

## **Sport & Recreation Sports Club Events Policy including statement on “Initiations” and misuse of Alcohol**

Within the Sport & Recreation Service we recognise that social activities are an appropriate and enjoyable aspect of Sports Club membership. Examples of appropriate social activities could include a welcome event for new members, club dinners, social nights and post-match refreshments. We recognise that for some students in social gatherings, the consumption of alcohol is an expected and enjoyable element to proceedings, however we also appreciate that this is not the case for many students. We are also mindful of the harm and health damage that alcohol misuse can cause, and we are committed to providing sports captains with appropriate knowledge on the potential harm this can cause, through our annual Captain's training events.

With this in mind, we advocate that social activities should not be organised which encourage the excessive consumption of alcohol. As well as the welfare and health issues associated with excessive drinking, students can feel extreme peer pressure to take part in order to gain acceptance within a student group. This is particularly an issue with students new to the group, such as first year undergraduates, who want to 'fit in', gain acceptance with the established members and who are potentially less aware of their own limits with respect to alcohol. Consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol in such cases can put students in the way of harm, jeopardising their safety and the safety of others. Social activities must be organised in such a way that no member feels harassed, intimidated or bullied into undertaking activities.

Excessive drinking poses a significant risk to students' degrees and careers. Students who drink to excess and behave irresponsibly as a result can potentially find themselves with a criminal record. In addition the behaviour of students can bring the reputation of Middlesex University into disrepute. This could result in disciplinary proceedings from the University, the most serious of which could result in expulsion from the University.

It is also vital that activities are accessible and respect the diverse beliefs and backgrounds of all of our students. Activities must be inclusive and make allowances for all cultural and personal beliefs. Members should be able to opt out without fear of undue pressure, reprisal, non-selection for teams, embarrassment or any form of discrimination.

### **Socials**

Sport & Recreation Service social events, or Sports Clubs that choose to hold social events throughout the year should adhere to the following principles in order to enable all members to participate in activities safely and enjoyably.

- Members should always know what is in their drink,

- Non-alcoholic options should always be available,
- Club Captains and Sport & Recreation staff are responsible for considering how members will get home safely,
- All Captains must consider how they will maintain the positive reputation of Middlesex University when in public,
- Members should consume alcohol and food of their own free will, free from coercion, bullying or threat.

### **“Initiation” ceremonies**

The Sport & Recreation Service is mindful of the long standing practice of sports clubs holding Initiation Ceremonies at the start of the academic year. However, over the past few years there has been a significant change in the University sector surrounding the acceptance of these type of events, following a number of widely reported tragedies and unsavoury incidents. The use of the term “Initiations” is now considered inappropriate, and the term should avoid being used in any context related to social events involving new sports club members.

We appreciate the social, and team building opportunities for involving new students in social activities at the start of term, and this is a normal activity which we support and encourage

While we are happy for sports clubs to continue to organise team-building social events, we require all Sports Captains or sports social event organisers, to comply with the following Sports Social Event Code of Practice:

- Organisers of events and participants have a duty to abide by the University’s equal opportunities policy
- Organisers and participants should challenge any discriminatory actions or behaviour
- All participants in events should be made to feel welcome and part of the team regardless of their willingness to participate in any organised activities
- Organisers of events should aim to ensure all participants are catered for. No peer pressure should be exerted on participants to engage in any activity, as part of an event.
- Organisers of sports club events must avoid any activities which might be construed as performing a task or ritual to gain credibility or status with a club. Activities which may compromise a person’s dignity such as forced drinking, eating, nudity and / or any activity or behaviour which might be deemed as humiliating should be avoided.
- There must be no compulsory or effectively compulsory requirement for participation, which has the potential to affect the physical or mental well-being of any individual.
- If any event involves some consumption of alcohol, there must be alternative, non-alcoholic drinks available, for participants.

### **Breach of Code of Practice**

Breaches of the Code of Practice can be reported to any permanent member of Sport & Recreation staff, but should ideally be reported to the Deputy Head of Sport & Recreation. Sanctions may be imposed on any group found to be in

breach of this Code of Practice. Breaches will be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary policies of the University.

Additionally sports clubs must be aware that British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) has identified Anti-Social Behaviour in Sport to be an area of concern and have a disciplinary policy which includes incidents which may bring the BUCS name into disrepute. Middlesex University has signed up to the BUCS policy on Anti-Social Behaviour. This contains the expectation that all institutions develop policies and procedures for managing student behaviour and alcohol misuse within sport. The policy states:

*Any grievance or complaint regarding student behaviour at its sporting events, fixtures or competitions should be submitted to BUCS and will be dealt with through its disciplinary process.*

Penalties can take the form of:

- Deduction of BUCS points
- Fines
- Individual/Team/Club suspension from BUCS Competitions/Leagues