified under the UK Equality Act 2010 (i.e., age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership,

pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).

3.3.2 **Expect:** HWUnion members challenging racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and xenophobic language or behaviour safely.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members using racist, sexist, homophobic or xenophobic language, jokes, and/ or stereotypes.

3.3.3 **Expect:** HWUnion members respecting different cultures and backgrounds.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members discriminating against others.

3.4 Objective: Leading through example and accountability

We:

3.4.1 **Expect:** HWUnion members being mindful of their language and behaviour to create a respectful environment.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members disrespecting others around them.

3.4.2 **Expect:** HWUnion members representing HWUnion and their society positively, whether that be online or in person.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members publicly shaming other students.

3.4.3 **Expect:** HWUnion members to accept feedback from others and resolve issues empathetically.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members dismissing or disregarding the feelings of others during conflict resolution.

3.4.4 **Expect:** HWUnion members to take accountability for their actions and how they may affect, or be perceived, by others.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members to be deliberately hurtful to others both verbally and through their actions.

3.5 Objective: Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment

In accordance with [Heriot-Watt University's Harassment and Bullying Policy](#), we:

3.5.1 **Expect:** HWUnion members looking out for their peers.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members peer pressuring others.

3.5.2 **Expect:** HWUnion members establishing boundaries with others.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members verbally or physically assaulting others.

3.5.3 **Expect:** HWUnion members supporting and encouraging others.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members exploiting other's perceived vulnerabilities or insecurities.

3.5.4 **Expect:** HWUnion members treating others with dignity and respect.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members benefiting from the mistakes or embarrassment of others.

3.6 Objective: Digital Spaces

We:

3.6.1 **Expect:** HWUnion members being respectful in group chats, such as WhatsApp and Discord, and thinking before posting.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members sharing offensive messaging (e.g., memes), private information and bullying others.

3.6.2 **Expect:** HWUnion members asking for permission before sharing photos or messages involving others.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members sending unwanted or indecent images or messages to others.

3.6.3 **Expect:** HWUnion members creating a welcoming environment for everyone.

Do Not Accept: HWUnion members excluding others from social spaces or events.

3.7 An image succinctly outlining the HWUnion Code of Conduct can be found and downloaded on the HWUnion website.

4. CODE BREACH

4.1 We recognise that everyone, including the HWUnion members, sometimes makes mistakes and falls short of the behaviours and values that are expected of them.

This section is designed to signpost to clear guidance on two key areas:

- Support for students who may experience behaviours that fall short of the HWUnion Code of Conduct;
- Procedures in place to call-out behaviours which fall short of the HWUnion Code of Conduct and, where appropriate, how this will be handled through formal means.

4.2 If a member of HWUnion breaches the standards of behaviour set out within this Code (whether intentional or unintentional), this may lead to investigation under the HWUnion's Disciplinary Procedures & Process.

4.3 If a member of HWUnion's conduct has also breached the Heriot-Watt University's standards of acceptable behaviour, then this would instead be potentially investigated under the [University's Student Discipline Policy and Procedures](#).

4.4 If you believe any student has breached this Code of Conduct, then you should raise this with a HWUnion staff member and/or raise a breach of conduct case through the [Complaints Form](#) which is part of the HWUnion's Disciplinary Procedures & Process.

APPENDICES

A1. DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL

This Code of Conduct was developed by the Student Engagement team of HWUnion following a consultation (1) of best practice across the UK Student Union/Association sector, followed by a consultation (2) with our student representatives (Student Executive, FTO, Student Council), HWUnion staff, Trustees and University colleagues.

A2. OWNERSHIP AND REVIEW

A2.1 The HWUnion Trustee Board has oversight of the Code of Conduct and will review it annually to ensure that it is fit for purpose. As part of this review, they will seek guidance and evidence from the following representative structures and HWUnion staff:

- a. Student Executive
- b. Society Council
- c. Department Officer Network
- d. Head of Student Engagement
- e. Chief Executive Officer
- f. Deputy Chief Executive Officer

A2.2 Operational direction of the Code of Conduct is the responsibility of the Head of Student Engagement. This will include all staff reports who are responsible for enabling environments where students engage in (i.e. Commercial, Advice and Support, Academic, Societies, Campaigns & Projects).

A2.3 Case management and handling of breaches are managed in line with the HWUnion's Disciplinary Procedures & Process.

Document Owner	Head of Student Engagement
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Review Frequency	Annually
Next Review Date	August 2027

A3. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary of Changes
1.0	30 September 2026	NA, Initial Document