



SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY
STUDENT ORGANIZATION
HANDBOOK



Sam Houston State University
**Campus Activities
& Involvement**

2025-2026

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SHSU STUDENT ORGANIZATION HANDBOOK

Sam Houston State University (SHSU) acknowledges that student organizations contribute richly to student success and persistence. The university further recognizes that students seeking to establish and participate in these organizations must comply with local, state, and federal law, university policies, Student Code of Conduct, and Texas State University System (TSUS) Rules and Regulations. To receive and retain official recognition, student organizations must annually meet the requirements listed in this handbook.

The purpose of this handbook is:

- A. To define and describe a recognized student organization.
- B. To outline the requirements for student organizations to be officially recognized by Sam Houston State University.
- C. To establish the rights and responsibilities of students acting in an official organization capacity.
- D. To outline risk management and event planning expectations.
- E. To share additional policies and regulations governing student organization activities.
- F. To provide conduct and disciplinary procedures for recognized student organizations.

Definition of a Recognized Student Organization (RSO)

A student organization is a formally recognized group that is joined together for a common lawful purpose, consists of a minimum of 5 student members, and operates in partnership with at least one full-time faculty/staff advisor. Student organizations may have different affiliations (i.e., affiliate with a national organization). SHSU recognized student organizations include, but are not limited to, all student organizations supported by the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement, Club Sports, Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life (FSL), and College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM).

Requirements for Official Student Organization Recognition

- A. All student organizations are required to register with the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement. Regardless of recognition status, all student organizations are subject to all University policies and guidelines, including the Student Code of Conduct, and all local, state, and federal laws including the Stop Campus Hazing Act of 2024, and TSUS Rules and Regulations.
- B. To obtain University recognition, a student organization must first complete all required registration materials, forms, training, and related steps listed in the Student Organization Handbook through Campus Activities & Involvement. Each subsequent year, every RSO must renew its registration with the same office to retain active status. Organizations that fail to meet these obligations will be placed on inactive status until all requirements are satisfied.

Procedure for Recognition of New Organizations

- A. Any group of students who wish to create a student organization may seek recognition with SHSU. Recognition of a student organization does not guarantee official university approval of all student organization activities. University recognition of a student organization may be withdrawn at any time if the organization is found in violation of any university policies and procedures and/or federal, state, or local laws.
- B. Groups seeking recognition will submit a New Organization Application via BearkatHQ (shsu.edu/BearkatHQ). The application must be submitted by a responsible student member associated with the group.
- C. Applications must be submitted between the first day of class during the fall semester and the last day of the spring semester of the academic calendar associated with the Huntsville campus, including the COM campus. Applications cannot be submitted during the summer to ensure new organizations align with updated requirements and responsibilities for the upcoming academic year.
- D. The application shall include:
 1. Organization's name (See section titled *Naming a Student Organization*).
 2. Constitution that adheres to the Constitution Checklist provided by the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement.
 3. Statement of unique purpose/description of the organization.
 4. Name and contact information for president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and faculty/staff advisor (*advisors can advise no more than 3 student organizations*).
 5. Number of student members (minimum 5 required).
 6. Intent to affiliate with internal or external organizations (if applicable).
- E. At the time of filing, the president or contact person for the student organization will complete New Organization Training and electronically sign a statement indicating that they are familiar with and will uphold all university policies including the Student Organization Handbook and Student Code of Conduct.
- F. Additional Oversight
 1. Student organizations with high levels of inherent risk that are looking to promote and develop common sport and/or recreation-related interest may be required to also report to Club Sports (within the Department of Campus Recreation) for additional oversight of organization activities.
 - a. Club Sports will be consulted if an organization meets the definition of a Club Sport (i.e., organizations with the primary purpose of providing a program of instruction, recreation, or competition in a specific sport or for a group of students who share a common interest in physical activity, along with promoting and developing the skills necessary for a particular sport).
 2. Student organizations classified as social Greek letter organizations with regional or national governance will be required to report to FSL for additional oversight of organization activities.
 3. Student organizations primarily situated at the COM or comprised of student

members from the COM will be required to work with the COM Student Affairs Liaison for additional oversight of organizational activities.

4. Once a recognized organization aligns with Club Sports, FSL, or COM, the organization must remain under their supervision. If a Club Sport, FSL, or COM organization loses its recognition as a Club Sport, FSL, or COM organization, it will also lose its status as a recognized student organization.
- G. When the New Organization Application has been submitted, university staff will review the application to ensure completeness and that the submission does not duplicate any other student organization or program currently or previously in existence at the university.
1. If the New Organization Application does not meet the requirements for recognition, the reviewer will notify the pending organization with recommendations and the decision regarding their status. The organization may then work with university staff to review the requirements for recognition.
 2. If an application meets all requirements for recognition, the application will be submitted to the Vice President for Student Affairs or their appointed designee to approve the application.
 3. If a New Organization Application is denied university recognition and the applicant wishes to appeal, they may do so by formally appealing, in writing, to the Director of Campus Activities & Involvement. The Director or their designee will review the appeal and application and make a final decision regarding the approval/denial of the application.
 4. After the review and/or appeal process, the president and faculty/staff advisor will be notified as to whether the application has been approved or denied.
 5. Student organizations that fail to become officially recognized by SHSU will be considered external constituents and will not be afforded the privileges of a RSO and must still abide by all university policies, guidelines, the Student Code of Conduct, or any applicable local, state, or federal laws.
 6. Registration confers no endorsement by the university of the organization's viewpoints, objectives, programs, or activities. The University assumes no responsibility or liability for the content or conduct of any program or activity sponsored by a registered student organization.

Maintenance of RSOs

A. Annual Registration

1. All student organizations are required to submit an annual registration on BearkatHQ to be recognized for the upcoming academic year. Annual registration must be submitted by a student member associated with the organization. Registration includes:
 - a. List of the officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Primary Contact, and On-Campus Advisor must be included).
 - b. Number of student members (minimum 5 required).
 - c. Attachment of an updated constitution that meets the current constitution checklist provided in the re-registration process

2. Annual registration opens on April 15 and closes on August 1 for all student organizations other than those associated with the College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM).
3. COM organizations will complete an annual re-registration process with embedded training by September 1.

B. Training

1. Student organizations must also complete the required annual training through the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement to be recognized, as outlined in Texas Education Code Sections 51.936, 51.9361, and 51.9362.
 - a. Student Organization Required Training (SORT)
 1. The president and one (1) additional officer from each organization must complete SORT via BearkatHQ between August 1-September 15 and then relay the information covered to their entire membership roster.
 - b. Required Student Organization Meeting (RSOM)
 1. One student member from each organization must attend a RSOM in its entirety and relay the information covered to their entire membership roster. RSOM typically occurs at the beginning of each fall semester.
2. COM organizations will complete training as noted in Part A of this section.
3. Once registration and training completions have been processed, recognition will be confirmed or denied. If an organization does not meet the requirements for continued recognition, university staff will provide notification of loss of recognition to the student representatives and the organization's advisor.

C. BearkatHQ Updates

- a. To maintain recognized status throughout the academic year, student organizations must update the following items on BearkatHQ within 5 business days:
 1. About page
 2. Roster
 3. Constitution
 4. Constitution changes must be emailed to the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement, and if applicable, their aligned areas of supervision (FSL, Club Sports, or COM) for review and approval. Upon approval, the constitution must be uploaded to the student organization's BearkatHQ page.
- b. Student organizations that also report to Club Sports, FSL, or COM may follow protocols designated by those areas.

D. Conditional Status

1. Conditional status may be considered for student organizations that do not meet the requirements for recognition but are actively working toward compliance with the minimum requirements to be a recognized student organization.
 - a. Student organizations may be placed on conditional status if they

- f. A limited allotment of complimentary photocopies provided through Campus Activities & Involvement.
 - g. Access, on a space-available basis, to approved campus advertising media for promoting organizational activities and membership, consistent with SHSU Posting Guidelines.
 - h. Authority to collect membership dues and to conduct fundraising projects.
 - i. Permission to invite guest speakers to campus in accordance with the university's [Expressive Activity Policy](#).
- C. If an organization is not recognized by the university, it is not allowed to represent itself as such. Representing a student organization as being recognized by the university, when not officially recognized, will result in disciplinary action by the university for all involved individuals as well as the student organization as necessary.
- D. Limitations on Privileges
- a. SHSU does not grant student organizations the right to speak on behalf of the university.
 - b. Unless an event is formally cosponsored with a department or program associated with SHSU, student organizations may not promote an engagement that suggests it is sponsored or sanctioned by the university.
 - c. The activity of student organizations or their members, taking place off university-owned or controlled property, is entirely the responsibility of the student organization. The university accepts no responsibility for off-campus activities; however, the university will not ignore any activity that reflects adversely on the university or the community and will investigate/adjudicate situations as necessary.

Membership

- A. Membership in an organization is limited to currently enrolled Sam Houston State University students unless national regulations require the membership of SHSU faculty or staff beyond the advisor position.
- B. Student membership in an organization must be no fewer than five (5).
- C. Membership is not denied to anyone based on race, creed, ancestry, marital status, citizenship, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, unless otherwise permitted under 20 U.S.C. §1681 section (a)(6) or other federal or state law.

Officers

- A. Holding an official RSO office or university office/title (e.g., university committees, Board of Regents' Advisory Committees, off-campus conferences, or programs, etc.) is limited to currently enrolled students at the university except when national regulations dictate that an office be held by a faculty or staff member at the university.
- B. To be eligible to serve as an officer in a RSO, a student must:
 1. must be a currently enrolled student at the university;
 2. have and maintain a 2.0 SHSU grade point average cumulatively;

3. not be on disciplinary probation.
- C. Advisors of student organizations are required to assist the student organization with the verification process for determining organization officer eligibility.

Organization Advisor

- A. An Organization Advisor refers to a full-time faculty or staff member who serves as a resource in an advisory capacity to a recognized student organization at Sam Houston State University (SHSU) advising no more than three (3) recognized student organizations, is older than 21 years of age, and is not a currently registered student at SHSU as dictated by Texas Education Code, Section 51.9361.
- B. An organization advisor to a RSO shall:
 1. Safeguard institutional interests by ensuring the organization's meetings, events, and operations comply with all university policies, procedures, and guidelines, in addition to, applicable local, state, and federal laws.
 2. Offer counsel on the RSO's governance, programming, and overall activities to promote effective, policy-compliant operations.
 3. Successfully complete the university's risk-management program during the first year of service as an advisor. Although only required once, advisors are strongly encouraged to attend this training annually alongside their organization's mandated participants.
 4. Successfully complete Crowd Control Manager training every two years and serve in the capacity if and when needed as outlined in the Student Organization Handbook.
 5. Participate in university-provided Clery Act training each year and remain knowledgeable of the duty to report crimes in accordance SHSU Finance & Operations Policy FO-64.
 6. Assist the student organization with the verification process for determining organization officer eligibility (i.e., student GPA and enrollment status).
 7. Advise no more than three student organizations at a time.
- C. If an advisor resigns or is removed, the RSO must appoint a new advisor within ten (10) calendar days and submit the updated advisor information to the Department of Campus Activities and Involvement.

Naming a Student Organization

- A. RSO names must be unique and distinguishable from existing RSOs.
- B. Use Of University Name
 1. GSO names may not give the impression that the organization is an official unit of SHSU. This includes, but is not limited to, using the University name of Sam Houston State University or any abbreviation of the University name as part of a GSO's name. This includes student organizations previously grandfathered from this rule.
 2. Only SSOs may use the name of the University or an abbreviation of the name of the University as part of or in conjunction with the organization's name.

3. Current RSOs with names that do not meet the criteria regarding use of the University name will have until the following re-registration period to request and obtain formal approval of name change.
- C. RSO Name Changes
1. RSOs may not change their organization's name after formal approval for recognition except in the following situations:
 2. The student organization has not registered for recognition for more than one (1) academic year. If the group decides to reapply for recognition, they can request a name change during the reactivation process.
 3. The student organization has disconnected or connected with a different national organization/affiliation.
 4. The RSO name is out of compliance with policies, guidelines, or statutes.
- D. Restrictions to Name Changes:
1. RSOs may not dissolve a student organization with the sole purpose of renaming the organization with the same purpose.
 2. Student organization names are not permitted to duplicate any existing program, department, or student organization already established on campus.
 3. The Department of Student Campus Activities & Involvement reserves the right to approve or deny any name change request for student organization.

Recognized Student Organization Classifications

All recognized student organizations (RSO) at Sam Houston State University will be classified as one of the following:

- A. **General Student Organization (GSO)** – a type of recognized student organization that operates on its own as a separate third-party entity with the general support of the University and is maintained by its student members. Through the annual recognition process for student organizations, GSOs agree to follow university policies/guidelines and are eligible for specific benefits including use of university facilities, eligibility for funding through the Campus Life Development Fund & Student Affairs Travel Fund, access to tabling, student organization fairs, etc.
- B. **Sponsored Student Organization (SSO)** – a type of recognized student organization that has direct affiliation to a University Unit (department or program), and functions in close alignment with the University's mission. These organizations have institutionally dedicated resources such as funding, office space, equipment, stipends, storage, etc. SSOs are often essential to a University Unit's operations and are typically advised by someone in the Unit. These organizations are considered an extension of a University Unit and must follow all university regulations, policies, standards, business practices, and other applicable rules. Through their affiliation with a University Unit, these organizations may receive access to additional benefits, but they are not eligible for funding through the Campus Life Development Fund & Student Affairs Travel Fund.

Determination of Student Organization Classification

- A. The Department of Campus Activities & Involvement determines organization categorization based on the following criteria:
 - 1. The nature of the organization's relationship to the University
 - 2. The scope and/or complexity of activities and operations
 - 3. Level of perceived or potential risk associated with the organization and its activities
 - 4. Organization's funding source and the amount of resources received
- B. Classifications cannot be altered without written approval from Campus Activities & Involvement and the RSO's affiliated university unit or program. To change classification, an RSO officer must meet with Campus Activities & Involvement staff.
- C. RSOs must not misrepresent their classification, provide misleading or false information to Campus Activities & Involvement to achieve a classification, or misuse university resources.
- D. Campus Activities & Involvement may reevaluate RSO classifications at any time and may reclassify an RSO at its sole discretion. The Director of Campus Activities & Involvement shall have the final determination of an RSO's classification.

Classification Overview:

Below is a chart detailing items that apply to each organization classification.

	General Student Organization	Sponsored Student Organization
Annual Registration required by August 1	Yes	Yes
Student Organization Required Training (SORT)	Yes	Yes
Recognized Student Organization Meeting (RSOM) (formerly SOLR)	Yes	Yes
Additional Training	Not typically	Yes, if assigned
Request funding via Campus Life Development Fund	Yes	No
Request funding via Student Affairs Travel Fund	Yes	No
Use of University Name and Trademark	Not typically	Yes, with IMC approval.
Staff Support	Full-time SHSU employee as Advisor	Full-time SHSU employee as Advisor, typically faculty/staff within their sponsoring University Unit.
Bank Account	Off-campus account needed if handling money. Account name may not include any form of the name of SHSU.	SHSU Account, if funded
SHSU Tax Exemption	No	Yes, if purchasing with SHSU funds from a SHSU internal account following SHSU Purchasing Policies and Guidelines. May not use for any purpose aside from purchasing.
Must Follow	All federal, state, and local laws. All TSUS and SHSU policies and guidelines.	All federal, state, and local laws. All TSUS and SHSU policies and guidelines. Must follow the same requirements and prohibitions as the University.

Student Organization Finances

Bank Accounts

- A. Student organizations are prohibited from using the University's name and/or any abbreviation of the University's name in their name when establishing bank accounts off university property. See SHSU Finance & Operations Policy FO-14.
- B. Student organizations are prohibited from using the university's tax number for the purposes of establishing an off-campus bank account (see further restrictions under *Taxes* section below).
- C. General Student Organization (GSO) Bank Accounts
 1. If a GSO handles any money, they are required to open a bank account of their choosing.
 2. GSO Advisors may not manage or access the funds or financial records of recognized student organizations whose accounts are off university property. Prohibited activities include receipting funds, check signing, authorizing spending, reconciling accounts, and directly receiving any financial mail. See *TSUS Rules and Regulations, Chapter VI, Section 6.2*.
 3. Advisors may not use personal funds for organizational expenses with the intent of reimbursement. See *TSUS Rules and Regulations, Chapter VI, Section 6.2*.
- D. Sponsored Student Organization (SSO) Bank Accounts
 1. SSOs must maintain a bank account with the University that SHSU employees actively manage using SHSU accounting and purchasing protocols.
 2. Advisors may not use personal funds for organizational expenses with the intent of reimbursement. See *TSUS Rules and Regulations, Chapter VI, Section 6.2*.

Taxes

- A. Student organizations are prohibited from using the university's tax number for any tax purpose unless they are classified as a SSO and are conducting official business using only university funds from an internal university account for the sole purpose of eliminating sales tax from their purchase.
- B. General Student Organization (GSO) Taxes
 1. All student organizations are required to operate as non-profit organizations. Student organizations, however, are not automatically registered as 501(c)3 organizations, and do not, therefore, automatically receive tax-exempt status.
- C. Tax Exemption Status
 1. Some student organizations may receive tax exemption status through an external "parent" organization that has the tax exemption status (e.g., national social fraternity and sororities).
 2. Student organizations may pursue obtaining their own tax exemption status through the Internal Revenue Service.
 - a. Annual Filing Requirements

- i. Organizations recognized as tax-exempt are generally required to file annual information with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), determined by the organization's annual gross receipts and assets.
- ii. Other organizations should seek advice through the IRS for additional information regarding taxes and reporting responsibilities.
- iii. Additional information about taxes and reporting is provided on the Campus Activities & Involvement website, but the student organization is solely responsible for determining and complying with any tax obligations.

RSO Solicitation and Fundraising

- A. Solicit: To sell or offer for sale any property or service, whether for immediate or future delivery, and the receipt of or request for any gift or contribution.
- B. Student organizations may solicit and fundraise with the approval of their advisor, for their projects or charitable activities.
- C. Any student organizations collecting financial donations for which there is no exchange of merchandise or services shall keep accurate records and deposit/use the funds according to the organization's financial procedures.
- D. Solicitation and fundraising on campus may require approval through various departments.

Raffles

Only a Sam Houston State University recognized student organization that is also a qualified organization under the Charitable Raffle Enabling Act (Tex. Occ. Code Ann. § 2002) may conduct raffles. A detailed video explaining the process is available on the Campus Activities & Involvement website.

- A. A raffle is defined as the award of one or more prizes by chance at a single occasion among a single pool or group of persons who have paid or promised a thing of value for a ticket that represents a chance to win a prize.
- B. Any raffle requests from Club Sports, FSL, or COM organizations should be sent to their respective areas for approval following the State Qualifications.
- C. Qualifications for the Charitable Raffle Enabling Act
 1. To qualify as an organization that can legally conduct a raffle under the Charitable Raffle Enabling Act, groups must meet one of the following categories and must provide documentation:
 - a. CATEGORY 1
 - i. Is an unincorporated nonprofit organization.
 - ii. Is not distributing any income to members or officers.

- iii. Has for the 3 years preceding the proposed raffle either had officers elected by the membership or is affiliated with a state or national organization that is organized to perform the same purposes.
 - iv. Does not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office in any manner.
 - v. Does qualify for and has obtained an exemption from federal income tax under Section 501(c), Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
- b. CATEGORY 2
- i. Is incorporated under the Texas Non-Profit Corporation Act or is a formally recognized local chapter or affiliate of a parent organization that is incorporated under the Texas Non-Profit Corporation Act or is a formally recognized local chapter or affiliate of a parent organization that has received a certificate of authority from the State of Texas.
 - ii. Is not distributing any income to members or officers.
 - iii. Has existed for 3 years before the raffle and elected officers by the membership or formally recognize them as a local chapter.
 - iv. Does not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office in any manner.
 - v. Has nationally or locally obtained an exemption from federal income tax under Section 501(c), Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
- c. CATEGORY 3
- i. Is a qualified religious society that has been in existence in Texas for at least 10 years and distributes no income to its members; Or
 - ii. Is a qualified volunteer emergency medical service Or
 - iii. Is a qualified volunteer fire department.
- D. Student organizations who qualify must fill out and submit an SHSU Raffle Request Form at least 10 business days in advance of the scheduled raffle date.
- E. Requesting student organizations must provide documentation to prove qualification for a charitable raffle.
- F. Raffle prizes must be in possession, or the organization must post a bond for the full amount of money value of such prize before raffle tickets are sold. The prize awarded at a raffle may not be money, and the value of the prize may not exceed \$75,000.
- G. The following must be printed on each raffle ticket sold or offered for sale:
- 1. The name of the university group conducting the raffle and the address. of the organization or a named officer of the organization.
 - 2. The price of the ticket.
 - 3. A general description of each prize that has a value of more than \$10 and is to be awarded in the raffle.
 - 4. The date on which the raffle prize(s) will be awarded.

- H. Student organizations must receive approval before any tickets are sold.
- I. If a student organization does not meet the qualifications to legally conduct a raffle under the Charitable Raffle Enabling Act, it is illegal to conduct a raffle, and the request will be denied.
- J. Student organizations are not allowed to conduct two raffles at one time, and may not host more than four raffles in one calendar year (January-December).

Campus Life Development Fund

- A. Only GSOs can apply for the Campus Life Development Fund.
- B. New organizations: Must request Seed Money (\$500 max, one-time only) before applying for regular funding.
- C. Established organizations: Can request any amount for regular event funding.
- D. Campus Life Development Fund is limited to on-campus and Huntsville events ONLY.
- E. For all Campus Life Development Fund requirements and request forms, please visit the [CLDF Website](#) or access it via BearkatHQ.

Travel

- A. Student organizations, other than Club Sports, traveling 4 hours or more away from their home campus, must submit a Student Organization Travel Form via BearkatHQ at least 10 business days before travel, which includes a listing for participants and emergency contact information. Club Sports must follow travel policies dictated by the Department of Campus Recreation.
- B. Student organization leaders are strongly encouraged to meet with university staff to discuss travel plans.
- C. In the event of an emergency while traveling, (such as, but not limited to, a health concern, injury, accident, or natural disaster), local police must be called at 911 immediately during domestic travel. For international travel, the appropriate local authority must be contacted.
- D. Travel leaders must carry an itinerary for the trip and a list of participants at all times during travel and all associated activities. Participants must carry an itinerary and the names and telephone numbers of all travel leaders during the travel and associated activities.
- E. If traveling and staying overnight, student organizations are required to complete and submit a Clery Act Travel Form with the University Police Department for compliance and record keeping.

Student Affairs Travel Fund

- A. Only GSOs can apply for the Student Affairs Travel Fund.
- B. Organizations must be in good standing and can only include students with a 2.0+ GPA and are part-time enrolled in the travel request form.
- C. Travel forms must be submitted 30 working business days prior to travel dates.
- D. Travel is limited to the US only - no international funding.

- E. For all Travel requirements and request forms, please visit the Travel Website or access it via BearkatHQ.

RSO Marketing

Use of University Branding and Trademark

- A. General Student Organization (GSO)
1. No GSO design can state or give the impression that the organization is a unit of Sam Houston State University.
 2. To maintain their unique identity, GSOs are encouraged to design and use their own unique logos and visual branding to represent their organization. These custom designs may not include or incorporate trademarks licensed by SHSU, including logos, icons or taglines.
 3. GSOs are independent, student-run groups. As such, they are not permitted to use any official university marks or trademarked imagery.
 4. GSOs may show their connection to the university in their marketing and promotional materials by using the University's colors and/or using the name of the University in a locational sense that indicates the GSO is located at Sam Houston State University (e.g., student organization name at SHSU). The University name should be in plain text in a font size no larger than the rest of the organization's name. All materials and/or items must appropriately signal the relationship with the University as opposed to being a part of the University.
 5. GSOs may be permitted special use of university marks on products/merchandise or materials for specific events such as national or college-to-college competitions or when students are acting as official university representatives at university events (ex. Club Sports). Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by SHSU Campus Activities & Involvement and Integrated Marketing Communications.
 6. GSO's are prohibited from submitting IT or IMC requests for an SHSU email account or graphic designs.
- B. Sponsored Student Organization (SSO)
1. SSOs are considered an official extension of the University with University Unit support and may use designated Institutional Marks for official campus business in accordance with SHSU Branding Guidelines. All branded items must include the University department or organization's name and logo prominently, per guidelines published by SHSU Integrated Marketing Communications.
- C. Additional Considerations
1. All Sam Houston State University logos are registered and may not be used without prior approval from SHSU Integrated Marketing Communications. SHSU logos must not be altered in any way, if approved to use.

2. All RSOs must use a licensed vendor from the approved licensed vendor list when using the SHSU name or marks. The list of licensed vendors is available on the SHSU IMC website.
3. All RSOs must request written permission from licensing@shsu.edu in order to resell branded items, including for fundraising purposes. Items for resale or fundraising purposes will have applicable royalties assessed.
4. Unless classified as a SSO, student organizations are not permitted to request and/or obtain SHSU email addresses, submit IT requests (including Blackboard), and/or Integrated Marketing Communication requests (e.g., Asana) without prior authorization from the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement.

Marketing Designs, Posting, & Distribution

- A. RSOs are required to have all promotional items and printed materials approved by the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement prior to purchasing and distribution.
 1. Exception: All Club Sports, FSL, COM, and SSO organizations will need to seek approval through their respective areas.
 2. SHSU Branding Guidelines extend to all possible promotional items or printed materials that student organizations purchase and/or distribute (i.e., t-shirts, lanyards, tablecloths, stickers, keychains, flyers/posters, yard signs, etc.) must go through proper university approval.
- B. Promotional Item Designs (including t-shirts)
 1. The following criteria must be met for approval:
 - a. Design must be appropriate – no drugs/alcohol, no derogatory language.
 - b. Design must be for a RSO in good standing with the university.
 - c. Use of University marks or trademarks (if permissible) must follow SHSU Branding Guidelines and be purchased through a SHSU licensed vendor.
 - A. If the t-shirt design does not have any reference to Sam Houston State University, the student organization may use any vendor of their choosing.
 2. IMC has final approval for designs utilizing university branding. Although the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement may approve a design, there may be additional changes required by IMC before the design can be printed based on branding standards.
 3. The Department of Campus Activities & Involvement does not approve designs for other campus departments.
 4. To request approval for a design, students will need to submit request in BearkatHQ with a copy of their design (jpg, png, pdf) or to their respective department (Club Sports, FSL, or COM). If there are two sides to the design, students will need to include both sides for review.
- C. RSO Digital & Printed Marketing Designs

1. Recognized student organizations (RSOs) needing design assistance for printed materials, merchandise, etc. may seek assistance through the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement, Club Sports, FSL, or COM depending upon organization oversight.
2. If additional design assistance is needed from SHSU Integrated Marketing and Communications (IMC), the request must be made by the RSO Advisor or a professional staff member in the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement, Club Sports, FSL, or COM depending upon organization oversight.
3. All student organization materials (printed/digital) should include:
 - a. Student organization's name
 - b. Contact information
 - c. Name of event (if applicable)
 - d. Date of the event (if applicable)
 - e. Time of the event (if applicable)
 - f. Location of the event (if applicable)
4. On-campus marketing designs are typically made for the following formats:
 - a. Flyers/Posters – placards or signs intended for posting on a designated bulletin board.
 - b. LSC Digital Signage – design is periodically displayed on television monitors throughout the Lowman Student Center, requiring approval from the LSC Department.
 - c. Banners – larger signs, up to six feet in length and three feet in width, or of similar dimensions.
 - d. Table Tents – self-standing promotional units created from printed and folded cardstock and designed to be placed on any horizontal surface.
 - e. A-Frames & Sandwich Boards – any upright rigid supporting frames in the form of a triangle or an inverted V.
 - f. Yard Signs- temporary signs that are affixed to the ground with stakes or poles and intended to be displayed for a limited period of time.

D. RSO Design Approval for Posting & Distribution

1. RSOs must adhere to the [SHSU Posting & Distribution of Printed Materials Policy](#) for specific design dimensions and parameters.
2. RSO posting designs must be submitted through BearkatHQ for digital review and approval by the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement.
 - a. Exception: RSOs may post under the approval of their sponsoring University Unit provided the design lists the University Unit with contact information.
 - b. Any postings intended for campus bulletin boards require an approval stamp that can be obtained from the Department of Campus Activities & Involvement in LSC 215.
 - c. If the posting includes an event, the event must be submitted and approved in BearkatHQ prior to posting approval

E. Posting & Distribution

1. Posting and distribution details can be found in the [SHSU Posting & Distribution](#)

[of Printed Materials Policy.](#)

2. Failure to comply with the SHSU Posting & Distribution Guidelines may result in disciplinary action.

Other RSO Resources

Student Organization Fairs

- A. Recognized student organizations will be invited to participate in various student organization fairs throughout each year. Fairs will be announced via email and/or banner announcements at the top of SHSU's BearkatHQ page. To participate student organizations must:
 1. Register to participate via BearkatHQ (tables are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, unless communicated otherwise by university staff).
 2. Arrive and check in with university staff within the communicated timeframe.
 3. Must participate for the entire duration of the fair event.
 4. Provide up to two representatives who must stay at their table the entire time. Representatives are not permitted to roam the fair or surrounding areas. One table will be provided for each student organization, and no chairs (unless requested in advance for accessibility purposes). Sitting on tables is prohibited.
 5. Cancel a minimum of 48 hours in advance of the fair by emailing getinvolved@shsu.edu, if needed.
 6. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in the student organization being penalized or removed from participating in future student organization fairs.

Risk Management and Event Planning

In accordance with Texas Education Code, Section 51.9361, all recognized student organizations are required to review and complete annual Risk Management training with the university.

- A. Timeline: For student organizations seeking re-recognition, training must be completed between August 1-September 15. For new student organizations seeking recognition, training will be completed during the application process.
- B. Responsible Parties: The president and one (1) additional officer from every organization are required to successfully complete and pass Risk Management Training via the Student Organization Required Training (SORT) form on BearkatHQ during the new organization/re-activation application process. The training is self-paced and must be completed and passed for the organization to gain credit. The officers are then responsible for relaying the information covered to the entire membership of their organization. Any other member of a student organization who is not otherwise required to complete training may do so. If the position of president is vacant, the student organization must designate another student in a leadership position and must contact the Campus Activities & Involvement to identify the role of the student leader in the student organization. Advisors must complete training within their first year of advisement and are encouraged to complete training annually. Training topics will include, but are not limited to:
 1. Possession and use of alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs, including penalties

- for possession or use.
 - 2. Overdose awareness and appropriate response training.
 - 3. Hazing.
 - 4. Sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct and harassment.
 - 5. Fire and other safety issues, including the possession and use of firearms or other weapons or explosive devices.
 - 6. Student travel.
 - 7. Behavior at parties and other events held by a student organization.
 - 8. Adoption of a student organization risk management policy.
 - 9. Issues regarding persons with disabilities, including a review of applicable requirements of federal and state law, and any related policies of the institution, for providing reasonable accommodations and modifications to address the needs of students with disabilities, including access to the activities of the student organization.
- C. Records of completion will be retained by Campus Activities & Involvement for 3 academic years unless the university records retention schedule changes.

Meetings & Events

- A. Student organizations are prohibited from advertising or promoting any event or activity in a manner that suggests that the event or activity is sponsored by the University unless classified as a sponsored student organization.
- B. Student organization leaders and advisors are expected to work together to plan meetings/ events while assessing and mitigating potential risks.
- C. Student organizations wishing to host a meeting or event on or off campus must complete an Event Submission in BearkatHQ within the following timelines based on event level:
NOTE: Bearkat HQ event submission is not required if the event qualifies as an expressive activity, as defined by the Expressive Activity Policy.
 - 1. Level 1 and 2 event submissions must be made 5 business days in advance.
 - 2. Level 3 event submissions must be made 30 days in advance.
- D. Level Definitions & Information
 - 1. Level 1: Low-risk events (e.g., tabling and reoccurring general body meetings)
 - a. Approvers: Student Organization President and Advisor + Campus Activities & Involvement, Club Sports, FSL, or COM.
 - b. Submission required in BearkatHQ at least 5 business days in advance.
 - c. Location reservation and confirmation are the organization's responsibility.
 - 2. Level 2: Medium-risk events (e.g., open to more than general membership, under 300 people in attendance, events social in nature (ex: Parties, Bid Days, Probates or any event that a University official deems social.)
 - a. Approvers: Level 1 approvers + Campus Activities & Involvement, Club Sports, FSL, or COM.
 - b. Submission required in BearkatHQ at least 5 business days in advance.
 - c. For events with 250 or more in attendance, a Crowd Control Manager is required to attend for the duration of the event per the

National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) 1 – Fire Code, NFPA 101 – Life Safety Code and the International Fire Code (e.g., all advisors are required to train and become certified as Crowd Control Managers). 28 Texas Administrative Code §34.303.

- d. Advisor attendance recommended, if not otherwise required to serve as Crowd Control Manager.
 - e. Wristbands for attendance may be required.
 - f. Location reservation and confirmation is the organization's responsibility.
3. Level 3: High-risk events (e.g., open event, 300+ attendance and social in nature (ex: Parties, Bid Days, Probates or any event that a University official deems social), events with alcohol involved, or hosted at Gibbs Ranch/Austin Hall/Peabody Library)
- a. Approvers: Level 1 & 2 approvers + Review and approval by the University Event Safety Group, comprised of professional staff members at SHSU.
 - b. Submission required in BearkatHQ at least 30 days in advance.
 - c. University Police Department (UPD) presence must be requested at least 30 days in advance and secured at least 15 days prior to the event.
 - i. Events may be cancelled or required to reschedule if Law Enforcement cannot be confirmed at least 15 days prior to the event.
 - ii. Law Enforcement request and confirmation documentation must be attached to a Level 3 Event request in BearkatHQ.
 - d. Location reservation and confirmation is the organization's responsibility.
- C. Events may be required to follow additional recommendations and requirements based on the venue or university staff.
- D. Student organizations are prohibited from partnering with 3rd party promoters to host events on or off campus.
- E. Student organizations inviting off-campus vendors (DJs, inflatable games, etc.) for events must meet standards set forth by SHSU Compliance & Insurance.

Student Organization Conduct and Discipline

- A. Any student in violation of any of these guidelines outlined in the student handbook will result in the following disciplinary action.
- a. Level 1: Educational Intervention (1st Violation)
 - i. i.e. any violation of the student organization handbook guidelines.
 - ii. Action:
 - 1. Required chapter leadership meeting with CAI or FSL or Campus Rec staff (President, Risk Manager, Social Chair)
 - 2. Chapter completes a brief reflection including a corrective action plan (1–2 pages)
 - b. Level 2: Structured Accountability & Skill Building (2nd Violation)
 - i. i.e. any second violation of the student organization handbook guidelines.
 - ii. Action:

1. All Level 1 elements plus:
 - a. Mandatory risk management retraining for: Executive board and Event planners (not just officers)
 2. Temporary requirement: All required submissions (i.e. marketing, events, resources) must be submitted earlier than standard (e.g., +2 days) Or require a pre-submission consult with staff
- c. Level 3: Loss of Privileges
- i. i.e. any third violation OR high-risk violation of the student organization handbook guidelines.
 - ii. Action:
 1. Temporary restriction on certain GSO privileges (social probation), including but not limited to: No social events, No off-campus events, No events with alcohol, Loss of recruitment privileges, Loss of marketing privileges, etc.
 2. Restriction lasts until:
 - a. Chapter completes a restorative project, such as: Risk management workshop for new members, Creation of an internal procedure checklist , Presentation to designated pro-staff on lessons learned, OR a time designated by pro-staff (not to exceed one full year).
- ci. Level 4: Formal Conduct Process
- i. i.e. Continued noncompliance or intentional disregard to anything outlined in the student organization handbook.
 - ii. Action:
 - iii. Referral to formal organizational conduct through the Dean of Students' Office
 - iv. Potential for: Extended social suspension, National organization involvement, Increased monitoring, deactivation of organization.

Student Organization Grievances

- A. Any member of the university community may file a complaint regarding a RSO when they believe that the student organization has failed to comply with university policies or guidelines and/or federal, state, or local laws. Complaints regarding Club Sports, FSL, or COM will be forwarded to those respective areas.
1. Complaints may be filed through the Student Organization Conduct-Grievance Form located on BearkatHQ, through their affiliated Department (i.e., Club Sports, FSL, or COM), or through the [Incident Report Form](#) located on the Dean of Students webpage
 2. University staff will review complaints regarding the Student Organization Handbook, student organization constitutions, and other low-level university policies.
 3. All complaints regarding the Student Code of Conduct, other high-level conduct violations, or alleged violations of law will be reported to the Dean of Students Office or the Office of Title IX & Discrimination Resolution as appropriate.

- B. University staff may investigate the complaint, and if a hearing is needed, they will determine the proper hearing body for the case or refer it to the proper department.
 - 1. University staff may investigate the alleged violations and notify the student organization in writing of any possible policy or guidelines violations.
 - 2. The student organization will then receive the opportunity to review the allegations and provide any relevant information on their behalf. The organization is required to meet with a university staff member as requested.
- C. After the review, university staff will determine if the student organization is responsible for any violations of university policies or laws. If the group is found responsible, university staff may impose sanctions that include any of the following:
 - 1. Suspensions of the rights of the organization to:
 - a. Use university facilities.
 - b. Sponsor any activities.
 - c. Participate in campus events.
 - 2. Suspension of Recognition or Placement on Conditional Status
 - a. An organization placed on Suspension of Recognition may not function on or off campus in any manner and all of the general rights of recognized student organizations are withdrawn.
 - b. An organization placed on Conditional Status will be required to work with university staff to achieve compliance to become recognized.
 - c. A timeline for suspension or conditional status will be for a certain period of time.
 - 3. Restorative Practices
 - a. The organization may be sanctioned in a manner to repair the harm caused. The organization may present an acceptable solution for restoration or university staff may provide an acceptable solution for restoration.
- D. The organization will be informed, in writing, of the decision by university staff, and a copy of the decision will remain on file with the department.
- E. Appeals:
 - 1. The student organization will have the opportunity to accept or appeal the decision made by university staff if the outcome was more severe than a warning.
 - 2. Student organizations wishing to appeal this decision will do so through the Director of Campus Activities & Involvement, Director of Campus Recreation, or the Dean of Students, or their designee, as appropriate.
 - 3. Written notice of appeal must be received by the appeal officer within 5 business days after the decision. An appeal is not simply a rehearing of the original case. An appeal must be based on:
 - a. Whether or not a fair hearing was afforded. A fair hearing includes notice of the alleged misconduct and an opportunity to present evidence.
 - b. Whether or not the sanctions levied were appropriate to the offense.
 - c. Whether or not the finding was supported by the evidence.

- d. Whether or not new evidence is introduced that was not available at the time of the hearing.
 4. Appeals will be heard by the Student Disciplinary Hearing Committee.
 5. The appellate parties, at the discretion of the appeal officer, may submit oral or written arguments to support their positions. For the appeal to be considered, the appealing party must submit all necessary documentation, including written arguments, when appropriate, to the appeal officer within 5 business days of giving notice of appeal.
 6. The Student Disciplinary Hearing Committee may approve, reject, or modify the decision, or remand the matter to the original hearing officer for reconsideration. The Student Disciplinary Hearing Committee shall respond to the appeal within 10 business days after all the documentation has been received and all testimony has been heard.
- F. University staff reserves the right to adjudicate matters not outlined in any policy or guidelines related to student organizations and may adjudicate matters as necessary. Any matters related to hazing will be investigated and adjudicated, as necessary, by the Dean of Students Office.

Related Statutes, Regulations, Rules, Policies, or Standards

[20 U.S.C. §1681 section \(a\)\(6\)](#)

[SHSU Expressive Activity Policy EA-1](#)

[SHSU Finance & Operations Policy FO-14](#)

[SHSU Finance & Operations Policy FO-64](#)

[SHSU Posting & Distribution of Printed Materials Policy](#)

[SHSU Student Code of Conduct](#)

[Texas Education Code, Sec. 51.936, 51.9361, 51.9362](#)

[TSUS Rules and Regulations, Chapter VI, Section 6.2](#)

If a university policy conflicts with the *TSUS Rules and Regulations*, state, or federal law, the preemptive or more restrictive authority prevails.

Handbook Modifications

The Department of Campus Activities and Involvement reserves the right to modify this handbook at any time. Information regarding such changes will be made available to RSO presidents and advisors. Additionally, the updated version of the handbook will be available online.