



# Union Debating Society Constitution

## 1. Overview

- 1.1. The official name of the subcommittee shall be the 'St Andrews Union Debating Society', or 'UDS'.
- 1.2. The official motto of the UDS shall be 'pro amicitia et litteris', translated from Latin as 'for the friendship of learning'.
- 1.3. All Ordinary Members of the Association shall be eligible to stand and vote in elections to the Debates Board and shall also be members of the House.
- 1.4. All members shall have speaking and voting rights in the House, save where the vote is of a constitutional or binding nature.
- 1.5. At the first debate chaired by the incoming Debates Officer, they shall swear upon the sword of UDS the following oath:
  - 1.5.1. "I, (name), Convenor, swear to uphold and protect the ancient traditions and rights of this House of the St Andrews Union Debating Society; and especially, I swear to guard the right of every matriculated student of this seat of learning to attend debates and speak his or her mind in any capacity at no charge or fee whatsoever. This being one of the chief glories of this House."
- 1.6. The Debates Board shall have responsibility for overseeing all matters concerning the UDS.
- 1.7. The House shall be governed by the Standing Orders of the House, as ratified by the SSG.
- 1.8. Throughout the academic year, there must be an extensive attempt to attract a diverse range of representation of minority groups as official guest speakers.
  - 1.8.1. This applies unless the Debates Officer and Public Debates Board have both exhaustively invited a diverse range of speakers without success, and if there has been no success in seeking a variety of University students or debaters.

## 2. Committee Structure

- 2.1. UDS Board of Ten:
  - 2.1.1. Debates Officer (President)
    - 2.1.1.1. Oversee all aspects of the Union Debating Society and student debates in St Andrews.
    - 2.1.1.2. Chair meetings of the collective Debates Board and the Board of Ten or appoint a nominee to do so in their absence.

- 2.1.1.3. Have the casting vote on the Board in the event of a tie.
- 2.1.2. First Secretary to the House
  - 2.1.2.1. Deputises for the Debates Officer and may fill in for the Debates Officer as the chair of board meetings or public debates. They will have the casting vote on Board in the event of a tie if the President is away or unable to attend.
  - 2.1.2.2. The Debates Officer will select the First Secretary to the House at the start of their tenure. The role is not elected or appointed through interview. The Debates Officer must inform the Director of Student Development and Activities of their choice as a formality.
  - 2.1.2.3. The holder of this role must be either the Treasurer, Chairperson of Ways and Means or the Chief Whip due to the seniority of the role.
  - 2.1.2.4. This role must be held in conjunction with the role of Treasurer, Chairperson of Ways and Means or Chief Whip, but it gives the holder only one vote in a board meeting.
  - 2.1.2.5. The Debates Officer should seek advice from the previous Debates Officer on the First Secretary to the House appointment.
  - 2.1.2.6. The First Secretary to the House position may be left unfilled if deemed necessary by the Debates Officer.
- 2.1.3. Treasurer
  - 2.1.3.1. Oversee the finances of UDS.
  - 2.1.3.2. Coordinate sponsorships for UDS
  - 2.1.3.3. Order UDS Clothing and Merchandise
- 2.1.4. Clerk to the House
  - 2.1.4.1. Keep accurate minutes of UDS meetings, recording all events and decisions in the House and of the Debates Board.
  - 2.1.4.2. Ensure minutes are shared with the committee, Association, and University Library, and are available in an accessible online format.
  - 2.1.4.3. Along with the Debates Officer, sign minutes upon their approval by the Board, thus forming the only authoritative record of the proceedings of UDS.
  - 2.1.4.4. Take responsibility for keeping a record of all handover documents, and ensuring new handover documents are added to this record.
- 2.1.5. Media Officers (x 2)
  - 2.1.5.1. Oversee all aspects of media and advertising for UDS including the 1794 Ball.
  - 2.1.5.2. Manage the weekly media push which include the weekly email, creating and posting within events, and filming the public debate.
- 2.1.6. Chief Whip
- 2.1.7. Diversity and Inclusion Officer
  - 2.1.7.1. Promote the inclusion of disadvantaged and minority groups in all activities of UDS.
  - 2.1.7.2. Act as the sober person for all non-competitive board events

- 2.1.7.3. Observe & enforce the equity policy (policy that lays out expected conduct at events & safeguards society member wellbeing)
    - 2.1.7.4. Hold a key role in the disciplinary procedure laid out in (Appendix A)
  - 2.1.8. Chair of Ways and Means
  - 2.1.9. Steward to the House
    - 2.1.9.1. Organise all social events, including the annual Gaudeamus Party, Magistrands and the 1794 Ball.
    - 2.1.9.2. In charge of the creation and management of the 1794 Ball subcommittee.
  - 2.1.10. Director of Student Development and Activities (Overseer)
  - 2.1.11. Parent(s) of the House (honorary, non-voting)
    - 2.1.11.1. Provide support and advice to UDS at their and the Debates Officer's discretion.
- 2.2. Competitive Debates Board:
  - 2.2.1. Chief Whip (Chair)
    - 2.2.1.1. Oversee the competitive and schools-oriented activities of UDS, including training sessions for both casual and competitive purposes.
  - 2.2.2. Training Officer
    - 2.2.2.1. Organise weekly debate training sessions for both beginner and advanced training.
  - 2.2.3. Competitions Secretary
    - 2.2.3.1. Arrange the representation and participation of UDS in external and internal competitions.
    - 2.2.3.2. Act as the point of call for external competition contingents.
  - 2.2.4. Schools Outreach Officer
    - 2.2.4.1. Oversee outreach and development of debating at local schools.
  - 2.2.5. Schools Competition Convenor
    - 2.2.5.1. Organise school debating competitions.
  - 2.2.6. Competitive Equity Officer
    - 2.2.6.1. Work in collaboration with the Chief Whip to provide training on equity in debating and discussing sensitive issues respectfully.
    - 2.2.6.2. Act as an equity officer at all internal competitions held and as one of the equity officers at the St Andrews Open
    - 2.2.6.3. Act as the sober person for all competitive board events
    - 2.2.6.4. Observe & enforce the equity policy (policy that lays out expected conduct at events & safeguards society member wellbeing)
    - 2.2.6.5. Hold a key role in the disciplinary procedure laid out in (Appendix A) for competitive events.
  - 2.2.7. Freshers' Representative
    - 2.2.7.1. Represent, and organise social activities for, all first-year debaters. This shall include any person who has not actively competed or participated in UDS for more than a year.
- 2.3. Public Events Board:
  - 2.3.1. Chair of Ways and Means (Chair)

- 2.3.1.1. Organise the public events.
- 2.3.1.2. Recruit speakers, with support from the Public Events Board.
- 2.3.2. Public Debates Secretary
  - 2.3.2.1. Support the Chair of Ways and Means in organising public debates and recruiting speakers.
  - 2.3.2.2. Maintain alumni relations.
- 2.3.3. Serjeant-at-Arms
  - 2.3.3.1. Enforce the standing orders and produce order papers.
  - 2.3.3.2. Assist with the recruitment of speakers and the organization of public debates.
  - 2.3.3.3. Maintain alumni relations.

### 3. Appointments

- 3.1. The Debates Officer shall be appointed at the AGM.
- 3.2. The outgoing Debates Officer shall serve as Quondam President until the end of the academic year, a non-voting position responsible for ensuring a smooth handover process.
- 3.3. The Treasurer, Media Officers, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, and Competitive Equity Officer shall be appointed by interview following the AGM.
  - 3.3.1. The interview panel shall consist of the incoming and outgoing Debates Officers, Director of Student Development and Activities, and current holder of the relevant position.
- 3.4. The Freshers' Representative shall be elected at an EGM in October.
- 3.5. The Parents of the House shall be appointed by the Debates Officer.
  - 3.5.1. Only two individuals can be Parents of the House at any given time.
  - 3.5.2. If the previous Debates Officer is still attending St Andrews University and does not hold a board position, they should be duly considered for one of the Parent of the House positions (unless they do not meet the criteria in 3.5.3).
  - 3.5.3. The Parent of the House must be in good standing with the UDS, a senior member of the society (served on board for at least one full academic year) and have a strong UDS service record that demonstrates strong commitment and reliability among other qualities deemed relevant by the Debates Officer.
  - 3.5.4. Previous board members may not ask to be Parents of the House.
  - 3.5.5. The role can be left unfilled if the Debates Officer deems no member to be suitable for the role.
  - 3.5.6. The Debates Officer should seek advice from the previous Debates Officer on the Parent(s) of the House appointment.
- 3.6. All other positions shall be elected at the AGM.
- 3.7. Individuals elected at the AGM or appointed by interview following the AGM (except for the convenor) shall serve as 'position elect' until the end of the academic year, when they officially take on the position exceptions can be granted by the Debates Officer and Quondam President in the case that the previous holder is not able to fulfill their duties.
- 3.8. Outgoing position holders (except for the Debates Officer) shall remain in their roles until the end of the academic year, when the 'position elect' officially takes over.

- 3.9. Outgoing position holders shall train their 'position elect' and slowly transfer tasks to them. Ultimate responsibility for the position's remit remains with the outgoing position holder until the end of the academic year.
  - 3.9.1. It is the responsibility of the outgoing position holder to create handover documents detailing the responsibilities of their position and to pass these on to the position elect as well as the newly elected convenor within 2 weeks after the date of the AGM.
- 3.10. To fill casual vacancies, the Board shall have the power to appoint positions through by election at an EGM.
- 3.11. All appointment-related matters, including interviews, elections, and co-options, shall run as outlined in the Laws of the Association.

#### 4. Meetings

- 4.1. All meetings shall operate as outlined in the Laws of the Association.
- 4.2. Meetings of the Board of Ten, Competitive Debating Board, and Public Debates Board shall be weekly during the academic year, and at other times if necessary.
- 4.3. Members must attend all meetings of the Boards they are part of, reporting their actions and planned activities. If unable to attend a meeting, they must send an apology to the Clerk of the House at least 24 hours in advance.
- 4.4. The chairs of the Competitive Debates, Public Debates Boards, Steward to the House and Media Officers shall update the Board of Ten on the activities of their respective Boards and portfolios.
- 4.5. Meetings of the entire Debates Board may be called by the Debates Officer and must be suitably advertised at least five days in advance.
- 4.6. The AGM shall be held before the end of semester two.
  - 4.6.1. The order of proceedings shall be:
  - 4.6.2. Reports of the outgoing committee members
  - 4.6.3. Annual statement of UDS accounts and finances
  - 4.6.4. Valediction of the outgoing Debates Officer
  - 4.6.5. Election of relevant committee positions
  - 4.6.6. Any other competent business
  - 4.6.7. The quorum shall be as defined in the Standing Orders of the House.
  - 4.6.8. The method of election to the Board shall be determined by the Debates Officer, subject to the approval and monitoring of a Sabbatical Officer.
- 4.7. An EGM may be called by the Debates Officer. An EGM may also be called through written request to the Debates Officer, signed by five members of the Board or twenty Ordinary Members of the Association.
  - 4.7.1. Any request for an EGM must state the purpose and proposed agenda, allowing for any other business that may be discussed.
  - 4.7.2. The form of an EGM must be accepted by both the Debates Officer and those making the request.
  - 4.7.3. An EGM must occur within two weeks following the receipt of a request and must be advertised for at least five days.
  - 4.7.4. The quorum for an EGM shall be as defined in the Standing Orders of the House.
  - 4.7.5. The resolutions of an EGM shall be binding upon the Debates Officer and the Board, subject to oversight of the Association.

- 4.8. To amend the UDS constitution, a vote must take place at a board meeting that is announced to the Board of Ten at least 5 days in advance. The amendment will go to SSG if the Board of Ten votes in favour with a two-thirds majority. The quorum required for constitutional changes is a simple majority of the Board of Ten (50%+1). The President acts as a tiebreaker in the event the vote is evenly split. It is heavily encouraged for the President to invite the full board to the meeting to seek advice.
  - 4.9. Before any Board of Ten vote, the Chair of Ways & Means and the Chief Whip must consult their subcommittees on their views and take them into consideration when voting.
  - 4.10. All board members may raise proposals or amendments to proposals in current consideration where a Board of Ten vote is necessary and must be considered by the Debates Officer.
5. Financial Support
    - 5.1. UDS is dedicated to ensuring that all interested students are able to participate in at least one debate competition per semester, regardless of socioeconomic background.
    - 5.2. The Debates Officer and Treasurer shall ensure that a bursary scheme is accessible to students from low-income backgrounds, so they have the opportunity to participate in debate competitions.
    - 5.3. The requirements, application process, and further details of the bursary schemes are outlined in Appendix C of the constitution.
    - 5.4. The process for receiving a bursary shall be entirely confidential.
    - 5.5. The trials and selection process to participate in competitions shall be entirely separate from the bursary application process. As such, a member will be able to trial for a speaker or judge spot without prior knowledge of their acceptance to the bursary scheme.
  6. Affiliation to the Scottish Students' Debating Council
    - 6.1. UDS shall be affiliated to the Scottish Students' Debating Council (SSDC) and abide by its policies, except where this may conflict with Association policy.
    - 6.2. The Chief Whip shall select the SSDC representative at the start of the academic year shall represent the interests of UDS on the SSDC. The SSDC representative cannot be a member of the SSDC executive.
    - 6.3. Non-Board of Ten members of UDS who are also members of the SSDC Executive shall be considered non-voting members of the Board of Ten, and may participate in the Competitive Debating Board, though they shall not be subject to attendance requirements.

#### **Appendix A: Equity Process Policy for Board Members**

- A1. This policy only applies to board members. If the transgression involves non-board members and/or involves concerns about non-board or board member attendance at non-paid UDS events, the transgression must be referred to the Union.
- A2. The President is ultimately responsible for managing the equity resolution process and does so in conjunction with the Diversity & Inclusion Officer & Competitive Equity Officer at the President's discretion unless the equity violation involves one of the board

members listed above. It remains at the discretion of the President which supporting equity officer is included in the process.

- A3. In the situation that all board members listed above are involved, the equity resolution process will be managed by the Director of Student Development and Activities (with advice from the Union HR Manager).
- A4. In the event that the relevant officers deem the concern to be too proximate to themselves or they become too personally impacted by these concerns, they may choose to recuse themselves from the process. In the event that all relevant officers choose to do so, the process will be completed by the Director of Student Development and Activities in consultation with the Union HR Manager.
- A5. All equity resolutions are completed in consultation with the Director of Student Development and Activities.
- A6. All Board members are expected to abide by and read the UDS equity policy, SSDC equity policy, standing orders of the House, the Union zero tolerance policy once taking office. A failure to do so will be considered a failure to fulfil their constitutional duties.
- A7. The following equity resolution process policy will be used to address failure of a board member to fulfil their constitutional duties:

**A7.1. Actions before sending a written warning:**

A7.1.1. A meeting with the complainant(s) by the Diversity & Inclusions Officer (if the complaint is in regard to non-competitive events) /Competitive Equity Officer (if the complaint is in regard to competitions) and President (and Director of Student Development and Activities, if relevant) must take place to formalise an equity complaint and to gather information related to the equity complaint. This can be requested through any means such as verbal request, request over text message and/or request through email.

A7.1.2. If this meeting cannot occur, except for extraordinary circumstances, the complaint cannot be treated as official i.e., hearsay from an individual not involved in the transgression cannot be used as the basis for an equity complaint (but can be factored into evidence collection after the complaint has been made). However, the following support measures can be adopted without the launching of a formal disciplinary process:

A7.1.2.1. The relevant officers (e.g., Chief Whip, Training Officer, etc.) can be required to never partner together individuals at a training session and/or for competitions;

A7.1.2.2. The Diversity and Inclusions Officer and/or Competitions Equity Officer can have a conversation with the individual in question about the specific concern at hand in an educational and non-disciplinary fashion. For example, conversation about appropriate pronoun usage or language to be adopted in the chamber.

A7.1.2.3. The Diversity and Inclusions Officer and/or Competitions Equity Officer can facilitate a mediated conversation between the individuals in question and/or can direct these individuals to other resources that can facilitate such a conversation, for example, the Student Services mediated conversation facility.

- A7.1.3. An equity complaint that is not formalised cannot result in disciplinary action that is more substantial than a written warning with improvement required.
- A7.1.4. A meeting with the individual(s) accused of wrongdoing in the equity complaint by the Diversity & Inclusions Officer/Competitive Equity Officer and President (and Director of Student Development and Activities, if relevant).
- A7.1.5. These meetings must take place after the raising of a formal complaint and any meeting held prior (e.g., an equity meeting at a competition) is insufficient to meet this requirement.
- A7.1.6. Meetings with the individual(s) accused must take place as part of fair & due process unless one of the following condition sets are satisfied:
  - A.7.1.6.1. Concrete evidence of transgression e.g., a text message or e-mail.
  - A.7.1.6.2. If there is a large, complainant-expressed safety concern, the UDS cannot be responsible for this transgression and must go through the Union or University channels.
  - A.7.1.6.3. Note: even if condition (a) is satisfied, it is encouraged to still hold meetings as part of fair & due process.
- A7.1.7. Having two meetings is a minimum. If further meetings are required to ensure clarity and further certainty of the transgression, then further meetings should take place;
- A7.1.8. All meetings must be requested with a 72-hour minimum notice to individuals giving individuals the flexibility to reschedule the meeting if they cannot attend (however this should be soon after the original date).
- A7.1.9. Participants may bring a trusted person to the meeting however the following conditions must be satisfied:
  - A.7.1.9.1. They have to agree to the same confidentiality agreement as those already in the equity process.
  - A.7.1.9.2. They can only attend with a written request outlining a justification for attendance and with approval by those who are managing the equity process (this is, mainly, a formality).
  - A.7.1.9.3. They cannot answer questions, give their opinions and/or speak for those who are directly involved with the equity process in the meeting (unless the individual involved in the equity process has requested that the friend speaks for them (this is not applicable to raising a formal complaint as this must be done by the complainant). If the friend has evidence, they can request a separate meeting).
  - A.7.1.9.4. After information has been collected, a consultation regarding the contents and wording of the written warning with the Director of Student Development and Activities must take place as a checks and balance mechanism.

**A7.2. Content of the written warning:**

- A.7.2.1. The written warning must reference the transgression in relation to a violation of the UDS equity policy, SSDC equity policy, the



standing orders of the house, University Code of Conduct policy and/or the Union zero-tolerance policy and/or failure to fulfil constitutional duties.

A.7.2.2. The written warning must also include an explicit reference and detail of the transgression that was committed (the complainant's name(s) should be included however can only be included with direct consent of the complainant(s));

A.7.2.3. The written warning must include a statement on the ability to appeal the decision to the relevant Union body.

A.7.2.4. The written warning must include a statement on the necessity for confidentiality (the existence of the disciplinary process and the content of the warning itself) from all parties involved during and after the equity process.

A.7.2.5. The written warning must include details for help and support including Student Services and Chaplaincy contact details.

A.7.2.6. The written warning must clearly include the specific outcome (e.g., the potential future consequences, suspension, etc.) of the written warning.

**A7.3. Disciplinary actions:**

A.7.3.1. Strong recommendation of behavioural improvement & detailing of future potential consequences if behaviour is not improved.

A.7.3.2. Suspension from competition(s) or any UDS paid activity.

A.7.3.3. Suspension for a certain length of time from board position.

A.7.3.4. Removal from board position.

A.7.3.5. Anonymously reporting the transgression (does not start a university discipline procedure) <https://reportandsupport.st-andrews.ac.uk/>;

A.7.3.6. Reporting the transgression to Union discipline (if specific incident happened on Union premises or at sub-committee event) [samisconduct@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:samisconduct@st-andrews.ac.uk);

A.7.3.7. Reporting the transgression with contact details included <https://reportandsupport.st-andrews.ac.uk/>.

**A7.4. Advice on choice of disciplinary action:**

A.7.4.1. Disciplinary action **must be** proportionate (up to discretion of those managing the equity process) to the severity of the transgression and/or the quantity of past written warnings.

A.7.4.2. Those who are managing the equity process must weigh information collected from both meetings in a fair and equitable manner when deciding the course of disciplinary action such as, but not limited to, weighing certainty against severity of claims levied.

A.7.4.3. If the transgression concerns a breaking of Union or University rules that is also not a breach of UDS, SSDC policies & standing orders of the House then the transgression must be referred to the Union to let them deal with the issue.

A.7.4.4. If this is the first written warning, disciplinary action 7.7.3.1 must be the course of action unless the transgression is illegal and requires police involvement.

A.7.4.5. If a first written warning has been given but the second written warning is of a different issue, defer to the severity of the second transgression while taking the wording of the first written warning into account.

A.7.4.6. If a first written warning has been given and the second written warning is of the same issue, those managing the equity process should follow the potential consequences laid out in the first written warning.

A.7.4.7. If the first and second written warnings occur during different board tenures, a serious consideration by those managing the equity process must be given to the potential consequences laid out in the first written warning.

A.7.4.8. If the first and second written warnings occur during the same board tenure, the potential consequences detailed in the first written warning should be carried through.

A.7.4.9. Only the President can authorise a suspension or removal of a board member (with consultation from the Director of Student Development & Activities). Other individuals managing the equity process can, however, advise on suspension or removal. If the President is being considered for suspension or dismissal, this decision lies with the Director of Student Development & Activities.

A.7.4.10. If there is a disagreement between those managing the equity process regarding disciplinary action, the Director of Student Development & Activities can act as a tiebreaker.

A.7.4.11. If disciplinary action 7.7.3.1 is the chosen course of disciplinary action, a meeting must be offered to the accused individual(s) to ensure that the violation is fully understood and a discussion of next steps for improvement. Further meetings can be offered to the accused individual(s) to aid personal development and ensure that the violation does not occur again at the discretion of the relevant parties.

A.7.4.12. If suspension or dismissal is the chosen course of disciplinary action, a meeting must be set up with the relevant parties to notify the accused individual(s) about suspension or dismissal. They also have a chance to give a statement and comments. Suspension and dismissal cannot be sent through an email.

A.7.4.13. In the event that the equity concern raised is deemed to be too significant or far reaching for the relevant officers to evaluate and resolve, these officers reserve the right to forward the concern to more relevant bodies.

A.7.4.14. Where the UDS equity policy, SSDC equity policy, the standing orders of the house, and/or the Union zero tolerance policy cannot deliver a proportionate response to the transgression, relevant university bodies will be contacted. For context, these mechanisms should be used rarely relative to other disciplinary mechanisms.

A.7.4.15. In the event that a formal disclosure of an illegal activity takes place, the UDS cannot evaluate and resolve these concerns and must defer to the relevant Union or University mechanisms.

A.7.4.16. If a case has been opened by the Union or the University, those who are managing the equity resolution process cannot pass an

outcome on the issue or send a written warning to the accused individual without the case being concluded by the Union or the University i.e., referral comes before any internal disciplinary action. Only a temporary suspension of the board member for the length of the Union or University case can be authorised by the President.

A.7.4.17. This advice is, naturally, subject to flexibility for those who are managing the equity process, but this advice follows past precedent and the likely outcomes in most scenarios.

- A8. Minutes must be kept of all meetings and uploaded onto the debatesequity@ email which is only accessible to the President, the Diversity & Inclusion Officer, and the Competitive Equity Officer. Individuals may request to see the minutes of their own meeting, but they must give a justification (as a formality) for wanting to view the minutes. Requesting to see sensitive information from another individuals' meeting will be automatically denied. Minutes will be deleted from the debatesequity@ email after every presidential term.
- A9. The equity resolution process policy is specifically for violations of the UDS equity policy, SSDC equity policy, standing orders of the House, and/or the Union zero tolerance policy and/or for one's frequent lack of attendance at Board meetings and/or failure to fulfil one's role description.
- A10. This equity policy applies always to all board members and attempts to undermine this equity resolution process policy will not be tolerated and will constitute a failure to fulfil constitutional duties.

#### **Appendix B: Competition payment policy**

Given the society's commitment to paying for registration fees for external competitions if individuals wish to self-fund for competitions they may not do so as representatives of St Andrews. This is conditional on (i) the society being committed to funding IVs that are close by, have reasonable registration fees & have interest from society members (this should include prestigious competitions such as Oxbridge IVs & team slots requested at IVs should reasonably reflect the size of competitive contingent of the society) (ii) society members being able to pay for as many open competitions with no specific monetary limit by not competing under 'St Andrews' labels (whether that is a composite team or two members from St Andrews), (iii) society members being able to self-fund for non-IoNA competitions (except majors) and (iv) members can self-fund for any competition in the circumstance that there is very limited UDS provision for competitions.

If any society member violates this policy, the Competitions Secretary has the right to restrict future competition attendance under the label of 'St Andrews' and/or participation at major competitions.

On the competition sign up from each semester, the description for each competition should indicate the general process of team/judge selection such as meritocracy, development, or any competition specific rules e.g., novice or WGM.

#### **Appendix C: Travel bursary policy**

##### **Introduction**

The Union Debating Society (UDS), as a subcommittee of the Student's Association, strongly believes in making debating open and fair. Although the Society covers the entry costs to competitions as standard,

to truly make this a level financial playing field, the Society needs to offer a bursary to cover competition travel costs. Competitions are central to allowing debaters to hone their public speaking and argumentation skills, but the costs associated with travelling to and from competitions can be prohibitive for some debaters. As such, this bursary scheme will allow debaters from all backgrounds to participate in debate competitions, by covering their travel costs. Financial status should not, and will not, be a prohibitive factor for debaters' participation in debating.

The selection of representatives to participate in a debate competition are made entirely separately from the bursary scheme application process. As such, a debater should ensure they have obtained a spot in the competition before applying for the bursary.

The UDS currently supports the registration fees for both local and international competitions. This bursary scheme is only meant to reimburse debaters' transportation costs. Even if the debater is given the bursary, they must still cover their other miscellaneous expenses.

### Bursary Scheme Procedures

**Allocation Process:** The debater must submit proof of receipt of funding from a body with a thorough financial need screening process. For example, proof of a needs-based scholarship from an education institution, such as the University of St. Andrews; or a government student loan agency, such as the SAAS (Student Awards Agency Scotland), or the SLC (Student Loans Company). If these are not applicable, or do not support the debater's case sufficiently, then they may be asked to submit other discretionary elements, such as an income threshold document, as determined by the President and Treasurer.

**Reimbursement Process:** The UDS will reimburse the recipient for their transportation costs, after attending the competition. Therefore, the recipient must submit their banking details, receipts, proof of transaction, and invoices to the President and the Treasurer to receive the reimbursement. As such, all relevant receipts must be kept for submission.

**Restrictions in Distribution of Bursary Scheme:** Due to the limited funding available for the Society, and so the bursary, there is a chance that not every debater who passes the criteria will be able to receive bursary funding. As such, it is up to the discretion of the President, in consultation with the Chief Whip about the nature of the competition, and the Treasurer to determine whether a debater will be able to receive the bursary. History of attended competitions, previous bursary allocations, and other relevant factors, may be considered in this process.

### Union Debating Society Bursary Allocation Pledge

The allocation of bursary funding for the academic year available must be decided by the committee from the grant from the Student's Association. This must not be infringed on by any other financial needs of the Society and must not decrease from the previous year's allocation. The amount allocated must be either the amount requested in the Budget submitted to the Student's Association, or that amount scaled by the ratio of the total budget requested from the Student's Association and the total grant received. If the Society is in dire financial circumstances, then the bursary may be reduced proportionally to reductions made in the competitive budget. This requires a unanimous vote of the board. Any additional funding received from alternate sources must act in addition to, not replacing, the allocation. Further money from the grant can be added to the bursary allocation for an exceptional circumstance, requiring a unanimous vote from the Competitive Subcommittee, and a two-thirds vote from the board. Any bursary

funding remaining at the end of the year must be rolled over and protected, in addition to the amount from the new grant.

**Signatures**