

Policy Name:	Recognition of Student Groups
Originating/Responsible Department:	Vice-President (Students and Enrolment)
Approval Authority:	Senior Management Committee
Date of Original Policy:	March 2008
Last Updated:	November 2025
Mandatory Revision Date:	November 2030
Contact:	Director, Student Life

Policy Statement:

Carleton University supports the right of students to freely express ideas, organize responsibly, and participate in campus life without discrimination, in accordance with the laws and university policies. Student groups seeking accreditation must be open to all students and comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the University Human Rights Policy. Accreditation is granted on an annual basis and may be revoked if a group lacks transparency, violates laws or policies, or disrupts activity or service of the university including its teaching, learning, work and living environments or its members.

Purpose:

Carleton University values student-led voluntary groups as an important part of university life that enriches the intellectual, cultural and social development of our students. However, only accredited student groups are granted the privilege to organize and host activities on campus for the benefit of their members.

Scope:

This policy establishes the principles for recognizing of student groups at Carleton University, defines what constitutes an accredited student groups, and outlines the process, separate from Carleton Undergraduate Student Association (CUSA) Club and Society Certification program, through which groups can be formally accredited by Carleton University. The Graduate Students' Association (GSA) does not formally accredit student groups. By obtaining accreditation, all student groups agree to uphold certain responsibilities, must comply with all applicable University policies, rules and regulations in order to obtain and maintain the privileges, as described in this policy.

This policy does not supersede or alter any legal or contractual relationship that exists between the university and its student associations: the CUSA, the GSA and the Rideau River Residence Association.

Procedure:

1. Definitions

Carleton Undergraduate Students' Association (CUSA) is the organization which includes all undergraduate students registered at Carleton University.

Graduate Students' Association (GSA) is the organization which includes all graduate students registered at Carleton University.

The Rideau River Residence Association (RRRA) is the student organization which includes all students living in the campus student residences.

Carleton Academic Student Government (CASG) is composed of student representatives from every academic department on campus. The members of CASG serve on Departmental Councils, Faculty Boards, and the University Senate. The CASG's mandate and formal status as a university entity is granted by the University Senate.

Clubs and Societies are student groups that have been certified by the CUSA Clubs and Societies Board through their policies and procedures. All student groups or collectives are entitled to apply for certification as a Club or Society unless otherwise indicated by CUSA. Student groups cannot be accredited both under the process outlined in this policy and certified under the CUSA process. Only one process can be utilized. CUSA is responsible for all clubs or societies that they certify. Clubs and Societies are subject to all applicable university policies.

Faculty/Departmental Academic Societies student groups affiliated with and supported by academic departments and Faculties. Their activities focus on the relevant academic disciplines. Such groups are approved by their respective Faculties and must follow this policy, the regulations of their Faculty, and all applicable University policies. Academic Societies certified by CUSA are also subject to the Faculty regulations and University policies. Academic Societies cannot hold accreditation under this policy and certified under the CUSA process at the same time, only one recognition process may be used. All Academic Societies must comply with all applicable University policies regardless of their recognition process.

A Student Group refers to all accredited campus groups including certified CUSA clubs and approved academic societies.

Accrediting Bodies for the purposes of this policy are:

- a. Faculty Deans for Academic Societies;
- b. The Student Group Accreditation Committee for other groups.

Event Risk Management Committee is a group of university officials responsible for managing the university's online risk assessment process and for approving student events on and off campus.

2. General Procedure

2.1 Student groups who wish to be accredited through the University **must complete and submit the following items to the Student Experience Office:**

- a. A completed and signed Accreditation of Student Groups Application Form;
- b. A copy of their current constitution, bylaws, policies and rules; and
- c. Submit a minimum of ten (10) student signatures along with their printed names and student numbers of students who are supportive of the group being accredited.

- d. In addition, student groups seeking accreditation through the Student Experience Office must clearly demonstrate their rationale for not seeking accreditation through the Carleton University Student Association (CUSA).

Further information can be found on the Student Experience Office website (<https://carleton.ca/seo/student-group-accreditation>).

- 2.2 Student groups that wish to become accredited Academic Societies under this policy are to follow the procedures outlined in the Accreditation of Student Groups Application Form.
- 2.3 Student groups meeting the requirements of this policy may be granted recognition by the Director, Student Life, on behalf of the University the year in which application is made. (For the purposes of this policy the year will be considered from October 1 to September 30 of the next academic year). Normally, recognition will be renewed automatically year-to-year at the request of the executive of the student group by submitting the online Accreditation Renewal Form no later than September 30. If a group has proposed constitutional or bylaw changes, the amended constitution or bylaws must be submitted for consideration during the renewal process. Any other substantial changes to the nature of the group should be submitted with the Accreditation Renewal Form no later than September 30.

3. Student Group Accreditation Committee

- 3.1 The Student Group Accreditation Committee is responsible for the accreditation of those student groups that are not otherwise certified by CUSA.
- 3.2 The Committee is appointed by the Director, Student Life and is responsible to the Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs and Student Life). A quorum for any decision is a minimum of three members of the committee.

The membership is:

- a. Director, Student Life (Chair);
 - b. Student Life Officer, Student Experience Office
 - c. EDI Student Engagement & Experience Coordinator, Student Experience Office
 - d. Manager, Student Conduct and Harm Reduction
- 3.3 The Committee will meet annually to review and discuss all new accreditation submissions.
 - 3.4 Where an Accredited Student Group or Academic Society is handling significant funds (more than \$1,000), it may be required to submit an audited financial statement to the Student Experience Office or the applicable Faculty Dean. Requests for financial information will be at the discretion of the Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs and Student Life) or the applicable Faculty Dean.
 - 3.5 Where an Accredited Student Group or Academic Society is providing goods or services for which a charge is being levied, the Group or Society will be required to indicate in all of its advertising, contractual and other material that the university does not endorse the Group or Society's activities nor does it assume responsibility or legal liability in connection with the goods and services

provided. No Student Group or Academic Society may use the University's official branding without approval as identified in related policies.

4. Complaints

- 4.1 The University reserves the right to investigate accredited Student Groups or Academic Societies that have acted in a manner that is inconsistent with its constitution, bylaws, or with the requirements of this or any other University policies and laws.
- 4.2 In the event a university investigation finds misconduct or other breach, sanctions may be applied by the Office of Student Affairs and the Student Experience Office against the Group or Society in question including but not limited to:
- a. Privileges outlined in this policy being suspended or withdrawn; and/or
 - b. The group's status as a university accredited Student Group or Society may be suspended or terminated.
- 4.3 If an Accredited Student Group's or Academic Society's status is suspended or terminated, an application for renewal of accreditation may be made at any time after September 30 in the following academic year.
- 4.4 In addition to group sanctions, individual sanctions may be applied under other University policies (e.g., the Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy) where individual group members have transgressed aspects of these policies.
- 4.5 Accredited Student Groups or Academic Societies seeking to appeal the decision to deny, suspend or withdraw their privileges or status as an accredited group may appeal in writing within 14 calendar days following their notification of a sanction to the Carleton University Resolution Board (CURB). Appeals to CURB must be sent to the Associate Vice-President, Student Affairs.

5. Accreditation of Student Groups

- 5.1 Carleton University affirms the rights of its members to communicate, debate, organize, and engage in peaceful activities, provided such activities comply with applicable law and University policy. These rights include freedom from discrimination on any grounds protected under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Membership in accredited Student Groups shall be open to all students of the Carleton community without restriction based on these protected grounds.
- 5.2 The accreditation period will be for the duration of one (1) year starting October 1 until September 30 of the following year. Student groups must renew their accreditation status annually, during the month of September.
- 5.3 The university will not accredit any group that:
- a. Operates in secrecy or is insufficiently transparent (including but not limited to the following areas: finances, budgets, constitutions, operations); or
 - b. Fails to comply with the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, Federal and Provincial laws, and any University Policies, Rules and Regulations; or
 - c. Is presently certified as a CUSA Club or Society; or

- d. Interferes with the operations, learning, living and work environment of the University and/or the health, wellbeing, security, and safety of the community in the University's sole discretion.

5.4 Each accrediting body has the authority to remove accreditation of groups that fall under their purview when this action is warranted by a breach of this policy, any applicable university policy and/or law.

5.5 Fees for accredited clubs and societies can only be assessed on students, if they follow procedures and policies set out by the University and comply with all relevant provincial legislation, directives, policies and guidelines.

6. Rights, Responsibilities and Prohibitions

6.1 Granting accreditation or certification to a student group by the University or CUSA, the group is accorded the following benefits:

- a. Use of the University's name subject to University regulations and policies;
- b. Ability to book space subject to the University's Space Booking Request process and related policies;
- c. Ability to hold events in accordance with University policies; and
- d. Use of campus facilities for the solicitation of memberships subject to University policies.

6.2 Student Groups are required to comply with the University's Free Speech Policy.

6.3 Accreditation under this policy as a Student Group or Academic Society by the University implies neither endorsement of a particular group's beliefs or philosophy, nor the assumption of legal liability for the student group's activities. Student groups and their individual members shall remain fully responsible for their actions including any violation of policies and/or legal liability.

6.4 If an unaccredited group or individual represent themselves as an official Carleton University student group, they may be subject to sanctions under the Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy and/or any other university policy. In addition, this may impact their application to be accredited under this Policy.

6.5 Accredited Student Groups or Academic Societies may not engage in activities that are essentially commercial in nature. This is not intended to preclude the collection of reasonable membership fees to cover the expenses of the group, or of charges for specific activities, programs or events, or to prohibit these groups from engaging in legitimate forms of fundraising as per university policies.

However, these groups cannot:

- a. Engage in on-campus commercial operations (including fundraising activities) which without the prior written approval of the Commercial Activity Review Committee
- b. Provide services and goods at a profit when that profit is used for other than those of the group; or
- c. Pay salaries to some, any or all of its officers or members of any sort.

- 6.6 The University reserves the right not to extend and/or revoke accreditation or the privileges offered to accredited Student Groups and/or Academic Societies where groups engage in inappropriate conduct including but not limited to:
- a. operating on the basis of membership exclusivity;
 - b. have or will violate university policies or regulations;
 - c. interfere with the operations, learning, living and work environment of the University and/or the health, wellbeing, security and safety of the community;
 - d. misrepresents their role;
 - e. operates beyond the terms of the approved mandate;
 - f. organizes events that contravene university policies; or
 - g. organizes special events that are not approved by the Risk Management Committee.
- 6.7 Any and all posting practiced by an Accredited Student Group or Academic Society shall be conducted in accordance with the University's Posting Policy. Failure to abide by the policy may impact accreditation under this Policy.
- 6.8 University accredited Student Groups and Academic Societies, or CUSA clubs must abide by the University's Risk Management Policy. Risk Management forms must be completed and submitted fourteen (14) days in advance of any event, whether on or off campus or virtual. Failure to submit a Risk Management form may result in any space booking requests being delayed or cancelled and may impact accreditation under this Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Student Experience Office

Responsible for receiving and evaluating all applications submitted by student groups seeking accreditation through this policy. Upon approval, the office provides ongoing oversight and support for the group throughout the accreditation period.

Department of Risk Management

Offers guidance and recommendations regarding student groups applying for recognition. Once approved, the department ensures compliance with the University's Risk Management Policy and monitors adherence to established terms and conditions.

Event Risk Management Committee

A designated panel of university officials tasked with overseeing the online risk assessment process and approving student-led events held both on and off campus.

Faculty Advisors

Academic societies applying for accreditation must obtain authorization from a faculty or staff advisor prior to submitting their application for consideration under this policy.

Contacts:

Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs)
Director, Student Life

Links to related Policies:

Alcohol and Cannabis Policy
Brand Identity Policy
Commercial and Supplemental Revenue Generating Activities Policy
Conference Service Space Booking and Use Policy
Free Speech Policy
Galleria Space Booking Policy
Human Rights Policy
Posting Policy
Risk Management Policy
Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy