

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
and
Trinity Laban Students' Union

Relationship Agreement

1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1 This Relationship Agreement aims to provide a clear and concise account of the relationship between Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance's Students' Union (TLSU) and outlines the basis for the relationship between the two parties and the principles under which they both shall operate.
- 1.2 The Relationship Agreement takes account of the legal requirement on the Conservatoire in the Education Act 1994 to ensure that the Students' Union operates in a fair and democratic manner and the registered charity status of Trinity Laban. It draws on the March 2011 *Guide for members of Higher Education Governing Bodies: Supplementary guide regarding the role of university governing bodies in relation to students' unions* and HEFCW Circular W12/09HE *Guidance on good practice in funding of effective, democratic student unions, and student representation issues* dated 28 March 2012 and complements the 2018 Student Charter.

2. Principles

- 2.1 Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and Trinity Laban Students' Union agree to adopt the following principles which will underpin and enhance the working relationship between the Conservatoire and the Students' Union:

a) Strategic Partnership

Spirit of partnership between the Conservatoire and SU informing the strategic direction of both parties and informing service agreements.

Informed engagement of SU representatives in key Conservatoire decision-making bodies.

b) Student Centred

Shared commitment to developing and improving students' experience of the academic and extra-curricular aspects of their lives whilst at Trinity Laban.

c) Respect and Understanding

Clarity about, and mutual understanding of, the distinct roles of Trinity Laban and the Students' Union and the value that each party brings to the relationship.

The institution respecting and understanding the voice of the SU – accountability working both ways.

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Working groups should use the students as the centre of them.

d) Openness and Trust

Full, open, regular communication on relevant issues, in particular issues likely to have an impact on the other party, the student population and/or other joint stakeholders.

e) Mutual Support and Commitment

Constructive interactions and demonstrable commitment to making the relationship work through investment of time and resources.

f) Independence

Recognition of the value of a strong, student-led students' union empowered to determine and manage its own affairs within its resources.

Recognition of the need for the Conservatoire to balance the interests of a range of stakeholders within an increasingly challenging external context.

The National Union of Students has developed a 'Good Governance Code of Practice' specifically for students' unions, which is available online. The Good Governance Code of Practice forms part of an interactive website that students' unions will be able to use to strengthen their governance arrangements. The Code of Practice identifies seven key principles of good governance in a students' union context:

- Democracy
- Openness & Accountability
- Clarity about the role of the Board
- Effective Trustees & Board Performance
- Delivering Organisational Purpose
- Exercising Control
- Behaving with Integrity

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g) Accountability

- i. Accountability of the Student's Union to Trinity Laban as supervisor and principal funder, within a mutually agreed framework which is robust, effective, efficient and compatible with the reporting requirements of regulators, including the Office for Students, the Charity Commission and Companies House.
- ii. Acknowledgement by Trinity Laban that the Students' Union is a major stakeholder and primary body representing the student voice.
- iii. Section 22 of the 1994 Education Act places a legal requirement on the governing body to ensure that the students' union at the establishment

'operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances'. It states that the governing body shall, in particular, take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure the requirements set out below,

1. **Approval of Governing Documents:**

The union should have a written constitution which should be subject to the approval of the governing body and to review at intervals of not more than five years.

2. **Right not to be a member:**

Students should have the right to choose not to be a member of the union, and students who exercise that right should not be unfairly disadvantaged as a result.

3. **Fair and Democratic:**

Appointment to major union offices should be by election in a secret ballot, in which all members are entitled to vote (this does not apply in the case of open or distance learning establishments). The governing body should satisfy themselves that the elections are fairly and properly conducted. A person should not hold sabbatical union office, or paid elected union office, for more than two years in total at the establishment.

The Committee of University Chairs suggests that governing bodies may wish to ensure that an independent returning officer is appointed to oversee elections and report on their findings.

4. **Financial Accountability:**

The governing body needs to ensure that the financial affairs of the union are properly conducted. The governing body should approve the union's budget and monitor its expenditure. The union is required to present audited financial statements to the governing body each year.

h) **Diversity & Equality**

A shared commitment to equality and diversity and the fair treatment of all staff and students.

(i) **Student voice**

Collaborative working to recognise the student voice through a range of methods, to ensure that students are partners at every level of the institution.

(j) **Funding**

The parties will consider and agree the core and additional functions of the Student's Union and agree appropriate funding having due regard to the current level of capitation grant (2018).

Should at any time the Conservatoire suspect and/or indeed determine that the Student Union is not conducting its affairs in an appropriate and proper manner

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the Conservatoire reserves the right to suspend either all, or a proportion of funding, and until such time as it is satisfied of the proper conduct of the Students' Union in administering its affairs.

3. **Working Relationship**

The principles outlined above will apply to all interaction between the parties and are particularly important in relation to the formal meetings held between the parties, primarily the regular meetings between the Principal and Students' Union representatives.

4. **Review**

This Relationship Agreement will be reviewed on an annual basis at the first meeting in each academic year between the Principal and Students' Union representatives.

Approved by Trinity Laban Board of Governors on _____ 2019

https://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/guide_for_members_of_higher_education_bodies.pdf