



Code of practice relating to the operation of the GCR

1. Introduction

This Code of Practice has been published by the Governing Body of St Antony's College in accordance with the requirements of section 22(3) of the Education Act 1994 ("the Act"). The Act requires the College and its Graduate Common Room (GCR) to comply with a number of measures relating to the operation of the GCR, in particular relating to its: constitution; membership; elections; GCR Representatives; finances; donations; affiliations; complaints; and notification requirements. This Code sets out the arrangements made to secure observance of the Act.

The Code will be reviewed by the Management Executive Team (MET) each Trinity Term when the newly elected GCR President attends. Should any amendments to the Code be suggested they will be reported to Governing Body at its meeting in 8th Week of Trinity Term.

The Governing Body will approach the use of this Code from a position that sees the GCR as a key institution in the life of the College which should be allowed to operate with the lightest possible degree of oversight. Where responsibilities are to be exercised by the College under the Education Act 1994 and this Code of Practice prior notification of at least two weeks will be given to GCR officers and the opportunity to discuss the matter will be given at MET.

2. Constitution

The GCR has been established, and conducts and manages its affairs, under a constitution approved by the Governing Body. Any amendments to the constitution must be submitted to and approved by the Governing Body before any such amendments can take legal effect.

The Governing Body will review and, where necessary, revise the GCR constitution in consultation with the GCR every three years. In reviewing and revising the constitution the Governing Body is acting to ensure that the GCR operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances. The Governing Body shall ensure that its review of the Constitution shall only proceed after discussion has taken place in the GCR Committee.

3. Membership

Any student member has the right not to be a member of the GCR and not to be unfairly disadvantaged by reason of having exercised that right.

Any student member not wishing to be a member of the GCR must indicate this decision in writing to the GCR President. This decision will remain effective for the current academic year unless a student member takes specific action within two weeks of the decision to opt out, to resume membership.

Any student member wishing to resume membership should write to the GCR President. The GCR President shall inform the College Registrar within five days of receipt of any decision to opt out or resume membership of the GCR by supplying a copy of the relevant correspondence. It is then the GCR President's responsibility to inform OUSU of the student member's decision.

4. Students who are not members of the GCR

Under the provisions of the Education Act 1994 any student member has the right not to be a member of the relevant Common Room and not to be unfairly disadvantaged with regard to the

provision of services, or otherwise, by reason of having exercised that right. At St Antony's College all student members, whether they are or are not members of the GCR, have in general the right of access to services provided by the College and the GCR. However, there are some rights which are not extended to non-members of the GCR and these include the following:

- the right to participate in GCR, OUSU and NUS (National Union of Students) elections and decision-making processes;
- the right of OUSU and NUS representation;
- the right to commercial advantages negotiated for the benefit of GCR, OUSU and NUS members.

On the basis of the above arrangements the College is satisfied that the range of services otherwise provided by the College and the GCR to student members (whether members of the GCR or not) are sufficient to ensure that non-members are not unfairly disadvantaged within the meaning of the Act.

5. Elections

Elections to GCR Offices shall be conducted by secret ballot in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. No person shall hold sabbatical or paid elected GCR office for more than two years in total at the College. The Governing Body may satisfy itself that an election has been fairly and properly conducted by requesting that a report from the Returning Officer be given to the College Registrar.

6. Finance

The GCR, through its Officers, is responsible for the proper conduct of its financial affairs and for ensuring that funds provided to them by the College are used only in accordance with the Act and other applicable legislation.

The GCR shall require its President and Treasurer to satisfy the College that all such requirements are complied with and to advise the GCR if at any time action or policy is being considered which appears to the GCR President to be incompatible with the terms of this Code of Practice relating to Finance and Affiliations.

In particular the GCR is required to:

- maintain accounts and accounting records in accordance with normal professional accounting principles in a form to be agreed with the Bursar;
- maintain a sound system of internal financial management and control as agreed with the Bursar;
- plan and conduct its financial affairs so as to ensure that its total income is at least sufficient, taking one year with another, to meet its total expenditure and that its financial solvency is maintained;
- maintain adequate insurance cover for GCR assets (if any);
- report regularly to the College, through the MET, in an agreed format to permit the College to approve annual budgets and monitor expenditure on behalf of the Governing Body;
- ensure that fair written procedures and rules exist for allocating resources to groups, clubs and societies and that these are observed;
- present the accounts of the GCR, approved by a General Meeting of the GCR, to MET within one month of the end of each academic year, for these to be reported to Governing Body before the end of Michaelmas Term. Copies shall be available to all student members for inspection on request to the GCR Treasurer;
- include in the accounts a list of:
 - all external organisations to which the GCR has made donations in the period to which the accounts relate and the amounts paid to each;

- all external organisations to which the GCR is affiliated and details of subscriptions, fees or donations made to such organisations in the period to which the accounts relate;
- establish arrangements for handover in each year between the current GCR Treasurer and incoming GCR Treasurer before the end of Trinity Term, including a period in which both share responsibility for the conduct of the GCR's financial affairs and its record keeping.

7. Affiliation

All proposals to affiliate to external organisations shall be approved by the Officers of the GCR and shall be submitted to the membership for approval annually at a properly advertised Open Meeting. If an affiliation is challenged, the Constitution permits a referendum to be held to decide the question of continued affiliation to that particular external organisation.

A register of current affiliations containing details of subscriptions or similar fees paid, or donations made, to such organisations in the past year (or since the last report) shall be maintained by the GCR. The register shall be available for inspection by all students on application to the GCR President.

8. Complaints

The following Complaints Procedure is available to all student members or groups of student members who are dissatisfied in their dealings with the GCR, or claim to be unfairly disadvantaged by reason of having exercised their right not to be a member of the GCR. The Complaints Procedure is designed to enable complaints to be dealt with promptly and fairly and, where a complaint is upheld, for an effective remedy to be provided.

The Complaints Procedure does not cover Harassment (including bullying) by another member of College. A separate procedure applies for dealing with harassment, including bullying. Please refer to www.sant.ox.ac.uk/policies/harass.pdf.

Stage 1: Informal

The College expects that the majority of issues can be resolved informally through normal contacts and discussion between students and GCR Officers without the need to instigate formal procedures. An issue or complaint should therefore initially be raised through someone close to its origin (the person responsible for a particular activity, event organiser, etc). If a student member wishes to complain about their treatment by a specific individual, they should try to approach this person in the first instance.

Student members are also able to seek (initial) help and advice from:

1. Oxford University Student Union's Student Advice Service: <http://ousu.org/advice/student-advice-service/>;
2. Their College Adviser: the College Registrar has details if not known to a student;
3. The Dean or Senior Tutor: see www.sant.ox.ac.uk/welfare for details.

An issue or complaint may initially be raised verbally or by email, and the student should indicate the outcome that they seek to resolve the complaint. They should raise the issue or complaint as soon as possible after the actions or lack of actions which prompted it; the greater the time delay from an action or lack of action to submission of the complaint, the more difficult it will be for the GCR to deal with the complaint effectively.

The person receiving the issue or complaint should seek to discover and understand the nature of the problem and if possible resolve it there and then. If the complaint is made in writing, an attempt should be made to contact the complainant to discuss the complaint in person. The relevant GCR Officer should seek to offer advice and where possible try to find an informal resolution. The GCR should aim to resolve complaints quickly (within 5 working days) and close to where the matter arose. This may for example be an on-the-spot apology and explanation, with immediate action to resolve the problem if possible, or with a letter of apology.

If a complaint covers more than one area of the GCR (for example because it involves more than one activity or GCR Officer), the person first receiving the complaint must ensure that responsibility for investigating and responding to the complaint is quickly agreed, and liaise with all relevant parties as necessary.

Stage 2 - Formal

If the student member are not happy with the outcome of Stage 1 they should register a formal complaint. This must be done in writing to the GCR President. All formal complaints should be logged a written acknowledgement issued within 5 working days.

A formal written complaint should include:

1. The student member's name and contact details;
2. Details of the concern or complaint;
3. Supporting evidence for the complaint (this can be sent in addition to the letter if applicable);
4. Why informal resolution was unsuccessful or they were not satisfied with the response they received;
5. What the student member would like the GCR to do to resolve their complaint.

The GCR will aim to investigate the complaint properly and provide a reply within 20 working days if possible, setting out how the problem will be dealt with. If this is not possible, an interim response should be made informing the student member of the action taken to date or being considered.

A written record should be kept of all decisions, correspondence and meetings relating to the investigation of the complaint. At the end of the investigation the student member will be told the conclusion, the reasons for the decision, and action to be taken, if any.

Stage 3 - Review

If the student member is not satisfied with the response to Stage 2, they have a right of appeal to the Dean. The Dean will consider the written records of the matter and reach a conclusion.

At all stages of the complaints procedure, those making decisions or prescribing remedies shall have regard to the Education Act 1994, the Statutes and By-Laws of the College, and the Constitution of the GCR.

9. Notification requirements

The College will bring to the attention of all student members at least once a year, in the form of an email message referring student members to the College website:

1. This Code of Practice, which includes statutory information relating to a student member's right not to be a member of the GCR and not to be unfairly disadvantaged as a consequence of having exercised that right (section 3), details of arrangements made by the College to provide services for students who are not members of the GCR (section 4) and information about restrictions imposed on the activities of Common Rooms by the law relating to charities (section 9);

2. The College's Free Speech Statement.

10. Restrictions imposed by the law of charities

The College is required by the Education Act 1994 to bring to the attention of all student members any restrictions which the law of charities places on students' unions, which for the purposes of this statement includes the GCR. As a general rule expenditure of GCR funds is only permitted if it "furthers the interests of the students in a way that assists in the educational aims of the College". The GCR is a constituent body of St Antony's College and falls under the College's charity registration. As such they are subject to many of the requirements of the law of charities.

Funds must be used for the pursuance of the GCR's objectives as stated in its constitution, and in accordance with relevant legislation. For example:

- recreational, leisure and sporting facilities;
- communicating with members;
- clubs and societies;
- affiliations to certain external organisations which have objects related to those of the GCR and affect members as students;
- donations to external organisations connected with the welfare of the College's students;
- campaigning, but only on issues relevant to the students as students of the college;
- debating issues of common concern.

Expenditure must be at a reasonable level, taking into account the likely benefits to students and the overall financial resources and commitments of the GCR.

Approved by Governing Body on: