



university of victoria
students' society

Advocacy Groups Policy

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Preamble

Advocacy groups empower, support, and provide resources to their constituents. These groups are intended to foster a welcoming space for members of minority groups to express themselves and join in activities together. This policy is designed to act as a governance and financial guide for operating advocacy groups for Directors, coordinators, and the Director of Student Affairs.

This policy was passed by the Advocacy Relations Committee. Amendments may be presented at a quorate meeting of the Advocacy Relations Committee. All amendments must be approved at a Board of Directors meeting. All efforts will be made to ensure that board representatives are present at Board of Directors meetings at which amendments will be discussed. Recommendations can also be referred to the Advocacy Relations Committee.

Part 1: Definitions

1.1 Advocacy Groups - all constituency groups with the addition of the Native Students' Union, as detailed in UVSS Bylaws 17 and 22:

Gender Empowerment Centre (GEM)
Native Students' Union (NSU)
UVic Pride
Students of Colour Collective (SOCC)
Society for Students with a Disability (SSD)

1.2 Board Representative - the official elected to represent their advocacy group at UVSS Board of Directors meetings and Advocacy Relations Committee;

1.3 Excluded Manager - the non-unionized staff who report directly to the UVSS Board of Directors, and who oversee all unionized UVSS staff. Includes the Executive Director, General Manager, and Administration and Services Manager.

1.4 Executive - governing members of an advocacy group elected by the voting membership to oversee and manage the affairs and activities of the group, as defined by their own constitution and/or bylaws and may operate using a consensus based decision making process. Often called a Collective, Council, or other titles;

1.5 Executive Director - the Executive Director is responsible for: legal, privacy, and financial compliance of the Students' Society; strategic planning; risk management; human resource management; and other duties established by the Board of Directors in policy. The Executive Director directly oversees Advocacy Group staff.

1.6 Fiscal year - the UVSS accounting fiscal year is May 1 - April 30;

1.7 Members - eligible members of an advocacy group, with associated rights, as defined by their own bylaws;

1.8 The Society - the University of Victoria Students' Society;

1.9 Voting Membership - all voting members of an advocacy group's governance structure as defined in their constitution; must include the executive, and optionally includes other elected positions and general advocacy group members.

Part 2: Governance

2.1 General

The governance structures outlined in this policy are considered best practices, and are not mandatory.

2.2 Membership

Each advocacy group must allow any interested student who meets the group's membership requirements to join the advocacy group.

2.3 General Meetings

An advocacy group shall hold at least one meeting per year that is advertised using a diverse variety of tactics and is open to all of their members, known as a General Meeting.

2.4 Elections

- a. An advocacy group shall hold annual elections for the positions of:
 - i. All executive members, including the board representative;
 - ii. Elections for non-executive positions may be held at the discretion of the advocacy group.
- b. The elections at the General Meeting shall be conducted by the coordinator(s). The elections shall be advertised with the General Meeting.
- c. Each member shall be entitled to one vote.
- d. Each member shall have the ability to be nominated, either by themselves or another member.
- e. The candidate with the relative majority shall be elected pending ratification from the general membership or current Executive, as specified in the group's bylaws or according to past practice.

- f. In the case of a failed ratification or the vacancy of a position, the advocacy group may hold a by-election at a meeting of the voting membership to fill the position until elections can be held at the following General Meeting.
 - i. By-elections must be advertised to the group's members at least two weeks before the election using a diverse variety of tactics, and
 - ii. Nominations must be open to all members.

2.5 Executive

- a. As expanded and defined in each advocacy group's bylaws, an advocacy group's executive shall be:
 - i. The board representative and at least two other executive members that are:
 - a. Current undergraduate students or, in the case of advocacy groups that serve both undergraduate and graduate students, graduate students; and
 - b. Elected by the membership.
 - ii. Any additional members elected by the advocacy group's membership.
- b. The duties of the Executive include:
 - i. Fulfilling the mandate laid out in the advocacy group's constitution,
 - ii. Following the bylaws and policy of the UVSS,
 - iii. Holding regular meetings (at least once a month) to discuss the activities of the group,
 - iv. Being signing authorities,
 - v. Directing the coordinator(s), and
 - vi. Other duties outlined in the advocacy group's constitution and bylaws.
- c. All members of the executive are elected for a term of no longer than one year and may run for re-election upon the completion of their term.

2.6 Board Representative

- a. Responsibilities of board representatives include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. Attending UVSS Board Orientation, generally scheduled the last week of April or first week of May;
 - A. If they are not elected before orientation, the Director of Student Affairs shall organize alternative training.
 - ii. Attending the UVSS Advocacy Relations Committee;
 - iii. Attending their advocacy group's meetings of the voting membership;
 - iv. Liaising with their respective advocacy group;
 - v. Attending UVSS Board of Directors meetings;
 - vi. Scrutinizing the activities of the UVSS Board of Directors; and,
 - vii. The duties of the Executive.

2.7 Coordinators

Complaints or concerns about coordinators including issues of harassment and discrimination may be taken to in-camera sessions of meetings of the membership and may be filed to the UVSS Executive Director.

Subject to the limitations of their own job descriptions, coordinators may support or complete the following tasks or they may be completed by delegate to their respective voting membership as per each group's Constitution and Bylaws:

- a. In collaboration with the Executive, prepare annual budgets and present them to the UVSS Advocacy Relations Committee, with the applicable board representative.
- b. Maintain office hours and ensure the advocacy group's space is inclusive and accessible.
- c. In collaboration with the Executive, plan and advertise general meetings and ensure vacant positions are filled.
- d. Maintain active communication with board representative on the UVSS Board of Directors, including supporting their participation on the Advocacy Relations Committee.
- e. Manage Work Study positions, including developing job descriptions and work plans, hiring, training, supervising, submitting payroll and providing feedback.
- f. Develop and maintain physical, digital, and in-person outreach materials.
- g. Maintain website and social media accounts.
- h. Establish and maintain active coalitions with UVSS Advocacy Groups and relevant social justice organizations.
- i. In collaboration with members, coordinate social justice outreach, projects, and events.
- j. Update newsletter email list and respond to telephone, email, and in-person inquiries.

Each advocacy group may prescribe some of these responsibilities to roles in their voting membership according to their respective Bylaws.

Part 3: Financial Management

3.1 General

Advocacy group coordinators shall work with their Executive, and finance committee, if applicable, to compile a single budget document for the next fiscal year. This annual budget must pass through the advocacy group's members and the Advocacy Relations Committee (ARC). In order for Constituency Control fees to be released, advocacy groups shall meet the requirements set out in this policy and shall meet the requirements

to be a recognised Constituency Organisation as outlined in UVSS Bylaw 17.1: Recognition of Constituency Organisations.

3.2 Definitions

- a. **Advocacy Groups Base Fund** - Shall consist of all student fees dedicated and collected for the sole purpose of funding advocacy groups other than respective fee levies.
- b. **ARC Joint Fund** - Used for collecting and distributing membership fee revenue other than respective fee levies for advocacy group capital acquisitions and joint projects.
- c. **Triple Net** - the rate charged per square foot to recover building operation costs, including janitorial, utilities, and maintenance costs of general and individual spaces.

3.3 Budgeting Schedule

The following dates may vary but are generally indicative of the timing and schedule for key budget-related dates.

February 1 Director of Student Affairs notifies board representatives and coordinators of the budgeting timeline for that year.

Director of Student Affairs shall request each group's actuals from last year from the UVSS Accounting department, and emails them to the coordinator(s) and the Board Representative.

Coordinators shall request UVSS Accounting complete the Labour section of the budget template.

Coordinators collaborate with the Executive, and their finance committee if applicable, to draft the budget.

March 1 Draft budget presented to voting membership and the finance committee, if applicable.

April 1 Draft budget revised to reflect advocacy group suggestions, if applicable.

Final draft budget presented and passed by voting membership.

Coordinators gather and finalize list of signing authorities.

April 15 List of signing authorities with emails and final budget sent to the Director of Student Affairs with minutes of the meeting at which it was passed by voting membership.

April 30 Budget presented and the actual spending from the previous fiscal year presented by board representative or a temporary alternative representative at ARC.

Budget approved at ARC by a majority vote.

May 1* The Director of Student Affairs emails approved budgets to the Accounting Manager and gives them a directive to release funds from the Advocacy Groups Base Fund as it is received.

If an advocacy group's budget is not passed at ARC by May 1st because quorum is not met, fees will not be released until quorum is met at ARC.

*The Director of Student Affairs and Executive Director may conditionally approve the advocacy group's budget upon meeting with both the coordinator and board representative, and then release the fees.

3.4 Budget Submissions

- a. The Director of Student Affairs will provide coordinators with a budget template.
- b. Before fees are released, each advocacy group's budget must be approved, in the following order, by:
 - i. the relevant advocacy group's members and/or finance committee, if relevant; and,
 - ii. the Advocacy Relations Committee*
- c. All budget submissions to the Advocacy Relations Committee must be sent to the Director of Student Affairs along with minutes of the meeting at which the voting membership passed the budget.
- d. Coordinators and board representatives may be asked further questions by other board representatives following a budget presentation and/or submission.

*Please note that a board representative must abstain from voting to approve the budget for the advocacy group they represent.

3.5 Role of Coordinators

Subject to the limitations of their own job descriptions, coordinators may complete the following tasks or delegate to their respective voting membership as per each group's Constitution and Bylaws:

- a. Ensuring that all expenditures reflect the priorities of members and approved programming;
- b. Keeping members apprised of the advocacy group's ongoing financial status;
- c. Providing regular updates at Executive meetings;
- d. Aiding the Executive in creating budgets;
- e. Reviewing budgets;
- f. Ensuring their board representative or a temporary alternative representative attends the Advocacy Relations Committee at which budgets are due.
- g. Following approval of the budget at Advocacy Relations Committee, publishing the budget online on the advocacy group's website.

Each advocacy group may prescribe some of these responsibilities to roles in their voting membership according to their respective Bylaws.

3.6 Funding

a. Advocacy Group Accounts

The UVSS shall maintain the following trust accounts for the purposes specified below.

- i. One trust account for each advocacy group for its operations.
 - 1. Collected fees are held in internal accounts for all levied groups. Advocacy groups must not have external bank accounts.
- ii. Advocacy Groups Base Fund: Used for collecting and distributing membership fee revenue other than respective fee levies for advocacy groups' operating budget.
- iii. ARC Joint Fund: Used for collecting and distributing membership fee revenue other than respective fee levies for advocacy group capital acquisitions and joint projects.

b. Disbursement of Funding through Advocacy Relations Committee

The UVSS shall disburse all revenue collected for the Constituency Control Account in the following ways:

- i. 90% of total revenue shall be divided evenly between the five advocacy groups; and,
 - 1. Each group's triple net fees shall be deducted directly from the respective amount to be given to each advocacy group before it is transferred.
- ii. 10% of total revenue shall be withheld, to be allocated by ARC for any of the following purposes:
 - 1. Collaborations among advocacy groups;
 - 2. Events organised by an advocacy group;
 - 3. Donations agreed upon by at least two thirds [$\frac{2}{3}$] of ARC; and

4. Joint capital projects by advocacy groups including but not limited to construction, expansion, renovation, or replacement projects for an existing facility.

c. Funding Eligibility

In order to be eligible for funding in a given term, an advocacy group must:

- i. Be recognised as a Constituency Organisation under UVSS Bylaw 17;
- ii. Hold advertised meetings open to all of its members;
- iii. Have at least three active executive members;
- iv. Maintain and provide a current list of signing authority names and signatures to the UVSS Director of Student Affairs; and,
- v. Present to the Advocacy Relations Committee a summary of their work and actual spending in the previous fiscal year as provided by UVSS accounting in February, and a budget for the coming fiscal year.

3.7 Allocation of Fees

- a. At the beginning of each semester, the Director of Student Affairs will organize and schedule a meeting with each coordinator, a UVSS Excluded Manager, and the relevant executive members. At this meeting, the coordinator and the executive members will provide the Director of Student Affairs and the Excluded Manager with an update on the advocacy group's financial standing as provided by UVSS accounting.
- b. In order to receive their funding from the Advocacy Groups Base Fund, advocacy groups must report a yearly budget and actuals as provided by UVSS accounting in February to the Advocacy Relations Committee according to the timeline in Section 3.3.
- c. Advocacy Groups may not budget for a yearly accumulated deficit.
- d. If an advocacy group's accumulated deficit is larger than the projected regular semesterly fees for the same semester, then the UVSS will work with the Coordinator and relevant Executive members to draft a recovery budget that will be in place until the accumulated deficit is recompensed. This recovery budget must be approved by the voting membership of the advocacy group and by ARC.
- e. The UVSS will not sign off on any cheque requisitions during the Fall or Winter semester that do not follow this recovery budget. Other financial sanctions such as holding back funding, temporarily halting spending, and removing signing authorities, may be imposed by the Society if the advocacy group is not compliant with the recovery budget.
 - i. A recovery budget may not reduce previously negotiated staff hours or benefits. It may prevent the hiring of new positions but not the replacement of a current position if a contract is due to expire. The

remaining non-staff expenditures within the projected regular semesterly fees may be reduced by no more than 75%.

- ii. Signing authorities may only be removed as a sanction if there is a pattern of non-compliant cheque requisitions submitted with their signature.
- f. Regular semesterly fees include operating grant funding from the Constituency Control Account, but does not include joint constituency trust account funds allocated by the Advocacy Relations Committee.
- g. In the case where a group has a net accumulated deficit at the end of the fiscal year, any requests for emergency funds may be approved by the UVSS Board of Directors.

3.8 Signing Authorities

- a. The number of signing authorities permitted per advocacy group shall not exceed five [5].
- b. At least three [3] signing authorities must be students. Non-student signing authorities must be advocacy group coordinator(s).
 - i. In the case of advocacy groups that serve both undergraduate and graduate students, there shall be no more than one [1] signing authority who is a graduate student.
 - ii. Signing authorities who are students must be members of the advocacy group.
- c. The coordinator shall provide the list of signing authorities and their emails to the Director of Student Affairs when submitting budgets and they shall share them with the UVSS General Office Manager and Executive Director.
 - i. The coordinator shall provide an updated list of signing authorities and their emails to the Director of Student Affairs, UVSS General Office Manager, and Executive Director with every change to the list.
- d. Cheque requisition forms put forward by advocacy groups require the signature of two of the groups' signing authorities.
 - i. In the case that a signature is not attainable, cheque requisitions can be approved by signing authorities over email and attached to the cheque requisition form.
- e. All signing authorities of an advocacy group are accountable to both the advocacy group's membership and the UVSS, including financial mismanagement.

3.9 Auditing

- a. Advocacy groups are included in the UVSS' annual audit.
- b. Should an audit indicate financial irregularities that cannot be accounted for or should spending fail to comply with internal regulations outlined in 3.9 Cheque Requisitions, the advocacy group shall be subject to financial sanctions by the

Society, including but not limited to holding back funding and temporarily halting spending.

- i. Before financial sanctions can be put in place, the Director of Student Affairs and the Executive Director shall meet with the relevant advocacy group's coordinator and board representative to clarify the nature of indicated financial irregularities.
- ii. Upon meeting with the relevant advocacy group's coordinator and board representative, the Director of Student Affairs shall bring proposed financial sanctions to a UVSS Board of Directors meeting, which must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote.
- iii. Financial irregularities include, but are not be limited to, the following:
 1. Significant expenses not budgeted and not approved by members,
 2. Significant expenses not approved by members, and
 3. Expenses made for personal use rather than organisation's use.

3.10 Cheque Requisitions

- a. When making purchases on behalf of students, cheque requisitions shall clearly indicate who is receiving the items purchased, the amount, and for what purpose.
 - i. All honorarium requests must include an honorarium form.
 - ii. All cheque requisitions must include both an itemized receipt and supporting documentation that includes the recipient's name, the amount, and what the payment is for, either stated in meeting minutes or by cc'ing at least two other signing authorities.
 - iii. All purchases above \$500 must be approved by the voting membership and documented in meeting minutes.
 - iv. Cheque requisitions for purchases approved by the voting membership must have the minutes of the relevant meeting attached, clearly denoting the recipient and amount, and relevant policy attached.
- b. All cheque requisitions above \$1500 must be signed by an excluded manager as the second or third signer.
- c. In the case that an advocacy group's budget is not passed by April 30th, the advocacy group will not be able to make purchases and submit cheque requisitions until their budget is passed either at ARC or conditionally approved by the Director of Student Affairs and the Executive Director.
 - i. Spending below accumulated surplus is exempt.
- d. Any Directors with questions about cheque requisitions submitted by advocacy groups shall contact the applicable advocacy group board representative and the Director of Student Affairs.

3.11 Gifts

- a. Gifts consist of all non-monetary compensation to a party.

- b. Gifts shall be left up to the discretion of the voting membership, but must not include alcohol or gift cards.
- c. Advocacy groups shall budget for gifts in their yearly budgets.
- d. Executive members are not eligible for gifts solely on the basis of fulfilling the duties of their executive roles.
- e. Coordinators and advocacy group members are prohibited from buying gifts for themselves or each other with student fees.
 - i. If an advocacy group member is the recipient of a gift, that member must not be present during voting to approve the allocation.
 - ii. Advocacy group members may receive a gift as recognition of volunteer work done for the advocacy group. In this case, such gifts shall not exceed \$50 in value.

3.12 Honorariums

- a. Honorariums consist of all extra-contractual monetary compensation to a party.
- b. Honorariums should be limited to events including but not limited to chairing an annual general meeting, performing at an event, or conducting a workshop. Payments for chairing a meeting should range from \$25 to \$100 depending on the length and complexity of the meeting. Payments for performances and workshops should range from \$50 to \$500 depending on the length of the event, preparation time, and education or professional designation of the presenter or performer.
- c. Cheque requisitions for honorariums must be accompanied by the Honorarium Request Form.
- d. Advocacy group members may receive honoraria for services rendered for the advocacy group, including workshop facilitation and chairing meetings, but must not be present during voting regarding their payment.

Part 4: Advocacy Relations Committee

1. Type

- a. Standing committee of the UVSS BoD with closed membership.

2. Purpose

- a. Act as the primary liaison among constituency groups, NSU, and the BoD.

3. Duties

- a. Ensure the successful operation and participation in UVSS affairs of all constituency organizations and NSU.
- b. Review policy directly impacting constituency groups and NSU for the purpose of providing recommendations to the Policy Development Committee.

- c. Approve all draft policies directly impacting constituency groups and NSU before it proceeds to the BoD.
- d. Work collaboratively to support the goals, events, and initiatives of constituency organizations, NSU, and the BoD.
- e. Serve as a forum for constituency organisations, NSU and the BoD to work collectively on common social justice issues on campus and in the community.
- f. Approve constituency groups' and NSU's previous and current semesters' financial documents, as per BoD finance policy.
- g. Allocate funds from the constituency control account to constituency organisations and the Native Students Union. See part 3.4 for details.
- h. At the first meeting of each semester, familiarize committee members with all policy directly relevant to the committee, including its terms of reference.

4. Membership

Voting Members

- a. The BoD representative for each Constituency Group.
- b. The BoD representative for NSU.
- c. Director of Student Affairs - ex officio and chair of the committee.
- d. An alternate representative for each Constituency Group and NSU for a semester upon ratification by their respective Constituency Group or NSU and by Advocacy Relations Committee.

Non-voting Members

- a. One [1] director elected by the BoD - ex officio and second chair of the committee
- b. Executive Director - ex officio
- c. General Manager - ex officio
- d. Administration and Services – ex officio
- e. Research and Communications Manager – ex officio
- f. Director of Finance & Operations - ex officio
- g. Director of Campaigns & Community Relations – ex officio
- h. Director of Outreach & University Relations – ex officio
- i. Director of Events – ex officio
- j. All Executive members of each Constituency Group
- k. All Executive members of the NSU
- l. All Coordinators of each Constituency Group and the NSU

*Voting members shall reserve the right to meet without non-voting members present.

5. Voting

- a. Shall be limited to the voting members designated in Section 4: Membership, sub-section a: Voting Members.

- b. Temporary alternative representatives may be selected by each group, for a semester upon presenting minutes from a quorate meeting from their respective constituency organisation ratifying their representative.
- c. All guests invited to attend a meeting must be unanimously approved by voting members.
- a. All voting decisions must be made by a 3/4th majority.

6. Quorum

- a. Shall be the chair and a minimum of three other voting members.

7. Meetings

- a. Shall meet bi-weekly at a day/time agreed upon by committee members at the beginning of each term or upon the call of the BoD, Executive Director, General Manager, constituency organizations, or NSU.
- b. The chair shall distribute meeting agendas and policy under consideration a minimum of 48 hours in advance of all meetings.
- c. The chair shall record minutes for each meeting containing an attendance list and important decisions and distribute these minutes within 72 hours of the meeting.

8. Term of Office

- a. Shall be for the duration of the Board of Directors' term (May 1 – April 30) with an annual reset at the beginning of each board te

Part 5: Safer Spaces

Safer Spaces Policy

Last updated: 10 March 2021

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1. Purpose

UVSS advocacy groups are committed to creating safer spaces in our centres, meetings, and events, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, age, race, or religion. We do not tolerate harassment in any form.

This policy applies to all users of all UVSS advocacy group spaces, events, meetings, as well as our online spaces. Anyone who violates this policy may be sanctioned or removed from these spaces, temporarily or permanently, at the discretion of the relevant advocacy group executive and the UVSS advocacy group coordinators at a confidential meeting (in consultation with the UVSS Executive Director).

Some UVSS advocacy groups may have additional guidelines in place, which will be made clearly available to all users. Users of advocacy groups are responsible for knowing and abiding by the 12 guidelines outlined in Section 2 and any other advocacy group specific guidelines, which will be publicly posted in advocacy groups' spaces and made available on the UVSS website and the websites of advocacy groups.

A safer space is created when participants work towards safety for all people and actively challenge all forms of oppression. We define safety as freedom from oppression and harassment, as outlined in the University of Victoria's *Discrimination and Harassment Policy*.

We recognize that systemic oppression and power structures are pervasive in all spaces. UVSS advocacy groups, as well as the University of Victoria, are located on unceded Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ territories. This land the UVSS exists on was originally a gathering place for camas bulb harvesting, as well as for trade and commerce. As organizations, we operate within a context of ongoing settler colonization and are complicit in this ongoing process. Decolonization is an integral part of creating safer spaces. Allowing dominant power structures and systems of oppression to be recreated and reaffirmed creates spaces that exclude people who experience those oppressions and we become complicit in actively harming them. For this reason, the creation of safer spaces is prioritized.

This policy provides some guidelines for creating safer spaces through mutually respectful dialogue. We must all act intentionally to create safer spaces. All people who access advocacy group spaces and events are asked to uphold these guidelines and our values of anti-oppression.

2. Expectations of UVSS Advocacy Groups Users

As people who access advocacy groups, we are accountable to each other. Each person shares responsibility to create safer spaces and create a welcoming environment. We collectively have the responsibility to uphold the UVSS' and advocacy groups' anti-oppression policies, if

applicable. In order to uphold these responsibilities, we require all users to adhere to the following guidelines when accessing UVSS advocacy group spaces, events, and meetings.

Guidelines for users of UVSS advocacy groups:

1. **Practice consent:** We prioritize consent and are survivor-centred. Before you touch anyone or discuss sensitive topics, ask if other people in the space are comfortable with that. We cannot assume that our physical and emotional boundaries are the same as other people's.
2. **Be aware of your privileges:** Think about how your words, opinions, and feelings are influenced and who they might exclude or harm.
 - a. If you are seeking resources to help you in this process, contact an advocacy group coordinator.
3. **Calling each other in:** If you have acted or spoken harmfully (even if unintentionally), someone may bring this up with you to begin a conversation of how your actions have been harmful. If this happens, listen and reflect on what they are saying. Take this as a learning opportunity.
4. **Prioritize ongoing learning:** None of us have all the answers and knowledge. If you do not understand something, ask someone else in the space or the advocacy group coordinator. We are each responsible for our own learning, but others may be able to help point us to helpful resources.
5. **Community accountability:** When someone is harmed, we aim to hold ourselves to account and find ways to heal, learn, and move forward together.
 - a. You can speak to others in the space or advocacy group staff if you would like information or support to work through an issue you have experienced or observed.
6. **Speak from personal experiences.** This means that, when possible, avoid speaking on the personal experiences of others, and avoid speaking on behalf of others.
 - a. Use "I" statements to share reactions or experiences (ie. "I feel..." "I experience...")
7. **Don't make assumptions** about others' identity or experiences.
8. **Be mindful of how long and often we speak** so that everyone has a chance to contribute.
9. **Share beliefs, opinions, and points of view rather than judgements.**
10. **Oppressive language and clothing is unacceptable** and will not be tolerated.
11. Adhere to each individual advocacy group's community agreements and anti-oppression policies.
 - a. Please approach coordinators of respective spaces with questions about these policies, or the UVSS Executive Director with questions about the UVSS' anti-oppression policy.
12. **Be respectful of the advocacy group's space**, including the physical space the group is located and the space the group uses to put on events.

Oppressive behaviour that makes others feel unsafe will not be tolerated.

Examples of oppressive behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive, derogatory, threatening, aggressive, or silencing comments (related to gender, sexuality, disability, physical appearance, language, body size, age, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and more)
- Deliberate misgendering or use of ‘dead’ or rejected names
- Violence, intimidation, stalking
- Wearing offensive attire including (but not limited to) hate symbols or culturally appropriative pieces
- Persistent, abusive, or non-constructive criticism
- Persistent micro-aggressions in the form of comments, jokes, material, or otherwise
- Non-consensual photography or recording
- Physical contact without consent
- Inappropriate social contact or unwelcome sexual attention
- Advocating or encouraging any of the above behaviour

UVSS advocacy groups prioritize marginalized people’s safety over privileged people’s comfort.

We reserve the right to not act on complaints regarding:

- ‘Reverse’-isms, including ‘reverse racism’, ‘reverse sexism’, and ‘cisphobia’
 - ‘Reverse racism’ and ‘reverse sexism’ are myths that allow folks with privilege to appropriate anti-racist and anti-sexist language to claim that they are the victims, thereby avoiding accountability and responsibility for their privilege. Since racism and sexism require systems of power to function, those with the relative power in those situations (e.g. White folks and male-identified folks, respectively), are not the victims of racism or sexism.
- Reasonable communication of boundaries, such as “leave me alone”, “go away”, or “I’m not discussing this with you”
- Communicating in a ‘tone’ you don’t find congenial
- People being held accountable for being racist, sexist, cissexist, ableist, or otherwise oppressive behaviour or assumptions

3. Reporting Harassment, Oppressive, and/or Harmful Behaviour

We encourage people to contact advocacy group coordinators, at any time, if they feel unsafe or notice another person who is being made to feel unsafe. Being made to feel “unsafe” means that you are experiencing discomfort or harassment due to oppressive behaviours or for other reasons not necessarily listed caused by another individual or group of individuals.

If someone has done something that violates this policy and you were not comfortable bringing it up at the time or want to discuss it further, you can report issues by:

- a. Speaking to the appropriate UVSS advocacy group coordinator in person, through the appropriate advocacy group’s social media channels, or via email at:

- i. Gender Empowerment Centre: gemcentre@uvss.ca
 - ii. Native Students Union: contact@uvicnsu.ca
 - iii. Society for Students with Disabilities: uvicssd@uvic.ca
 - iv. Students of Colour Collective: socc@uvss.ca
 - v. UVic Pride: pride@uvic.ca
- b. Contacting the UVSS Executive Director by email at execdir@uvss.ca or by mail at:
- Executive Director
UVic Students' Society
University of Victoria
PO Box 3035 STN CSC
Victoria BC V8W 3P3
Canada*
- c. Anonymously reporting via a letter outlining the issue, mailed to the above address or placed in the mailbox of the Executive Director in the UVSS General Office (Student Union Building B128).
- d. Filing a complaint with EQHR under UVic's Discrimination and Harassment Policy (GV0205). Please note that the UVSS and EQHR are separate entities, and thus the procedures listed in this policy differ. In situations where a complaint has been both filed with EQHR and reported to a UVSS advocacy group, the UVSS will submit to all processes of UVic's policy GV0205. All students and UVic employees are advised they have the right to confidential consultation with the Director of EQHR.

If the person who is harassing you is a staff member of an advocacy group, please contact the UVSS Executive Director through a method outlined above.

Please note that anonymous reports cannot be followed up with you directly, unless you provide contact information. However, we will take all anonymous reports seriously.

Other useful numbers:

- Emergencies: 911
- UVic Campus Security: 250-721-7599
- Vancouver Island Crisis Line: 1-888-494-3888
- Victoria Sexual Assault Centre: 250-383-3232
- Men's Trauma Centre: 250-381-6367
- KUU-US Crisis Line (Indigenous specific): 1-800-588-8717
- Anti-Violence Project (AVP): 778-400-5007

4. Conflict Resolution

If a person engages in oppressive or harassing behaviour, they will be asked to stop and are expected to comply. If the person continues to engage in such behaviour despite being asked to stop, advocacy group coordinators retain the right to take necessary action to keep the event,

meeting, or space a welcoming and safer space for everyone. Education rather than punishment shall be prioritized.

All incidents will be addressed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the respective UVSS advocacy group coordinator and UVSS Executive Director. All resolutions are at the discretion of the advocacy group coordinator, in consultation with the UVSS Executive Director.

Potential actions can include:

- a. Speaking to those involved to resolve the issue.
- b. Providing educational resources to the person engaging in the harmful behaviour.
- c. In cases of someone wearing offensive attire, you will be asked to remove the offensive piece(s).
- d. Discussing the issue with the UVSS Executive Director and taking actions recommended by them.
- e. Contacting the Anti-Violence Project or other local organizations for assistance and/or mediation.
- f. Assisting the person experiencing harassment in submitting a complaint to EQHR, if the issue falls under UVic's Discrimination and Harassment Policy.
- g. In extreme cases, the person engaging in the harmful behaviour may be asked to leave the space, event, or meeting for an outlined period of time.

Conflict Resolution Timeline:

- a. The advocacy group coordinator and/or UVSS Executive Director shall have a limit of two weeks to take initial steps in working to resolve the safer spaces concern. This initial action shall include following up with the individual who made the complaint (unless it was made anonymously) and beginning to take steps to address the situation, which may or may not include an action listed above.
- b. The advocacy group coordinator and/or UVSS Executive Director shall make every effort to resolve the complaint within 30 days. Resolution can include any of the above actions listed, dependent on the consent of all parties involved.
- c. All members are responsible for creating a safer space. This is a learning process for everyone involved. People will make mistakes, and those who are self-reflective of their oppressive behaviour, who have taken actions towards understanding and implicating their own privilege and power in perpetuating systems of oppression, and who have taken actions towards working against these systems and unlearning their oppressive behaviours will be welcomed back into the space by the appropriate advocacy group coordinator.

If you have been asked to leave the space because you engaged in oppressive behaviour, intentional or unintentional, and have not been provided with a timeline for when you can re-enter the space, please contact the respective UVSS advocacy group coordinator before returning to discuss the incident and expectations of the safer spaces policy.

UVSS advocacy groups will take all reasonable and appropriate action to ensure that confidentiality of all parties to a reported conflict is respected.

This policy shall not be used as a tool for removal of collective members/constituents based on personal issues. All concerns addressed must pertain to safer spaces at UVSS advocacy group spaces and events.

5. Definitions

Harassment is:

- a. Humiliating someone physically or verbally;
- b. Sexual harassment, as defined in UVic's Discrimination and Harassment Policy (GV0205);
- c. Threatening or intimidating behaviour towards someone; and/or
- d. Making abusive and demeaning comments about someone's disability, race, national or ethnic origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, or other marginalized identity.

Microaggressions are:

- a. The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.
- b. In many cases, these hidden messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of target persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment.
- c. Microaggressions are rooted in ideologies such as racism, classism, sexism, cissexism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, colonialism, as well as other discriminatory belief systems. (Source: [Anti-Violence Project](#))

Oppression is:

- a. Institutionalised power that is historically formed and perpetuated over time that allows certain 'groups' of people to assume a dominant position over 'other groups' and this dominance is maintained and continued at an institutional level.
- b. This means oppression is built into institutions like government and education systems. It gives power and positions of dominance to some groups of people over other groups of people. (Source: [Anti-Violence Project](#))

Anti-Oppression is:

- a. The process of making one's views of the world large enough to include everyone—looking for ways to make connections among different people's struggles and finding ways to think about how issues affect different people in different ways.
- b. It means not just not accepting 'norms,' 'isms' and oppressive dynamics, but actively working to make the invisible visible, and challenging the systems that hold them in place.
- c. Also, an anti-oppression analysis acknowledges that all forms of oppression are linked

and that the best way to organize against oppression is to take into account that all oppressions are linked. (Source: [Anti-Violence Project](#))

The following additional definitions shall apply in this document:

- a. “UVSS” refers to the University of Victoria Students’ Society;
- b. “UVic” refers to the University of Victoria;
- c. “EQHR” refers to the Office of Equity and Human Rights at UVic;
- d. “ED” refers to the UVSS Executive Director;
- e. “Members” refers to members of the UVSS and/or UVSS Advocacy Groups including:
 - i. Gender Empowerment Centre (GEM)
 - ii. Native Students Union (NSU)
 - iii. Society for Students with a Disability (SSD)
 - iv. Students of Colour Collective (SOCC)
 - v. UVic Pride

6. Background to the Policy

What is a safer space?

A safer space is a supportive, non-threatening environment that encourages open-mindedness, respect, a willingness to learn from others, as well as physical and mental safety. It is a space that is critical of the power structures that affect our everyday lives, and where power dynamics, backgrounds, and the effects of our behaviour on others are prioritized. It’s a space that strives to respect and understand survivors’ specific needs. Everyone who enters a safer space has a responsibility to uphold the guidelines of the space.

We use the term ‘safer’, recognizing that not everyone experiences spaces in the same way as others. Thus, any one set of guidelines established to create safety may not meet the requirements of everyone and there may be complications or lapses in fulfilling those guidelines in practice.

Generally, safer spaces are welcoming, engaging and supportive. Proactively creating safer spaces includes establishing guidelines for conditions that are not acceptable in a space and action plan(s) for what to do if those conditions arise. Safer space policies may address issues like hurtful language and behaviour (both within the space itself, and in patterns extending beyond activities of the space), violence, offensive attire, touching people without their consent, and other behaviour or language that may perpetuate oppression, including but not limited to, racism, colourism, xenophobia, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, transantagonism, ageism, fatphobia, ableism, or classism.

Why are ‘safer’ spaces valuable?

If we profess to be concerned about issues of race, gender and sexuality, etc., we need to live our lives in a way that proactively seeks to subvert oppression, to undermine the very possibility that someone will feel discriminated against. We need to recognize that assault and abuse are

also perpetrated by people who we know and love and share similar anti-oppression ideologies with. (Source: *Coalition for Safer Spaces*, 2010, <https://saferspacesnyc.wordpress.com/>)

7. Questions, Concerns, Feedback

If you have questions about this safer space policy, email the UVSS Executive Director at execdir@uvss.ca