



## Creating Safer Spaces

As amended and approved by the 2014 Leeds Delegates Meeting (24/1/14).

Students for Cooperation believes:

1. That any network which concerns itself with the development of community ought to be inclusive of all aspects of the struggle, specifically the struggles of those from marginalised groups.
2. That we can only ever create a 'safer' space, not an entirely safe space, and that this is an on-going process which ought to be regularly assessed and revised by a rotating working group.
3. That safer spaces exist in order to empower oppressed individuals and groups and to challenge oppressive behaviour within an organisation/group either by individuals or by groups involved in the campaign.
4. That we should take collective responsibility for each other's' behaviour:
  - a. We should 'police' ourselves democratically, collectively and equally. We should not rely on policing 'from above'.
  - b. We should act to prevent, challenge and rehabilitate. Only through this approach can we build towards a more inclusive/unoppressive environment.
5. That breaches of the safer spaces policy should be dealt with respectfully and constructively, with a sensitivity to aspects which should be kept confidential when necessary. We seek to educate and, where possible, not to exclude.

6. That, in extreme circumstances, it may be necessary to exclude individuals or groups from the space.

Students for Cooperation resolves:

1. To replace the existing Safe Space Policy with the attached Safer Spaces Policy and Accountability Processes.
2. To make participants aware of this policy during every event, and online.



## Safer Spaces Policy

As amended and approved by the 2014 Leeds Delegates Meeting (24/1/14).

It is the collective responsibility of all Students for Cooperation members to ensure the following points are acted upon both during meetings/conferences/events and online on the Students for Cooperation Loomio, Facebook page and website (where points are applicable):

1. Participants should respect the methods of the Facilitator unless there are reasonable grounds not to. If there is a particular problem with the Facilitator bring this up as early as possible and state clear reasons why this is the case. The aim is to improve the skills of the Facilitator and of all participants.
2. Participants should not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, sex, gender, age, sexuality, language, disability, asylum status, religious affiliation or any other structurally oppressive criteria.
3. Everyone should get consent (if in doubt, seek explicit verbal consent) before touching someone - this is a part of respecting one another's emotional and physical boundaries. Sexual harassment or sexual assault will lead to the perpetrator being banned from the premises and potential police involvement, if desired by the survivor(s), will be fully supported. If you encounter any kind of harassment or assault please let someone within the organisation know, so that those responsible can be dealt with by the Safer Spaces working group.

4. We should avoid assuming the opinions and identification of other participants. Examples include, but are not limited to, assumptions regarding sex, sexuality, gender identity, preferred personal pronouns, neurotypicality, able-bodied status, socio-economic background, relationship model (monogamous, polyamorous etc.) and religious beliefs.
5. Try to avoid speaking about obviously psychologically triggering topics (including not limited to: rape, sexual assault, self-harm, suicide, abuse etc.) in a public domain or, where possible, preclude this with a 'trigger warning'. This can be simply a verbal warning of the content of the discussion, with adequate room for objection or avoidance for those who may find the topic triggering. In general we encourage open and frank discussion of issues related to oppression and ideology particularly within coops and the cooperative movement. However, this should not be at the risk of alienating or causing others psychological distress.
6. During meetings and other related non-social events refrain from consuming alcohol or recreational drugs.
7. We should give one another the time and space to speak, using appropriate, understood and agreed hand signals where relevant.
8. We are responsible not only for our own behaviour but for challenging poor behaviour in others.
9. We should always be aware of the social space we occupy, as well as the positions and privileges we may be conveying, including racial, class and gender privilege. If a member of a liberation group (keeping in mind that it is possible to be oppressive whilst identifying as a part of that oppressed group) requests that you change your use of language regarding topics about their liberation, please be respectful and change your use of language. If you are unsure as to the reason your language was inappropriate or offensive, please politely request that the complainant explain, if they feel they are able to or are willing to with the understanding that they in no way owe you this explanation. Failing this, remove yourself from the situation and take on personal research on the matter.

10. During all meetings and events there should be access breaks for a minimum of ten minutes at least every 90 minutes and/or upon request.

### **Accountability processes**

1. SfC should select a Safer Spaces working group who are committed to ensuring the enacting of the Safer Spaces Policy both at events and in online organising spaces (e.g. the SfC Loomio, website and Facebook page).
  - a. This working group will deal with any and all breaches of the Safer Spaces Policy, or complaints regarding it.
  - b. The working group should be rotated when possible.
  - c. SfC will aim to share the skills and experience involved and allow new people to take on these roles. We will aim to ask for new volunteers to help out at every event.
  - d. The working group actively encourages people from oppressed groups to participate as far as possible.
  - e. The working group should be composed of at least three people, if not more.
  - f. It shall be the duty of the working group to deal with complaints in a timely and sensitive manner.
  - g. The working group will also aim to educate and be pro-active in their role when dealing with safer space ideology.
2. During meetings if the Safer Spaces Policy is breached members on the working group should feel free to point it out and attempt to deal with it. Others may also come forward to inform the working group about Safer Spaces breaches. All complaints should be taken seriously.

### **Language/assumptions/biases complaints**

1. If oppressive language is used it should be challenged as soon as possible.

2. Generally, if people feel able, it should be addressed immediately and called out, with appropriate explanations as to why it is oppressive and what language might be used instead.
3. If the offender apologises and changes their language immediately, and this is their first or one of their first offences, the matter need not be pursued any further.
4. If, however, this person refuses to change their language and/or is a repeat offender the matter should be taken up by the working group who will discuss further measures to take including:
  - a. Issuing the offender with a formal warning (written or verbal) and explanation of how their use of language is offensive, reminding them of the Safer Spaces Policy.
  - b. Asking the offender to leave the group entirely if it is felt that they are not at all receptive, after the formal warning.
  - c. If it is felt this is a widespread or commonly misunderstood issue there should be discussion of a workshop to inform others on the issues surrounding this particular complaint.

### **Oppressive behaviours**

1. If members' behaviours are oppressive (e.g. constantly talking over others, refusing to let others speak) this should be challenged immediately.
2. Generally, if people feel able, the behaviours should be called out by any members, in particular those who are part of the working group.
3. If the offender recognises their behaviour as oppressive and attempts to rectify this immediately, then the group should be supportive and continue to help them address these behaviours.
4. If, however, the offender refuses to engage with this process they should be:
  - a. Asked to leave with immediate effect, that particular event, pending investigation.

- b. Be under investigation. I.e. the complainants and other witnesses should inform the working group of examples of their behaviour, including a statement from the offender, which should all be taken into account and final decision should be made regarding the offender's future involvement in SfC events.
  - c. If the offender is found 'guilty' by the working group they should be asked to leave and to refrain from attending all future SfC events and banned from online spaces.
5. The working group may decide to put a time limit on these measures, or to only carry out some of them, depending on severity.

### **Physical/Sexual harassment, assault and violation of boundaries**

1. If members or the working group witnesses or hears of any form of coercive, non-consenting physical or sexual assault they should encourage the victim to come forward and report it. Only if the victim is comfortable should this be taken to the official working group, they are under no obligation to report it.
2. This matter should be dealt with by as few people as possible. One person on the working group should be involved directly with the complainant. They should remain anonymous to all other members of the working group to try and avoid bias. The case should be presented in a neutral, victim-led way.
3. The case should be reviewed by the working group taking into consideration statement from both the victim and the accused, but with the understanding that this process should always depend on the victim's wishes. It is NOT for the working group to decide whether or not the accused is guilty they ONLY decide if they consider them a threat to others and the victim's safety.
4. The working group may decide to take any or all of the following measures:
  - a. Issue a warning to the offender that their behaviour has made others uncomfortable and that any further breach may lead to more serious action being taken.

- b. Banning the offender from all future events and online forums.
- c. Banning the offender for a fixed period of time.
- d. Ensuring that the offender and the victim (and those affected) are not in the same spaces.
- e. Supporting the victim in either legal action or restorative justice.