



Safe Space Agreement

Stirling University LGBTQ+ Society

What is the purpose of this agreement?

We are committed to creating a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ people to enjoy at the University of Stirling. To support this, we have developed this 'Safe Space Agreement' to outline how we achieve an environment that prioritises each other's safety and ensures marginalising behaviour is robustly challenged and rectified. The purpose of this agreement is to clarify the standards of behaviour that are expected from members and guests attending any of our events or using our online spaces so that we can maintain a space that is safe and free from oppression as far as possible.

Becoming a member of the society or attending any of our events means that you are committed to respecting the safe space. You can demonstrate this commitment by looking out for each other's safety and well-being, listening to and respecting the thoughts and feelings of others, and changing your behaviour if someone indicates you are making them uncomfortable or unsafe.

Below, we clarify some of the behaviours we will not tolerate. **If you encounter any of these behaviours or any other behaviour that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, please alert a member of the committee or the event host. Alternatively, you can report any incidents, behaviour or concerns to us by emailing support@sulgbtq.org.**

We take any report of unacceptable behaviour seriously and will take action as described below. Anything you report to us will be treated as confidential, in line with the society's Confidentiality Policies as outlined in our constitution.

This agreement will be subject to annual review. If you are a member of the society, you can send us your views and feedback by telling us at meetings or sending an email to support@sulgbtq.org.

Please note: in addition to this agreement, everyone attending our meetings is expected to comply with all Students' Union policy and governing articles. You can read these documents at stirlingstudentsunion.com/aboutus/governanceandplanning



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What behaviour is unacceptable?

Violent and aggressive behaviour

This includes physical violence or attempted physical violence, any non-consensual sexual behaviour, aggression and intimidating behaviour, and wilful or attempted vandalism of property.

This behaviour risks causing harm, both to those involved and potentially those around them, and displays disregard to the safety and boundaries of others as well as causing intimidation to those in the vicinity.

Physical violence will always result in immediate ejection from an event and permanent removal from the society in line with Stirling Students' Union disciplinary procedures.

Harassment

Any behaviour that disregards others' boundaries or aims to make them feel threatened and unsafe, including (for example) verbal abuse or threats, bullying behaviours, use of derogatory language to insult or undermine, misgendering, intentional outing, deliberate unwanted intrusion into someone's personal space, and wilful misinterpretation of someone's desires or behaviour (such as not leaving them alone when they clearly want you to do so).

This behaviour demonstrates a desire to cause harm and disregard towards others' wishes and autonomy.

Prejudiced behaviour

Any behaviour that exhibits prejudice, regardless if it is directed at a specific person. This includes making assumptions about people, implying their inferiority or treating them with less respect based on any characteristic associated with marginalisation, oppression or discrimination. This includes but is not limited to discrimination of individuals because of their: age, disability, body shape/size, gender identity, gender expression, assigned sex, sexual orientation, sexual attraction, romantic attraction, HIV status, health, marital/civil partnership status, pregnancy status, religious or philosophical belief, ethnicity, nationality, social class, mental health, asylum/immigration status, care responsibilities, political affiliation or criminal conviction.

Prejudiced behaviour reinforces oppression and discrimination, and as such, it is actively harmful and can put people in danger. Refusing to tolerate it is an essential step towards creating a safer space.



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What you can do to respect the safe space

Make no assumptions

When engaging with others attending our events, do not assume their gender identity, pronouns or sexual and romantic attraction. You should always ask how an individual identifies or expresses. Additionally, you should be open to a variety of identities and expressions.

Use inclusive language

Avoid using gendered, cis-normative or heteronormative language. Many examples of this have become part of the natural language we use daily. When referring to people, avoid using words such as:

- “girls”, “guys” or “ladies and gentlemen” – use folks, everyone or friends instead;
- “men/women” – use everyone instead;
- “boy/girls” – use kids instead;
- “Ms./Mrs./Mr” – use Mx instead;
- “boyfriend/girlfriend” or “husband/wife” – use partner or spouse instead;
- “mum/dad” or “mother/father” – use parents instead;
- “brother/sister” – use sibling instead;
- gendered pronouns such as “he/she” – use they/them instead;
- “mankind/womankind” – humankind.

Use accessible language

When taking part in discussions, try to invite questions rather than speak in a closed or absolute manner. Make sure to moderate your language to ensure it is accessible, avoiding advanced words or phrases that not everyone may understand.

Challenge and report unacceptable behaviour

If you feel comfortable doing so, we encourage you to challenge and report any unacceptable behaviour when it occurs or hear about it. Everyone attending our events has a shared responsibility to respect the safe space and challenge inappropriate behaviour, reinforcing the message that we will not tolerate any of the behaviours described above.

Respect and listen to others

Our events are spaces to learn and grow, which can only be achieved through actively listening to and respecting others. We encourage you to listen and learn from the experiences of others and resist being rude if you feel the need to disagree.



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Identify and be aware of your privileges

We all have certain privileges because of characteristics such as our gender, ethnicity or culture. It is crucial you recognise your sources of privilege, reflect and challenge yourself, and take action to use your privilege to benefit others.

Give trigger warnings

If you want to share something that might be upsetting or distressing for others, please give a trigger warning beforehand; this makes sure everyone feels safe and comfortable at our events.

Abstain from apologism, victim-blaming or gaslighting

If someone shares something traumatic or you bear witness to something, please refrain from making a defence or excuse. It is always best to listen to the individual(s) involved and be sensitive towards any discussion.

Treat any sensitive information as confidential

You should treat anything disclosed by someone about their identity or a traumatic experience as confidential and not discuss outside the meeting without consent.

Learn from your mistakes

We fully understand that learning about different identities and expressions takes time, especially if you are starting to explore how you identify. If you make a mistake, that is okay! The committee and other society members are here to support your learning and growth.

Be sober

It is forbidden to drink alcohol in teaching rooms, so please do not bring any with you to our events. We do run off-campus socials where alcohol can be consumed. Please drink responsibly and know your limits.



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How will we respond to unacceptable behaviour?

All reports of unacceptable behaviour will be treated very seriously. The committee will take action as appropriate to address unacceptable behaviour while it is occurring or after it has occurred. You can suggest action we can take that you feel would be appropriate, and we will consider this. However, how we respond to unacceptable behaviour will remain at the committee's discretion to ensure fairness.

While it is occurring

You are encouraged to seek assistance and report behaviour that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable in our spaces. The committee will aim to help you with the situation immediately and take action as necessary.

The committee is also responsible for monitoring the behaviour of those in attendance at our events and will challenge anything considered unacceptable. In the first instance, members of the committee will intervene and request that the person involved desist and remind them of the Safe Space Agreement. In more serious incidents, such as those involving violence or abuse, or if an individual persists, they will be asked to leave the event and ejected if necessary. Depending on the severity of the incident, we may also alert the Students' Union.

After it has occurred

You can report behaviour that has made yourself or others unsafe or uncomfortable by emailing support@sulgbtq.org. Alternatively, you can raise your concerns with a member of the committee in person.

The committee will conduct a full investigation of any reports of unacceptable behaviour by individuals attending our events or using our online spaces. Following an investigation, we will approach the individuals involved and issue a formal warning (if necessary), reminding them of the Safe Space Agreement. Depending on the severity of the incident, we may also escalate through the disciplinary procedures of the Student's Union. Where an individual's unacceptable behaviour is persistent, this will also result in disciplinary action.