



Cardiff University and Cardiff University Students' Union Relationship Agreement 2020/2021



**Cardiff University Students' Union
Undeb Myfyrwyr Prifysgol Caerdydd**

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Introduction & Context

This Relationship Agreement aims to articulate the relationship between Cardiff University and Cardiff University Students' Union, and outlines the basis for the relationship between the parties and the principles under which they operate.

The agreement has drawn on the guidance provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) in Circular, '*Revised guidance on good practice in funding of effective, democratic student unions, and student representation*' (Ref: W14/06HE).

This agreement serves as the Code of Practice defined in and required by Section 22 of the **Education Act 1994**; and in accordance with the provisions of this Act Cardiff University must ensure that the requirements applicable to the Students' Union are applied.

Principles

1. Status of Cardiff University Students' Union

Principle: *Cardiff University Students' Union (the Union) is the recognised Students' Union of Cardiff University for the purposes of the Education Act 1994.*

The Union is a Students' Union, as defined in the **Education Act 1994**, with internal regulations and rules approved by its Board of Trustees and the **University Council**, which is the University's **governing body**. The Union is a registered charity (Charity No: 1137163) and company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (Company No: 07328777). The Union is independent of the University and is a **charitable company**. It is therefore constituted by its **Memorandum and Articles of Association**. It is governed by a Board of Trustees, who act as Directors for the purposes of company law and Trustees for the purposes of charity law. This is because of the Union's status as a **charitable company**. Decisions of the Board of Trustees require majority agreement.

The Union has the right to manage its own affairs and funds as defined within its **Memorandum & Articles of Association**, jointly approved by the University at intervals not exceeding five years. In accordance with the **Education Act 1994**, the University Council has a statutory duty to ensure that the Union is run in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances.

The Union has two subsidiary companies controlled by the Union by virtue of sole membership: Cardiff Union Services Limited (CUSL) and Cardiff Volunteering (CV), the latter of which is a **charitable company**. These companies, along with the Union are reported as a group.

The Union's **charitable objects** are the advancement of education of students¹ at Cardiff University for the public benefit by: promoting the interests and welfare of students at Cardiff University during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students; being the recognised representative channel between students and Cardiff University and any other external bodies; and providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its students.

¹ As defined in Cardiff University Statute 1 (2.11)

2. Strategic Partnership

Principle: *The University and the Union work in partnership to inform the development of each other's strategic directions.*

The University and the Union have strategic plans which aim to enhance the education and experience of all students at the University. The Elected Officers and Union staff meet regularly with University staff at all levels in a range of formal and informal settings to further their respective strategic objectives.

The Union reports its activities and identifies areas of concern through regular reports to the **University Council** and in meetings with University staff at all levels. The Union's elected President and the appointed Chief Executive meet regularly with the University's Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer respectively, and the University's senior staff meet regularly with the Union's Elected Officers.

The University organises an annual induction for the Union's Elected Officers for the purpose of communicating the University's structures, governance, priorities and projects. The induction also aims to establish relationships and provide a forum for discussing areas of mutual interest.

The University has the right to nominate two Trustees to become members of the Union's Board of Trustees, as defined with the Union's **Memorandum & Articles of Association**. The contribution of University Nominated Trustees is recognised as integral to the good governance of the Union. The Student Members of the Council shall comprise the Students' Union President and one other Union elected officer, as prescribed by the University's Ordinances. Recognition of the importance of the student perspective in University decision-making is demonstrated by the fact that there are student members on all major **University committees**, as well as advisory groups of the University.

In addition to student members on the University's **governing body**, there is student membership on other bodies which include: Court, Senate, Finance & Resources Committee, Investment & Banking Sub-Committee, Governance Committee, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Academic Standards & Quality Committee, the **Student Experience Strategy Group** and a range of other Student Experience related groups.

Student members of Council are provided with an induction which covers: the role and responsibilities of members of a **governing body** with particular focus on the collective, and ultimate responsibility for the governance of the institution; the role as a trustee of a Registered Charity; compliance responsibilities; conventions about confidentiality and declaring conflicts of interest; information about the University's vision and mission, strategic planning, funding, estates and academic governance.

3. Student Centred University

Principle: *The University and the Union share a commitment to developing and improving the student experience.*

There is a high level of engagement between the University, the Union and the student body. This partnership enables students to become independent and lifelong learners within a culture that fosters, champions and respects equality, diversity and inclusion. The Student Academic Representative (Rep) system and the Union's governing structures enable the University and the Union to continue work together to improve student satisfaction.

The Union supports the University's **strategy**, and specifically its aims of maximising the potential of its students. The University's current strategy is **The Way Forward 2018 – 2023**.

The Union exists to promote the welfare of students and to provide social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of students. These activities aim to support the wellbeing of students, aid student retention and improve student employability in accordance with the University's aims.

Through regular communication and joint working, the Union's Student Advice Team and the University's Student Support Services mutually respect and support each other to promote and protect the interests and welfare of the student body.

4. Student Voice

Principle: *The University and the Union will work together to ensure opportunities for students to express their opinions and be partners in the decision-making of the University and the Union.*

The Unions' Elected Officers

The Union has 7 Full Time Officers (the Sabbatical Trustees) and 10 Part Time Officers, who are elected through a cross campus ballot to represent various constituent groups of the student body according to their job description. The purpose of these Officers is to engage with students and work in partnership with stakeholders to communicate their views and interests to the University and external bodies. In the course of their work, Elected Officers will make use of different forms of campaigning, University Committee membership, and other formal and informal meetings with University staff and external bodies.

The Student Academic Representatives (Rep) System

Student Academic Reps are students who are elected by peers within their cohort to provide a vital link between their School and College to the Union and the wider University. Their main responsibilities are to represent their fellow students; help make decisions that improve the student experience; feedback these decisions to their cohort; and work in partnership with University staff to develop projects and initiatives.

The University and the Union jointly support the Student Academic Rep system and work together to ensure the representation of students at School, College and University-wide level. The Union takes responsibility for recruiting, training and supporting the Academic Reps through the Student Voice Team within the Union. The University, through the Centre for Education Support and Innovation, supports the embedding of the Academic Rep system within **University Committees**, and the appointment of Student Rep Coordinators within Schools. The University and the Union ensure that Academic Reps have access to relevant survey data, module evaluation results, **Student Staff Panel** minutes and **Boards of Studies** minutes to support their work.

Student feedback and student surveys

To help understand the needs of students, the University and the Union engage in regular informal dialogue and collect data from students and use it to improve the student experience. Examples of data used in this way include, but are not limited to: **National Student Survey (NSS)**, **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)**, **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**, **Welcome to Cardiff Survey**, Module Evaluation, Speak Week, **Student Staff Panel Minutes**, Focus Groups and workshops.

The Student View

The Union provides the Student View on an annual basis to the **University Council**. The submission sets out the key issues, concerns of the student body and recommends potential projects and actions that the University might take to address them, including a balance of pastoral and academic priorities. The submission also reports on progress made against the recommended actions in previous years. The University commits to providing a written response which is presented to Council for approval and details how it will address the submission's recommendations. The jointly chaired Student View Steering group oversees progress and reports periodically to Council. The University and the Union commit to supporting these activities and to develop them as appropriate, making use of the University's **Student Survey Management Group**.

5. Student Behaviour

Principle: The University and the Union work cooperatively to investigate and hear student behaviour allegations relating to student groups, clubs and societies or individuals when on Union premises or when participating in Students Union activities and services.

The University and Union have a process of joint investigation for matters relating to alleged behaviour of individuals and/or student groups, clubs and societies, reviewed annually by the University's Academic Registrar and the Union's Chief Executive. The process is designed to tackle student group behaviour concerns quickly, fairly and consistently.

The Union has an independent code of conduct for individual student members, applied in relation to student behaviour on Union premises or whilst participating in the Union's activities and services. The Union shares the details of serious and significant student behaviour incidents in accordance with the joint investigation process. The University is responsible for general student behaviour at the University and maintains associated policy, processes and procedures all of which allow students to seek advice and representation from the Union.

6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Principle: The University and the Union have a shared commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

The University and the Union aim to promote a dignified and principled community, where equality is promoted; diversity and inclusivity are valued and individuals are respected; behaviour is guided by codes of academic integrity, ethics and good conduct; everyone accepts their responsibilities to each other; and the English and Welsh languages are treated on a basis of equality. The University has a Strategic Equality Plan to promote equality and achieve equality improvements, and this is supported by several related policies, including the Dignity at Work and Study Policy. Both the University's Plan and the Union's governing documents make specific reference to the equality of the Welsh and English languages.

The University promotes a climate of equal opportunity for all students and is committed to meeting its statutory responsibilities regarding equality, diversity, safeguarding and protected characteristics. The University provides Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training to staff within the University and the Union in order to ensure that these core principles are promoted. The Union is accredited with Investors in Diversity status and is committed to maintaining the standard.

7. Complaints Procedure

Principle: *There is a complaints procedure available to students who are dissatisfied in their dealings with the Union.*

Students who are dissatisfied in their dealings with the Union or claim to be unfairly disadvantaged by reason of having exercised their right to not be a member of the Union can make a complaint to the Union, in line with the Union's Complaints, Discipline and Appeals Procedure (Appendix 1 of the Union's **Bye-Laws Appendices**). If a student continues to be dissatisfied, they may complain to the University in accordance with the provisions of the **Education Act 1994**, the University may refer the matter for investigation to an independently appointed person.

8. Freedom of Speech

Principle: *The University and the Union are committed to the principle of freedom of speech under the law.*

The Education (2) Act 1986 requires the University to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for students, staff and visitors. The Education (2) Act 1986 also imposes a duty on the University to publish a Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech; which sets out the procedures and conduct required of those organising or attending meetings, or other activities.

The University and the Union follow an established external speaker booking procedure to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is maintained. All Union events, including those of affiliated student clubs and societies are captured within this procedure. The lawful restrictions on freedom of speech applied by the University are detailed within section 4 of the University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

9. Mutual Support and Commitment

Principle: *The University and the Union are committed to the partnership, constructive interactions and mutual respect.*

The University's and Union's relationship is established within the University Charter, **Statutes** and Ordinances, and further detailed within the Student Charter and this Relationship Agreement. The University and Union invest time and resource in the partnership and as a result have enjoyed a successful relationship over an extended period. Full, open and regular communication on issues likely to have an impact on the other party, the student population and/or other joint stakeholders are recognised as underpinning the continued success and strength of the partnership.

The University and Union recognise and respect the distinct role the other plays. The University recognises the value of a strong, independent student-led Students' Union empowered to determine and manage its own affairs.

The Union recognises the need for the University to balance the interests of a range of stakeholders within an increasingly challenging external context. The University and Union recognise that this can lead to differences of perspective, and when that occurs commit to engaging in constructive dialogue that recognises the benefits of working together to improve the student experience.

10. Finances and Accounts of the Union

Principle: *The Union has the power to manage its own affairs and funds, in accordance with the provisions of the University's Ordinances and the financial agreement between the University and the Union.*

The University has responsibility under the **Education Act 1994** to ensure that the Union operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances. The University is committed to providing a **Block Grant** and other financial support to the Union with the structure of support, oversight and reporting detailed within a financial agreement. Financial support to the Union is subject to review by the Finance and Resources Committee, approval of the **University Council**, and is provided in accordance with the requirements of Ordinance 13 and the financial agreement between the University and the Union.

11. The University Union building and occupancy of University premises

Principle: *The Union occupies the University Union building on Park Place by lease from the University and occupies a selection of rooms within the Neuadd Meirionnydd building at the Heath campus.*

The Union occupies the University Union building on Park Place by lease for a **Peppercorn rent**, and this non-financial support is intrinsic to the support provided by the University to the Union. The annual block grant made to the Union takes account of the Union's maintenance and running costs associated with the University Union building.

The Union occupies a selection of rooms within the Neuadd Meirionnydd building at the Heath Park Campus without formal agreement, in support of the Union's activities and services at the Heath Park. The University and Union commit to working together to ensure that physical spaces, activities and services are provided for Union activities at the Heath campus.

The University commits to enabling Union staff and officers to access University buildings in pursuance of the Union's aims and objectives. Similarly, the Union commits to enabling University staff to access Union spaces. University staff are also provided with associate membership of the Union to allow participation in Union activities and services.

12. Affiliation to External Organisations

Principle: *The Union has the right to affiliate to external organisations in accordance with its objects and Charity Law. The Union decides its affiliations democratically in observance of the rules within its Memorandum and Articles of Association and in accordance with the provisions within the Education Act 1994.*

The Union publishes a list of external affiliations and fees paid to those organisations on an annual basis in its Trustees Annual Report, in accordance with the **Education Act 1994**.

The procedures to review affiliations to external organisations are detailed within the Union's **Memorandum & Articles of Association, Bye-Laws & Bye-Laws Appendices**. In line with the **Education Act 1994**, the **University Council** may determine the interval period for review, and the proportion of members required to request a review of external affiliations to be decided by secret ballot (in which all members of the Union are entitled to vote).

13. Allocation of Union Resources to Student Groups, Clubs & Societies

Principle: *In accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1994 the University expects that there be a procedure for the appropriate allocation of resources to student groups. The procedure for allocating resources to student groups and clubs should be fair, set down in writing, and freely accessible to all students.*

The Union provides funding to student groups, clubs and societies via general and special grants. The process or application for funding is detailed on the Union's website (www.cardiffstudents.com) under the sections for student groups, clubs and societies. Students can request further information by contacting any of the Union's Sabbatical Trustees or senior Union staff.

14. Status and Publication of this Agreement

Principle: *The University and Union will review the Relationship Agreement annually.*

The Relationship Agreement will be reviewed annually by the **University Council** and the Union's Board of Trustees. It is published on the governance section of the University's website and the governance section of the Union's website, and is referred to in the University's induction process which students undertake annually.

15. References

[Cardiff University Charter, Statute and Ordinances](#)
[Cardiff University Students' Union Memorandum & Articles of Association](#)
[Education Act 1986 \(2\)](#)
[Education Act 1994](#)
[Students' Union Complaints Procedure](#)
[Cardiff University Strategy](#)
[Cardiff University Students' Union Strategy](#)
[Cardiff University – Governance Framework](#)
[University Strategic Equality Plan](#)
[Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#)

16. Approval History [2020/2021]

Approved by the Council of Cardiff University and signed of its behalf:

***Professor Stuart Palmer**

Chair of Council

Approved on: 23 November 2020

Approved by the Students' Union's Board of Trustees and signed on its behalf:

***Tomos Evans**

Students' Union President 2020/2021

Approved on: 04 December 2020

**The final signed version of this document is held by the Cardiff University Governance Services Team. The Governance Services Team can be contacted on Governance@cardiff.ac.uk.*

17. Glossary of Terms

Block Grant

The Block Grant is an annual sum of money granted by the University to the Students' Union to financially support the Union's activities. The sum is agreed and awarded on an annual basis before the start of the academic year, as detailed in the Financial Agreement.

Boards of Studies

Formal meetings bringing together Head of School with appropriate staff members to discuss academic issues and support of education delivery relating to programmes delivered within the School, and in some cases jointly with other Schools. Further information can be found in the University's Academic Regulations.

Bye-Laws & Bye-Laws Appendices

The Students' Union's supplementary rules which form, with the Memorandum & Articles of Association, its governing documents.

Charitable Company

A charity which is also a registered company. The corporate body must therefore comply with the charity law and the company law. This is a common form of incorporation for not-for-profit organisations in the UK.

Charitable Objects

A charity's 'charitable objects' are another way of referring to its purpose for existing. An organisation must have solely charitable objects in be a charity; and it describes what the charity has been set up to achieve. A charitable object is one which falls within the one or more of the 13 descriptions of purpose prescribed by charity law, and which is for the public benefit.

Education Act 1994

An Act of Parliament which sets out legal requirements relevant to Students' Unions and their parent institutions, and detailing a series of duties imposed on the Students' Union and its institution. Section 22 of the Education Act 1994 includes the requirements to be observed in relation to Students' Unions.

Education & Students Sub-Strategy

A sub-strategy of Cardiff University's strategy, *The Way Forward 2018-2023*, that focuses on ensuring Cardiff University is an 'educationally outstanding' institution and provides 'high quality student experience'.

Governing Body

The governors of any institution who are legally responsible for its management and administration. As charities both the University and the Union have a Board of Trustees; but in the University they are known as 'Council'.

Memorandum & Articles of Association

The Union's governing document. It is the legal document that creates the company and says how it should be run. The Union has Articles of Association because it is a charitable company.

National Student Survey (NSS)

A UK-wide survey that gives the opportunity for final year undergraduate students to share their opinions on the quality of their courses, which supports the institution in improving the student experience.

Peppercorn Rent

A legal term for a very low or nominal sum of money.

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

A UK-wide survey that gives Postgraduate Research Students the opportunity to share their experiences of learning and supervision at their institution.

Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

A UK-wide survey that give Postgraduate Taught Students the opportunity to share their experiences of learning and teaching at their institution.

Student Experience Strategy Group

The University Student Experience Strategy Group is advisory to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards, as the accountable member of University Executive Board, for all matters concerning the experience of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students.

Statutes

The University Statutes are one of the University's constitutional documents, because of its status as a body corporate by Royal Charter. The Statues contain details of the members of the University, and the rules concerning the statutory bodies.

Student Survey Management Group

Established to have overarching responsibility for strategic oversight of the all key student experience surveys. This group provides institutional approach to surveys from design to closing the feedback loop.

Student and Staff Panels

Meetings held in the University that bring together Student Academic Reps and School staff to discuss issues affecting the student population at a local level.

The Student View

A document produced by the Sabbatical Officer team in the Students' Union which offers a series of recommendations to the University, based on data and feedback from the student body about student life.

The Way Forward 2018 – 2023

The Way Forward 2018 – 2023 is the name of the University's organisational strategy. The strategy document, and the associated sub-strategies can be viewed on the University's website: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/thewayforward>

University Committees

University Committees perform a variety of functions. Their terms of reference, as defined by Ordinance or other regulation, set out their membership, powers and duties and lines of reporting. The detail around the University's governance framework can be viewed on the University's website:

<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance>

University Council

University Council is the governing body of the University and as such, is the supreme authority of the University. It has the ultimate power of decision in all matters affecting the University.

Welcome to Cardiff Survey (W2C)

A survey for all first-year students at Cardiff University to gain insight into their initial experiences at the institution.