

# DIRECTOR OF STUDENT PUBLICATIONS POLICY 2026

**DRAFTED BY:** Governance Officer

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**VERSION:** 2

**EFFECTIVE DATE:**

**SCHEDULED REVIEW DATE:**

This Policy is adopted by USYD Student Union Ltd (ABN 52 688 637 818) (USU), a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).]

This Policy must be read consistently with the USU Constitution and USU Regulations.

## 1. Purpose of Director of Student Publications Policy

- a. The purpose of this Director of Student Publications Policy (**The Policy**) is to clarify the role of Director of Student Publications (**DSP**) within the USYD Student Union Ltd (ABN 52 688 637 818) the responsibilities and obligations thereof, alongside the mechanisms guiding their operations in order to ensure the appropriate function of the USU's publications. The Policy, in doing so, seeks to:
  - i. Re-iterate the USU's commitment to the editorial freedom of its student editors;
  - ii. Outline the publications for which the USU is responsible and indeed liable;
  - iii. Delineate and codify the powers and responsibilities of the Directors of Student Publications in order to alleviate potential sources of confusion or conflict; and
  - iv. Ensure the appropriate structures and procedures are in place to ensure the USU will not find itself responsible for published content that is legally problematic.

The exercise of functions under this Policy must align with the USU Constitution and its charitable purposes.

## 2. Duties of the Directors of Student Publications (as per USU Regulations, Appendix 1. 8)

Duties are exercised in accordance with the USU Constitution, USU Regulations, and any delegated authority.

- a. The duties of the Directors of Student Publications (**DSPs**) are set out in the USU Regulations Appendix 1.8. Refer *attached*.

## 3. Acting on behalf of the DSPs

- a. Whilst the President or members of the Executive Committee other than the Honorary Secretary may be called upon to exercise functions when the DSPs are otherwise unable to, akin to that of the DSPs under this policy or pursuant to the *USU*

*Regulations*, they are not to be considered DSPs.

- i. For the purposes of this policy, the DSPs will be considered as unable to fulfil their functions if they refer a decision regarding publication, they are unsure of, or if they have not made a decision for 24 hours.
- b. Section 3.a. (i) notwithstanding, should a non-DSP be required to exercise DSP-like functions vis-à-vis a USU publication they must do so in compliance with this policy.
- c. A DSP that is not the Honorary Secretary may resign their role by presenting a formal letter to the Executive Committee.
- d. If any DSP position becomes vacant, a replacement shall be elected at the next Board Meeting.

Any exercise of DSP functions by other officeholders must comply with governance and delegation requirements under the Constitution.

#### **4. Commitment to Editorial Freedom**

This commitment operates subject to the legal obligations of USU as a company limited by guarantee and registered charity.

- a. The USU acknowledges that it, as an organisation, bears the ultimate responsibility for the content published within its publications, and therefore that it cannot avoid the existence of an interest in what said publications create.
- b. The USU similarly re-affirms its commitment to upholding editorial freedom to the greatest extent possible, and that such freedom should only ever be undermined as a last resort.
  - i. For the purposes of this policy, undermining editorial freedom shall refer to instances where the USU uses its influence to either force a publication to publish content or prohibit it from publishing content that it wishes.
- c. The USU will endeavour to balance its commitment to editorial freedom and its liability in a manner compatible with its risk appetite yet notes that on principle the editors of its publications are hired to act as autonomous agents.

#### **5. Recognised USU Publications**

Board consideration must occur in accordance with governance procedures set out in the Constitution.

- a. Whether or not in circulation at the time this policy is effective, the following publications are considered to be officially Recognised USU Publications:
  - i. *Pulp*
  - ii. *Hermes*
  - iii. *Union Recorder*
  - iv. *Bull*
- b. For a publication to be added to the list of Recognised USU publications, the individual or individuals seeking to do so must submit a formal proposal to the Honorary Secretary.

- i. The Honorary Secretary may request additional information or documentation to accompany the proposal within reason.
  - ii. The Honorary Secretary must then bring the formal proposal to a meeting of the Board within 60 days.
  - iii. The Board may approve the proposal by way of an ordinary motion, reject the proposal, or request revisions.
- c. Any publication approved as a Recognised USU Publication will be formally under the control of the USU management team. Management control is exercised in accordance with the Constitution and Regulations.
- d. Publications, digital and social media of registered USU clubs and societies **do not** form part of this policy. These clubs and societies shall be bound by the Clubs Handbook.

## 6. General Provisions and Responsibilities

DSP approval functions are exercised under delegated authority in accordance with the Constitution and Regulations.

- a. The DSP(s) shall check and approve all completed USU Publications.
  - i. Where the USU Publication does not publish full publications, but rather individual pieces of content, each distinct piece of content must be approved.
    - ii. Published pieces of “content” refers to both printed and digital publications, including (but not limited to) content posted to websites, blog posts, publishing written or visual content via social media applications, uploading and/or sharing “tweets”, photos, images or videos, posts, status “updates” or any other form of content publishing facilitated by social media.
  - iii. Each publication must be approved by at least one DSP before publication. If a DSP is uncertain or concerned about any content, it must be approved by the second DSP, or the Executive.
- b. The DSP(s) may, acting reasonably, reject publication from a USU Publication on any of the following grounds:
  - i. Defamatory material.
  - ii. Breaches of copyright.
  - iii. Content that may otherwise open the USU to civil or criminal liability.
  - iv. Any content that is discriminatory on the basis of sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, or disability.
  - v. Any content that is sexually explicit or exploitative.
  - vi. Any content featuring a subject or subjects who are identifiable (using their image, likeness, statements, or voice) without their express consent

or permission).

vii. Any content without consent of the owner.

- viii. Any content which may pose risk to the USU's commercial operations, including risk to licencing or legislative requirements.
  - ix. Any content which depicts breach of licencing or the law.
  - x. Any content which may otherwise bring the USU into disrepute.
  - xi. Any article between the close of nominations and the declaration of the results of the USU election, that passes biased judgment on any candidate or their policies.
  - xii. Any article endorsing a candidate in an election that has not formally been endorsed by the USU.
  - xiii. Other material that in the opinion of the DSP(s), in any way contravenes the USU Constitution, USU Regulations, or applicable policies.
- c. The DSP(s) may request revision of revision of content that may be preventing the publication from being published under section 5(b), including providing specific suggestions to alleviate the concerns raised.
- d. When rejecting content or requesting revisions the DSP must provide the individual seeking to publish it the rationale for the decision with reference to a section of this policy.
  - i. The Honorary Secretary must notify the Executive Committee of the rejection of any article in a USU publication if that rejected content is not revised and resubmitted within 3 working days.

All decisions must be consistent with procedural fairness and governance requirements under the Constitution and Regulations.

- e. The DSP(s) may approve publication upon changes suggested under section 5(d).
- f. The DSP(s) may suggest, but not mandate, edits to proposed publications on the following grounds:
  - i. Grammar or spelling mistakes.
  - ii. Mistranslation or language-based errors the instance the article is in a language other than English.
  - iii. Where there is an error of fact that is obvious to the reasonable person, noting that if the editor wishes to publish without the suggested changes the USU has the ability to provide a disclaimer on the publication.
- g. The power to disclaim under section f(iii) extends to all articles published by a USU Publication and said disclaimer may contain any content that the USU sees fit provided it complies with the *Regulations* and values of the organisation.

- h. The DSP(s) shall be indemnified by the USU for all liability that may arise should their actions be carried out which are bona fide, conducted without negligence, and do not violate this policy. Indemnity operates subject to applicable law including the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and ACNC governance standards.
- i. There shall be created at the beginning of each Board term by the Honorary Secretary an online chat or group for the centralised function of the DSPs.
  - i. The platform of such a group is to be decided by the Honorary Secretary.
  - ii. Each USU Publication shall have its own group, should it be in operation in a given year.
    - iii. The group shall include only:
      - 1. The Honorary Secretary
      - 2. The two DSPs as elected by the Board
      - 3. The editors of the relevant USU Publication
    - iv. All content wishing to be submitted for the consideration of the DSPs, other sections of this policy notwithstanding, shall be sent to this centralised chat.
- j. Should an editor of a USU Publication perceive that the content of article is likely to be prejudiced by the formal DSP process they may submit it for consideration by the Honorary Secretary alone in their role as DSP.
  - i. For the purposes of section 5(j) “prejudiced” refers to instances where the content of the publication, for example breaking news as the result of investigative journalism, may be undermined, or otherwise interfered with by virtue of it being made known before formal publication.
  - ii. For the purposes of section 5(j) the fear that an article may simply be rejected from publication does not suffice in enlivening the provision. Fears vis-à-vis time sensitivity alone are similarly insufficient, though may be a persuasive factor in addition to consideration of section 5(j)(i).
  - iii. Publication under the provisions of this section must be accompanied by a formal report at the following Board Meeting of why the article was so sensitive and why the formal process could not be followed.
  - iv. The Honorary Secretary may approve the article with the support of another member of the Executive Committee. As a result, the additional member of the Executive Committee involved in this process will be answerable to the Board for the purposes of subsections 5(j)(iii) and 5(j)(v).

- v. This mechanism is to be used in only the most of extreme circumstances, and inappropriate uses may subject the relevant editor to reprimanding processes at the discretion of the Board.
- k. Should a USU Publication wish to produce content that requires real-time, or “live”, coverage, it may do so with the prior approval of the DSP(s).
  - i. The DSP(s) must ensure that they maintain overwatch as such coverage occurs and may censor any content that is in violation of this policy.
  - ii. At the conclusion of the real-time coverage, the DSP(s) must check the entire publication to ensure it complies with this policy.

## **7. Director of Student Publications Reporting**

Reporting obligations must align with governance and reporting frameworks established under the Constitution.

- a. The DSP(s) shall maintain a formal record of all proposed publications and the outcomes of their review.
  - i. The Honorary Secretary shall be as responsible for maintaining this record.
  - ii. This record will be tabled within the Honorary Secretary’s report at Ordinary Meetings of The Board.
- b. This record will include, but need not be limited to:
  - i. The publication proposing the content.
  - ii. The author of the content.
  - iii. The editor submitting the content.
  - iv. The date the content was submitted.
  - v. The date of the DSP decision.
  - vi. The outcome of the DSP decision; and
  - vii. The DSP that made the relevant decision.
- c. Should an article be rejected under this policy, and not subsequently revised and published within 30 days, the Honorary Secretary shall provide formal justification for the decision to the Board on behalf of the DSPs.

## **8. DSP Handover and Training**

Training must include governance obligations applicable to directors and officers of a company limited by guarantee where relevant.

- a. All DSPs shall attend both a handover session (both for themselves when appointed and for their successors) and formal training.
  - i. The handover session shall be conducted by the previous Honorary Secretary and DSPs.

- ii. The content of the handover shall be at the discretion of those conducting it yet should be conducted with due diligence.
- b. The USU must organise for the DSPs formal training from outside professionals.
  - i. This training should at a minimum include:
    1. Formal defamation training
    2. Media training
    3. Training on USU's legal and licencing obligations
    4. Diversity & Inclusion training
    5. Cultural awareness

## **9. Adjudication of Disputes**

Dispute resolution must be conducted consistently with governance structures and authority under the Constitution.

- a. In the event of a dispute between any parties under this policy, including between an editor and a DSP or between numerous DSPs, the matter shall be referred to the Board Executive for final arbitration.
- b. In the instance that the Board Executive is unable to decide, the Honorary Secretary, as a DSP, shall exercise the decisive "casting vote".

## **10. Governance**

This Policy is governed by the USU Constitution, USU Regulations, the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth), and ACNC governance standards.

In the event of inconsistency, the USU Constitution and applicable law prevail.

USU is an independent legal entity and not part of the University of Sydney.