

Team Sunderland Sports Clubs Code of Conduct

Purpose

The Code of Conduct is designed to ensure the highest possible standards of competition, sportsmanship, fairness, honesty and behaviour concerning the conduct of all University of Sunderland representatives. Everyone involved in Team Sunderland sports clubs has a responsibility for setting standards, ensuring equal access and opportunity for all, and upholding fairness and respect on all occasions.

This Code of Conduct applies to all members of Team Sunderland sports clubs, including coaches, spectators, volunteers and anyone representing or competing on behalf of the University. They outline expectations of reasonable behaviour when participating in any Team Sunderland activity or related social activity, the process and possible sanctions, which may be used if sports club members do not meet the expectations of reasonable behaviour. The clauses are not exhaustive, and other acts deemed by the University to be unacceptable may be treated in the same way as a breach of this code. These are in addition to the standards of behaviour set by the University of Sunderland.

Expectations:

The University expects that students and coaches participating in all activities related to Team Sunderland will always demonstrate respect for:

- Themselves, fellow University of Sunderland students, university staff, students of other institutions, external venue staff, volunteers, coaches, officials and spectators and service providers (e.g. coach drivers).
- Laws and culture of the relevant sporting activities.
- Property of Sunderland, Team Sunderland, Team Sunderland Clubs and any venue they are visiting.

Participants are also expected to:

- Value their performances, that of others and not just results.
- Co-operate with team/club mates, coaches, officials and staff.

By signing up to a Team Sunderland sports club or taking out Team Sunderland Membership, you agree to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Team Sunderland Sports Clubs Code of Conduct

The primary concern for Team Sunderland will always be the welfare of students and ensuring we always protect the safety and well-being of our members. The following standards will ensure that clubs, committees and individual members are aware of their responsibilities whilst representing the university, whether in a sporting or social situation. This Code of Conduct is a localised procedure relevant to those students who are involved in Team Sunderland sports clubs.

What do these standards cover?

The Code of Conduct sets out clear guidelines on the expected behaviour of the Sunderland community when participating in any activity or social event under the name of University of Sunderland. All students are expected to also abide by the

[University's Student Charter](#) and [Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure](#), which all students agree to when they become students at the University.

What are the aims of this Code of Conduct?

- To complement the University of Sunderland Student Charter and Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure.
- To protect members of Team Sunderland.
- To protect others potentially affected by members' actions.
- Ensure the highest possible standards of fairness, honesty, competition and behaviour.
- Reduce the risk of harm, injury, harassment and nuisance to members and the community in general.
- Create inclusive and vibrant student groups.
- Facilitate an environment to enable all those involved with Team Sunderland to be the best they can be.
- Detail the actions that can be taken should the Code of Conduct be breached to ensure a strong reputation both internally and to the University externally.

To whom does this Code apply?

- All members of a Team Sunderland sports club.
- All persons officially appointed to any team or individual competing in an event (including administrators, coaches, managers, medical practitioners and physiotherapists).
- Spectators of Team Sunderland Sports Club training and fixtures.

Behavioural Expectations

All Team Sunderland Sports Clubs members agree to abide by the behaviours outlined in the non-exhaustive list below:

- To act as an appropriate ambassador for University of Sunderland and your club.
- To refrain from any behaviour that brings the Club, Team Sunderland or University of Sunderland into disrepute.
- To conduct themselves in a reasonable manner relating to language, noise and behaviour meeting the expectations of the Sunderland community.
- To encourage and guide participants to accept responsibility for their performance and behaviour.
- To adhere to the Sports Club Constitution, general rules, regulations and policies of University of Sunderland (which includes, but is not limited to, [Sunderland Students Charter](#), [Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure](#), [University Health and Safety Policies](#), Team Sunderland Terms and Conditions).
- To adhere to the rules and regulations of the relevant sports' governing body, and where necessary, the relevant international federations, agreeing always to demonstrate sporting behaviour towards opponents, staff and officials.
- To never behave violently where this is outside the rules of the sport or deliberately seek to gain an advantage through cheating.
- To be fair, considerate, honest and respectful to the needs of fellow students, staff, volunteers, coaches and visitors to Sunderland.
- To respect Sunderland's property and that of others (e.g. external facilities, other institutions and transport providers) and not cause damage to such property or use it for unapproved purposes.

- To adhere to the rules and regulations in the [IT Acceptable Use Policy](#) and take personal responsibility for their words, images and actions in an online environment.

Alcohol Consumption

To not consume or carry alcohol:

- Whilst being transported, whether by hire car, minibus or coach, to or from any activity organised under the umbrella of the Club, Team Sunderland or the University.
- Within or near any sporting facility
- Alcohol should be consumed only at appropriate times and in approved areas, in line with relevant alcohol licensing regulations.
- Avoid consuming excess alcohol at any event or social function organised under the umbrella of the Club, Team Sunderland or the University.
- To refrain from the use of any illegal drugs and banned substances in line with UK Anti-Doping guidance and the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure. The consumption of legal "highs" is also prohibited.
- To act within the law, and to be aware of offending others and members of the public through anti-social behaviour.
- To not pressure or coerce any other member into any action with which they feel uncomfortable, or which acts against the code of conduct.
- To understand that any 'welcome' activity for new club members should be inclusive, and non-compulsory, and should not, in the judgement of Team Sunderland, make the individuals feel humiliated, uncomfortable or degraded.
- To refrain from any form of 'problem initiation' throughout the year so clubs remain inclusive for all.
- To take responsibility for their understanding of this Code of Conduct and the repercussions of any breaches and seek further information or clarification if they are unsure about how it should be applied.

Off-Campus

The University works hard to build good relationships with its local communities. It works with residents' associations, local representatives and the police to help make the Sunderland campus and the surrounding area safe and friendly environments to live in. In that context students are expected to:

- Help to support these relationships in the way that they conduct themselves in the surrounding area.
- Be considerate of your neighbours, especially about noise levels and rubbish.
- Act within the law and not engage in activity or behaviour that is likely to bring the University into disrepute.

Initiations Policy

University of Sunderland does not permit Problem Initiation Ceremonies.

A 'problem initiation' includes any activity that could reasonably be perceived as resulting in risk or the occurrence of physical or mental detriment to participants. It is a problem initiation regardless of whether it has been labelled as such by the group, regardless of an individual's willingness to participate, and regardless of where and when it takes place (BUCS Definition 2020).

Problem activities and behaviours

Inappropriate or dangerous activities or behaviours associated with 'problem initiations' include but are not limited to:

- Bullying, harassment and power inequality, often used to coerce participation in activities, challenges and other risky behaviours designed to humiliate, often against a person's will.
- Consumption of excessive quantities of alcohol.
- Consumption of abnormal/unpleasant substances.
- Forced acts of nudity/nakedness.
- The humiliation of a person in public (i.e. setting someone up to fail).
- Isolation or ostracising of individuals through the removal of their mobile phones, geographical remoteness or physical isolation.
- Physical acts perpetrated against a person's body (e.g. shaving their hair).
- Psychological torment.
- Sexual assault.
- Sexual harassment.
- Victimisation of a specific group of individuals (e.g. "Freshers").
- Wearing of items or clothing that could be deemed degrading or offensive.

What are acceptable social activities?

Social activities such as those identified below are encouraged. You should aim to create activities that are welcoming and inclusive to new members provide a positive first impression of university life and throughout the year support a positive club culture.

Acceptable social activities include:

- Welcome evening for new members.
- Team and Club meals.
- Social nights.
- Team bonding activities (e.g. paintball, bowling).
- Celebrations (e.g. Birthday and Christmas meals).

When planning and running club social activities, the following must occur:

- All activities must be opt-in and have no bearing on the acceptance into the team/squad selection or equivalent.
- Peer pressure must not be exerted on individuals.
- Activities must not be humiliating, unlawful or degrading.
- Activities must not involve the forced consumption of any fluid/substance.
- Taking alcohol to the activity/event must not be made a condition of attendance.
- If activities involve alcohol, then non-alcoholic drinks must be made available.
- Activities must not bring the reputation of the University into question or disrepute.

What is an organised Team Sunderland Sports club activity or social?

If any of the following criteria apply, then an event or social is deemed as being 'organised' by the Club:

- Activity publicised at a Club meeting.
- Activity in any way publicised by the Club.
- Activity requiring the use of equipment owned by the Club/University.

- An activity where group transport is booked through Team Sunderland.
- You are wearing clothing that identifies you with the University of Sunderland, Team Sunderland or your club (including fancy dress).
- Activity publicised on social media pages (i.e. Facebook groups and X) and the Team Sunderland /university website(s).
- Any Wednesday Night social/event will be classed as an organised event.

Competitions & Fixtures Policy

When representing Sunderland in competitions and/or fixtures each competitor must:

- Adhere to the laws of the sport.
- Display and promote high standards of behaviour.
- Promote fair play.
- Always respect the official's decision.
- Refrain from engaging in public criticism of game officials.
- Refrain from engaging in offensive, insulting or abusive language or behaviour, whether expressed verbally or via social networking sites or other technology.
- Refrain from engaging in bullying, intimidation or harassment, whether expressed verbally or via social networking sites or other technology.
- Speak to your club-mates, opposition, coaches, officials and all staff with respect.
- Win or lose with dignity. Thank the opposition and officials at the end of every game.
- Report or identify any individual whose behaviours breach this Code of Conduct.

Social Media Advice

Club Committees must provide Team Sunderland with a list of all club social media accounts before the start of the season and when any new accounts are set up. All social media accounts must have an owner, who will be responsible for all activity that the account engages in. This includes, but is not limited to, posts on the account, comments on any posts, and messages sent to other accounts.

Team Sunderland must be permitted access to view any non-public club social media accounts, if requested, for monitoring purposes.

Sports club members must always be aware that whilst contributing to social media activities they are ultimately representing the University. Appropriate use of club accounts is required along with appropriate use of personal accounts when representing the University or discussing Team Sunderland-related topics. All members should ensure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the Club and the University.

Any communications that sport club members make in a Sports Club capacity through social media must not do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example, by:

- Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age.
- Using social media to bully another individual.
- Distributing, or being involved in the distribution of, material on any social media platform that can be deemed offensive, abusive, threatening, humiliating, degrading or intimidating.

Bring the University/Team Sunderland into disrepute, for example by:

- Criticising or arguing with students, employees or competitors or making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.
- Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.
- Breaching confidentiality by revealing private information owned by the Club or University, or about an individual.
- Breaching copyright by using images or content without permission or failing to give acknowledgement.

Reporting breaches to the Sport Code of Conduct

If any individual and/or club have concerns over the behaviour of individuals and/or the club, please report it directly to:

- Team Sunderland's Development team or an email to team@sunderland.ac.uk or
- The Report and Support Team via the report and support portal.

If Team Sunderland is made aware of any incidents that are in breach of this code, it shall:

- I. Contact the Sports Club Committee and/or individuals involved to obtain further information and identify if any action has been taken by the sports club.
At this stage, only minimal information should be collected to assess the appropriate method of continuation.
- II. Team Sunderland may discuss the incident with the Student Casework Team and decide upon the appropriate method for continuation (the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure may be invoked if the breach is sufficiently serious, which the Student Casework Team will lead under that Procedure; Team Sunderland sanctions may subsequently be applied after any University sanctions).
- III. If the incident does not proceed through the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure, Team Sunderland will appoint a suitable person (Investigating Officer) to investigate the alleged breach. The Investigating Officer will make whatever enquiries they deem necessary and produce a report setting out details of the incident.
- IV. If the Investigating Officer is satisfied that a breach may have occurred, the Investigating Officer shall decide if action is required.
- V. If it is decided that no action is required, this will be recorded on the Team Sunderland Incident Database.
- VI. The Investigating Officer will provide the following information to the student in writing usually within 10 working days of completing their initial enquiries:
- VII. Details of the incident, notification of the allegations being considered and a summary of the information gathered by the Investigating Officer including details of the next steps.
- VIII. Where the Investigating Officer is unable to provide all the above information, for example, because of the nature of further enquiries, the Investigating Officer will provide the student with the available information and then provide further information when it becomes available.
- IX. The student will be notified in writing as soon as reasonably practicable if there is any variation of the allegation/s at any stage.

Procedure

The Investigating Officer will invite the student to either admit the alleged misconduct (and make any representations about the action that the University should take) or to deny the alleged misconduct.

- I. The student will be allowed to provide any evidence in support of their case or any evidence about mitigating circumstances in writing within 10 working days of being formally notified of the allegation.
- II. The student will be allowed to meet with the Investigating Officer within a reasonable period. Although this procedure sits outside of the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure, the student may be accompanied by another student or an advisor from the Students' Union, but the student is expected to make their representations.
- III. If the alleged misconduct is admitted in full by the student, the Investigating Officer will determine whether it is appropriate to impose a sanction/s on the student and, if so, decide which sanction/s should be imposed.
- IV. If the alleged misconduct is not admitted by the student, the Investigating Officer will decide if there is sufficient evidence to establish on the balance of probabilities (it is more likely than not) that misconduct has occurred and will determine whether it is appropriate to impose a sanction/s on the student and, if so, decide which sanction/s should be imposed.
- V. The student will be notified in writing of the Investigating Officer's decision and details of any sanctions being imposed, together with the reasons for the decision and the right to appeal that decision within 10 working days of the decision being made.
- VI. The Investigating Officer may at any stage decide that the Incident could follow the university's Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure. In such circumstances, the Investigating Officer will stop this disciplinary route and discuss the case further with the Student Casework Team. The student will be notified in writing as soon as reasonably practicable by the Investigating Officer of any change in the disciplinary route.
- VII. The Investigating Officer has the discretion to vary the procedure set out above if they decide that it is fair to do so.

Appeal

The following are the only grounds of appeal which will be considered:

- That there was a material procedural irregularity which may have affected the outcome.
- That there is evidence which was not considered by the Investigating Officer, which may have affected the outcome, and which the student could not reasonably have been expected to have submitted at the time; or
- That the decision is not one which, given the evidence, could be reasonably sustained.
- If the student wishes to appeal the decision of the Investigating Officer, they must notify the Sports Development Manager in writing within 10 working days of receiving the investigation outcome. The student should make representations as to why they believe the outcome was unfair and provide the Sports Development Manager with any new information that was not considered during the investigation.
- The Sports Development Manager will review the student's grounds for appeal, along with the investigation outcome, and may contact the investigating officer to address any points raised.
- The Sports Development Manager may uphold the decision of the Investigating Officer or set aside the decision of the Investigating Officer and substitute their own decision.

- The Sports Development Manager has the discretion to make a decision and/or impose a sanction that is more or less serious than that imposed by the Investigating Officer. The Sports Development Manager's decision is final.
- The student will be notified in writing of the Sports Development Manager's decision, together with the reasons for their decision within 10 working days of the decision being made.

For any breaches that result in criminal or University investigations, Team Sunderland will suspend the investigation process at any stage until the criminal or University investigation is completed.

A conviction in Criminal Court or sanctioned through the university's Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure will be taken by Team Sunderland as conclusive evidence that the offence has occurred, and no further investigation of the facts will be required. Team Sunderland may still act under this Code of Conduct.

Where a decision is taken not to pursue a criminal case against the student or where the student has been acquitted of a criminal offence or no sanction taken within the university's Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure, Team Sunderland will consider the student's behaviour under this Code of Conduct and may still take sanctions.

Potential Breaches of the Sports Club Code of Conduct

The following list provides examples of misconduct that may be considered under the Code of Conduct. The list is illustrative and is not exhaustive.

- Individual or multiple instances of inappropriate sportsmanship/behaviour misconduct.
- Inappropriate physical sportsmanship during the fixture (e.g. resulting in sending off).
- Behaviour that has or has the potential to cause damage to the reputation of the University.
- Verbal Abuse.
- Causing damage to property or inappropriate use of university facilities such as IT.
- Use of inappropriate language.
- Physical misconduct, including physical violence.
- Threatening, offensive, indecent, intimidating, bullying, harassing, abusive conduct, or conduct otherwise detrimental to the well-being of others.
- Failure to comply with rules or regulations; for example, causing a disturbance during transport to a fixture or smoking in non-designated areas.
- Refusal to respond to a reasonable request by relevant University staff; for example, refusing to confirm identity when requested.
- Unacceptable social activities or responsible for organising any unacceptable behaviour.
- Causing distress to others through excessive and unacceptable levels of noise.
- Conduct of a kind which contravenes the principles set out in the University's health and safety and wellbeing policies, including showing disregard for one's health and safety, disregard for the health and safety of others or misusing or interfering with facilities that have a health and safety purpose.
- Abuse, trolling or nudity/offensive content on social media.
- Abusive language about a university team (Internal or external) on a personal account.
- Abusive language using a club's social media account.
- Committee/player not assisting with enforcing the Code of Conduct / or not reporting incidents.
- Committee/player not assisting with the investigation
- Conduct of a kind which may lead to or has led to a conviction under the criminal law.

- Sexual misconduct, including indecent behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence.
- Malicious or vexatious allegations against another student or staff and/or
- Persistent refusal to comply with a sanction imposed for an act of misconduct.

Potential Sanction for Breaching the Sports Club Code of Conduct

The circumstances and context of each case will be considered when determining whether a sanction/s should be imposed and if so, which sanction/s should be imposed and, where relevant, the timeframe for compliance. The following list provides examples of sanctions that may be imposed by the Investigating Officer. The list is illustrative and is not exhaustive.

- Information will be shared /reported to the University's Student Casework Team and/or Police including details of any sanction taken.
- The provision of caution with a record kept of the incident on the Team Sunderland Incident Database.
- The payment of any fines incurred through the sports NGB whether for an individual or team.
- The payment of a fine; such a fine will not normally exceed £1,000.
- A requirement for the student/team to make good at their expense, in whole or part, any damage caused by them, whether alone or with others.
- Sanctions incurred in line with NGB's guidelines.
- A written apology to any person or persons affected by the incident.
- A requirement for the student to undertake a specified number of hours of service for the benefit of the complainant, the University or the local community
- Compulsory attendance at an appropriate workshop, course and/or one-to-one session.
- Suspension from all club-related events (e.g. Performance, training and/or fixtures and/or Socials) for a specified period.
- Ban from representing the university in any sport or activity.
- Removal from Committee Position.
- Cancellation of Team Sunderland and/or CitySpace Fitness Membership.
- Removal of privileges such as support from website and/or social media accounts.
- Removal of the ability of the Team and/or Club to hire out or use university facilities.
- Remove, and the ability to apply for, any additional support (training time, kits, equipment, etc). for a specified period.
- Removal of the team from the club.
- Removal of the Club from BUCS competition.
- Closure of Sports Club.
- Team and/or Club unable to attend Welcome Fair.
- Team and/or Club unable to attend Varsity/Clash of the Minsters.
- Team and/or Club unable to attend Sports Awards.
- An extension of a previous sanction.
- A decision to take no further action in respect of the act of misconduct.

The Investigating Officer may take previous acts of misconduct by the student into account when determining which sanction is most appropriate.

Any sanction(s) levied will continue into subsequent years, if applicable. Confirmation of sanctions may be shared with other departments, for example, the University's Student Casework Team.

Please note that Team Sunderland reserves the right to suspend all functions of a club and/or individual members alleged to be in breach of this policy until disciplinary proceedings have been concluded.

Representing your university in sports is a privilege. The demand for places on teams is high, and we would therefore like to remind members that the primary focus of your participation in your chosen sport should be your sporting performance, with social activities solely complementing your student experience.