**UMDS Society Policy 2025/26**

1. Introduction

The aim of this policy is to ensure The University of Manchester Drama Society (UMDS) operates as a fair and safe space for students to participate in drama while providing a level of transparency between the operating committee and members and prospective members.

This policy outlines our standards and approach to:

* Wellbeing
* Accessibility
* Inclusion
* Programming
* Recruitment (defined in section 6)
* Casting
* Finance
* Membership
* Complaints
1. Wellbeing
We want UMDS to feel like a creative home. Your wellbeing matters as much as your talent. Whether you're directing, acting, teching or watching – your experience should be safe and enjoyable.

UMDS strives to be a safe environment for any and all students who wish to get involved. We are committed to supporting our members' wellbeing during the course of their involvement with UMDS.

The majority of UMDS members are above eighteen years of age so as a society we do not hold a safeguarding policy or have an appointed Designated Safeguarding Lead. However, our **Accessibility & Wellbeing Rep** is responsible for maintaining our wellbeing standards among the committee and wider society; we believe that looking out for each other and supporting our fellow members is crucial in all that we do.

When working on shows throughout the seasons we program, each show has an appointed **show rep** who is a member of the committee responsible for overseeing that show. Whilst also acting in an administrative capacity the show rep’s main responsibility is to offer support to members of the cast and creative team. They do this by ensuring hours of rehearsal are not too intensive, any physical injuries or disabilities are being taken into consideration, emotional state and tiredness are being taken into consideration and that the working environment is consistently productive and professional.

Any member of the cast and creative team can arrange a meeting with their show rep to discuss any issues they may be having. Show reps are required to give feedback to the Accessibility & Wellbeing Rep but any issues will be discussed under the strictest confidence and will only ever be discussed with the designated show rep, the Accessibility & Wellbeing Rep and the **Co-Presidents.**

Ahead of taking part in UMDS opportunities, we ask members to complete an **Accessibility & Wellbeing form.** This form aims to provide the person leading the project i.e director(s) with any access requirements that a participant may have so necessary adjustments can be put in place. This is treated as privileged information and is only accessed by the Accessibility & Wellbeing Rep, relevant parties and where necessary the Co-Presidents. This form is **not mandatory** and members may opt out of the form if required.

1. Accessibility
UMDS is proud to be an adaptive space. We aim to go beyond minimum requirements and embed accessibility into our planning from the start – so everyone feels confident participating and contributing.

UMDS recognises that the needs of our member group differ and constantly strive to ensure that members with specific needs and/or medical conditions are accommodated. It is our policy not to exclude any member with specific needs and/or medical conditions. We use the term “access requirements” when collecting information from members to ascertain any adjustments that may need to be implemented in our practice. These requirements may be due to physical injuries or medical conditions, special educational needs or mental health conditions.

UMDS stages theatre productions and holds social events in venues across Manchester and where possible these venues are wheelchair accessible; whilst this is not always possible it is our policy to always use wheelchair accessible venues in the first instance.

During our two main seasons of theatre (The Autumn Fringe and MIFTAs) each show will include at least one performance that is a dedicated “relaxed performance”. A relaxed performance aims to accommodate neuro-divergent audience members who may struggle to enjoy theatre in a traditional setting.

For all Wellbeing & Accessibility inquiries:

and/or

1. Inclusion

UMDS is committed to not only avoiding discrimination but actively fostering a space where **everyone** feels safe, seen, and celebrated. We believe theatre thrives when it is inclusive, representative, and welcoming for all identities, backgrounds, and lived experiences.

UMDS will always aim to ensure that the society is an inclusive space free from any discrimination.

As part of this policy we expect committee members and members of the society to:

* Respect the different racial origins, religions, cultures and languages in a multi-ethnic society so that each member is valued as an individual without racial or gender stereotyping.
* Not discriminate against persons on the grounds of disability, gender identity, age, race, sexual orientation, class, family status or HIV/Aids status.
* Allow and encourage members to celebrate and express their cultural and religious identity by providing a wide range of appropriate resources and activities.
* Uphold a zero-tolerance policy for hate speech/discrimination across the society. UMDS defines hate-speech / discrimination as abusive or threatening speech, writing and behaviours (verbal or non-verbal) that expresses prejudice on the basis of disability, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, class, family status or HIV/Aids status. UMDS defines a zero-tolerance policy as the termination of membership preventing an individual from participating in any UMDS opportunities with immediate effect.

The **Diversity & Inclusion Rep** and **Co-Presidents** are responsible for:

* Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of our inclusive practice
* Responding to any feedback/complaints
* Ensuring the zero-tolerance policy is upheld and, if necessary, executed.

UMDS is committed to representing a diverse cross-section of society through the medium of theatre and the arts both on and offstage. As such, we reserve the right to program, recruit and cast with diversity and inclusion very much in mind. We will only make these decisions to further represent the global majority and other marginalised groups including the LGBTQIA+ community and deaf/disabled community. For example, we may decide to program a show that requires race-specific casting from within the global majority. In all other instances we require shows to cast blind of race and disability and encourage shows to cast blind of gender and age.

We also require shows to be specific with casting requirements in relation to gender. Rather than using descriptions such as “female” or “male”, we ask that shows use the terms “male presenting”, “female presenting”, “non-binary” or “any gender”. UMDS is committed to ensuring people who identify across the gender spectrum feel represented by the work we program and always welcomes feedback on how we can improve our inclusive practice.

For all inclusion inquiries:

and/or

1. Programming policy

Programming refers to the process wherein members of UMDS submit new writing, pre-published plays or devising concepts to the committee ahead of each season.

In the case of the Autumn Fringe seven pieces of theatre are programmed as well as one Freshers Show, we program eight pieces of theatre for the MIFTAs, two pieces of theatre for the Edinburgh Fringe and The Shorts vary in the number of pieces of theatre programmed. However, we reserve the right to change the number of pieces of theatre programmed in all seasons if the committee feel it is necessary.

The Programming Officer leads this process with the administrative support of the Programming Secretary and they are committed to ensuring its fairness. The deadlines for proposals are circulated via the calendar, email and Instagram. We are unable to accept late submissions.

Once a proposal is received it is anonymised by the Programming Secretary who then distributes proposals for the Programming Officer and reading groups of the committee. The reading groups are split in the following ways:

* **The Programming Officer reads 100% of submissions**
* **The Programming Secretary reads 0% of submissions to ensure anonymity.**
* **Co-Presidents read 50% of submissions each.**
* **Accessibility & Wellbeing Rep and Diversity & Inclusion Rep read 50% of submissions each.**
* **The rest of the committee (where eligible) read a share of submissions.**

This process ensures that each anonymous submission is read in full by a minimum of four committee members. Once the committee member finishes reading each script they complete a Script Coverage Form which collects their thoughts on the piece, which will be taken into consideration by the Programming Officer.

If a committee member is aware of a submission and/or specific applicant through personal means they declare this to the Programming Officer and do not read that submission.

Once the reading process is completed all applicants are invited to an interview with the Programming Officer and the members of the committee who read the relevant script. The name of each applicant is revealed to the relevant members of the committee ahead of the interview stage.

Once the interview stage is completed a programming meeting is held with all relevant members of the committee present, then a meeting with the Diversity & Inclusion Rep, the Access and Wellbeing Rep and the core programming team, and the final meeting is between the core programming team which consists of the Programming Officer, the Co-Presidents, the Programming Secretary and the Secretary. Following this meeting, applicants are notified of the outcome of the process. In all cases, feedback is offered to the applicant. Once the process is complete, committee members (except the Programming Officer) are no longer able to access Script Coverage Forms or proposals.

Members of the committee are permitted to apply to the programming process, with the exception of the Co-Presidents, the Programming Officer and the Programming Secretary. If a member of the committee is applying, they are removed from any discussion surrounding programming or recruitment, they do not read any submissions and do not receive any preferential treatment or additional support.

For all programming inquiries:

1. Recruitment policy

Recruitment refers to the process in which members apply for Creative Team roles ahead of each season. This process runs in tandem with programming.

Our Recruitment process is done via The Pool which is a form accessible to all members that collects information such as theatrical inspiration, hobbies outside drama and relevant experience. The deadlines for The Pool are circulated via the calendar, email and Instagram. We are unable to accept late applications.

These forms are received by the Secretary a who reviews each application in full and feedback to the core programming team once shows have been decided. While relevant experience is factored into this decision it is never the deciding factor and UMDS encourages members with little to no experience to apply for Creative Team Roles. UMDS strives to be a place where passionate people experience working on professional standard theatre for the first time.

Applicants who are submitting to the programming process who wish to be on the creative team for their respective show must also submit a Pool application. We reserve the right to program a piece of theatre but reject the applicant from the Pool, this is to ensure as many opportunities as possible are offered.

Members of the committee are permitted to apply to The Pool with the exception of the Co-Presidents. If a member of the committee applies to The Pool they may still take part in programming decisions and read submissions; however, they are then excluded from all recruitment decisions and do not receive any preferential treatment or additional support.

For all recruitment policy inquiries:

1. Casting policy

Casting refers to the process in which members audition for the shows programmed in each season. Sign-up sheets are circulated to members in the days ahead of auditions and members are required to sign up and complete a contact details form. Contact details are only shared with relevant creative teams.

Creative teams are required to treat casting with the strictest level of confidentiality. Following first-round auditions and recalls (second-round auditions), they submit their casting choices to the Secretary. The Secretary leads the casting process: they condense all casting choices and ascertain when actors are requested by multiple shows, which is referred to as a “clash”. Once a clash has been identified the requested actor is contacted during the casting meeting for which all creative teams and non-auditioning committee members are present. The respective actors are offered each role, no input is given by creative teams. This process is repeated until clashes have been resolved and casts are confirmed.

UMDS upholds a strict confidentiality procedure in respect of casting. If the committee learns of casting choices being disclosed to actors or any other third party, the individual(s) responsible for disclosing the information will be contacted by the Presidents and if necessary removed from their respective show. This is to ensure UMDS remains a respectful and professional society.

Any documents or communications containing casting choices held by the committee are deleted following the completion of this process.

All members of the committee including the Co-Presidents are permitted to audition for any season or UMDS opportunity. In the case that the Secretary auditions, another member of the committee will be selected to lead the casting meeting.

For all casting policy inquiries:

and/or

1. Finance policy

UMDS is a financially self-sustaining society. Our income is generated via:

* Ticket sales from performances and social events
* Membership fees
* Online crowdfunders

This income is used to produce the UMDS program. Our main costs are the staging of individual shows, their venue hire, tech, design budgets and legal rights to perform pre-published work. At the end of the academic year, any and all financial revenue is passed over to the incoming committee.

The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring the financial stability of UMDS and approving all budgets for UMDS activities.

UMDS does not offer any paid opportunities to members or the reimbursement of personal expenses incurred such as travel. Committee roles are unpaid and members of the committee do not receive any form of financial incentives. They may on occasion be reimbursed for expenses incurred while acting in their UMDS capacity; however, this will only be approved on a case by case basis and is subject to approval by the Treasurer and Co-Presidents.

1. Membership Policy

The normal cost of UMDS membership is £10 and we offer a discounted membership of £5 during Welcome Week and in the first week of Semester Two. We require anyone who participates in a UMDS Season or attends workshops to purchase membership. Membership is not required to take part in auditions.

Only students of University of Manchester, Royal Northern College of Music and BIMM University Manchester are able to become members of UMDS. RNCM and BIMM students are required to purchase associate membership.

For all finance and membership enquiries:

1. Complaints policy

Submit complaint .

Or contact Manchester Students Union directly on

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of UMDS. All complaint information will be handled sensitively, whether received via a written form accessible at all times to members, email or in-person communications.

Our complaints procedure follows the following format:

Phase One

For complaints about aspects of UMDS activity (theatre performances, social media, socials, or creative projects):

* The Co-Presidents will discuss with the member concerned and aim to reach a satisfactory resolution.

For complaints about another UMDS member or member of The Committee:

* If appropriate the concerned member will be encouraged to discuss the complaint with the other member or committee member and try to reach a satisfactory resolution.
* If this is not appropriate the matter will be discussed with the Co-Presidents who will then discuss the matter with the other member or committee member and try to reach a satisfactory resolution.

For complaints about the Co-Presidents:

* If the complaint relates to the Co-Presidents, the Student Union should be contacted directly via

Phase Two

If it is impossible to reach a satisfactory resolution to the complaint through informal discussion, the Co-Presidents will record the incident as a formal complaint by a member. The Co-Presidents will then work quickly to:

* Acknowledge receipt of the complaint.
* Make contact with the Student Union.
* Investigate the matter fully and consult all concerned parties.
* Send a full response to all relevant parties, including details of any changes implemented to UMDS practices following the complaint.
* If appropriate, meet with the wider committee to discuss the society’s response to the complaint.
* If necessary, revoke the membership of individuals or committee status to mitigate risk to other members.

We hold a zero-tolerance policy for the following behaviours during UMDS activity:

* Violence towards other members.
* Sexual harassment or assault whether verbal, physical or digitally.
* Hate speech including sexual or misogynistic remarks.
* Threats or threatening behaviour.
* Repeated derogatory comments about individuals either verbally, in writing/digitally or on social media platforms.

If any member is reported to be in breach of this policy at any time during the course of a UMDS activity they will be removed from that activity and pending investigation have their membership revoked, preventing any future involvement with UMDS.

For all complaints policy inquiries:

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| Agreed by the 2025/26 committee on |  |
| Next review date | June 2026 |
| Co-Presidents 2024/25  | Nitheeshan Gunanantham and Mili Branston  |
| Signed by Co-President 2024/25 |  |
| Signed by Co-President 2024/25 |  |