

# NUS

## Staff Protocol Policy

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>Staff Protocol Policy</b>	<b>Policy No:</b>	HR003
<b>Approval Date:</b>	October 2022	<b>To Be Reviewed:</b>	Annually
<b>Approved By:</b>	NUS HR Subcommittee		
<b>Noted / Endorsed:</b>	NUS UK and NUS Charity Directors TUNE		
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<b>Related Policies:</b>	Staff Disciplinary Policy Officer Disciplinary Policy Grievance Policy Dignity at Work Policy Social Media Policy Safeguarding Policy Values Framework Wellbeing Policy Statement Membership Code of Conduct		

### Review History

Date	Version	Name	Notes
March 2019	V1	Sharon Pass	Review and re-write (to replace existing Policy)
Sept 2020	V2	Jane Gilchrist	<i>Review and amendments</i>
Sept 2021	V3	Jane Gilchrist	<i>Review and amendments</i>
Sept 2022	V4	Jane Gilchrist	<i>Review</i>

## Staff Protocol Policy Statement

In common with many political and membership governed organisations, NUS recognises that it is important to clarify the relationship and accountability between staff, Representatives and members. We are striving to create and promote healthy political spaces and healthy working relationships which is vital to the success and wellbeing of the organisation. To support this the Staff Protocol provides rules and procedures so that everyone understands the standards expected in order to live our values and uphold the principles of appropriate accountability within a culture of mutual support and respect.

## **1. Purpose**

This policy seeks to:

- 1.1. Clarify the boundaries regarding staff involvement in the democratic governance of NUS.
- 1.2. Clarify the appropriate accountability of staff, officers, representatives and members, in terms of their own management structures and towards one another.
- 1.3. Explain the appropriate processes each group should follow to be able to critically appraise the work of NUS and each other, including where this relates to NUS events and public spaces.
- 1.4. Emphasise the need for all parties to show accountability and respect for one another when commenting on others performance or work in public spaces.
- 1.5. Signpost to other relevant people policies and accompanying guidance and so that all groups can understand the standards of behaviour required and how poor behaviour relating to this staff protocol will be handled.

## **2. Definitions**

- 2.1. A member of NUS shall be defined as a representative of an affiliated students' union (an officer, trustee, volunteer, student or staff member). The students' union may be affiliated to NUS UK or NUS Charity.
- 2.2. Staff members of NUS shall be defined for the purposes of this policy as all employees including temporary and fixed-term staff and contractors under contractual obligation to NUS.
- 2.3. Representatives of NUS shall be defined as all full and part-time Officers, volunteers, members, board members or elected committee members throughout the organisation.

N.B It is important to note that full and part-time officers are also employees of NUS but are defined separately to staff members for the purposes of this policy, in order to clarify the separate nature of their accountability and the complaints processes that apply to each group.

## **3. Conflict of Interests / Overlap of roles**

- 3.1. It is possible that an individual may hold conflicting interests. For example:
  - a staff member of NUS may also be a student, a staff member or officer
  - a student at an affiliated Students' Union may also be a representative of NUS,
  - a NUS UK or NUS Charity Trustee may also be a staff member, an officer or student at an affiliated Students' Union.

It is expected in these situations common sense and discretion will prevail as to the handling of particular conflicts or situations.

- 3.2. For the avoidance of doubt, no individual shall be able to be employed by NUS in a staff role and as an Officer or Representative of NUS at the same time.
- 3.3. No full-time officer of NUS shall be eligible to apply for a staff role until five years has passed since their final date in office.
- 3.4. Further guidance regarding conflict of interest should be sought via the HR Team as required.

## **4. Expectations and Accountability of Staff, Representatives and members**

### **Expectations and accountability of NUS Staff**

- 4.1. In the first instance, members of staff are accountable to their designated manager who in turn is accountable through the organisational structure to the Directors of NUS UK

and NUS Charity, who is in turn accountable to the NUS UK and NUS Charity Boards through the Boards.

- 4.2. Staff are not accountable to membership for decisions made in political spaces, and as such have no right to reply in public and/or political spaces. Staff must not become involved inappropriately in the democracy of NUS; further guidance on what is and is not acceptable can be found in the Staff Disciplinary Policy.
- 4.3. Supporting full and part-time Officers to carry out their duties will regularly require advice on political issues. Providing expert advice on political issues does not constitute inappropriate involvement in the democracy of NUS unless the advice is provided in order to influence an election outcome.
- 4.4. While staff are not line managed by full time officers, the role of staff is to support their work and therefore there is an expectation that staff will work cooperatively with full-time officers in line with agreed project plans. This may include officers working with senior managers to explore how staff could support the officers' objectives. Any concerns an officer may have regarding staff performance should be raised directly with the staff member's line manager, so that the line manager can take the appropriate steps to address the concerns.
- 4.5. It is expected that staff will respect and maintain the integrity of the democratic governance of NUS. If a decision is made or policy set by the Board of Directors, Conferences (including National Conference) or Full Time Officers it would be unacceptable for an employee to publicly criticise, challenge or undermine that decision or policy, through any form of media, including social media.
- 4.6. Staff will not publicly criticise any officer or elected/appointed Representative or member of NUS, unless such criticism has been established as NUS policy through National Conference, or unless a member of staff has been commissioned to do so as an agreed part of their role.
- 4.7. If staff have any concerns, problems or complaints about their employment terms and conditions, working environment or working relationships, this should be addressed via the Grievance Policy and raised with their line manager or the HR Team. Grievances must not under any circumstance be raised directly or indirectly with members, officers or other Representatives of NUS. Complaints regarding full time officers will be dealt with through NUS Grievance and Officer Disciplinary Policies. The process for dealing with complaints regarding members, representatives and volunteers is outlined in the Membership Code of Conduct. Any staff member found to be in breach of this protocol may be subject to disciplinary action under the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

## **5. Expectations and accountability of NUS Representatives and Members**

- 5.1. Officers and Representatives of NUS are elected or appointed to provide leadership, oversight and scrutiny of NUS.
- 5.2. Officers and Representatives of NUS share a collective and individual responsibility to ensure that they respect confidentiality relating to forums, such as Board (or appropriate sub-committee) meetings or matters discussed in-confidence with a member of the Executive Team or National President.
- 5.3. Officers and representatives must ensure the absolute confidentiality of any information or matter related to staffing or employment conditions that they have access to through their role or involvement in relevant committees.
- 5.4. Officers, Representatives and members of NUS share a collective and individual responsibility to ensure that under no circumstances will discussion take place on matters relating to the responsibilities, conditions of employment, performance or conduct of members of staff other than in appropriate forums, such as Board (or appropriate sub-committee) meetings or in-confidence with a member of the Executive Team or National President. This includes making reference to staff members or groups of staff through

either written or any other form of media including blogs, event speeches and social media. If in doubt queries should be referred to the HR Team.

- 5.5. Officers, Representatives and members should never name individual staff members or groups of staff when criticising or praising the work of NUS in public. This is because staff and groups of staff should not be referenced or singled out in political or public spaces including online. In addition, this may cause individuals to feel uncomfortable with no right to reply.
- 5.6. Officers should also refer to the Press Protocol for the rules on dealing with media/press enquiries in order that their reputation and that of NUS is protected.
- 5.7. Officers, Representatives and members should take due care to identify the political responsibility for the area of work identified for criticism or praise and to frame criticism or praise in such a way as avoid staff or groups of staff being identified.
- 5.8. Officers and Representatives are accountable to both the membership, (for their political performance and delivery) and the NUS UK Board (for their behaviour and actions). Officer behaviour is governed by the Officer Disciplinary Policy and therefore breaches of this protocol will be dealt with through that policy.
- 5.9. Member behaviour is governed by the Membership Code of Conduct as well as policies from their own Students Unions' and breaches of the Staff Protocol will be dealt with through these policies. The NUS Membership Code of Conduct explains the NUS approach for dealing with the conduct of members that criticise staff in public or political spaces.
- 5.10. Specific examples of behaviour by that may breach staff protocol at conferences are included in the guidance provided prior to attendees prior to the event or conference. It will never be possible to write a definitive list of all potential breaches and non-breaches of the protocol but the response should always be proportionate depending upon the seriousness and intent underpinning any breach.

## **6. Protocol for raising direct criticism regarding NUS staff, Officers, other Representatives or members**

- 6.1. It is recognised that in a democratic environment, members, officers, other representatives and/or staff should feel able to critically appraise the work of NUS and each other, but this must be through appropriate processes, as set out below.
- 6.2. NUS wishes to create healthy political spaces and is mindful of how an individual's wellbeing may be adversely impacted when criticism is not handled sensitively or constructively. It is therefore important that officers, staff, representatives and members follow the procedures outlined in this policy when they wish to raise concerns.
- 6.3. A criticism of staff, officers, representatives or members falling under the definitions within this policy not raised through the procedures as outlined may be considered as bullying and harassment.

## **7. Direct criticism of an NUS staff member by an Officer, Representative or NUS Member:**

- 7.1. Officers should raise informal and formal concerns about staff members using the Grievance Policy or alternatively the Dignity at Work Policy if a concern relates to bullying or harassment. Contact the HR Team for further guidance as required.
- 7.2. Other Representatives and members should raise concerns in writing via the staff member's manager, Department Director or the HR Team.
- 7.3. The member of staff's manager will be responsible for ensuring that the matter is discussed through the established structures with the staff member, whilst obtaining advice and guidance from the HR Team.
- 7.4. Where action against the staff member is appropriate, the normal staff disciplinary procedure will apply.

- 7.5. A reply to the concern/complaint will normally be conveyed to the member or representative who raised the matter through the staff member's manager or Department Director. That reply will confirm the outcome of the complaint but will not give details of sanctions against staff, if any.
- 7.6. It is always preferable for officers, representatives or members to raise any dignity at work issues through the NUS internal procedure described above, allowing NUS to address, challenge or improve behaviours. Our external whistleblowing reporting line provided via Expolink (contact details below) may be used as an alternative reporting route for dignity at work issues i.e. where individuals do not wish to use the internal process outlined above.
- 7.7. A report may be submitted via Navex Global as follows:  
**Call the hotline: 0800 890011 then dial 833 641 0513**  
**Visit the online portal: [nus.ethicspoint.com](https://nus.ethicspoint.com)**
- 7.8. Expolink is an independent organisation. Its employees are impartial and are trained to handle sensitive disclosures and encourage individuals to share their concerns in confidence.

## **8. Raising criticism or concern regarding an Officer, Representative or NUS member by staff**

- 8.1 If a member of staff or group of staff wishes to raise criticism or concern about an officer, Representative or member of NUS, they should refer to the Grievance Policy which encourages staff to try to seek a resolution informally at the earliest opportunity wherever possible. Alternatively, the Dignity at Work policy will apply if the concern relates to bullying or harassment. N.B the NUS Membership Code of Conduct explains how misconduct by members at conferences will be dealt with.
- 8.2 With regard to communicating expectations to NUS members, NUS will ensure that the relevant aspects of this protocol and the Membership Code of Conduct are communicated effectively to delegates at all NUS Conferences.
- 8.3 Any concerns regarding possible inappropriate conduct by Student Unions' representatives will be escalated to the member's students' union as appropriate.
- 8.4 N.B If an officer wishes to raise a concern about another officer, they should do so via the grievance policy or alternatively via the Dignity at Work policy if a complaint relates to bullying or harassment.

## **9. Behaviour at NUS Events**

- 9.1 NUS will not tolerate breaches of the staff protocol, including conduct within democratic spaces and events. NUS is mindful that staff protocol breaches may intimidate or create a difficult environment for attendees and is mindful that staff in particular do not have a right to reply. NUS will therefore issue a series of warnings at an event if a staff protocol breach arises and if the inappropriate behaviour continues, the individual(s) in breach of the protocol may be removed from the event (see Membership Code of Conduct for further details) and/or staff will be given permission from the Complaints Manager to leave conference floor. It is also possible that NUS would stop the event. Guidance will be issued in advance of National Conference and democratic conferences to ensure that members, officers, representatives and staff are reminded of the rules surrounding staff protocol.