



# Scottish Socialist Youth

Members Policy

# Introduction

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The Scottish Socialist Youth (SSY) is a democratic organisation led by young people between the ages of 14 and 30 who are passionate about the ideals of socialism, independence, social liberation, democracy, internationalism, and environmentalism.

As we strive to create a just and equal society, it is essential that we establish clear guidelines and principles that govern our actions and interactions within the organisation. A robust members' policy serves as the foundation for fostering a welcoming, inclusive, and respectful environment that reflects our core values.

The purpose of this members' policy is to outline our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, as well as provide guidelines for members' democracy, addressing harassment and bullying, managing language and behavior, ensuring confidentiality, and responsible social media use. By adhering to this policy, we can collectively create a space that nurtures collaboration, empowers individuals, and promotes a culture of mutual respect and understanding.

## 1. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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### 1.a) Members' Democracy

Socialist organisers believe in the power of collective decision-making and the inclusion of all members in shaping democratic organisations. We encourage active participation and engagement from members of diverse backgrounds and experiences, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic. To foster a democratic environment, we hold regular meetings which feature discussions and feedback sessions, where all members have the opportunity to voice their opinions, propose ideas, and contribute to decision-making processes. We value transparency and fairness and all ensure that voting procedures for electing representatives and leaders are accessible, inclusive, and accountable.

## 1.b) Harassment And Bullying

The SSY is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all members. We have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to harassment, bullying, discrimination, or any form of prejudiced behaviour in our organisation. We define harassment and bullying as any unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or online, that denigrates, intimidates, or creates a hostile or offensive environment for individuals based on their age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or any other protected characteristic. We strongly encourage all members to treat each other with respect, empathy, and kindness.

In the event that any member experiences or witnesses such behaviour, we offer a confidential reporting mechanism to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed promptly (**see section 5c**). All complaints will be taken seriously, thoroughly investigated, and appropriate action will be taken to maintain the well-being and inclusivity of our organization.

## 1.c) Language And Behaviour

Language and behaviour play a crucial role in creating an inclusive and respectful atmosphere within our organisation. We strive to promote the use of respectful and inclusive language, avoiding derogatory, offensive, or discriminatory terms. We encourage members to engage in constructive and respectful dialogue, even when differing opinions arise. Disagreements are an opportunity for growth, and we value open-mindedness, empathy, and the ability to listen and learn from one another.

During meetings, events, and online discussions, we expect all members to adhere to a standard of conduct that emphasizes respect, tolerance, and understanding. By fostering an environment that values diverse perspectives and promotes constructive discourse, we can collectively work towards our shared vision of social liberation, democracy, and equality.

## 2. Confidentiality

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Respecting the privacy and confidentiality of our members is a high priority of the SSY. We understand that members may share personal experiences, ideas, or concerns during their involvement with the organisation, and we are committed to safeguarding this information.

We expect all members to treat any sensitive or personal information shared within the organisation with the utmost discretion. Personal data, including contact details and any other confidential information, should be handled responsibly and securely. Sharing such information without consent is strictly prohibited. We assure our members that any breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously and appropriate action will be taken to maintain trust and privacy within our organisation.

## 3. Social Media Use

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We recognise the impact and reach of social media platforms in shaping public opinion and promoting socialist values. We encourage all members to use social media responsibly, respectfully, and in alignment with our core principles. When representing the organisation on social media platforms, members should ensure that their online behaviour reflects our commitment to socialism, independence, social liberation, democracy, internationalism, and environmentalism.

We emphasize the importance of promoting inclusive and positive content while refraining from posting or sharing offensive, discriminatory, or harmful material. In cases where disagreements arise, we expect members to engage in constructive dialogue, promoting understanding and empathy rather than resorting to personal attacks or divisive language. By using social media thoughtfully and responsibly, we can amplify our message and engage with a wider audience while maintaining the integrity and values of 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism.

## 4. Accountability For Positions Of Power

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The SSY believes in the democratic principles of transparency, integrity, and accountability. We recognise that individuals in positions of power or leadership hold a responsibility to act in the best interests of the organisation and its members.

Any abuse of authority undermines the trust and values we strive to uphold. Abuse of authority includes but is not limited to actions such as exploiting power differentials, engaging in discriminatory behaviour, making decisions without appropriate consultation, or using positions of influence for personal gain.

## 5. Disciplinary Action

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### 5.a) Introduction

This section outlines the procedures and measures in place to address violations of the SSY's members policy. The SSY is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all members. In the majority of cases, disciplinary action aims to correct behaviour, promote accountability, and uphold the values of the organisation.

### 5.b) The Discipline Committee

The role of the Discipline Committee is to conduct thorough investigations into reports of members' conduct, hold disciplinary hearings and make decisions based on the evidence presented and in accordance with the SSY's policies. The committee's proceedings will follow fair and transparent procedures, providing all parties involved with an opportunity to present their perspectives.

Twice per year the disciplinary committee will be rotated to ensure that power cannot become concentrated within the group. Each time, four members will be selected at random from a pool of nominees. This committee will be led by the National Membership Secretary.

The process for nominating members to this pool will take place once per year in the same month as the National Committee elections take place. This process will be coordinated by the National Secretary and the National Committee will review the members selected, ensuring that the pool is diverse and representative of the different communities within the SSY.

### 5.c) Reporting

Any report should be directed to the National Membership Secretary through a confidential communication channel, preferably by email or a scheduled face-to-face chat. The report should include details of the incident, individuals involved, and any supporting evidence. All reports will be treated confidentially, and no retaliation will be tolerated against individuals who report in good faith. Reports may also be directed to any standing member of the Discipline Committee.

### 5.d) Conciliation

In cases where appropriate and feasible, the Discipline Committee will attempt to conciliate or reach an informal resolution before initiating formal disciplinary action. The conciliation process involves the intervention of a mediator selected by the Discipline Committee who will assist the parties involved in resolving conflicts and addressing concerns through open communication, active listening, and negotiation. The goal is to promote understanding, mutual respect, and reconciliation among all parties.

### 5.e) Disciplinary Hearings

After investigation determines that disciplinary action should proceed against a reported member, and conciliation has neither been successful nor appropriate, a disciplinary meeting should be scheduled. The following steps outline this process:

- 1. Notification:** The member involved in the disciplinary process should be notified in writing about the upcoming disciplinary hearing. The notification should include the date, time, and location of the hearing, as well as a clear

statement of the alleged violation or misconduct. Sufficient notice should be given to allow the member to prepare their defence.

- 2. Attendance:** The member facing disciplinary action, along with any relevant witnesses, has the right to attend the disciplinary hearing. They may also bring a friend to assist them during the process. If it is determined that the reporting member should attend the disciplinary meeting, they shall do so at a separate time to the member facing discipline.
- 3. Presentation of Evidence:** During the hearing, the discipline committee will present the evidence collected during the investigation. This may include witness testimonies, documents, electronic communications, or any other relevant information. The member involved will have the opportunity to review and respond to the evidence presented.
- 4. Testimonies and Statements:** The discipline committee may hear testimonies from witnesses, including the reporting member, if applicable. Both the member facing disciplinary action and the committee members have the right to ask questions and seek clarification from witnesses. The member involved may also present their own witnesses or submit written statements to support their case.
- 5. Member's Defence:** The member involved will have the opportunity to present their defence and provide explanations, evidence, or witnesses to refute the allegations. They can address any discrepancies, challenge the evidence presented, or provide context to their actions. The discipline committee members may ask questions or seek further clarification during this phase.
- 6. Deliberation:** After all evidence and testimonies have been presented, the discipline committee will enter into a deliberation phase and the other participants will leave. During this time, committee members will review the information, consider all perspectives, and discuss the case in a fair and unbiased manner.

**7. Decision and Outcomes:** Following the deliberation, the discipline committee will reach a decision based on the evidence and information presented during the hearing. The decision may include determining whether the member is responsible for the alleged violation, as well as determining the appropriate disciplinary action, if necessary. Possible outcomes are detailed in **section 4f**.

**8. Notification of Decision:** The discipline committee will communicate the decision and the rationale behind it to the member involved. The decision should be provided in writing, outlining the findings, any imposed disciplinary actions, and the right to appeal, if applicable. The communication should also emphasize the organisation's commitment to fairness, transparency, and the opportunity for personal growth and improvement.

### 5.f) Appeals

Members who wish to appeal a disciplinary decision have the right to do so within a specified timeframe. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the National Secretary. An Appeals Committee should thereafter be convened, comprising impartial members from the same pool that the Discipline Committee was selected from.

This committee will review the appeal and consider factors such as procedural errors, new evidence, or inconsistencies in the original decision. The appeals process may involve a formal hearing where all relevant parties have the opportunity to present their case. The purpose of the appeals process is to ensure fairness, transparency, and the rectification of any potential errors or misunderstandings.

The decision of the Appeals Committee may: uphold the original decision of the disciplinary hearing; provide mitigation to the penalties applied by the Discipline Committee; or clear the reported member of wrongdoing.



## 5.g) Outcomes

The outcomes of disciplinary action within the SSY may vary depending on the severity and nature of the violation. The specific disciplinary action will be determined by the Discipline Committee, taking into consideration the circumstances of each case. The focus of disciplinary action is to promote learning, personal growth, accountability, and the maintenance of a safe and inclusive environment for all members.

Potential outcomes are subject to time-scales decided by the Discipline Committee and include:

- Commitment to good behaviour;
- Commitment to reparations;
- A written warning;
- A bar from holding office bearer positions;
- Temporary suspension;
- A ban from holding Organiser Membership;
- Permanent expulsion from the organisation.

## 5.h) Accountability

The Discipline Committee and Appeals Committee should maintain comprehensive records of all disciplinary proceedings, including correspondence, minutes, decisions, evidence, and any other relevant documentation. These records should be stored securely and made accessible only to authorised individuals.

## **6. Reviewing This Policy**

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At a minimum of once every three years, this policy should be systematically reviewed by a delegated committee to ensure that its processes are fair and equitable in delivering positive outcomes for the SSY and its members. Changes to this policy should be treated as a constitutional amendment and voted on through the use of an online ballot at the same time as SSY National Elections.