

Oxford LARP Society - Conduct and Themes Policy

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1. Application

1.1

The Conduct and Themes of the Oxford LARP Society (OLS, henceforth “the Society”) will be upheld by the Society in line with its Constitution. Where the Conduct and Themes Policy and the Constitution conflict, the Constitution maintains precedence.

1.2

As per the Constitution, once agreed this Conduct and Themes Policy may only be modified by agreement at a General Meeting.

1.3

In particular, the rules and guidelines here apply to all Society events that are advertised by the Society (and henceforth referred to as “official”) and behaviour which violates these guidelines at official events will be dealt with as a problem by the Society. An event or game may gain special exemption to the rules in this policy by the Committee. Either of these may be overruled by agreement at a General Meeting.

1.4

If someone wishes to advertise other events through official society channels (e.g. as through the Mailing Lists, Facebook Group or Announcements at official events) they must consider whether these guidelines should be followed even though the event is unofficial, and if these guidelines will not be followed they have a duty to give suitable warning of this.

1.5

If an announcement of an event fails to address whether or not it is held under the Society's Conduct and Acceptable Themes policy, Society members are positively encouraged to ask for public clarification.

1.6

Any member who wishes to organise an event that would violate these guidelines must understand that it cannot be an official event while the Society endorses this policy unless it has gained an exemption by a majority vote of the Committee, and this has not been overturned by a General Meeting.

2. Summary

2.1

Real-world discrimination is as unacceptable in the Society, just as real-world violence. The Society will not tolerate discrimination or harassment at its events.

2.2

The Society is committed to ensuring that anyone and everyone can enjoy its games. As such, it recognises that certain behaviours and themes can harm someone's enjoyment of an event or even cause emotional distress.

2.3

This Policy details themes that should not be included in any Society event, and themes that should be warned about if they are included.

2.4

This policy applies to In Character and Out Of Character discussions both in person and in online spaces operated by the Society.

2.5

The aim of this policy is not to censor discussion but to raise attention to the distress that these issues may cause other members.

2.6

Society Members are always welcome to contact the Committee with questions, queries, or concerns about this Policy, or to report a breach if a more relevant person at an event cannot be contacted. Such discussions will be kept as confidential as is reasonably possible bearing in mind that the Committee are not professionals.

2.7

Responsibility for promoting an inclusive environment lies with all those running and attending the Society and its events.

2.8

The spirit of this Policy is as if not more important than the wording. The Society takes a dim view of using the specific wording in this Policy to defend inappropriate behaviour.

3. Themes

3.1

Appendix A lists topics that will not be permitted at any official Oxford LARP Society event.

3.2

Appendix B lists topics that require careful handling. Event Organisers should make a judgment call as to whether such themes are needed to deliver their game. When topics from Appendix B are included in an event, Event Organisers should make clear how those topics will manifest so that each player can make an informed decision about whether to play that game.

3.3

Updates to the topic lists in this policy should be notified to the membership by the Committee as soon as is practical. Planned events that are affected by updates to the list should do their best to accommodate and notify attendees of changes, and should discuss with the Committee where that is impractical.

3.4

Event Organisers should take into account specific issues that may affect attendees that they have not flagged. Attendees are always welcome to raise such issues with Event Organisers directly or via the Committee and at any point during the game. Where this results in modification to the topics expected, Event Organisers must notify all attendees as soon as is practical.

3.5

Event Organisers should, as far as is reasonable, act to help attendees avoid interacting with issues that they wish to avoid. Where that will not be reasonably possible, this should be communicated to the attendee. Attendees are always welcome to raise such issues with Event Organisers directly or via the Committee and at any point during the game.

3.6

All attendees should be mindful of their portrayal of characteristics or attributes that they do not themselves possess out of character, and should be prepared to modify their portrayal if another member finds it distressing.

4. IC/OC Divide

4.1

Due to the nature of Roleplaying Games, it is necessary to maintain a strong divide between In Character (IC) and Out of Character (OC) issues. Not only does this help maintain a good roleplaying experience, but also it maintains an atmosphere in which all should feel comfortable roleplaying.

4.2

It should be very obvious that excluding or insulting another player based on an out-of-character attribute is completely unacceptable. To make this clear, consider the following example: Say that Alice is playing an Elven Wizard called Theran in a game where Elves are considered to be jerks. It is fine for other characters to insult Theran for his Elvishness, but not to insult him for Alice's natural accent.

4.3

It is also unacceptable to bring IC grudges into an OC setting or indeed to bring OC grudges into an IC setting. Again, to make this clear, consider the example: Using the previous example, if Bob's Orc Barbarian, Throg, steals Theran's magic wand, it is not fair for Alice to exclude or insult Bob out of character (or even in another game) because of this. Similarly, however, Throg should not steal Theran's magic wand because Alice ate the last biscuit.

5. Interactions with Other Attendees

5.1

Nobody should ever be forced to roleplay with another player or GM with whom they are uncomfortable OC. People should respect when this decision is made about them. In situations where a player has requested not to roleplay with a particular player or GM, the GMs should not create a situation where these people are forced to interact with each other. Such a request is not an indication that an individual is unsafe (such concerns should be reported to the Committee).

5.2

Anyone who makes such a request about another player or GM should also act to respect that request. Should either party feel for some reason that the request is not being respected, this issue should be raised promptly with a relevant person.

5.3

Event Organisers (aka GMs, Refs) inherently hold a position of authority over players in a game, and as such Event Organisers should be careful not to abuse this authority either In Character or Out of Character. Should any participant believe an Event Organiser is abusing their authority, this should be raised promptly with a relevant person.

5.4

Physical contact during games is only permitted where expressly consented to. Consent for physical contact may be provided on a specific basis or in the form of blanket consent. All attendees may withdraw consent to physical contact at any time.

5.5

Obviously, certain physical contact is never acceptable: unsolicited sexual contact and bodily harm or threat of such through intimidation are both illegal and will be dealt with extremely seriously.

6. Resolving Issues

6.1

The Society takes a very firm line on inappropriate behaviour and encourages anyone to feel comfortable raising an issue. In any instance, whoever is organising a game or event is chiefly responsible for dealing with the issue as they see appropriate, but to allow for circumstances where reporting to the organiser is not possible or would not be appropriate, the following system is in place to ensure issues can be handled:

- If an attendee during a game is the cause of a problem, it is the Event Organiser or their team who should deal with the issue.
- If an Event Organiser during a game cannot be reported to, it is a relevant Committee member who should deal with the issue.
- If a member of the committee cannot be reported to, it is the Society Chair who should deal with the issue.
- If the Society Chair is the issue then it is the rest of the Committee who should deal with the issue.

6.2

Issues should be resolved in good faith in a manner that is appropriate to the matter in hand. It is expected that most breaches of this policy will be dealt with either unofficially at the time the incident occurs by Society members, or by a quiet word with individuals by the relevant game organiser. The Society recognises that the fact that an issue has arisen does not mean anyone is necessarily at fault.

6.3

Where issues cannot be resolved informally, or it would be inappropriate to do so, disciplinary procedures as described by the Constitution may be invoked by the Committee.

6.4

Complaints with resolution of issues should be resolved by the Committee in line with the Constitution.

6.5

In any situation where this resolution process must be applied, it is likely to be because someone has been upset or made to feel upset or harmed at a Society event, and addressing that is the highest priority. As such, the wording of this policy is less important than the spirit in which it is intended, and arguments based on the specific wording of this or any other Society policy or document cannot provide a justification for or defence of behaviour which has caused harm.

Appendix A - Topics not permitted

A.1

The following themes will not be permitted in Official OLS Events:

- Sexual assault, sexual coercion or any other form of non-consensual sexual activity
- Sexual activity with those lacking the capacity to consent e.g. children
- Sexual harassment
- Use of real-world discriminatory slurs

Appendix B - Topics that require careful handling

B.1

Event Organisers should make a judgment call as to whether topics in this appendix are needed to deliver a better game. Even for themes passing this criterion, Event Organisers should consider if they can be addressed “off screen” (e.g. fade to black).

B.2

If a topic from Appendix B is declared to be included in a game, this declaration must include warnings of how that topic is expected to be portrayed or manifest itself during the game.

B.3

This list is not exhaustive since it would be impractical to form an exhaustive list.

B.4

The following list contains topics that should be considered before including:

- Discrimination on the basis of protected real world characteristics (e.g. gender/sexuality/race)
- Consensual sexual contact
- Consensual incest
- Genital mutilation or castration
- Portrayals of disabilities, including but not limited to sensory impairments, mobility impairments, and mental illness including eating disorders
- Portrayals of real-world religions
- Portrayals of real-world historical figures
- Portrayals of real-world events of an upsetting or traumatic nature
- Self-harm and suicide as an expression of emotional distress
- Torture

- Manifestation of degenerative illness
- Common phobia triggers, such as spiders or needles
- Addiction, such as drug or gambling addiction
- Homelessness
- Extreme or indiscriminate violence
- Extreme gore
- Miscarriage, stillbirth, and abortion
- Slavery or human trafficking
- Mind Control or other means of removing agency
- Domestic abuse
- Animal abuse
- Child abuse
- Eugenics, genocide, and genocide denial
- Cannibalism