



The Commonwealth Student Integrity Declaration

A formal, symbolic statement that student government representatives sign to publicly commit to upholding ethical standards, transparency, and accountability in their roles.

Ratified by the CSA Congress - October 26, 2024

The Commonwealth Student Government Integrity Declaration is a formal, symbolic statement that student government representatives sign to publicly commit to upholding ethical standards, transparency, and accountability in their roles. It is designed to encourage student leaders to act in the best interests of their constituents and maintain the trust of the student body.

As youth and students, we should hold those in elected leadership to a high standard but we should be prepared to speak even more loudly in demanding a high standard of governance from ourselves and our peers who lead and serve students. We will be judged by our management of elections, the treasury of student organizations we lead, our response to political favours and leading with transparency. We hold the power to break decadal cycles of corruption.

Student government is the incubator for future Heads of State, legislators, public departments and government ministry leaders. By instilling and agreeing to commit to the values espoused in this Declaration, we believe that Member States will enjoy the leadership of future leaders who will resist dishonest practices, disrupt undemocratic systems and challenge the status quo of corruption.

Signed,

The CSA Executive Committee 2022-2025

Preamble

Article I - Transparency

Article II - Campaign Finance

Article III - Political Favours

Article IV - Student Elections

Article V - Managing Funds

Definitions

“political favours” occur where leaders provide special treatment or benefits to individuals or groups based on political connections or motivations

We the students of the Commonwealth

Preamble

Recognizing that student government is a microcosm of public administration;

Acknowledging that elected student leaders represent large youth constituents:

Understanding that the future of national leadership of Member States will likely be occupied by elected student leaders;

Affirming that elected student leaders must hold themselves to a high standard of integrity, ethical behaviour, transparency, accountability and to avoid conflicts of interest;

Recognizing that student government members are still students and should prioritize their academic responsibilities:

Article I - Transparency

1.1 We recognize that leading with transparency is a crucial commitment for student leaders. Transparency ensures that student leaders are accountable to their constituents, builds trust, and fosters an environment of open communication.

1.2 We recognize that transparency sets a positive example for ethical and accountable leadership. It empowers students to become more engaged and informed participants in the governance of their educational institutions, and it helps student leaders to better represent the diverse interests of their constituents.

1.3 We commit to

1.3.1 maintaining open lines of communication with our constituents. This includes responding to inquiries, concerns, and feedback in a timely and respectful manner.

1.3.2 making information about decisions, budgets, and activities readily available to all students.

1.3.3 holding regular public meetings where students can attend, ask questions, and provide input on important matters.

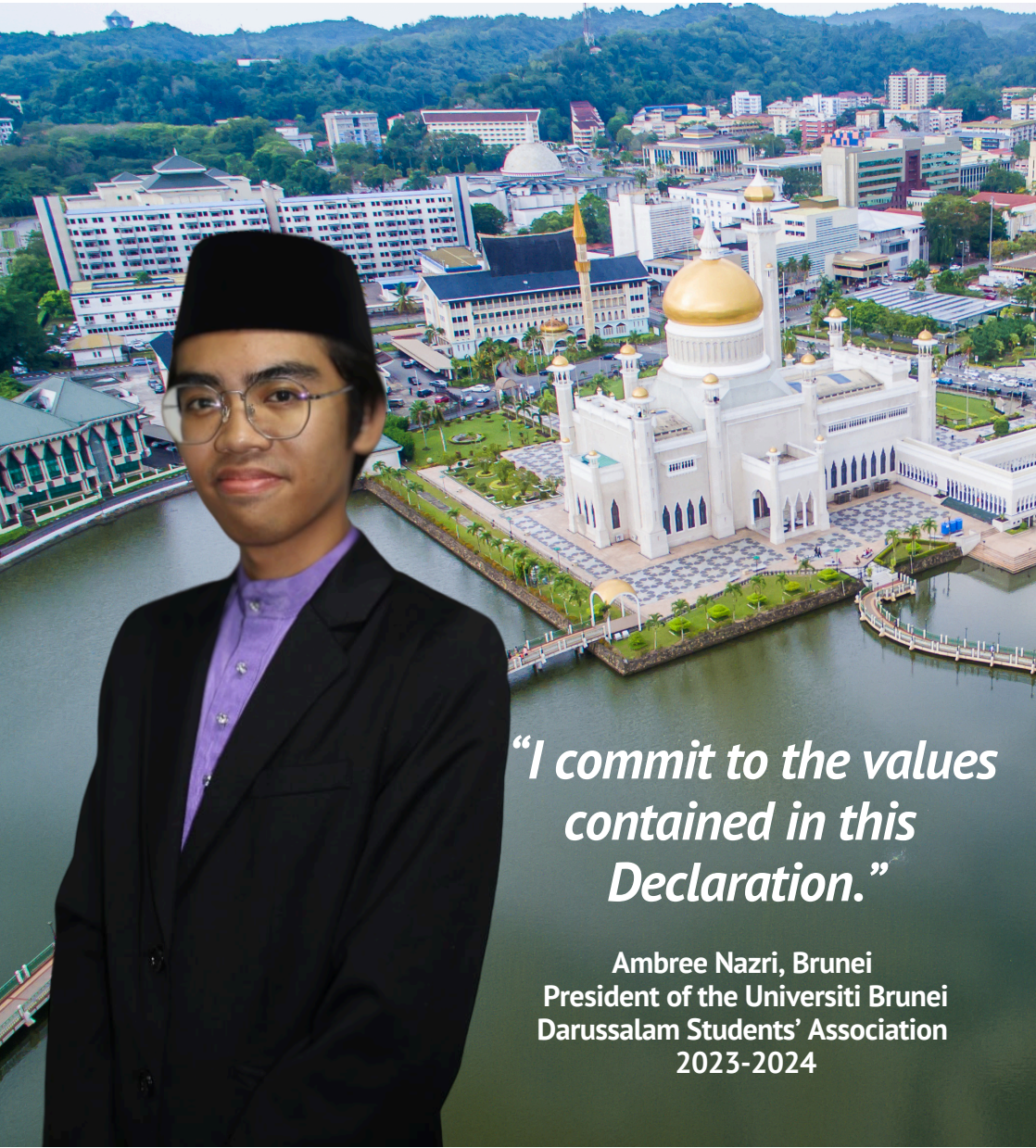
1.3.4 clearly explaining the decision-making process, including who was involved, what factors were considered, and how the final decision was reached save for circumstances where the nature of the decision requires that the information be withheld.

1.3.5 disclosing any potential conflicts of interest and taking steps to mitigate them.

1.3.6 establishing feedback mechanisms where students can express their concerns, ideas, and suggestions.

1.3.7 following the organization's bylaws and rules, ensuring that all actions are in accordance with the governing principles.

1.3.8 taking responsibility for decisions and actions, whether they lead to positive outcomes or issues.



“I commit to the values contained in this Declaration.”

**Ambree Nazri, Brunei
President of the Universiti Brunei
Darussalam Students' Association
2023-2024**

Article II - Campaign Finance

2.1 We recognize that campaign finance management in student elections is essential to ensure fairness, prevent undue influence, and promote a level playing field for all candidates.

2.2 We agree to develop and communicate clear campaign finance rules and guidelines well in advance of the election. These rules should outline contribution limits, spending limits, and reporting requirements.

2.3 We affirm the importance of setting equitable limits on the amount of money a candidate or their supporters can contribute to their campaign and ensuring that all campaign-related spending and fundraising are conducted through officially recognized campaign committees.

2.4 We agree that candidates should be required to disclose their campaign finances through regular, transparent, and publicly accessible reporting. This includes detailing contributions received, expenditures made, and the sources of campaign funds.

2.5 We support defining what constitutes an in-kind contribution (non-monetary contributions, such as volunteer services, transportation, air-time or materials), and establish rules for reporting and valuing these contributions.

2.6 We encourage consideration of the possibility of public financing options, where candidates receive a set amount of funding from the student government or university to run their campaigns.

2.7 We agree that banning external or third-party funding, such as funds from national political organizations or outside interest groups helps to maintain the independence of the student government and the elections.

***“I commit to the values
contained in this Declaration”***

**Ester Simon, Namibia
17th and 1st Female President of the
Namibian National Students Organization (NANSO)**

**Youngest Presidential Advisor on the High-Level
Panel on the Namibian Economy**



Article III - Political Favours

3.1 We recognize that the concept of student leaders engaging in political favours can be a complex and potentially problematic issue. Engaging in political favours can raise concerns about transparency, fairness, and ethical conduct.

3.2 We firmly believe that student leaders should prioritize transparency in their actions and decisions and avoid engaging in political favours which can erode trust if it is perceived that decisions are not made based on the best interests of the student body.

3.3 We stress that when political favours are granted to individuals or groups with personal or political ties to the leaders, it can raise questions about whether decisions are being made for personal gain rather than in the interest of the students they represent.

3.4 We recognize that accepting political favours or granting political favours may expose student organizations to manipulation, undue influence and can compromise their ability to impartially and independently represent their constituents.

3.5 We affirm that decisions regarding funding, resources, and opportunities should be made based on merit, need, or other fair and objective criteria, rather than political considerations.

3.6 We note that even if political favours are not intended to be unfair, they can create a perception of impropriety.

3.7 We agree that violations of ethical standards or policies related to political favours should have consequences. Student leaders should be held accountable for their actions if they breach established rules and guidelines.

***“I commit to the values
contained in this
Declaration.”***

**Tavoy Barrett
Jamaica Union of Tertiary Students,
2nd Vice President Local and
International Affairs 2023-2025**



Article IV - Student Elections

4.1 We unreservedly commit to free and fair student elections is a fundamental principle for student leaders, as it ensures the democratic process within the student body.

4.2 We recognize that student elections foreshadow local and general elections and are opportunities to promote civic participation, promote democratic values, teach voter rights and address voter apathy especially in youth.

4.3 We agree that student leaders, especially those responsible for overseeing elections such as returning officers, should remain impartial and refrain from endorsing or showing favouritism toward any candidate or group.

4.4 We support the appointment of an independent election commission or committee responsible for overseeing the election process, monitoring compliance with rules, and investigating any violations or irregularities.

4.5 We reiterate our commitment to developing and communicating clear and well-defined election guidelines, including rules, deadlines, and procedures, well in advance of the election.

4.6 We agree that all candidates should have equitable access to campaign resources, including advertising space, venues for debates, and opportunities to engage with the student body.

4.7 We support voter registration and systems that ensure that the election process is accessible to all eligible students, including those with disabilities and those who may be studying remotely.


4.8 We emphasize that student governments or organizations should have mechanisms in place to ensure accountability which may include codes of conduct, ethics committees, and independent oversight bodies that can investigate allegations of electoral violations.

4.9 We support public debates or forums where candidates can discuss their platforms and answer questions from the student body.

4.10 We support campaigns that inform students about the election process, voting procedures, and the importance of participation.

4.11 We stress that student leaders should not engage in unethical campaign tactics such as spreading misinformation, blackmailing, bribery, vote-buying and intimidation.

4.12 We agree that penalties should be defined for candidates or campaign teams found in violation of campaign finance rules. These penalties could include fines, disqualification, or other appropriate sanctions.



***“I commit to the values
contained in this
Declaration.”***

Sebastian Berger
**Global Student Forum,
Executive Director 2020 - 2024**

Article V - Managing funds

5.1 We commit to managing the finances of the student organizations we represent.

5.2 We emphasize that elected student leaders, especially treasurers and finance committees must discharge a high standard of financial prudence which involves making informed financial decisions by considering the organization's financial health, available resources, and the impact on the organization's mission and goals.

5.3 We encourage student leaders to appoint a treasurer or finance committee responsible for overseeing the organization's finances, monitoring adherence to the budget, and ensuring compliance with financial policies.

5.4 We are committed to financial best practices including

5.4.1 developing a comprehensive annual budget that outlines anticipated income and projected expenses.

5.4.2 maintaining open and transparent financial records that are accessible to all organization members.

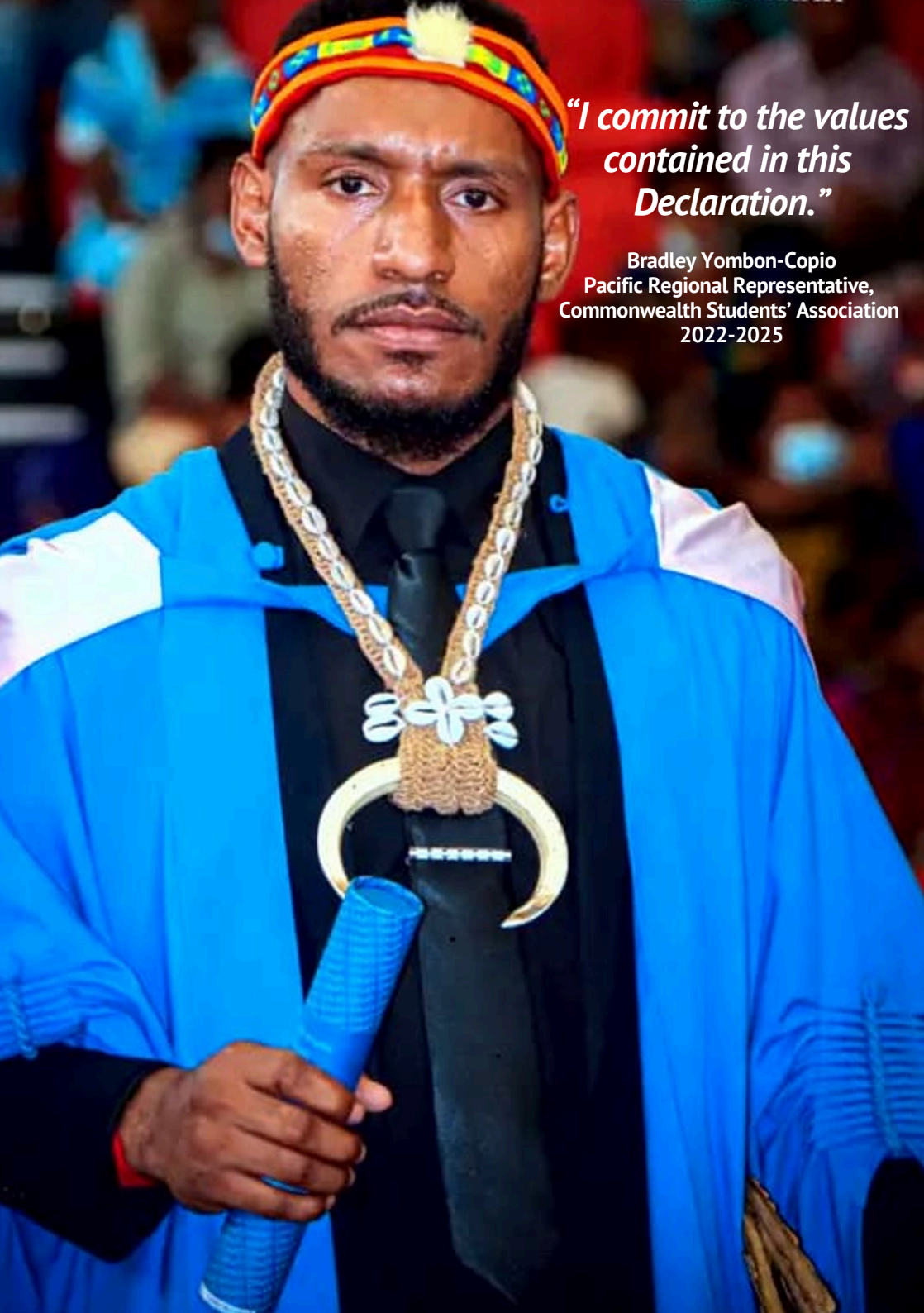
5.4.3 establishing clear and consistent financial policies and procedures that govern how funds are managed, including authorization for expenditures, reimbursement processes, and handling cash transactions.

5.4.4 diversifying sources of funding, which may include membership dues, fundraising activities, grants, and sponsorships. Avoid over-reliance on a single funding source.

5.4.5 setting aside a portion of the budget for unexpected expenses or emergencies.

5.4.6 conduct periodic financial audits or reviews to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the financial records and to prevent fraud or mismanagement.

5.4.7 consider long-term financial sustainability by saving for future projects or events, as well as investing in the organization's growth and development.



*“I commit to the values
contained in this
Declaration.”*

Bradley Yombon-Copio
Pacific Regional Representative,
Commonwealth Students' Association
2022-2025

