



ATU DONEGAL

Clubs & Societies

Handbook & Guidelines

2026–2027

This handbook outlines the guidelines, responsibilities, and funding routes for all Clubs & Societies at ATU Donegal. Recreational Sports Clubs have a separate funding drawdown route under the Recreational Sports Guidelines. It is designed to support you in setting up, managing, and participating in vibrant extracurricular groups that enhance the student experience.

For full details on registration, funding applications, equipment, safeguarding, and the code of conduct, please refer to the sections within.

Clubs & Societies Contacts:

- Michael Murphy – Head of Sport, ATU Donegal | michael.murphy@atu.ie
- Don Donoghue – SU General Manager, ATU Donegal | don.donoghue@associate.atu.ie

www.atusulife.ie | Your online platform for memberships, events, funding applications and compliance.

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Welcome

University life is about more than academic studies - it is also about expanding your personal and social horizons, gaining new skills, supporting others, and above all, enjoying your time here. The Clubs & Societies Programme at ATU exists to give all students opportunities to come together, build communities, and thrive outside the classroom and represent ATU.

This handbook outlines how Clubs & Societies operate, including registration, membership, funding, responsibilities and expected standards. It should be used alongside our online platform www.atusulife.ie, which is your central hub for managing memberships, events, finances and resources. Unless expressly stated otherwise, the expenditure rules and caps in this handbook apply to Society funding; Recreational Sports Clubs draw down funding under the separate Recreational Sports Guidelines.

What is a Club and Society?

Clubs

Clubs in ATU can be defined as Competitive Sports Clubs or Recreational Sports Clubs which provide both competitive and recreational sporting activities.

- Competitive Sport Clubs engage in leagues, tournaments and events governed by National Governing Bodies (NGBs).
- Recreational Sport Clubs provide social or leisure-focused sporting activity, often for general fitness or skill development, within a non-competitive sports environment.

Your point of contact for Competitive and Recreational Sports Clubs is:

Michael Murphy, Head of Sport, ATU Donegal — michael.murphy@atu.ie

Recreational Sports Club Funding

Recreational Sports Clubs may submit an annual budget, but a budget submission is not mandatory in every case. They can receive a minimum funding allocation of €650 and a maximum of €2,000 per academic year. The drawdown and permitted use of this funding are governed by the Recreational Sports Guidelines, not the Clubs & Societies funding rules set out later in this handbook. For guidance or approval, contact Michael Murphy, Head of Sport, at michael.murphy@atu.ie.

Societies

Societies are non-sporting groups formed around cultural, creative, special interest, lifestyle, wellbeing, environmental or charitable themes. They are an essential part of campus life, fostering creativity, debate, leadership and community building.

Your point of contact for all Societies is:

Don Donoghue, SU General Manager, ATU Donegal — don.donoghue@associate.atu.ie

Registering a Club or Society

- Clubs & Societies are open to all ATU Donegal students registered in the current academic year and current staff (subject to Club or Society approval) based on the Letterkenny and Killybegs campuses.
 - Staff may join if permitted by the Club or Society's members, but cannot vote or hold executive positions. They may help in development roles, renewed each September/October by the executive.
- All Clubs & Societies require a minimum of 10 members.

- Each Club or Society must have a core Executive Committee: President, Secretary and Treasurer or two Student Liaisons in the case of Competitive Sports Clubs.
- A person may only hold an executive role in one Club or Society at a time.
- Registration is managed via www.atusulife.ie, where your Club or Society becomes active upon approval.

New Clubs or Societies

A new Club or Society is defined as any group that was not registered and active in the previous full academic year (September to May). These groups are typically in their first year of operation following registration. New Societies are eligible for funding up to the maximum level designated for new Societies, provided they submit acceptable plans and remain compliant with all programme guidelines. Recreational Sports Clubs are funded under the separate Recreational Sports Guidelines and are not subject to the Society drawdown rules in this handbook.

Note: Clubs or Societies that were first registered in semester two of the previous academic year will still be considered new in the following year. This ensures all Clubs & Societies complete at least one full academic cycle before being regarded as established.

Established Clubs or Societies

An established Club or Society is any group that has been active for at least one full academic year, having been registered and operated throughout the preceding September to May cycle. Established Societies are eligible for standard annual funding allocations, provided they submit acceptable plans and remain compliant with all programme guidelines. Recreational Sports Club funding is administered separately by the Head of Sport under the Recreational Sports Guidelines.

Important: If an established Society fails to register in September, it will be deemed to have lapsed and will revert to new Society status for funding purposes. This means it will be treated as starting over and subject to the maximum new Society funding limits. Recreational Sports Clubs should confirm their registration and funding position with the Head of Sport.

In the case of established Societies, the maximum funding available under this programme is €2,000 per academic year. This ensures that funding is distributed fairly and sustainably, supporting a broad range of student activities while encouraging Societies to plan responsibly and seek additional sponsorship or fundraising where needed. Recreational Sports Clubs can receive between €650 and €2,000 per academic year, with all drawdown governed by the Recreational Sports Guidelines.

Membership, SU Life & Attendance Lists

- All members (students or permitted staff) must sign up via www.atusulife.ie, which manages memberships, events, attendance, equipment inventories and funding activity.
- Attendance lists on SU Life are mandatory for all trips, lessons, or funded events. This ensures compliance with funding rules and maintains clear records for your Club or Society.

The Executive Committee of Clubs & Societies

Each Club or Society must have an Executive Committee made up of at least three core positions: President, Secretary and Treasurer. These are the only officer roles formally recognised by the University and the Clubs & Societies Programme. All executive positions are equal in standing, and the committee draws its authority from the collective views of its members.

Appointments must be carried out in a democratic manner, guided by each Club or Societies. Where more than one candidate is nominated for a position, SU Life may be used to facilitate an election, ensuring the democratic views of the membership are upheld.

It is expected that all efforts to resolve internal issues are managed within the Club or Society under procedures.

To promote effective handover and continuity, Clubs & Societies should ensure, wherever possible, that their executive committee is made up of students from more than one year group. This helps safeguard the long-term operation of the Club or Society and ensures valuable knowledge and experience are retained each year.

Additional officers e.g Public Relations Officer, can be added via SU Life to help with operations, but these do not hold formal standing beyond the Club or Society's internal structure.

Role of the President

Leads planning of activities and is the main contact with the SU office. Ensures all Society business follows SU and University procedures.

Role of the Secretary

Handles administration, maintains SU Life records, prepares agendas and minutes, and keeps members informed of meetings and decisions.

Role of the Treasurer

Manages all financial matters, prepares budgets on SU Life where required, tracks spending, maintains invoices and receipts, and ensures activities stay within approved funding arrangements. For Recreational Sports Clubs, spending must comply with the Recreational Sports Guidelines whether or not a formal budget was submitted.

Role of the Student Liaison (Competitive Sport)

Acts as the main student link between the club and the ATU Head of Sport

Duplicate Clubs & Societies

To protect resources and maintain a broad range of opportunities for students, the Clubs & Societies Committee will not approve registration of a Club or Society that substantially duplicates the purpose, activities or objectives of an existing registered group. Where significant overlap is identified, Clubs & Societies may be required to merge. Name changes for existing Clubs or Societies may be considered on a case-by-case basis by application to the CSC, provided there is no significant change to the aims and objectives originally approved by the committee.

Clubs & Societies Days

These are the most important days each year for promoting your Club or Society, attracting members, and generating excitement. Committee members are expected to host a table, sign up new members, and answer questions. All memberships must be processed through www.atusulife.ie to ensure accurate records and eligibility for funding.

If you are setting up a new Club or Society for the first time, you must email don.donoghue@associate.atu.ie no later than 12 noon on the 21st of September so a provisional presence can be created on SU Life and you can secure your place at the Semester One Clubs & Societies Day. Applications for a new Club or Society can be accepted until the close of budget applications at 12 noon on the 2nd of October.

Rules for the Day

1. Book a table in advance. Details will be sent to all students at the start of term.
2. Ensure your Club or Society is unlocked and active on SU Life. New Clubs & Societies must contact Don Donoghue to arrange this.

3. Bring a laptop or device with internet so you can assist new members signing up on SU Life at your table.

After Clubs & Societies Day

- Log into SU Life to see your updated membership list.
- Email new members promptly to welcome them and share first meeting details.
- Societies should submit their budget via www.atusulife.ie. Recreational Sports Clubs should contact Michael Murphy to confirm whether a budget submission is required. (Refer to the sections on budget and funding below for further details.)

Booking Facilities & Rooms

- The Clubs & Societies Meeting Room can now be booked directly through www.atusulife.ie. It has a capacity of 10 people.
- Larger rooms in the main building must be booked by emailing the Estates Office at estates.donegal@atu.ie. Book well ahead due to heavy term-time demand. Rooms must also be left clean.
- Sports facilities (sports hall, pitches, canteen in An Danlann) can be booked by contacting the Sports Centre at sportscentre.donegal@atu.ie. Early booking is essential.
- In all instances it is essential that rooms and facilities are left clean, tidy and in their original condition. This will ensure future bookings are not impacted.

Political, Religious and Ideological Societies

Political, religious and ideological Clubs & Societies play an important role in supporting debate, community, expression and learning within the university environment. These societies are welcome to register under the Clubs & Societies Programme at ATU Donegal.

Annual Budgeting & Funding

Different Funding Routes

Society funding is governed by the budget, expenditure and drawdown rules in this handbook. Recreational Sports Clubs use a separate route: they may submit a budget, but their drawdown is governed by the Recreational Sports Guidelines and administered by the Head of Sport.

- Each Society must submit a proposed budget on SU Life at the start of the academic year, outlining intended activities, estimated costs and a general timeline. This budget is reviewed by the Clubs & Societies Committee (CSC) to ensure plans are appropriate, feasible and aligned with programme objectives. While minor adjustments are understood as part of normal operations, substantial changes to spending plans or major deviations from the approved budget will not be permitted without prior written approval from the SU General Manager. Societies that spend significantly outside their submitted and approved budget risk having future funding withheld.
- All Societies, including returning ones, will have a minimum approved budget of up to €650 for one full academic year, subject to submitting acceptable plans. New Societies have a maximum first-year allocation of €650 for one full academic year. Funds should be drawn down in a timely manner throughout the year in line with each Society's approved budget plan. Payment requests submitted purely to spend unutilised budgets, without a clear link to planned or meaningful activities, will not be accepted. Societies are expected to manage their funds responsibly and ensure all spending directly benefits their members and aligns with their original objectives.

- Society budgets are allocated on the principle that not all Societies will fully draw down the funding approved to them. This approach enables the overall resources to be distributed in a manner that maximises benefit across the entire programme. In circumstances where there is higher utilisation of funds than anticipated, it may be necessary to revise budget allocations without prior notice in the second semester. Where there is a notable under-utilisation of funds, Societies may be invited to apply for additional funding opportunities later in the academic year if so agreed by the CSC.

Recreational Sports Clubs

Recreational Sports Clubs may submit a proposed budget on SU Life; however, a budget submission is not mandatory in every case. They can receive a minimum funding allocation of €650 and a maximum of €2,000 per academic year.

All expenditure, permitted uses, percentage contributions, supporting documentation and approval requirements for Recreational Sports Clubs are governed by the Recreational Sports Guidelines. The funding tables and drawdown rules in this handbook do not apply to Recreational Sports Clubs. For further information, contact Michael Murphy, Head of Sport, at michael.murphy@atu.ie.

Payment & Claims

- **All payments must be pre-approved and processed through the appropriate route: the SU General Manager for Societies, or the Head of Sport for Recreational Sports Clubs under the Recreational Sports Guidelines.**
- Students and staff cannot pay suppliers directly and then seek reimbursement unless explicitly pre-approved.
- Society invoices must go to the SU General Manager through SU Life. Recreational Sports Club claims and supporting documents must be submitted to the Head of Sport in accordance with the Recreational Sports Guidelines.
- For smaller, recurring Society purchases (e.g., snacks for events) that are already covered within an approved budget, reimbursements may be made directly to the executive officer's bank account. These purchases must still comply with the Clubs & Societies Guidelines and the approved budget for that Society. Recreational Sports Club reimbursements are governed separately by the Recreational Sports Guidelines.

Programme Dates & Summer Activity

The Clubs & Societies Programme for the 2026/27 academic year will run from 14th September 2026 to 7th May 2027. All activities funded through this programme must take place within these dates.

Societies that wish to continue operating over the summer months, up to 31st July 2027, must apply for an exemption at the time of Society registration on their budget application form. Recreational Sports Clubs should contact the Head of Sport regarding any proposed summer activity. Exemptions will not be granted at any other point during the year. To be approved, the group must be able to provide evidence that the majority of its members are studying or working on campus during the summer period.

Please note that no payments of any kind will be processed after 7th May 2027. This means that all activities taking place after this date must be fully prepaid before the funding deadline closes regardless of exemptions.

What Can & Cannot Be Funded Under These Guidelines

The following lists provide guidance on the types of expenses that may or may not be funded under the Clubs & Societies funding rules. These lists do not govern the drawdown of funding by Recreational Sports Clubs, which must follow the Recreational Sports Guidelines and obtain approval

from Michael Murphy, Head of Sport, before expenditure is incurred. For all other groups, the lists are not exhaustive and advice must be sought from the SU General Manager (for Societies) or the Head of Sport (for other Clubs) before any expense is incurred. Any items purchased outside the applicable guidelines or without prior approval may have to be covered personally by the committee.

Engagement Materials

To support societies in delivering engaging and visible events, the following expenses are proposed to be grouped under a new funding category:

Event Support Costs

- Printing (e.g. posters, flyers, banners)
- Decorations (e.g. cultural/charity awareness events)
- Trophies & Medals (e.g. competitions, recognition)

Cap: €100 per society per academic year.

Cultural & Community Events Support

To support societies delivering cultural, religious, or community celebration events that enhance inclusion, diversity, and campus life at ATU Donegal.

Eligible Costs

- Modest decorations, refreshments/snacks, materials (e.g. colours for Holi, sweets for Diwali).
- Basic event costs that cannot reasonably be covered under “Engagement Materials.”

Cap

- €300 per society per academic year.
- This is a standalone category and cannot be combined with Engagement Materials.

Proposed Rule for Joint Events

- Societies are strongly encouraged to collaborate on joint events.
- Where two or more societies collaborate, the event may draw from one society’s allocation only.
- Collaborating societies may agree which one society will submit the claim.
- Each society can still benefit from visibility, promotion, and shared participation - but funding will not be duplicated or doubled up.

Fundable Expenditure

Area	What’s covered
Clothing / Leisurewear	• 50% funding up to €15 per item (must display ATU or SU Donegal logo). • Funding for clothing or leisurewear is limited to a maximum of 30% of the Club or Society’s approved annual budget.
Bonding Sessions	• 50% of approved Arena 7 or Century Complex costs. • Funding for bonding activities is limited to a maximum of 30% of the Club or Society’s approved annual budget.
Lessons / Tuition	• Funding for lessons or tuition is available up to 50%, capped at €15 per individual, and limited to a maximum of 30% of the Club or Society’s approved annual budget. Tutors or instructors engaged to provide these lessons cannot be members of the Club or Society, to maintain clear boundaries and avoid conflicts of interest.

Area	What's covered
Trips	• Max 1 per semester, 50% SU funding permitted up to a max of €20 per student. Domestic Trips Only.
Non-perishable Food & Snacks	• Up to €100 per year for small events or charity needs.
Transport	• 50% SU funded when booked via SU General Manager with approved operators.
Equipment	• For Society use; becomes ATU property. See also the Equipment, Safeguarding & Safety section (p. 10) for full details on equipment responsibilities and storage.
Guest Speakers / Facilitators	• Up to €50 per session, max 2 per year.
NGB Affiliation Fees	• 100% for sports clubs (pre-approved by Head of Sport).
Insurance	• Funded if necessary via own Club/Society Funds. See also the Equipment, Safeguarding & Safety section (p. 10) for details on insurance requirements for off-campus activities.

Prohibited Expenditure

Area	Not covered
Alcohol	Purchased under any circumstances.
Social outings / class balls	Events in pubs, nightclubs, licensed venues.
General catering	Beyond the €100 annual allowance.
Prizes / Vouchers	Gifts, raffles, awards.
Personal items	Mouthguards, boots, gloves, wetsuits etc.
Unapproved expenditure	Any outside the approved CSC Guidelines
Academic excursions	Tied to course learning outcomes.
Gifts or gratuities	For committee members or others.
Cash payments to individuals	Under any circumstances.

Important General Notes

- All bonding, trips, lessons, speakers, affiliations and insurance must be pre-approved through the applicable route: the SU General Manager for Societies, or the Head of Sport for Clubs. Recreational Sports Clubs must follow the Recreational Sports Guidelines.
- Trips must be for Club or Society members only; attendance lists are required.
- Equipment must be securely stored and logged; items over €50 need a photo & serial number.
- Society invoices go through the SU General Manager. Recreational Sports Club claims go through the Head of Sport under the Recreational Sports Guidelines; reimbursements require explicit prior approval.
- Spending beyond approved allocations will be borne by the Club or Society.
- Payments require documentation: invoices, itemised receipts, and for spends over €1,000, three quotes plus justification.

Fundraising & Sponsorship by Clubs & Societies

At ATU Donegal, Clubs & Societies are not permitted to charge a fee for membership. This ensures that all students have equal access to participate in Clubs & Societies without financial barriers, supported by the University's funding programme.

However, Clubs & Societies may fund or part-fund events and activities through their own fundraising and sponsorship efforts, helping expand what they can offer beyond the support provided by the University.

Fundraising

Clubs & Societies may organise:

- Bake sales, table quizzes or other small events to raise additional funds.
- Raffles or competitions (noting that prizes for such must be funded privately, not from C&S budgets).

Sponsorship

Clubs & Societies may also explore sponsorship from external companies. However:

- All sponsorship ideas must be provided to the SU General Manager before a final decision is made to proceed.
- Sponsorship from alcohol, tobacco, or gambling-related companies — or brands associated with these — is strictly prohibited.

Equipment, Safeguarding & Safety

- All equipment bought with funding is property of ATU Clubs & Societies. It must be logged on SU Life and stored securely.
- Society trips and activities must be booked through the SU General Manager using approved transport. Sports Club trips and activities must be arranged through the Head of Sport under the applicable sports guidelines.
- Garda Vetting is required for activities involving under-18s or vulnerable adults.
- Clubs and Societies must comply with the ATU Child Protection Policy and ensure officers complete the Tusla Children First e-learning module.
- For off-campus activities, insurance must be provided by the venue, NGB or a qualified third party.

Student Achievement Awards

The ATU Donegal Student Achievement Awards take place in March or April. A number of Clubs & Societies Scholarships and other awards are presented to honour student leaders and Clubs & Societies who excel during the year. The number of awards and scholarships is decided by the CSC each January, based on participation levels, funding, and overall engagement.

Full details of the nomination process are circulated in late January. Clubs & Societies are encouraged to keep press cuttings, posters, publications and videos throughout the year to strengthen future award applications.

Additional Responsibilities & Policies

Health & Safety & Risk Assessments

It is the responsibility of each Club or Society to ensure that their activities are carried out in a safe manner and in line with recognised best practice. Clubs & Societies are expected to identify any risks associated with their events, trips or activities and put appropriate measures in place. Where required (particularly for higher-risk activities such as outdoor adventure or sports). Clubs & Societies must complete a risk assessment and maintain a Code of Safe Practice appropriate to their activities.

Data Protection & GDPR

All Clubs & Societies must ensure that personal data of members is managed responsibly and in line with GDPR and the ATU Data Protection Policy. Membership lists, attendance records and any personal contact details are managed through SU Life, which is designed to be secure and compliant. Officers must take care to keep any data they export or download secure, only use it for the intended purpose of running their Club or Society, and delete or return data when their term ends.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Clubs & Societies at ATU are committed to being welcoming and inclusive spaces. All Clubs & Societies are expected to operate in line with the ATU Equal Opportunities Policy and to ensure that membership and participation are open to all students, regardless of age, disability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristic. Any Club or Society activity that fails to uphold these principles may risk funding or recognition under the Clubs & Societies Programme.

Code of Safe Practice for High-Risk Activities

Clubs & Societies that engage in activities which carry a higher level of risk (for example water sports, adventure or climbing activities) must prepare a simple Code of Safe Practice. This document should outline how your Clubs or Societies manages safety, the use of qualified instructors where necessary, equipment checks, and any procedures to handle incidents. Copies should be uploaded or noted on SU Life and be available to members on request.

Code of Conduct, Complaints & Mediation

All members are bound by the ATU Student Code, which promotes honesty, fairness, respect and responsibility. Misuse of funds, misconduct, or breaches of this code may result in suspension of funding or deregistration.

It is expected that all Clubs & Societies will handle internal matters, including disputes or concerns, in line with their own procedures. The University and the Students' Union will not intervene in the internal operations of Clubs & Societies.

However, should a member wish to make a formal complaint under the ATU Complaints Procedure, this will be handled independently by the University through its established channels.

Beginning of the Year Checklist for Committee Executives

- Book a table for Clubs & Societies Day through the SU General Manager (don.donoghue@associate.atu.ie) by Monday the 21st of September.
- Familiarise yourself with this handbook and the funding guidelines that apply to your group, including the Recreational Sports Guidelines where relevant.
- Complete registration on www.atusulife.ie to activate your Clubs or Society.
- Plan activities, trips, lessons and costs for the year.
- Societies must submit their funding application on SU Life by the closing date. Recreational Sports Clubs should confirm with Michael Murphy whether a budget submission is required.
- Attend SU Life training at the start of term.
- Book rooms, halls or pitches well in advance:
- Ensure your Clubs & Societies Day table is staffed, and all sign-ups are through SU Life.
- Keep your SU Life page up to date and check your email regularly.
- Make sure trips, lessons and purchases are pre-approved in your Society budget or, for Recreational Sports Clubs, under the Recreational Sports Guidelines.