

Student Group Web Platforms and Online Safety Guidance

Student Engagement
April 2025



Web Platforms Guidance

This guidance is for student groups to use when setting up and running their web platforms. This guidance aims to provide student group leaders with information on how to:

- Facilitate and maintain positive and inclusive interactions on their platforms
- Respond to inappropriate behaviour on their web platforms

Web Platforms

Platforms provided by the Students' Union

The Students' Union provides each student group with a mini site on the Students' Union's main website, www.qmsu.org.

These mini sites are set up by the Students' Union upon a group's affiliation and the space remains active until a group is disaffiliated.

The mini site allows student groups to:

- Promote their events and activities
- Provide information about the purpose of the student group
- Hold democratic elections for committee positions
- Sell memberships (if applicable to the type of student group) and track memberships purchased
- Email members
- Sell event tickets and merchandise
- Create news articles

Web Platforms Created by the Student Group

Student groups may have additional online platforms to promote their activities and/or communicate with their members, such as:

- Email addresses
- External websites, providing:
 - The student group provide the URL link clearly on their QMSU webpage
 - The student group do not take sign ups through the external website
 - The purpose of the external website does not overlap with the purpose of the QMSU student group webpage
 - The students group's QMSU webpage is maintained with up to date information about upcoming events and activities
- Social media accounts : Instagram, TikTok, X, Facebook, Snapchat or LinkedIn
- Group messaging forums such as: WhatsApp, Facebook group chats

Web Conduct

It is important to remember that any web platform for student groups is an official student group space, so behaviour that is unacceptable at an event, is equally as unacceptable on any of your web platforms. All users interacting with the Students' Union, or a representative of the Students' Union (including student leaders), should have an expectation of feeling safe. Here is some guidance on unacceptable behaviour and tips for preventing it.

Unacceptable Conduct

The Students' Union has a Zero Tolerance approach to conduct that could legitimately be perceived by its recipients as:

- Sexual harassment
- Discriminatory comments and behaviour
- Abuse and unwanted attention
- Threatening or violent behaviour or language

You can find out more about this and how you can report incidences of unacceptable conduct here [on our website here](#).

Managing your Web Platforms

Here are some points we recommend groups follow to promote positive interactions on their web platforms and how to handle unacceptable conduct.

For mini sites provided by the Students' Union, external websites and email addresses created by student groups:

- Use these platforms as a professional space to inform members and prospective members about your student group and its activities, and answer general enquiries.
- Only give access to the committee members who need admin access to these platforms.
- Remove admin access to those who no longer need it.

For more interactive web platforms such as social media pages/groups and/or group chats:

- Only give admin access to those who need it.
- Include web platform handover in your handover between the old and new committees each year.
- Keep your groups and chats closed to paid members only (remember to add new members regularly).
- Do not give access to external people (including sponsors etc)
- Provide a statement to members upon joining that your web platforms are for discussion and communication around student group activities only and behaviour associated with the unacceptable conduct in this document is not tolerated.

If an incident of unacceptable conduct does occur on any of your web platforms, here is some advice on actions you should take as a committee:

- Put a message out on the web platform where the incident has occurred, to state that the behaviour shown is not tolerated in your student group and kindly ask your members to keep the platform a safe space for students.

- In addition to this, or if the behaviour continues, consider direct messaging the person (or people) to let them know that their comments are not acceptable on the student group web platform, referring back to the statement made at the beginning of there year where possible.
- If the situation has become unmanageable you can consider instigating a cooling off period and temporarily freeze the group for a period of time. Admins can then consider using this period to release any further statements on the platform, as necessary.

Report the incident to your Students' Union staff support and provide screenshots/evidence of the behaviour. The Students' Union will then be able to offer support with dealing any necessary further action or investigation as per relevant Students' Union procedure (if necessary).

- If the behaviour was posted online, remove the comments to revert your web platform back to a safe space for students (make sure you have collected any evidence you need for later reference before removing).
- After a cooling off period, re-open/ unfreeze the web platform for members to have access to posting again and remind all members that everyone is to move on from the previous conversations and remain respectful on your group's web platforms and at your events.
- Keep your staff support at the Students' Union up to date with any further escalations or issues so they can provide you with the correct support.

Online Safety

All QMUL students have free access to MS Teams via their QMUL account. This platform has features and functions which can be used, prior and during a session, to help control participant behaviour. This document explains how you can best use the settings on MS Teams to keep your student group events and activities safe and a positive experience for all involved.

Student group leaders should also familiarise themselves with the Online Platforms Guidance above for student groups which contains information how to facilitate and maintain positive and inclusive interactions and how to respond to inappropriate behaviour at online events and activities.

Settings

To ensure a safe environment for students, there are some functionalities that will help you while running an online event. These include but are not limited to:

- Requiring a password
- Using the waiting room
- Muting participants on entry
- Turn video off on entry
- Prevent attendees from re-joining
- Allow only QMUL users
- Remove an attendee
- Mute a or all participant
- Control screen sharing
- Suspend participant activities
- Giving control to others
- Participant list and limiting participant activity
- Moderated Q&A facility

Further information and guidance

When setting up meetings you can ensure only QMUL students or invited guests are permitted to the event. When starting the event, they will wait in a waiting room and you can accept the appropriate people and reject anyone that shouldn't be there. You can also have it set up to have everyone on mute and camera off on arrival if needed.

Once you have joined a meeting on MS Teams you will have several options available to keep the meeting safe. You can find lots of tutorials and support on the [Microsoft Office page here](#).

Support with managing your Web Platforms or Online events

We understand that it may be more difficult to understand the effect of some messages when online. If you are ever unsure of whether you should take steps to manage behaviour shown on your web platforms, please contact your Students' Union staff support, who can offer informal support as well as investigate any serious behaviour misconduct as per relevant Students' Union procedure (if necessary).

You can contact your staff support through the relevant contact details below:

Societies – su-societies@qmul.ac.uk

Sport Clubs – su-sportsadministrator@qmul.ac.uk

Student Media – su-studentmedia@qmul.ac.uk

RAG Committees – su-rag@qmul.ac.uk

Volunteering Groups – su-volunteering@qmul.ac.uk

Part Time Officers – email your individual staff contact given to you at the start of the year.

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