



# UA Recommendations:

## *Club Recruitment Process*

47<sup>th</sup> Session

2019 - 2020

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## OVERVIEW

The club recruitment process has become a source of high-stress for incoming students as organizations have grown increasingly more exclusive. Getting involved with extracurricular activities, rather than providing an opportunity for students to get outside their comfort zone, delve into unexplored interests, or simply have fun, has submerged them into additional stress. The culmination of multiple essays, interviews, and tryout sessions has come to exclude students from campus life. Penn students are already tasked with many responsibilities early-on: adapting to a new environment, preparing for courses, and finding a social community. Applying to clubs not only increases the number of responsibilities for incoming students, but also deters them from participating at all. Students should not be adding additional barriers for others to get involved with university life.

The Undergraduate Assembly and Student Activities Council conducted a survey to better understand the impacts of the current club recruitment process. Over 200 students completed the survey and their results have been compiled within this report. A major finding from the survey results was that 87.6% of students found the club recruitment process to be stressful. This result emphasizes the necessity to reform this process in order to make it easier for students to join clubs and organizations of their interests. Professor Harkavy, Associate Vice President and founding Director of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships, asserts that activities that promote a commercialization of higher education “contribute to an overemphasis on institutional competition for wealth and status and have a devastating impact on the values and ambitions of college students.”

The following recommendations to the SAC Club Recruitment Guidelines and Enforcement Mechanisms have been created to address the student concerns and create a healthier and more inclusive environment. Each recommendation was developed with the purpose of reducing stress in the club recruitment process. The recommended guidelines should not be viewed as a final declaration, but rather should be amended and revised annually to better represent the current environment.

# UA RECOMMENDATIONS

## Club Recruitment Guidelines

Encourage SAC to adopt/amend the following Club Recruitment Guidelines:

### General Recruitment Guidelines

1. Organizations must have an open membership avenue within their group.<sup>1</sup>
2. Organizations must provide the SAC Executive Board a description of its recruitment process, including example interview questions, when registering for the Fall and Spring Activities Fairs.
3. Organizations must disclose their application/interview review criteria to all applicants and inform students of the SAC Club Recruitment Guidelines at the start of the application cycle.
4. Organizations may not collect resumes from first-year students; however, a list of activities may be requested on a written application.
5. Organizations may not hold more than 1 round of interviews or auditions during the application cycle.<sup>2</sup>
6. Organizations are prohibited from asking questions of applicants that may constitute discrimination or harassment based on the University of Pennsylvania Non-discrimination Statement and may not ask brain-teasers designed specifically to fluster candidates during interviews.
7. Organizations may not require specific attire of applicants during rounds of recruiting and may not have interviewers wear formal attire during the application process.
8. Organizations cannot discriminate based on personal bias, class year, or school of the applicant.
9. Organizations must inform each applicant by name of their application status no later than one week after the organization concludes the interview or audition process. Acceptable forms of communication include, but are not limited to, email or phone.
10. Organizations must provide SAC with the number of applicants and accepted applicants each recruitment cycle.

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<sup>1</sup> All clubs are encouraged to maintain a policy of open admissions and allow students to join at any time during the semester unless authorized by SAC (or OSA) in view of special circumstances. Clubs that decide not to hold open admissions for specific reasons are expected to send a request to SAC both explaining the reasons why such a policy would be unfeasible and describing the actions that would be taken instead in order to **reduce the rigor of their recruitment process and expand their membership**. These policies are designed to encourage clubs to hold open admissions and expand their membership size. Clubs that refuse to do either of these recommendations will potentially lose recognition.

<sup>2</sup> Organizations holding specific application processes are encouraged to have two rounds of recruitment cycles.

### **Student Government Additional Recruitment Guidelines**

1. Organizations may only require an application/election process for specific positions. All student government organizations must have an open membership avenue.

### **Performing Arts Additional Recruitment Guidelines**

1. Organizations may not hold more than 2 rounds of auditions during the application cycle and the total duration of each audition should not exceed X minutes.

### **Athletics Additional Recruitment Guidelines**

1. Organizations may not hold more than 2 rounds of tryouts during the application cycle.

## **General Recommendations**

### **Performing Arts Additional Recruitment Guidelines**

1. Competitive performance organizations are encouraged to have more rigorous sets of auditions for specific performances that they may have. Amateurs or students with little experience may be allowed membership and access to the group's practices and regular activities.

### **Competitive Organizations Additional Recruitment Guidelines**

1. Organizations that participate in national or international competitions representing the university are encouraged to have more rigorous sets of auditions/tryouts for specific competitions that they may have. Amateurs or students with little experience may be allowed membership and access to the group's practices and regular activities.

## Enforcement Mechanisms

Ask SAC to adopt the following Enforcement Mechanisms:

1. SAC is encouraged to enforce these guidelines through a combination of both positive and negative reinforcement mechanisms
  - a. Negative Reinforcement
    - i. SAC should investigate cases of clubs that are allegedly violating the club recruitment guidelines
      1. Clubs that are found to be violating club recruitment guidelines will be placed on probation for the following semester and tasked with improving their process during the probationary semester.
      2. SAC will review the recruitment improvements of probationary clubs and choose to either remove from probation or de-recognize the group
  - b. Positive Reinforcement
    - i. SAC should incentivize clubs to adhere to club recruitment guidelines and reduce exclusivity
      1. SAC should develop an open-admission fund to be used to incentivize groups to provide avenues for open admission
      2. Clubs that demonstrate a clear avenue for open admission are eligible for open-admission funding during the next budget season
2. SAC should send out a [Club Recruitment Violation Form](#) to be completed by students if a violation of the guidelines is discovered
  - a. SAC should post Club Recruitment Violation Form on website and other marketing materials
3. SAC and UA should send out Club Recruitment Survey at the end of the application cycle to allow students to provide feedback and suggestions about the current club recruitment process

# BACKGROUND

## Current Club Recruitment Guidelines

1. Organizations are prohibited from asking questions of applicants that may constitute discrimination or harassment based on the University of Pennsylvania Non-discrimination Statement.
2. Each organization must provide the SAC Executive Board a description of its recruitment process, including example interview questions, when registering for the Fall and Spring Activities Fairs.
3. Organizations may not collect resumes from first-year students; however, a list of activities may be requested on a written application.
4. Organizations must limit rounds of recruiting (i.e. interviews or auditions) to two (2) rounds per position.
5. Organizations may not ask brain-teasers designed specifically to fluster candidates during interviews.
6. Organizations may not require specific attire of applicants during rounds of recruiting except when necessary for the completion of the recruiting activity.
7. Each organization must inform each applicant by name of their application status no later than one week after the organization has made a final decision regarding their application. Acceptable forms of communication include, but are not limited to, email or phone.

## Current Club Recruitment Process

The current club recruitment process varies across different types of groups. Below is a summary of each category's recruitment processes. The summaries provided are from a limited subset of information and are not representative of all groups within that category.

### Academic/Pre-Professional

The recruitment process for academic/pre-professional groups entails an application and an interview. The application consists of questions relating to your relevant skills to the organization as well as personal information regarding your previous experiences. The interview asks applicants to elaborate on questions from their application and tests their skills. For instance, some technology focused groups have a coding challenge.

### Community Service

The recruitment process for community service groups entails an application. The application consists of questions relating to the applicant's previous experiences and interest in the group. Most



community service groups use an application to ensure students are truly committed to the organization.

## Publication

The recruitment process for publication groups entails an interest form, application and interview. The interest form is used to gauge interest from incoming students as to what parts of journalism they are interested in. The application consists of questions relating to the applicant's relevant skills to the organization as well as personal information regarding their previous experiences. The interview asks applicants to elaborate on questions from their application and tests their skills. For instance, some groups have writing submissions required.

## Performing Arts

The recruitment process for performing arts groups entails an application and an audition. The application consists of questions relating to the applicant's relevant skills to the organization as well as personal information regarding their previous experiences. The audition allows applicants to perform their skills in-person for the organization's board. Auditions can last multiple hours and applicants can be asked to perform more than once.

## Student Government

The recruitment process for student government groups entails an election or an application and an interview. The election allows members of the student body to vote to elect people into the organization and is administered by the Nominations and Elections Committee. The application consists of questions relating to the applicant's relevant skills to the organization as well as personal information regarding their previous experiences. The interview allows students to elaborate further on their application.

## Social/Cultural

The recruitment process for social/cultural groups entails a listserv sign-up or general interest form. Students can freely sign-up to be added to the listserv and invited to events. The general interest form may be used by groups to gauge student interest and place students in specific committees within the organization.

## Athletics

The recruitment process for athletics groups entails an interest form and a tryout. The interest form consists of questions relating to the applicant's previous experience and interest in the group. The tryout allows applicants to perform their skills in-person for the team. Try-outs can last multiple hours and applicants can be asked to try-out more than once.



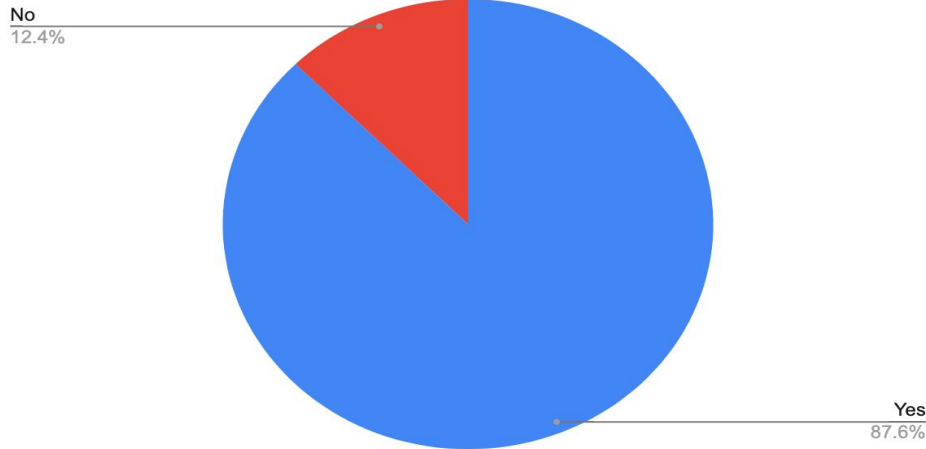
## Competitive or Instructional

The recruitment process for competitive or instructional groups entails an application and an interview. The application consists of questions relating to the applicant's previous experience and interest in the group. The interview asks applicants to elaborate on their application and demonstrate any relevant skills. Interviews may also have a technical component in which the applicant is required to solve a task or debate a topic.

# UA SURVEY RESULTS

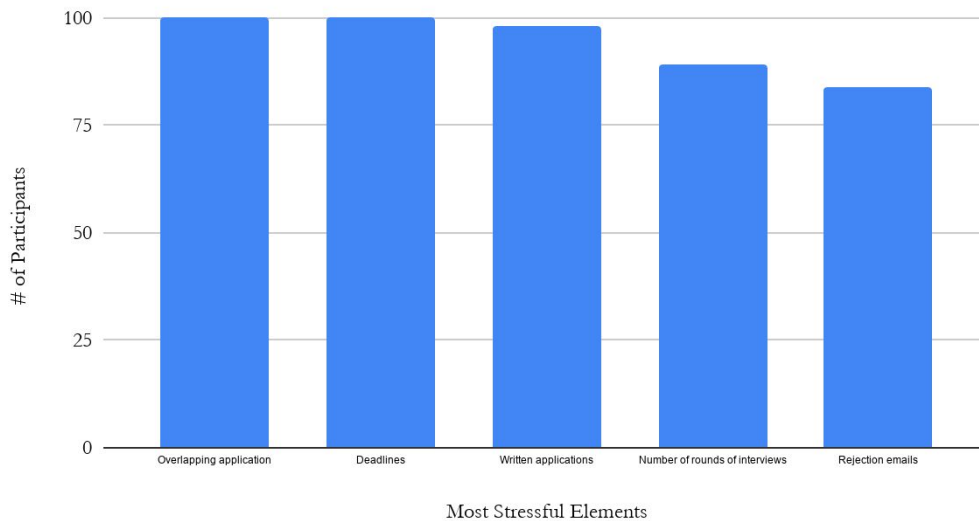
## Stress Concerns

Was the Process Stressful?



Students were asked to reflect on if the club recruitment process was stressful. A majority of students, 87.6% of students, found the club recruitment process to be stressful when asked about the process.

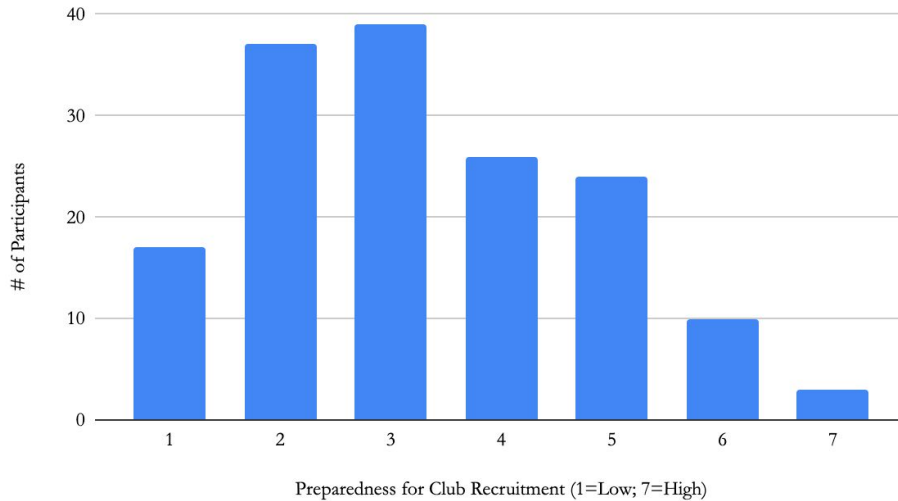
Top 5 Most Stressful Elements



Students were asked to select the most stressful elements of the club recruitment process from a predetermined list of club recruitment elements. Overlapping applications, deadlines, and written applications were found to be the top 3 most stressful elements of the club recruitment process.

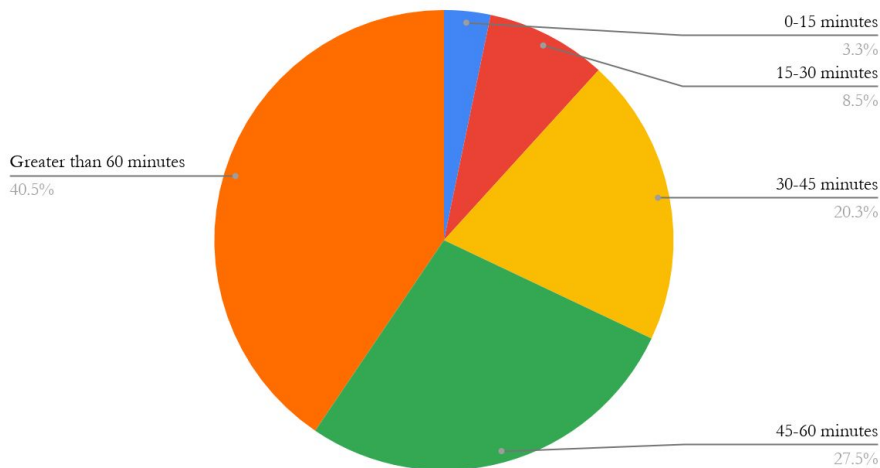
## Process Concerns

### Preparedness for Club Recruitment



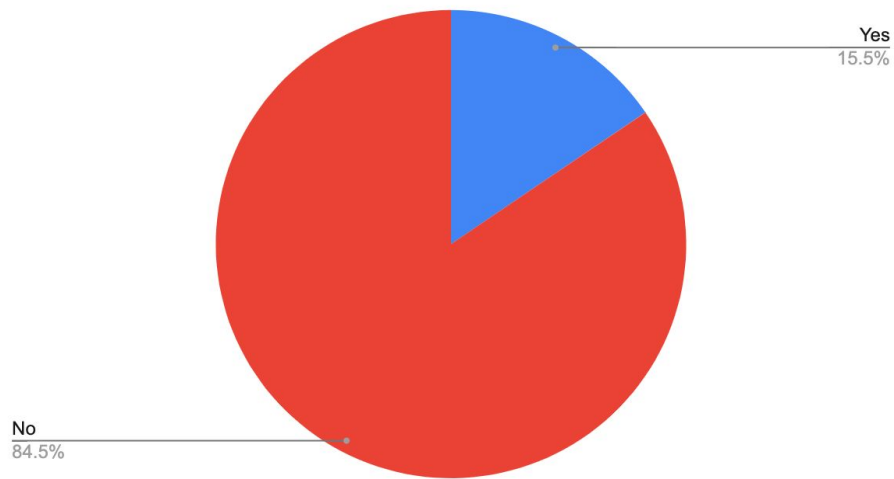
Students were asked to measure their preparedness for club recruitment on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 being the most prepared. The results show that students generally felt underprepared for the process with average scores ranging from 2 to 4.

### Length of Time Spent Applying



Students were asked to estimate the length of time spent applying for clubs and select one of five predetermined time estimates. The results show that over 40% of students spent more than an hour applying to a group.

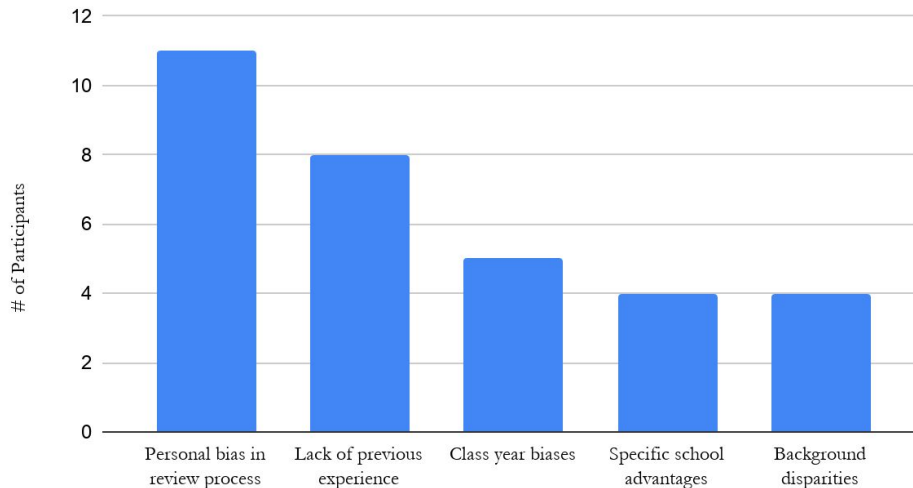
Are you aware of the Club Recruitment Guidelines?



Students were asked if they were aware of the club recruitment guidelines. A majority of students, 84.5% of students, responded that they were not aware of the club recruitment guidelines.

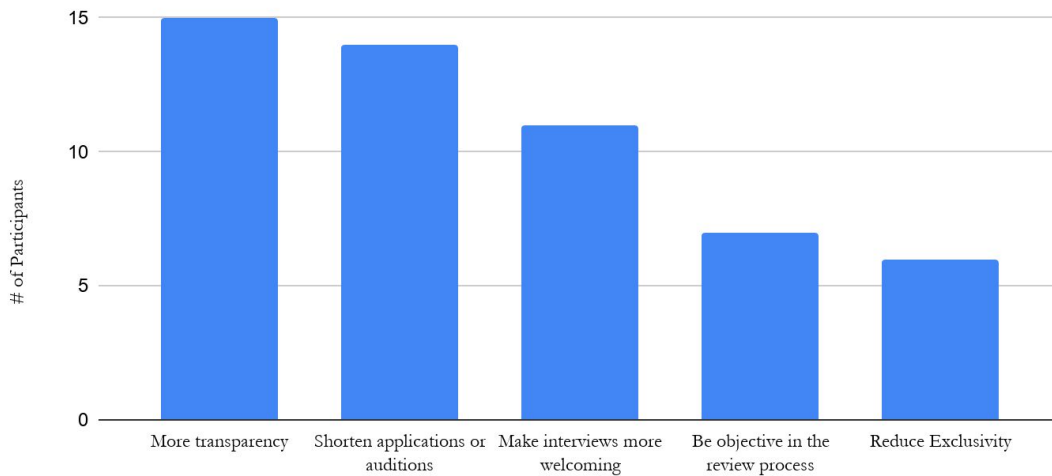
## Disadvantages and Improvements

Top 5 Disadvantages of Club Recruitment



1. **Personal bias in review process:** Students felt that personal biases in the review process have led to some groups only accepting members based on previously held friendships and not on merit. Students request that the process is objective so that all students have an equal opportunity to apply.
2. **Lack of previous experience:** Students cited that a lack of previous experience was a barrier to entry for some groups. Students who do not have previous experience with a particular group/skill do not feel it is even worth their time to apply or audition.
3. **Class year biases:** Students expressed that they feel their class year can negatively impact their chances of getting into a group. Some feel that the older your year the less likely they will be accepted.
4. **Specific school advantages:** Students explained that for some groups they felt that your school allowed for an advantage. Students feel that your school should not be a part of the review process for groups
5. **Background disparities:** Students felt that their background (e.g. socio-economic, racial) could negatively impact their ability to apply or audition for a group. Without the previous experience or proper tools required this puts some at a disadvantage.

## Top 5 Improvements for Club Recruitment.



1. **More transparency:** Students expressed that through added transparency the process will be less daunting and uncertain to students applying. They urged groups to disclose the application and interview review criteria alongside the application.
2. **Shorten applications or auditions:** Students highlighted that through a shortened process, they would be able to better focus on a single group or school as opposed to many. They ask that each group is able to shorten their process by at least half to address this concern.
3. **Make interviews more welcoming:** Students requested that interviews become more welcoming to reduce the tension of the process. They asked that no student should be required to wear formal attire for an interview and that this be a more casual conversation.
4. **Be objective in the review process:** Students asked for more objectivity in the review process because many felt that some students were accepted based on nepotism. Objectivity in the review process would make students feel more comfortable if they were accepted or rejected
5. **Reduce exclusivity:** Students highlighted that clubs are unnecessarily selective. They ask that clubs accept more members.

## Selected Qualitative Data

“The application process is long and unnecessary. I shouldn't have to write essays on top of my workload from classes.”

“The interview process for most clubs was very intimidating and consisting of irrelevant questions that did nothing but throw me off.”

“Some auditions lasted more than 4 hours.”

"If you know the guys, you're in."

“I felt like the entire process was a huge blow to self esteem and that some club members enjoyed being able to reject those interested.”

“[Clubs should have] shorter applications and accept more members. There is little reason for clubs to be so exclusive.”

“Having to write application essays and go through interviews even though it's just a club.”