



Date: 2025-11-19

Reference: 2025 ACUOSU 4

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA STUDENT UNION'S APPEALS COMMITTEE

BETWEEN

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA CINEMA CLUB

The Appellant

AND

UOSU CLUB COMMITTEE

The Respondent

Indexed as

University of Ottawa Cinema Club v UOSU Club Committee

In a matter concerning an appeal of a final Club Committee's decision under the University of Ottawa Student Union's Constitution

Before: a panel of the UOSU Appeals Committee composed of:

Philippe Giguère, Chair of Appeals Committee

Élodie Proulx, Student member at the Faculty of Law

For the Appellant: Martin Beaulieu, Appellant's Representative

For the Respondent: Emilia Bah, Student Life Commissioner

REASONS FOR DECISION

I. Overview of the Appeals Committee's decision

1. Club recognition matters. Recognition enables students to run events, book space, access funding, and participate meaningfully in campus life. Because of its importance, the process must be fair, equitable and transparent to those affected. These requirements are reflected in Article 8.12.4 of the UOSU Constitution, which requires decision-makers to act in furtherance of fairness, accountability, transparency, consultation, and equity.
2. The UOttawa Cinema Club is a long-standing, active, and attended club that has hosted monthly screenings, student film festivals, collaborations with other clubs, and community-building events since its creation. The club operated continuously until 2025, when a transition in leadership and limited communication led to a missed renewal deadline. When it attempted to re-register in mid-August, its application met all eligibility requirements under POL-GEN-03 (Student Groups Policy) but was nevertheless refused.
3. The only explanation provided by the Club Committee for the refusal was that the 300-club cap had been reached. At the same time, 17 other new clubs were approved. The record or decision does not explain how those clubs were selected among eligible applicants or why University of Ottawa Cinema Club was not included. There are no scoring, ranking, or sufficiently documented criteria to explain how eligible applicants were distinguished.
4. While the cap itself is valid, a decision that simply cites the cap, without explaining the selection process, does not allow an applicant to understand the reasoning behind the outcome or how discretion was exercised. Without a transparent and consistently applied method, outcomes risk appearing arbitrary, prevent applicants from improving future submissions, and prevent oversight bodies from meaningfully reviewing the decision. Because no such reasoning or method is documented in this case, the decision is inconsistent with Article 8.12.4 and the principles of fair and lawful decision-making. The appeal is therefore allowed, and University of Ottawa Cinema Club is granted recognition for 2025–2026.

II. Background:

5. University of Ottawa Cinema Club is a student-run film community founded in February 2022. It has consistently hosted monthly film screenings, run collaborations with other University of Ottawa clubs, organized film festivals, conducted screenwriting competitions. The University of Ottawa Cinema Club has also developed ties with the broader Ottawa film community.

6. University of Ottawa Cinema Club operated continuously from 2022–2025 under the same leadership. In April 2025, the presidency transitioned to a new executive team and unfortunately the club missed the April–May renewal window. As a result, beginning in the summer of 2025, University of Ottawa Cinema Club lost access to room bookings, the Clubs Fair, the VEMS portal, and club funding.
7. Clubs at the University of Ottawa operate within the framework of POL-GEN-03 (Policy on Student Groups), which sets out eligibility requirements for recognition, including but not limited to executive structure, a valid bilingual logo and constitution, and alignment with UOSU policies, positions and constitution. Recognition is the gateway to accessing funding, space booking, and promotion channels. Without recognition, clubs face significant barriers to participating in campus life.
8. The Club Committee is the decision-making body responsible for reviewing applications under the Policy. The Club Committee is empowered to determine whether applicants meet the eligibility standards and, when necessary, to allocate limited recognition spaces in accordance with this Policy and the Constitution.
9. More specifically, Article 8.12.4 of the UOSU Constitution provides that the Club Committee, the Club Administration Service, and all other committees and staff involved with the management and support of clubs must always act in a way which furthers the following principles: fairness, accountability, transparency, consultation, and equity.
10. The Policy also establishes a general cap of 300 recognized clubs. The cap is intended as a resource-management measure to ensure that funding, staff capacity, room bookings, and event supports remain sustainable. However, the Policy does not specify how clubs should be selected when there are more eligible applicants than available recognition spots in a given intake period.
11. In this case, University of Ottawa Cinema Club submitted a complete and compliant application during the authorized registration period. The rejection decision indicated only that the cap had been reached.
12. The meeting minutes record approval of 17 new clubs during the same intake, but they do not clearly document any criteria, scoring, prioritization, or selection method used to allocate the limited recognition spaces among eligible applicants. Moreover, the Committee’s spreadsheet listed 150+ applicants and 17 approvals. The only notation attached to the University of Ottawa Cinema Club’s entry was: “*multiple movie-related clubs exist.*” No further reasoning was documented.
13. The University of Ottawa Cinema Club appealed that decision.

III. Submissions of the parties

14. The Appellant submits that it is one of the largest, most active, and most established recreation-based clubs at the University of Ottawa. It offers monthly screenings, major annual events, student film festivals, and collaborative programming that enriches student life and fills a gap in the absence of a film studies program on campus.
15. The Appellant states that it cannot function without access to on-campus space. Its events require classroom bookings and AV facilities, and losing recognition has had immediate operational consequences.
16. The Appellant argues that the denial email provided no explanation other than the 300-club cap, despite University of Ottawa Cinema Club's extensive contribution to student life and its compliance with the eligibility requirements of POL-GEN-03.
17. The Appellant argues that the decision-making process lacked transparency, by asserting that it was not informed of any criteria used to select the 17 approved clubs. It was not consulted regarding the implementation of the club cap. It has no insight into how applicants were differentiated or prioritized. Moreover, it states that the spreadsheet contains a note referencing "many other clubs do movie nights," but no explanation of how this informal categorization justified exclusion.
18. The Respondent acknowledges that the Appellant met the eligibility criteria and demonstrated student engagement. However, the Respondent submits that the application was refused solely due to the capacity limit of 300 recognized clubs, as set out in Section 3.7 of POL-GEN-03, and that the Club Committee did not have discretion to exceed this limit.
19. In reply, the Appellant reiterates that the core issue is not the cap itself but the absence of a transparent, fair, and consistently applied allocation method.

IV. Analysis

20. The Appeals Committee recognizes that the Clubs Committee has discretion under POL-GEN-03 to approve or refuse applications.
21. Likewise, under the UOSU's governance structure, the Board of Directors has the authority to adopt and amend POL-GEN-03, including the establishment or modification of the 300-club cap as a resource-management measure.
22. The validity of the cap itself is not in dispute, UOSU is entitled to design and adjust the club recognition system in ways that support the effective delivery of student services. A numerical cap is a practical and legitimate tool.
23. However, where the number of eligible applicants exceeds available recognition spaces, the exercise of discretion must align with Article 8.12.4 of the UOSU Constitution, which requires that decisions relating to the management and support of clubs be made in furtherance of fairness, accountability, transparency, consultation, and equity.

24. These are not symbolic values; they are binding governance standards that guide how discretionary power must be exercised. This requirement is also consistent with general principles of administrative law, which hold that discretionary decisions must be made in a manner that is intelligible, transparent, and reviewable, so that affected individuals can understand what was decided and why.
25. The need for clear, fair and reasoned decision-making is particularly important in this case, where decisions materially affect students' ability to participate in campus life. Club recognition is not symbolic. It determines whether students can access funding, hold events, and meaningfully contribute to student life.
26. In this case, it is uncontested that University of Ottawa Cinema Club met all eligibility requirements under POL-GEN-03. The written decision communicated to the Appellant consisted only of a brief reference to the 300-club cap, without any explanation of how the Appellant's application compared to others or why it was not selected.
27. The Annex A spreadsheet identifies the 17 new clubs that were approved during the intake but does not appear to contain any scoring, ranking, sufficient weighting of criteria, or comparative assessment of applications. Moreover, although the spreadsheet contains a note beside University of Ottawa Cinema Club's entry referencing that "many other clubs do movie nights," there is no explanation of how this informal categorization was applied or why it justified exclusion.
28. This concern is heightened by the fact that at least three of the 17 approved clubs contain comments concerning similar clubs/orgs on campus, yet their applications were nevertheless accepted. The record provides no rationale explaining how these clubs were distinguished from the University of Ottawa Cinema Club, how this factor was weighed, or why it was determinative only in University of Ottawa Cinema Club's case.
29. Additionally, as per the Annex A spreadsheet several of the clubs that were *not* selected among the 17 approved applicants have no comments recorded at all, further underscoring the absence of a consistent, transparent, or documented evaluative method. Taken together, these omissions prevent the Appeals Committee from understanding the reasoning behind the selection decisions and raise concerns about unequal or inconsistent treatment.
30. Similarly, the meeting minutes document the approval of clubs but do not describe any criteria or method used to select among competing eligible applicants. They contain no recorded discussion of comparative assessment, prioritization, or weighting of relevant considerations.
31. The record therefore allows us to determine *which* clubs were selected, but not *why they were selected*, nor why University of Ottawa Cinema Club was not. The selection rationale is not fair, equitable, accountable, and transparent.

32. In administrative and student governance contexts, discretion is never absolute. Its discretion must be always exercised in a manner that is fair, intelligible, transparent. It must be exercised through reasoning that can be followed and understood. A decision is transparent when a person affected can determine what was decided and why. A decision is intelligible when the rationale logically connects the evidence and principles to the result. By contrast, a decision becomes arbitrary when similarly situated applicants are treated differently without explanation.
33. A decision that merely cites a maximum-capacity limit, without more, does not permit the affected party to understand the reasoning behind the outcome or how the Committee exercised its discretion.
34. Moreover, without documented criteria or a neutral selection method (such as scoring, ranking, or a random draw), the outcome here appears arbitrary, even if no unfair intent existed. It also prevents applicants from knowing how to improve future submissions and prevents oversight appeal bodies from reviewing the decision meaningfully.
35. When multiple applicants meet all eligibility requirements, the Club Committee must apply a transparent and consistently applied method to determine which organizations are approved. Without such a method, outcomes risk becoming arbitrary, even where the underlying capacity limit is valid.
36. A simple and transparent framework would have mitigated these concerns. For example, where a ranking or scoring system is not feasible, a randomized selection process (lottery) among eligible applicants is a recognized and procedurally fair allocation method in resource-limited environments.
37. Because the Committee did not provide reasons, did not properly and sufficiently document a fair and equitable selection methodology, nor explain why University of Ottawa Cinema Club was excluded while 17 other eligible applicants were selected, the decision is not consistent with Article 8.12.4 of the Constitution or legal principles of procedural fairness.
38. The lack of a clear prioritization method or neutral allocation mechanism, and the absence of transparency around how decisions were made, renders the process unreasonable and creates the appearance of unfair or inconsistent treatment, even if the Club Committee acted in good faith. It also prevents applicants from understanding how to participate meaningfully in future recognition cycles, or oversight appeal bodies from reviewing the decision meaningfully.
39. The Appeals Committee therefore concludes that the refusal to recognize University of Ottawa Cinema Club was not made in a manner consistent with Article 8.12.4 and the principles of procedural fairness. The decision must therefore be set aside.

IV. Conclusion & order

40. The appeal is allowed.

41. The decision of the Club Committee is set aside.
42. University of Ottawa Cinema Club is granted recognized club status for the 2025–2026 academic year, effective immediately.
43. The Appeals Committee recommends that, in future intakes, the Club Committee provide brief written decisions that are more transparent and detailed.
44. The Appeals Committee further recommends that, in future intakes where there are more eligible applicants than available recognition spaces, the Club Committee consider adopting a more transparent ranking or scoring system or another neutral and consistently applied selection method (such as a lottery draw).

“Philippe Giguère, Chair of Appeals Committee”

“I agree,
Élodie Proulx, Faculty of Law Member of Appeals Committee’