

Policy Name:	Student Organization Policy		
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Volume:		Responsible Executive:	VPA and Provost
Chapter:		Responsible Office:	AVP Students
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Policy Statement

Student organizations are an integral and important part of university life, community, and culture. While these student-administered organizations have significant autonomy, and their primary responsibility and accountability is to their student members and/or Board of Directors, their actions reflect upon Nipissing University (the “University”) as a whole and impact the University community. Therefore, it is recognized under this Policy that student organizations are required to abide by all relevant University policies and procedures with the goal of supporting their valuable contributions to the University in an accountable manner.

Jurisdiction

The Student Organization Policy (SOP) establishes the relationship and responsibilities between the University and Recognized Student Organizations (as defined in Appendix 1).

Student organizations that adhere to the SOP will be considered by the University as Recognized Student Organizations in good standing. The University has ultimate authority in administering the privileges associated with being a Recognized Student Organization.

This SOP does not supersede nor alter any legal contractual relationship that exists between Nipissing University and the Nipissing University Student Union.

Contacts

This SOP is administered by the Office of the Assistant Vice-President, Students on behalf of the University. Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to avpstudents@nipissingu.ca or extension 4100.

Definitions

Definitions of terms found in this Policy are available in Appendix 1.

The Policy

1. Recognition of Student Organizations
 - 1.1. Status as a Recognized Student Organization (RSO) brings with it certain requirements and accountabilities.
 - 1.2. Accreditation under this Policy by the University does not imply endorsement of a particular group's beliefs or philosophies, nor the assumption of legal liability for the student group's activities. Student groups and their individual members remain responsible for their actions including any violations of University policies, or legal liabilities.
 - 1.3. Under the terms of this Policy, the University will not attempt to censor, control, or interfere with any RSO on the basis of philosophy, beliefs, interests or opinions expressed unless and until these lead to activities which are illegal or infringe on the rights and freedoms of University community members as outlined in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment Policy, or other relevant policies.
2. Approval of Recognized Student Organizations:
 - 2.1. Nipissing University recognizes one legally incorporated Primary Student Organization (PSO) representing student constituents: the Nipissing University Student Union (NUSU).
 - 2.1.1. All PSOs are responsible for:
 - Maintaining autonomous incorporated operations;
 - Upholding any and all binding agreements with the University;
 - Maintaining accountability in their own day-to-day operations and business management; and
 - Incurring any and all legal liabilities.
 - 2.2. To attain recognized status as a Primary Student Organization (PSO), Special Status Group (SSG) or Accredited Student Organization (ASO) under this Policy, any group of currently enrolled students must follow the procedure as outlined in Appendix 2.
 - 2.3. The University delegates oversight of an ASO to NUSU, only after it has been approved and recognized under this Policy.
 - 2.4. Once approved and recognized under this Policy, an ASO is required to abide by all relevant University policies and procedures, as well as all NUSU policies, procedures, and by-laws.
 - 2.5. ASO Executive positions must be held by Nipissing University students in good academic and financial standing with the University.
 - 2.6. ASO general membership for clubs must be comprised of a minimum of 50% currently enrolled Nipissing University students, and for a Society 100% enrolled Nipissing University students, to be, and remain, eligible to be recognized under this Policy.
 - 2.7. The University has the final determination on the approval of all new Recognized Student Organizations.

3. Responsibilities of Recognized Student Organization
 - 3.1. To maintain status as an RSO in good standing with the University, documentation must be submitted annually as outlined in Appendix 3.
 - 3.2. RSOs must follow standard financial practices designed to promote good financial management including:
 - Having an open review and approval process for budgets and financial statements;
 - Have procedures in place to protect them from fraudulent behaviour including dual signing authority and limitations on authority for spending without appropriate approval;
 - Maintain appropriate action with those students' fees applicable to the RSO.
Examples of inappropriate use of student fees may include but are not limited to:
 - An annual deficit with no explanation of unanticipated financial challenges and with no plan to remove the deficit;
 - An annual surplus with no explanation of unanticipated financial challenges, and with no plan to remove the surplus;
 - Failure to use the fees consistently with the original purpose as approved.
 - 3.3. RSOs are responsible for risk management and mitigation in all of their activities, events, campaigns, and initiatives.
 - 3.4. RSOs must adhere to all relevant University by-laws, policies, procedures and protocols including but not limited to the following:
 - Accessibility Policy
 - Alcohol and Cannabis Policy
 - Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities
 - Discrimination and Harassment Policy
 - Free Speech Policy
 - Privacy Policy
 - Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment Policy
 - Sexual Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy
 - 3.5. RSOs must adhere to all municipal, provincial, and federal laws and by-laws.
4. Benefits of Recognized Student Organization Status
 - 4.1. RSOs in good standing as determined by this Policy have access to several benefits and privileges including:
 - Use of the University's name and insignia subject to University regulations, policies, and brand standards;
 - Access to organizational email accounts for executive/staff members;
 - For an SSG, University organizational email accounts will be used;
 - For ASO who hold Society status, University organizational email accounts will be used.
 - Use of University space and facilities free of charge, subject to availability and booking protocols;
 - Receipt of student fees applicable to the RSO and in line with the requirements of the

Compulsory Ancillary Fee Committee and relevant legislation.

5. Non-Compliance
 - 5.1. RSOs that do not comply with the terms of this Policy may be deemed by the University, or NUSU in the case of ASOs, to not be in good standing or non-compliant.
 - 5.2. Any Nipissing University community member can report non-compliance of an RSO to the Office of the Assistant Vice-President, Students.
 - 5.3. The University reserves the right to investigate any RSO to determine if it has acted in a manner that is inconsistent with its constitution, or with the requirements of this Policy.
 - 5.4. Investigations will be completed in a fair and impartial manner as outlined in Appendix 4.
 - 5.5. If an investigation finds misconduct or another breach of RSO members, appropriate corrective outcomes will be applied according to NUSU and University policies as applicable, which may include removal from the RSO among other outcomes.
6. Appeals
 - 6.1. Any decision made by the University under this Policy is appealable to the next level of administrative responsibility as outlined in Appendix 5.
7. Policy Review
 - 7.1. This Policy is to be reviewed every 3 years or as needed by the Assistant Vice-President, Students of the University in consultation with the NUSU Executive Committee.
 - 7.2. Any changes or updates to this Policy are to be approved by Nipissing University's Board of Governor's.

Related Documents

[Nipissing University Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

[Nipissing University Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment](#)

[Nipissing University Sexual Violence and Sexual Misconduct Prevention, Support, and Response Policy for Students](#)

[Nipissing University Student Union Abuse Policy](#)

[Nipissing University Student Union Code of Conduct Policy](#)

[Nipissing University Student Union Sexual Violence Intervention and Response Policy](#)

[Nipissing University Student Union Groups Policy](#)

[Nipissing University Student Union Whistleblower Policy](#)

[Nipissing University Student Union Workplace Violence, Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#)

APPENDIX 1: Definitions

Fiscal Year: means May 1st to April 30th.

Non-Compliance: refers to the failure to abide by the terms of this SOP.

Recognized Student Organizations or RSO: Student Organizations that have been recognized by the University in accordance with this SOP.

Student Organizations: organizations whose members are currently enrolled students sharing a common goal or interest. Student Organizations include but are not limited to PSOs, ASOs, and SSGs defined as follows:

- *Primary Student Organizations (PSOs):* Student organizations (including those that are independently incorporated) that have clearly defined and countable fee-paying constituencies and have the authority, once recognized by the University, to recognize other groups and in accordance with relevant policies and guidelines.
- *Accredited Student Organization (ASO):* Clubs, Societies and Groups representing an area of interest, culture or a hobby, an academic program or academic area of interest. All ASOs are recognized by the University under the supervision of NUSU.
- *Special Status Groups (SSG):* These groups do not officially represent all students through a student government but rather provide the University community with a special and specific service. These groups have clear and direct accountability to the University, as overseen by a department at the University.

APPENDIX 2: Student Organization Approval Procedure

1. Primary Student Organizations
 - 1.1. Nipissing University recognizes one independently incorporated Primary Student Organization; the Nipissing University Student Union.
2. Accredited Student Organizations
 - 2.1. Student groups wishing to be recognized as Accredited Student Organizations under NUSU must submit documentation to NUSU in accordance with NUSU's Student Groups Policy.
 - 2.2. NUSU's Vice-President of Student Life will review all applications to ensure completeness and alignment with NUSU's mandates and values.
 - 2.3. Applications approved by NUSU's Vice-President of Student Life will be signed and submitted to the University's Assistant Vice-President, Students for final approval and recognition.
 - 2.4. Applications approved by the University will be signed by the Assistant Vice-President, Students and returned to NUSU's Vice-President of Student Life.
 - 2.5. It is NUSU's responsibility to communicate the status of the application to the student

group.

2.6. NUSU will retain its record of all ASO applications for 7 years after the dissolution of the group.

3. Special Status Groups

3.1. University departments wishing to create a recognized Special Status Group of students must submit documentation to the University's Assistant Vice-President, Students for review. This documentation must include:

- A proposed Terms of Reference for the group which at minimum must include;
 - Intended group membership;
 - Methods for determining selected members;
 - What will constitute quorum;
 - The frequency of meetings for the group;
 - The deliverables of the group; and
 - A dispute resolution plan.
- A proposed annual budget including:
 - Projected revenue/income from all sources; and
 - Projected expenses.
- A completed application form including:
 - A description of the group;
 - A clear description of how the group will assist the department in achieving its mandates;
 - Indication of which full-time, permanent role(s) at the University will oversee the activities of the student group;
 - A description of the proposed membership;
 - Proposed group name;
 - Proposed group email address; and
 - A list of officers for the group.

3.2. The Assistant Vice-President, Students will review all applications to ensure completeness and alignment with the University's mandates, values, and strategic plan.

3.3. Applications approved by the Assistant Vice-President, Students will be signed and a copy will be returned to the department applicant.

3.4. The Office of the Assistant Vice-President, Students will retain its record of all SSG applications for 7 years after the dissolution of the group.

APPENDIX 3: Annual Recognized Student Organization Renewal Procedure

1. NUSU as a PSO must abide by all current agreements with the University to remain eligible for recognition.
2. ASO Documentation Requirements:
 - 2.1. By September 30th of each year, the newly elected Executive teams of ASOs must submit documentation confirming the following information to NUSU:
 - Name of the student organization;
 - Names, titles, and email addresses of its officers;
 - Either an attestation that there are no changes to the group's constitution/guiding documents OR an updated version of these documents submitted with tracked changes;
 - A projected budget for the current fiscal year;
 - A signed attestation that the officers of the group have read and understood this policy; and
 - Any other recognition requirements as managed by NUSU.
 - 2.2. NUSU will review all submissions before October 31st each year and report any substantial changes to the Assistant Vice-President, Students of the University. Substantial changes include, but are not limited to:
 - All updates to constitutions or other guiding documents;
 - Financial statements demonstrating surplus or deficit;
 - Non-compliance in submission of these documents.
 - 2.3. NUSU will retain a record of all submissions for seven (7) years.
3. SSG Documentation Requirements:
 - 3.1. By September 30th of each year, SSGs must submit documentation confirming the following information to their affiliated department:
 - Name of the student organization;
 - Names, titles, and email addresses of its officers;
 - Either an attestation that there are no changes to the group's Terms of Reference OR an updated version of these documents submitted with tracked changes;
 - A copy of financial statements from the previous fiscal year;
 - A projected budget for the current fiscal year;
 - A signed attestation that the officers of the group have read and understood this policy; and

- Any other recognition requirements as managed by the individual University department.
- 3.2. The department will review all submissions before October 15th each year and report any substantial changes to the Assistant Vice-President, Students of the University. Substantial changes include, but are not limited to:
- All updates to constitutions or other guiding documents;
 - Financial statements demonstrating surplus or deficit;
 - Non-compliance in submission of these documents.
- 3.3. The department will retain a record of all submissions for seven (7) years.

APPENDIX 4: Non-Compliance Investigation Procedure

1. Non-compliance in Documentation Submission
 - 1.1. If a student group has not submitted their required documents as outlined in Appendix 2 or Appendix 3, ASOs will be contacted initially by NUSU and SSGs will be contacted by the relevant University department. Groups will be provided with ten (10) business days from notification to complete the required documentation.
 - 1.2. Any group that has not completed the required documentation in the allotted time will be addressed in accordance with Section 5.5 of the SOP.
2. Non-compliance of Responsibilities Outlined in this Policy
 - 2.1. All complaints or reasonable suspicion of non-compliance with RSO responsibilities and obligations under this Policy will be investigated.
 - 2.1.1. Should a PSO be suspected of non-compliance, the University will investigate.
 - 2.1.2. Should a SSG be suspected of non-compliance, the University will investigate.
 - 2.1.3. Should an ASO be suspected of non-compliance, NUSU and the University will hold joint responsibility for investigation under their respective policies.
 - 2.1.4. There may be situations where it is necessary to retain an external investigator.
 - 2.2. In cases where a complaint is under the jurisdiction of another policy (e.g. Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment Policy, or others) it will be managed through the procedures associated with the relevant policy.
 - 2.3. Investigation
 - 2.3.1. Once aware of suspected non-compliance, the relevant Investigator(s) (Section 2.1. of this appendix), will have ten (10) business days to notify the RSO in writing that a concern has been raised and a meeting is required.

- 2.3.2. The RSO will then have fifteen (15) days from notification to meet with the Investigator(s). If no contact is made, and/or no meeting is attended, the Investigator(s) can dispose of the concern *in absentia* including possible sanctions under Section 5.5. of the SOP.
- 2.3.3. After the initial meeting of the Investigator(s) and RSO, if the matter is unresolved and requires further investigation all relevant parties will be interviewed, and all relevant documentation will be provided to the Investigator(s), within thirty (30) business days of the initial meeting.
- 2.3.4. The Investigator(s) will consider all relevant information and render a decision in writing to the RSO within ten (10) business days of completing the information gathering in 2.3.3. above.

APPENDIX 5: Appeals Procedure

1. ASO Investigations handled by NUSU will follow NUSU's Student Group Policy appeals processes.
2. Investigations handled by the Assistant Vice-President, Students (or designate) on behalf of the University will be appealed to the Non-Academic Student Conduct Appeals Committee.
 - 2.1. Individual's will have fifteen (15) business days from the notification of investigation outcomes to submit a request for appeal to the Committee Chair at nascac@nipissingu.ca.
 - 2.2. A request for appeal must articulate the grounds the appeal is being made on as well as the rationale for what the violation of those grounds has been.
 - 2.3. Appeals can be filed on the following grounds:
 - 2.3.1. New Information: Significant new information has emerged that was not reasonably available at the time of the original decision, and that could have substantially affected the outcome.
 - 2.3.2. Procedural Violation: A material violation of university policy or procedure occurred during the original investigation or decision-making process, and such a violation could have meaningfully impacted the outcome.