

**DUBLIN UNIVERSITY CENTRAL SOCIETIES COMMITTEE
SOCIETY GRIEVANCES PROTOCOL**

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Dublin University Central Societies Committee (hereafter “CSC” or “Committee”) is committed to supporting students to engage with their University Society (hereafter “society”) experience which can have its challenges, in a way that fosters learning and growth in a constructive, safe, and inclusive university environment. Working together as a committee provides a huge opportunity for learning and self-development. It teaches us about collaboration, meeting challenges and navigating difficult situations as well as thriving in the good times.

Sometimes, as part of this unique experience, issues can arise within the dynamics of the society or with members. Resolving such issues, preventing them from recurring, and creating an environment where everyone can thrive, is a shared responsibility.

This Protocol also establishes a disciplinary process, which will apply exclusively to University Societies in their capacity as collective entities recognised by the CSC. It does not apply to and shall not be used to bring disciplinary proceedings against, individual members of the University. It is to be read in conjunction with, and subject to, the CSC Constitution, the CSC Grants Policy Document, and the CSC Recognition Policy Document.

2. IDENTIFYING AND SOLVING ISSUES

2.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 2.1.1 There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to resolving issues which are dynamic – at all times it’s important to think clearly about your actions and not make snap, fear or other emotion-based judgements on how to address a ‘problem’.
- 2.1.2 Where an issue arises in the course of society activity, the University Society committee should first consider the specific nature of the matter, who it affects, and how it may be addressed in a safe and responsible manner.
- 2.1.3 The appropriate route to resolution will depend on the nature and scale of the issue. Some matters will be capable of resolution by the University Society committee acting together. Others may be more complex or serious in nature, and societies are neither expected nor required to resolve such matters without appropriate support.
- 2.1.4 University Society membership and participation is at all times supplementary to a member's fundamental status as a registered student of the University. Accordingly, all society-related activity must be conducted in accordance with applicable University policy and Irish law.

2.2 GUIDANCE FOR UNIVERSITY SOCIETIES

- 2.2.1 Any member of a University Society may avail of support services provided by the University or by external bodies at any time. This right exists independently of the society and of the CSC, and no member should be discouraged from seeking such support.
- 2.2.2 When an issue arises, the following steps should be taken:
 - (a) Consider the facts of the issue carefully and without rushing to conclusions.
 - (b) Read the guidance available from the CSC and relevant Trinity College departments.
 - (c) Work as a committee, where appropriate, to reach consensus on a suitable resolution route — whether informal or formal, internal to the society or with outside support.

- (d) Reach out for support where necessary, and ensure all members are aware of the supports available to them.
- 2.2.3 University Societies should keep a private record of experiences and any points considered relevant to the issue. Care should be taken not to share identifying personal information or data, such as photographs or screenshots, unnecessarily.
- 2.2.4 The following outlines common categories of issue and the considerations that apply to each.
- (a) *Administrative or Financial Issues.* Where an issue concerns the day-to-day administration or finances of the society, the committee should consider whether it falls within the normal scope of running the society and can be addressed through internal discussion and improved working practices. The CSC may be approached for support where an issue is taking a significant amount of time to resolve or is beyond the society's control.
 - (b) *Society Activity, Content, or Events.* Disagreements about the activities a society should pursue should be approached by reference to the aims and objectives set out in the society's constitution. Differing views are normal and should be addressed through open discussion, welcoming of feedback, and democratic decision-making. Ultimately, the committee is responsible for ensuring the society operates in accordance with its constitution.
 - (c) *Interpersonal Issues.* It is normal for members of a society committee to experience disagreements from time to time. Low-level interpersonal conflict is a natural part of working in a committee and does not in itself indicate a serious problem. Where a disagreement can be resolved informally, standard conflict resolution approaches should be considered in the first instance.
 - (d) *Expressive Activity.* Disagreements may arise, from within or outside the society, about how the society or its members express their views. This can include questions about the nature of society activities, members' freedom of expression, or differences in values. Such discourse is inherent in university life. The same principles apply as in any other type of issue: does the expression fall within the normal activity of the society? What does the society's constitution provide? Can the matter be discussed and resolved informally? And does the expression reach a level that may be in contravention of College policy or Irish law?
- 2.2.5 Where an issue cannot be resolved informally or in the ordinary course of society business, it may be appropriate to seek support from outside the society. What follows sets out in broad terms what is and is not within the remit of the CSC, and where else support may be sought. Each situation is unique and may call for more than one form of response.

2.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNIVERSITY SOCIETIES

- 2.3.1 University Societies are responsible for resolving issues that fall within the normal scope of their business.
- 2.3.2 Where a resolution cannot be found and the matter has reached an impasse, the issue will either fall within the remit of the CSC, or will require referral to another appropriate support as set out in this Protocol.
- 2.3.3 Issues that are generally within the capacity of a society and its members to resolve include:
- (a) Normal administrative, financial, or operational matters;
 - (b) Interpersonal issues or conflicts within the committee or membership;
 - (c) Debates or disagreements about the aims and activities of the society.

2.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CSC

2.4.1 Where a data protection concern relates to the CSC domain (csc.tcd.ie), it should be directed to the CSC Data Protection Officer, Emma Matthew, via emma@csc.tcd.ie. Concerns may also be reported to the College Data Protection Officer.

2.4.2 Issues that may fall within the ability of the CSC to assist with include:

- (a) Actions that might be deemed grossly improper and which are likely to bring the name of the University Society, the CSC, or the University into disrepute;
- (b) Actions in breach of the CSC Constitution, the Grants Policy Document, the Recognition Policy Document, or any other applicable CSC policy or operational norm;
- (c) Actions in breach of the University Society's own constitution;
- (d) Financial incompetence, recklessness, or misuse of society funds or property (including digital property);
- (e) Failure to comply with conditions attached to recognition or grant allocation;
- (f) Actions in contravention of applicable College policy (where those actions fall within the Committee's remit);
- (g) Failure to remove from office an individual implicated in financial negligence or misappropriation of society funds when so directed by the CSC Executive.

2.4.3 Reports to the CSC may be submitted using the [prescribed form](#). Reports will be held in confidence by the CSC Chairperson, who will review the matter and discuss appropriate next steps with the reporting party. Reports should not contain more information or personal data, including photographs or screenshots, than is strictly necessary at the initial stage. The CSC cannot act on reports that are submitted anonymously or on behalf of another person.

2.4.4 The CSC manages issues reported to it in accordance with this Society Grievance Protocol, which includes the University Society Disciplinary Process set out in Section 3.

2.5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OUTSIDE THE REMIT OF THE CSC

Issue	Contact
Bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct	Dignity, Respect and Consent Service
Student disciplinary matter	Office of the Junior Dean
Health and Safety incident	Local attendant desk
Accident or security incident	Security Office
Physical issue (graffiti, broken facilities, missing amenities)	Local attendant desk (liaises with Estates and Facilities)
Serious incident warranting Garda involvement	An Garda Síochána
Hate crime	Garda Online Hate Crime Reporting
Complaint against the Students' Union	TCDSU Oversight Commission
Complaint relating to a student publication	Office of the Press Ombudsman
EDI-related issue	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Office
All other complaints	Secretary's Office

3. UNIVERSITY SOCIETY DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

3.1 TRIGGERING THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

3.1.1 The Disciplinary Process may be triggered in one of two ways:

- (a) By the CSC acting on its own initiative, where it has received a report or otherwise has grounds to believe that a University Society has engaged in conduct falling within the scope of Section 2.4.2; or
- (b) By referral from a College authority or established College service (including, in very limited and exceptional cases, and on the advice of the College, a law enforcement agency), where the facts have already been established by that referring body. In such cases, the Committee shall act solely on the established facts presented to it and shall not conduct any independent investigative proceedings.

3.1.2 As established in Section 1, this Process applies exclusively to University Societies in their capacity as collective entities recognised by the CSC.

3.1.3 There are two distinct situations in which this Process would be applicable:

- (a) Disciplinary action against a University Society as a collective entity, where the University Society's committee bears collegiate responsibility for the conduct in question; and
- (b) Disciplinary action against an individual officer of a University Society acting in their official capacity as an officer of that University Society.

3.1.4 For the avoidance of doubt, responsibility for student discipline rests with the College in the first instance.

3.1.5 Any issue involving bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or conduct potentially in breach of Irish law falls outside the remit of the CSC and must be referred to the appropriate College body — including but not limited to the Dignity, Respect and Consent Service, the Office of the Junior Dean, or An Garda Síochána, as appropriate.

3.2 MATTERS SUBJECT TO THIS PROCESS

3.2.1 This Process may be applied where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a University Society has engaged in conduct listed in Section 2.4.2.

3.3 INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS

3.3.1 The Committee is committed to ensuring that any disciplinary matter is handled fairly, promptly, and in accordance with the principles of natural justice. In particular, every University Society subject to these proceedings shall have a meaningful right of reply before any sanction is imposed.

3.3.2 Upon receipt of a complaint, report, or referral, or upon the Committee otherwise becoming aware of a potential issue, the CSC Chairperson shall conduct an initial assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to determine:

- (a) Whether the matter falls within the remit of the CSC under Section 3.1 and 3.2 above;
- (b) Whether the matter should more appropriately be referred to another College body without further action by the CSC;
- (c) Whether the matter is suitable for resolution by informal means (see Section 3.3.4); or
- (d) Whether a formal investigation is warranted.

3.3.3 The initial assessment shall be completed within five (5) working days of the matter coming to the attention of the Chairperson. The outcome of the assessment shall be communicated in writing to the complainant or reporting party, if applicable.

- 3.3.4 Where the initial assessment indicates that the matter is less serious in nature and amenable to resolution without the full formal procedure, the Committee may seek to resolve the matter informally. This may include:
- (a) Direct engagement with the society's officers;
 - (b) Provision of guidance; or
 - (c) The imposition of remedial requirements, with the consent of the relevant parties.
- 3.3.5 Where the initial assessment indicates that a formal investigation is warranted, the CSC Chairperson shall notify the University Society in writing. The notification, which will be addressed to the University Society Chairperson, the University Society Secretary and the University Society Treasurer, shall include:
- (a) A clear statement of the nature of the allegations or concerns being investigated;
 - (b) A copy of the Society Grievances Protocol and any relevant provisions of the CSC Constitution and applicable Policy Documents;
 - (c) An invitation to the society to provide a written response to the allegations within five (5) working days of the date of the notification (the "Right of Reply");
 - (d) Confirmation that the University Society may attend a meeting with the CSC Chairperson to present its position, if it so wishes.
- 3.3.6 The CSC Chairperson, with the support of the CSC Operations Officer, shall gather such evidence as is reasonably necessary to establish the relevant facts. This may include:
- (a) Review of the society's financial records, accounts, receipts, and bank statements held by or accessible to the CSC;
 - (b) Review of correspondence, meeting minutes, and any other documentary records relevant to the matter;
 - (c) Interviews with relevant individuals, including officers of the society, on a voluntary basis;
 - (d) Consultation with the CSC Treasurer and/or Accounts Administrator in matters involving financial conduct;
 - (e) Consultation with College offices or services where relevant and appropriate.
- 3.3.7 The failure of a University Society to submit a Right of Reply within the specified timeframe shall not, of itself, be treated as an admission of the conduct alleged, but the CSC Chairperson shall proceed on the basis of the information available.
- 3.3.8 Upon completion of the investigation, the CSC Chairperson shall prepare, and submit a written report to the CSC Executive within ten (10) working days of the date of the notification to the University Society setting out:
- (a) A summary of the allegations or concerns investigated;
 - (b) The evidence gathered and the steps taken during the investigation;
 - (c) The University Society's Right of Reply and any representations made;
 - (d) Findings of fact;
 - (e) A recommendation as to whether the matter has been established and, if so, what sanction or sanctions are proposed.
- 3.3.9 The CSC Executive shall consider the CSC Chairperson's report at a duly convened meeting. The Executive shall determine:
- (a) Whether, on the balance of probabilities, the conduct alleged has been established;
 - (b) If so, what sanction or sanctions are appropriate having regard to the nature and gravity of the conduct, any mitigating circumstances, and the proportionality of the sanction.

3.3.10 The University Society shall be notified in writing of the Executive's decision within five (5) working days of the meeting at which the decision was made. The written decision shall include:

- (a) A statement of the findings of fact;
- (b) The sanction or sanctions imposed, if any;
- (c) The reasons for the decision;
- (d) Information regarding the University Society's right of appeal under Section 2.5 of this document.

3.4 SANCTIONS

3.4.1 Sanctions shall be applied in a proportionate manner, having regard to the nature and gravity of the conduct, the degree of culpability, any pattern of prior misconduct, and any mitigating factors presented by the University Society.

3.4.2 The CSC Executive retains discretion to impose one or more sanctions simultaneously where the circumstances warrant.

3.4.3 In all cases, sanctions imposed under this Process are intended to supplement, not replace, the provisions regarding suspension, derecognition, and financial penalties already set out in the Recognition Policy Document and the Grants Policy Document, to which reference should always be made.

3.4.4 Schedule of Available Sanctions

Sanction	Description	Applicable Circumstances
Formal Warning	A written formal warning placed on the University Society's record with the CSC, setting out the conduct of concern and the expectation of improvement. Typically issued for a first or minor breach.	Minor or technical breaches; first-time non-compliance with administrative or financial requirements.
Directed Remediation	A binding requirement that the society undertake specific corrective action within a defined timeframe. This may include attendance at CSC-organised training, revision of the University Society's own constitution, or implementation of improved financial controls.	Breaches of the University Society's own constitution; failures in financial record-keeping; non-compliance with CSC operational norms.
Reduction or Withholding of Grant	A reduction in the society's grant allocation for the current or following USG Year, or withholding of part or all of an outstanding grant, in respect of financial misconduct or misuse of funds. To be applied in conjunction with the provisions of the Grants Policy Document.	Financial incompetence; misuse of CSC funds; failure to produce satisfactory financial records; breach of conditions of grant.
Recovery of Funds	A requirement that the society repay to the CSC monies that were improperly spent, misappropriated, or unaccounted for. This may be offset against future grant entitlements.	Misuse or misappropriation of CSC-allocated funds; expenditure outside approved grant headings; failure to produce receipts or documentary evidence.
Restriction of Activities	A time-limited restriction on the society's ability to hold events, run classes, or engage in specified activities, as a condition of continued recognition.	Conduct bringing the CSC or University into disrepute; repeated or

Sanction	Description	Applicable Circumstances
	The nature and duration of the restriction shall be specified in the written decision.	serious breach of CSC policy; events or activities conducted in violation of College policy.
Suspension	Full suspension of the University Society for a specified period. Upon suspension, the University Society will lose access to society rooms and CSC Central Office facilities, the right to book rooms within College will be suspended, and the society's grant entitlements will be restricted to those applicable to provisionally recognised societies, as provided in Section 6 of the Recognition Policy Document.	Serious or persistent misconduct; financial recklessness; grossly improper behaviour likely to bring the University, the CSC, or the society into disrepute; failure to remove an officer implicated in financial misconduct when directed.
Derecognition	Withdrawal of the University Society's recognition by the CSC. Derecognition will result in loss of all rights and entitlements associated with recognised status, including access to grants, facilities, and CSC services.	Provided for in the Recognition Policy Document.

3.4.5 In determining the appropriate sanction or sanctions, the CSC Executive shall have regard to all relevant circumstances, including the following:

- (a) The nature, gravity, and duration of the conduct in question;
- (b) Whether the conduct was deliberate or reckless, as opposed to inadvertent;
- (c) Whether the society has previously been subject to sanctions or formal warnings under this or any predecessor process;
- (d) The extent to which the society has cooperated with the investigation;
- (e) Any remedial steps taken by the University Society before or during the proceedings;
- (f) The impact of the conduct on the University Society's members, on the CSC, or on the wider University community;
- (g) The financial or other harm caused and whether it has been remedied;
- (h) Any mitigating factors presented by the society in its Right of Reply.

3.4.6 Where the CSC Executive, having regard to the nature of the allegations and the risk of ongoing harm or prejudice, considers it necessary to act before the conclusion of the formal investigation, it may impose interim measures pending the outcome of proceedings.

- (a) Such measures shall be proportionate and shall not constitute a pre-determination of the matter.
- (b) The University Society shall be notified immediately and shall retain the right to make representations against the interim measures.
- (c) Interim measures shall be reviewed at each stage of the process and shall lapse upon the issuance of a final decision.

3.5 APPEAL PROCESS

3.5.1 A University Society that has been the subject of a disciplinary decision under this Process shall have the right to appeal that decision to the Capitulation Committee.

3.5.2 An appeal may only be brought on the grounds that a material procedural error occurred during the investigation that caused unfairness to the University Society and may have affected the ultimate outcome.

- 3.5.3 Disagreement with the outcome of the process alone, without substantive grounds as set out above, does not constitute a valid basis for appeal.
- 3.5.4 A University Society wishing to appeal a decision must submit a written Notice of Appeal to the Senior Dean and the CSC Chairperson within ten (10) working days of the date of the written decision notified.
- 3.5.5 The lodging of a Notice of Appeal shall not automatically suspend the operation of any sanction imposed, unless the Capitation Committee or the CSC Executive considers it appropriate to do so having regard to the nature of the sanction and the grounds of appeal advanced. The University Society may request a stay of sanction in its Notice of Appeal, setting out the reasons why such a stay should be granted.

3.6 GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 3.6.1 All parties involved in disciplinary proceedings under this Process shall treat the proceedings and any information arising from them as strictly confidential, subject to any overriding obligations under applicable law or College policy.
- 3.6.2 The CSC shall handle all personal data processed in the course of the proceedings in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and the College's Data Protection Policy.
- 3.6.3 The timelines specified in this document are intended to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a prompt and fair manner.
 - (a) Where a party to proceedings is unable to meet a specified deadline due to exceptional circumstances (including periods of academic examinations, illness, or other serious personal circumstances), that party shall notify the CSC Chairperson as soon as possible and request an extension in writing, setting out the reasons.
 - (b) The CSC Chairperson has discretion to grant reasonable extensions, which shall be communicated to all relevant parties.
- 3.6.4 The CSC shall maintain a confidential record of all disciplinary proceedings, including investigation reports, decisions, and appeals, for a minimum period of five years from the date of the final decision. These records shall be made available only on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with data protection obligations. A record of formal sanctions shall be noted on the University Society's file with the CSC for such period as the Executive considers appropriate having regard to the nature of the sanction.