

Executive Committee
University of Toronto Students' Union

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STATEMENT

For immediate release

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RE: Statement on the Student Societies Complaint and Resolution Council

On May 25th, 2016 the University Affairs Board recommended the Policy on Open, Accessible and Democratic Autonomous Student Organizations be forwarded to Governing Council for approval. If approved, this policy will establish the Student Societies Complaint and Resolution Council (SSCRC).

This process was started in 2013, after many years of deteriorating relations and credible allegations of misconduct, a number of student societies voted to secede from the UTSU. While the University did not allow them to secede, it did convene the year-long Student Societies Summit, to which almost every student society contributed in one form or another. The purpose of the Summit was to create a mechanism for the resolution of disputes involving student societies, including disputes between student societies and individual students. The [final report](#) of the Summit recommended the creation of a "Student Society Appeals Board that would serve as a court of final resort for all complaints about the conduct of particular student societies, including elections complaints."

The UTSU Executive Committee endorses the establishment of the SSCRC. All student societies are required by the University to conduct themselves in an open, accessible, and democratic fashion. The purpose of the SSCRC is to change--and improve--what happens when a student society acts wrongly.

To be clear, the University will not be able to do anything that it cannot currently do--the only change is the replacement of a closed-door investigation by the administration with a formal, public investigation by the SSCRC. Right now, if a student has a problem with a student society, their only option is to complain to the University. The complaint will be investigated by the University administration, but there is no formal process and thus no guarantee that all relevant perspectives will be considered. The SSCRC will formalize the investigative process and move it out into the open. Composed of four students as well as two non-students (a chair with experience in dispute resolution and a non-voting secretary), the SSCRC will investigate complaints against student societies and, whenever possible, resolve them through mediation (and, if mediation fails in a given case, the SSCRC will recommend a course of action to the Provost).

Other student societies may argue that the SSCRC is a threat to their--and our--autonomy. We disagree. Firstly, as we noted above, the creation of the SSCRC will not give the University any new powers. Secondly, while the autonomy of student societies is important, the UTSU believes that the rights of individual students are even more so. All students have the right to be heard. We are not, by endorsing the SSCRC, capitulating to the administration--simply put, the SSCRC will help our members hold us accountable. We hope that our fellow student societies come to the same conclusion. Student societies that are willing to conduct themselves in an open, accessible, and democratic fashion have no reason not to be supportive of the SSCRC.

The policy in question is available [here](#).

Yours in service,

The UTSU Executive Committee

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