

The Union, MMU Policy on Social events, Initiations and Alcohol

1. Introduction

1.1 It is The Unions mission to “exist to represent all students at Manchester Metropolitan University, we strive to ensure the needs and views of students are at the heart of everything the university does, we will provide a wide range of services activities and opportunities to offer the best possible student experience”

1.2 We have a duty to ensure that members can participate in all student activities in a safe, non-threatening and enjoyable environment as laid out in the Health & Safety Policy.

2. Alcohol Statement

2.1 The Union is acutely aware that student life and student sport often involves alcohol consumption, but it condemns any behaviour that damages students' health and wellbeing.

2.2 The Union recommends that all teams, clubs, societies and members take a responsible attitude to the provision and consumption of alcohol at sporting events and activities on and off campus.

2.3 Excess alcohol can lead to ill health and anti-social behaviour and The Union expects all its membership clubs, societies and groups to ensure that the consumption of alcohol in and around events is managed appropriately, promoting moderation and responsible behaviour at all times.

2.4 Extra-curricular activities at university are a great way to develop skills and make new and lasting friendships, adding value to the overall student experience. However, activity and sports involvement and participation should never put students in situations where they feel bullied, harassed or intimidated.

2.5 The Union recommends that all clubs, societies and groups develop their own policies and procedures for managing student behaviour and alcohol misuse within their activities. The Union provides an overarching membership code of practice which can be viewed on our website.

3. Policy awareness

3.1 The Union expects that all teams, clubs, societies, groups and members to familiarise themselves with this statement and the policy on social events, initiations and alcohol which outlines its approach to behaviour in activities.

4. Social Events

4.1 Social events act as a team building exercise, whereby new club/society members can meet and socialise with other members. The following aspects need to be considered.

- All sports club, society or activity group members must recognise and adhere to the Union Equal Opportunities Policy and the Equalities Act (2010).
- It is an individual's choice whether or not they attend any social event. Non-attendance should not be a barrier within the activity.
- It should be each sports club, society or activity group's objective that every member has an enjoyable time. It follows that each member will have a different response to activities, and no 'peer' pressure (intended or not) should be placed on any member to do anything that they may not enjoy.
- The Committee of each sports club, society or activity group is responsible for the welfare of all members and must take the necessary measures to ensure that an adequate level of safety is maintained at all times.
- All members of activities sports clubs, societies or activity groups must show respect towards members of the public and other members of the University, at all times.

4.2 Manchester Metropolitan University recognises that social activities are an important part of clubs and societies; however they do not need to involve degrading acts and/or alcohol.

4.3 'Pub crawls', organised bar visits where members are encouraged to drink specific types or quantities of alcohol as part of games or social activities encourages unsafe practices. This often exerts direct or indirect pressure on inexperienced or new members. **The Union therefore does not permit these activities.**

5. Initiation Ceremonies

5.1 A survey carried out at Southampton University in 2003 found that initiation rituals have gained acceptance among a number of students because it is believed to accomplish team building, instil needed humility in new team members, establish a necessary team hierarchy for decision-making, and allow individuals free choice regarding their participation. However, there is concern that initially harmless intentions may frequently evolve to demeaning, felonious, dangerous, and even fatal activities.

5.2 Southampton University banned 'Initiation Ceremonies' from on campus venues and as a result local pubs and bars sometimes provided the facilities for such events and it was up to the proprietor/bar manager/landlord to govern what is allowed in their own venue. However those taking part are Students, and are members of the Students' Union so their welfare on and off campus is still our concern.

5.3 The Union believes the practice of initiations is a dangerous and degrading exercise that jeopardises the safety of members and is a source of negative publicity for the Union. It is also considered that unforeseen circumstances that may result from such ceremonies can cause anguish that may affect students both personally and academically.

5.4 Therefore, following the death of a first year student in 2003 at another NW University from acute alcohol poisoning and asphyxiation as a direct result of an 'initiation* ceremony' the following Policy was introduced:

Activity groups (including sports clubs and societies) will NOT carry out initiation* ceremonies either on or off university premises

***Definition:** An initiation ceremony is an event in which members (often new members) of the club are expected to perform a task or tasks as a means of gaining credibility, status or entry within that club. This may involve peer pressure (though not explicitly) exerted on students, and may compromise a person's inherent dignity as a person by forcing or requiring an individual to drink alcohol, eat mixtures of various food stuffs, nudity and behaviour that may be deemed humiliating.

5.5 Breaches of this policy will result in the The Union disciplinary procedure as laid out in the The Union constitution. Individuals who organise events in breach of this policy will also be subject to disciplinary action in line with the The Union Disciplinary Procedure.

5.6 It is the belief of the Union that every student has the right to participate as a full member in all activities without attending any social events. Selection for competitive activities should be based purely on ability, skill, fitness criteria and attendance at training.

6. Behaviour

6.1 Every member club/society/group shall be responsible for ensuring that its members, players, officials and all persons purporting to be its supporters or followers conduct themselves in an orderly fashion whilst attending or taking part in an event, match or competition in which it is involved, whether on Union/University premises or elsewhere. Any of the following actions by the above shall render the club/society/group liable to a charge of misconduct for failing to discharge its said responsibility:

- Violent, threatening, abusive, obscene or provocative behaviour, conduct or language;
- Encroachment on a playing/activity area by spectators or unauthorised persons, save for reasons of safety;
- Throwing missiles, bottles or other potentially harmful or dangerous objects at, onto or adjacent to the playing/activity area.

- Every clubs/society/group shall be responsible for ensuring that its members, officials and all persons purporting to be its representatives do not conduct themselves or print/have published any material which will bring The Union into disrepute.

6.2 In almost all circumstances open alcohol containers and drinking of alcohol is illegal on private and hired transport as laid out in the drivers handbook. It is also against National Governing Body regulations and the majority of sports fixtures, centres and facilities.

6.3 For all Union managed events (eg. Inter-faculty cup, large festivals, BUCS finals etc) we also request that each club/society/group notifies The Union of the number of members, supporters, or students likely to attend and gives the name of three people who will be responsible for their behaviour at the event to aid management of, and compliance with, this policy.

7. Breach of this policy

7.1 If a member feels that these guidelines have been breached, The Union welcomes any grievance or complaint; to do this, please submit a written complaint via email to phil.kynaston@mmu.ac.uk or in the case of a complaint against an elected official of The Union to s.u.president@mmu.ac.uk and The Union will enact its disciplinary proceedings against the individual(s) or group as laid out in its constitution.

7.2 Disciplinary outcomes may include but not be limited to:

- Removal of financial support
- Fines
- Individual(s) removal from office/suspension/expulsion from The Union
- Team suspension/expulsion from The Union
- Club/society/group suspension/expulsion from The Union
- University disciplinary action
- Legal action

7.3 For more information visit:

<http://www.theunionmmu.org/about/our-constitution/>

<http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>