# Policy on the Recognition of Student Groups

# #6.3

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| **CATEGORY: Student Affairs** | **APPROVAL DATE: October 6, 2026** |
| **EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2026** | **REVIEW: Every three (3) years** |
| **APPROVAL: Executive Leadership Team** | |
| **SPONSOR:** Vice-Provost, Students & International | |
| **CONTACT:** Director, Office of Student Affairs | |
| **PREVIOUS VERSIONS:**<br>Approved: Executive Team: May 2024<br>Modified/approved: Vice-Provost, Students & International, April 2018<br>Modified/approved: Associate Vice-President, Students, August 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015; Vice-Provost, Students & International 2018, 2019.<br>Approved: Academic Council: May 2006 | |

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**
OCAD University wishes to acknowledge the following institutions, whose related policies and guidelines provided background in the development of this policy: University of Toronto, Sheridan College.

**STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

Organizations, clubs, affinity groups and associations formed by students of OCAD University ("Student Groups") are a traditional part of life on and off campus. Student Groups formed for the purpose of pursuing social, cultural and other interests of students of the University, and activities and events held by Student Groups for the benefit of their members, contribute in significant ways to the University's intellectual, political, social and cultural diversity.

In its interactions with Student Groups, the University is guided by a commitment to respect Student Groups that are organized for lawful purposes and to respect the privilege of those Student Groups to move about the University, to use its facilities in a reasonable way, to distribute on campus, in a responsible way, published material provided that the material is not contrary to University policies or procedures, to hold meetings, to debate, and to engage in peaceful demonstrations. The University is also guided by a commitment to the right of all Members of the University Community to communicate and to discuss and explore all ideas, as well as to freedom of expression and freedom from discrimination. Members of the University Community include students, faculty, post-doctoral fellows, contractors and employees of the University.

Freedom of expression is a principle which is essential to the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of art and design. This principle requires the ability to question and debate many subjects — even the most controversial — while promoting freedom of expression. The

University also has a concurrent responsibility to ensure that all Members of the University Community are able to pursue their work and studies in an inclusive and respectful working and learning environment, free from harassment, discrimination and bullying.

Therefore, the University does not condone discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, invasion of personal privacy, threatening or violent conduct, or offences against University property.

While Student Groups are independent and autonomous from the University, their actions reflect upon the University community as a whole. As such, recognition as a Student Group is a privilege based on abiding by all University policies and procedures. It follows that this privilege can be withdrawn if University policies and procedures are not followed, or if the Student Group fails to abide by the responsibilities outlined in this Policy or any other University policy or procedure.

In compliance with the *Respectful Work and Learning Environment Policy* under the terms of this policy, the University will not attempt to censor, control or interfere with any student group on the basis of its philosophy, beliefs, interests or opinions expressed unless and until these lead to activities which are illegal or which infringe the rights and freedoms already mentioned. By the same token, recognition as a Student Group by the University implies neither endorsement of a particular Student Group's beliefs or philosophy, nor the assumption of legal liability for the Student Group's activities. It assumes only that the University has a responsibility to inform itself of Student Groups which have been formed, and to deny or withdraw recognition of Student Groups for the reasons set out in this Policy.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the terms for eligibility for recognized Student Group status, to identify Student Groups' privileges and responsibilities, and to outline the procedures for recognition, approval or denial of recognized Student Group status, complaints against Student Groups, appeals of decisions regarding status, and reporting of administrative decisions.

## APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Policy applies to Members of the University Community.

## POLICY

### 1. Recognition requirements and eligibility

In order to be recognized as a Student Group at the University, the Group must:

(a) Hold activities or events, or be mandated to exist primarily for the purpose of bettering the experiences of OCAD University students or the Group's members. Student Groups are encouraged to hold activities and events that are open to all students of the University.

(b) Contribute to the educational, social, or cultural values of OCAD University.

(c) Have a membership comprised of at least 80% currently registered OCAD University students.

(d) Contribute to establishing and maintaining a respectful work and learning environment by demonstrating respect for others and by not condoning and/or engaging in conduct that is inconsistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code, this Policy or any other University policies or procedures.

(e) Comply with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Personal Privacy Act (Ontario), respecting the collection, use, disclosure, retention or storage of personal information.

(f) Not be essentially commercial in nature, that is, provide services or goods at a profit when the profit is used for purposes other than the activities of the Student Group.

Recognized Student Group status will not be granted for:

(a) One-time events or activities. Student Groups must have on-going activities and student members.

(b) Events or projects that are primarily related to a course or an instructor. These students should be referred to the appropriate Faculty office for support.

(c) Events or projects primarily commercial in nature.

## 2. Procedure to apply for recognized Student Group status

To become officially registered as an OCAD University-recognized Student Group, the proposed Student Group must:

(a) Submit an application for recognized Student Group status to the Office of Student Affairs. The application must state the Group's name, purpose, and the manner by which it proposes to carry out its activities.

The application must include a list of members and officers, with a minimum of five (5) currently registered students, indicate position (where applicable), and include up-to-date contact information (OCAD U email address and student numbers).

Group leaders (officers) must be currently registered students for the duration of their leadership.

Applications are accepted year-round. Student Group leader(s) applying for status for the beginning of the Fall academic term are recommended to submit an application by July 31 to be recognized in advance of the start of classes and participate in Orientation and Welcome events.

(b) Student Groups must declare any external affiliations, partnerships, or relationships (directly or indirectly) with organizations, including but not limited to

corporate, non-profit, political, or advocacy organizations.

Student Groups must disclose the nature of the affiliation, including any financial, material, or other benefits provided to or received by the Student Group, and any expectations or obligations arising from the relationship.

The University may request additional information to clarify the nature of an affiliation and assess alignment with University policies, values, and applicable laws.

(c) Where an external affiliation presents operational, legal, or reputational considerations, the University may impose reasonable conditions on a Student Group's activities, including additional disclosure requirements, limitations on the use of University resources, or clarification of the relationship in communications and promotional materials.

(d) Renewals must include confirmation of any existing external affiliations and disclosure of any new or changed affiliations. Student Groups have an ongoing obligation to promptly inform the University of material changes to external relationships that may affect their activities or compliance with University policies.

Applications for recognized Student Group status are reviewed by a committee comprised of the Director of the Office of Student Affairs, Campus Life staff, and a representative of the OCAD Student Union. Approval or denial of recognized Student Group status will be communicated in writing to the Student Group leader(s) who applied.

### 3. Denial of recognized Student Group status

The Committee may deny an application for recognized Student Group status, under the following conditions:

(a) The Student Group fails to meet the recognition requirements and eligibility (see 1. Recognition requirements and eligibility).

(b) The Student Group's stated purpose or the manner by which it proposes to carry out its activities would, by their very nature, be contrary to establishing and maintaining a respectful work and learning environment consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code and University policies or procedures.

(c) The Student Group has previously had its recognized status withdrawn and has not provided with the application a plan detailing how the Group intends to achieve the specific conditions or required actions identified in the withdrawal decision (see 9. Withdrawal of status).

The Student Group leader(s) who applied for status will receive the decision within ten (10) working days from the Office of Student Affairs, in writing, with specific conditions that must be met to achieve approval.

### 4. Recognized Student Group privileges

Student Groups that have been approved for recognized status are eligible to:

(a) Free use of bookable on-campus spaces and equipment, subject to availability, apart from shops, studios and computer labs.
    - OCAD University recognizes the value that studio practice centred student Groups bring to advancing learning and professional practice. These types of Groups are welcomed and encouraged. However, Student Groups centred around a studio practice (for example, ceramics, drawing and painting, fabrication, foundry, wood working) must not assume that shops and studios can be used for their Group's activities. These facilities, resources and equipment are prioritized for curricular needs. Studio practice centred Groups may enquire about accessing studio spaces for their activities by discussing their needs in advance with the Studio Management office and related technician(s).
    - Any access to shops or studios for Student Group activities must be approved in writing by the Studio Management office.

(b) Student Group and events marketing and promotion support, facilitated by the Office of Student Affairs.

(c) Apply for Student Group funding programs offered by the University or the OCAD Student Union.

(d) Participate in University community events including Orientation and welcome activities, OCAD Student Union sponsored events, and other events identified as appropriate.

(e) Participate by invitation in advisory councils, committees or working groups that pertain to student life, leadership and Student Group activities by appointing leader participants or delegate members.

(f) Access to special programs and services developed to support the success of Student Groups.

**5. Student Group obligations and requirements**

(a) (Group Leaders) Attend and complete required trainings, as prescribed by the University, including training related to accessibility, inclusion, respectful conduct, and the prevention of racism, hate, discrimination, and harassment.

(b) (Group Leaders) Attend or send a Group representative/delegate to participate in meetings or workshops organized by the Office of Student Affairs or OCAD Student Union for recognized Student Groups.

(c) Contribute to establishing and maintaining a respectful work and learning environment by demonstrating respect for others and by not condoning and/or engaging in conduct that is inconsistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code, this Policy or any other University policies or procedures, with particular attention to:
    - OCAD University Freedom of Expression Statement and Policies
    - Respectful Work & Learning Environment Policy

- Non-Academic Misconduct Policy
- Response to Violent and Threatening Behaviour Policy
- Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Events & Beverage Service Policy
- Any policies, guidelines or regulations governing the use of equipment or University facilities, as applicable.

These responsibilities apply to all students of the University engaged in University-related activities. University-related activities include events (authorized and non-authorized) that occur on University premises or on non-University premises, including social media, where there is a clear nexus to the work or learning environment.

(d) Be aware of and operate in compliance with all municipal, provincial and federal bylaws, laws, regulations, standards and rules.

(e) Maintain updated leadership/officer information with the University by submitting a Change of Leadership form within ten (10) working days of a change in Student Group leaders.

(f) Renew annually. To renew Student Group status, Group leader(s) must confirm their intention to renew and provide updated information as required by the University.

As part of renewal, Student Groups will be required to confirm that they continue to meet the requirements of this Policy, including eligibility, leadership, and compliance with University policies and applicable laws.

The University may request additional information or clarification where concerns are identified, or where a Student Group's activities present elevated risk or require further review.

Failure to complete the renewal process, provide required confirmations, or respond to follow-up inquiries may result in a lapse or loss of recognized Student Group status. Student Groups that do not renew annually will be declared inactive.

Annual renewal is required before April 30 (the end of the Winter term), after which date Student Group status expires. Student Groups that wish to hold summer programming must apply for recognized status at least ten (10) working days prior to accessing privileges.

(g) In planning events and activities, Student Groups are expected to consider accessibility, inclusion, and participant well-being, including taking reasonable steps to:
- identify and reduce potential barriers to participation;
- provide clear and accurate information about the nature of the activity; and
- support a respectful and welcoming environment for all participants.

Recognized Student Groups may collaborate with external organizations, speakers, partners, or affiliates in support of their activities. However, the

privileges associated with recognized status are intended to support student-led activities and may not be used primarily to facilitate, sponsor, or provide access to University resources for the activities of an external organization. Student Groups are expected to maintain meaningful involvement in the planning, organization, and delivery of activities conducted under their name.

## 6. Event planning and risk mitigation

Recognized Student Groups are responsible for planning and conducting activities in a manner that supports the safety, accessibility, and well-being of participants and the broader University community.

Depending on the size, nature, or complexity of an event or activity, Student Groups may be required to provide advance notification or additional information to the University. This may include, but is not limited to, activities involving large attendance, public participation, external speakers or collaborators, alcohol service, off-campus locations, or other safety, reputational, or operational considerations.

In such cases, Student Groups may be required to identify a responsible event organizer and submit a brief event plan outlining key details and any measures in place to support a safe and respectful environment.

The University may review submitted information and impose reasonable conditions on an event or activity to ensure compliance with University policies, applicable laws, and the effective management of risk. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in restrictions on the activity or impact a Student Group's recognized status.

In assessing event-related risks, the University may consider factors related to participant safety, accessibility, inclusion, potential discriminatory impacts, and the risk of racism, hate, harassment, or intimidation.

## 7. Communications requirement

Recognized Student Groups are required to maintain an email account and respond to inquiries from the University within ten (10) working days. Should a recognized Student Group or their leader(s) fail to respond to the University's inquiries, a Complaint may be submitted (see 10. Complaints about Student Groups), which may lead to a suspension of recognized Student Group status.

## 8. Alcohol at events

All events on campus that include alcohol, including those organized by recognized Student Groups, must comply with the University's Events & Beverage Service Policy and all applicable municipal, provincial, and federal laws and regulations governing the sale, service, possession, and consumption of alcohol, including the Liquor Licence and Control Act, 2019 and related regulations. Recognized Student Groups are responsible for ensuring that all required permits, approvals, and conditions are obtained and maintained, including any Special Occasion Permit required by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.

## 9. Student Group name and visual identity

Recognized Student Groups may create their own graphical identity system (e.g. logo, systems of typography, identity guidelines, etc.). Recognized Student Groups are not permitted to use the OCAD University visual identity system, including the logo.

Recognized Student Groups may use the name, “OCAD,” “OCAD U,” or “…at OCAD University” as part of their Group naming convention.

Permission to use of the OCAD University visual identity, including the logo, may be granted to a Student Group by the Office of Student Affairs, for some one-time use scenarios, such as to recognize an official partnership with the University. Permission must be provided in writing, detailing the specific usage parameters.

## 10. Independent organizations

Recognized Student Groups are understood as independent and autonomous organizations from the University and are responsible for managing their own affairs.

Recognized Student Groups are strongly encouraged to establish and maintain governance documents that support the effective and sustainable operation of the Group, such as a constitution, bylaws, terms of reference, or other written procedures.

Recognized Student Groups are strongly encouraged to establish internal complaint mechanisms for addressing member disputes, and communicate the procedures to their members.

Recognized Student Groups are not authorized to enter contractual obligations in the name of the University, nor are they units or agents of the University, and are not permitted to represent themselves as such.

Events and activities conducted by recognized Student Groups are not considered University-sponsored or endorsed under this Policy unless the Office of Student Affairs confirms University sponsorship in writing.

## 11. Complaints about Student Groups

The University will not attempt to monitor or review the activities of a Student Group recognized under this Policy in the normal course of events, unless a complaint is received.

Notwithstanding the above, the University may take immediate action, including the temporary suspension of a Student Group’s activities or privileges, where it reasonably determines that such action is necessary to address urgent safety concerns.

The Student Group’s leader(s) will be informed of the reasons for such action and provided an opportunity to respond. Further review will be conducted as appropriate in accordance with this Policy.

Concerns regarding racism, hate, discrimination, harassment, or other conduct involving a Student Group that are received by any University office may be referred to the appropriate University process or decision-maker for review and response.

Complaints regarding a Student Group acting in a manner that is inconsistent with the requirements of this or any other University policy or procedure are encouraged first to be resolved through informal resolution processes, such as meeting with the Student Group's leader(s) to discuss and remedy the issue. Where informal resolution is not appropriate, or does not resolve the concern, students are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office.

Concerns regarding a Student Group may be brought to the University's attention orally or in writing. Anonymous concerns may be received and considered by the University; however, the University's ability to investigate or take action may be limited by the information available. Individuals seeking information, advice, referral, or assistance are not required to submit a formal complaint.

The Dean of Students Office will provide information about the resolution options available under this Policy and related University policies and procedures, including the possible outcomes and implications of each process, and will assist individuals in identifying the most appropriate pathway for addressing their concern. A formal complaint under this Policy may be submitted to the Office of Student Affairs.

Complaints may be submitted by OCAD University students, employees, and the OCAD Student Union.

A complainant must normally file a complaint within 4 months of the date of the incident. Complaints must be filed with the Office of Student Affairs. The University recognizes that there may be extenuating circumstances that may prevent a complaint from being made within this time period and a complaint outside this timeframe may be permitted to proceed at the discretion of the Office of Student Affairs.

Complaints must include sufficient information to describe the concern and its connection to the Student Group's activities.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the University will conduct a preliminary review to determine whether the matter falls within the scope of this Policy, or other University policies, and whether further inquiry is required. Where appropriate, the University may gather additional information, seek clarification from the complainant and/or the Student Group, or determine that no further action is warranted.

The University may also initiate a review or complaint based on information received from any source.

In assessing complaints against Student Groups, the University may consider whether conduct by individual members reflects a pattern, is endorsed by the Student Group leadership, occurs in the context of the Student Group's activities, or is reasonably connected to the Group's operations or identity.

Complaints against individuals must be made in accordance with the procedures outlined in the appropriate University policy, including, but not limited to, the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy,

the Respectful Work & Learning Environment Policy, and the Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

## 12. Investigation of complaints and suspension of status

Where further review is warranted, the matter will be referred to the Vice-Provost, Students & International (or designate), who may initiate an investigation. The Vice-Provost, Students & International may suspend recognized Student Group status and its privileges during an investigation.

The Student Group's leader(s) will be informed of the nature of the concern and provided an opportunity to respond. The University will conduct reviews and investigations in a timely manner, taking into account the complexity of the matter and the requirements of any applicable University policy, procedure, or legislative requirement. Where a complaint is addressed under another University policy or process that establishes specific timelines, those timelines shall apply.

The decision to suspend recognized Student Group status during the period of investigation will be provided in writing to the Student Group's leader(s). The Student Group's leader(s) may be required to provide a list of members as part of an investigation. The Student Group's leader(s) and members are required to participate in an investigation.

Following the review and investigation of a complaint, the University may take and apply corrective actions as appropriate to the nature and severity of the concern. Outcomes are intended to be educational, corrective, and proportionate, and may be applied progressively.

Corrective actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Providing guidance, recommendations, or required corrective actions to Student Group leaders;
- Requiring participation in training, workshops, or meetings with University staff;
- Placing conditions on the Student Group's activities or events;
- Imposing restrictions on access to specific privileges, space bookings, or participation in University events;
- Placing the Student Group on probationary status for a defined period;
- Temporarily suspending recognized Student Group status; or
- Withdrawing recognized Student Group status.

In determining appropriate outcomes, the University may consider factors such as the nature and impact of the conduct, whether it reflects a pattern of behaviour, the Student Group's response to the concern, and any prior incidents or interventions.

## 13. Withdrawal of status

If a complaint is substantiated, in addition to any other sanctions applied pursuant to other University policies, recognized Student Group status may be withdrawn. The Student Group's leader(s) will be provided with the decision in writing within ten (10) working days of the decision. The decision will include the specific conditions, required actions and timeline that

must be met for the Group's recognized Student Group status and associated privileges to be reinstated.

If a Student Group's status is withdrawn and the outlined conditions and action timelines required for reinstatement are not met, the Student Group may reapply for recognition status any time after the Student Group renewal deadline of April 30. As part of the Student Group's application, the leader(s) will be required to provide, in writing, a plan for how the Student Group will achieve the specific conditions and required actions previously outlined in the decision to withdraw status.

### 14. Appealing a decision to withdraw status

A Student Group's leader(s) may appeal a decision to withdraw recognized Student Group status by submitting an appeal in writing to the Office of Student Affairs within ten (10) working days of a written decision to withdraw status. Appeals submitted after this time will not be heard.

Appeals must be based on one or more of the following grounds:

- a procedural error that may have affected the outcome;
- new information that was not reasonably available at the time of the original decision; or
- the outcome being unreasonable or disproportionate in the circumstances.

The University will conduct a preliminary review of the appeal to determine whether it meets the grounds for appeal and falls within the scope of this Policy. Appeals that do not meet these criteria may not proceed to a hearing.

If the request meets the grounds for appeal, an Appeal Committee will be convened by the Office of Student Affairs. The Committee will be comprised of a member of the OCAD Student Union Executive, a faculty member and the Vice-President, Academic & Provost. The Appeal Committee will act independently in its review of the matter.

An appeal hearing will be promptly set by the Office of Student Affairs with the complainant and the Student Group's leader(s) being notified of the date and location of the meeting with sufficient time for preparation.

The format and procedures of the appeal will be established to ensure a fair and timely process. Both the complainant and the Student Group's leader(s) will be provided with relevant information and an opportunity to participate. Legal counsel may not represent organizations at an appeal hearing.

The Appeal Committee will review the decision based on the grounds of appeal and will not rehear the matter in full, except where necessary to assess new information or procedural fairness.

The decision of the Appeal Committee is final.

The Office of Student Affairs will forward the Appeal Committee's decision in writing to the Student Group's leader(s) within fifteen (15) working days of the receipt of their decision.

## 15. Administration of this Policy

The Office of Student Affairs is responsible for the review and implementation of this Policy. This Policy must be reviewed every three (3) years. Amendments may be made as needed with the approval of the Vice-Provost, Students & International.

The OCAD Student Union maintains the right to administer their own internal policies and procedures with respect to recognized Student Groups at the University.

The Office of Student Affairs publishes a list of currently recognized Student Groups that is updated every thirty (30) days, and shares the list with departments across the University that support Student Group activities, including but not limited to, Safety, Security & Campus Operations, Facilities and Studio Services, IT Services and AV Loans, Marketing & Communications, the Vice-Provost, Students & International, and office of the Vice-President, Academic & Provost.

A copy of this Policy will be kept on file at all times in the offices of Student Affairs, OCAD Student Union, and Office of the Vice-Provost, Students & International.