

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX
STUDENTS* UNION

Policy Book – Dec 2020

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Love and support for students with disabilities and mental health conditions

Submitted By: Nathan Casteler

Union Notes:

- 1) That on the 10th of February 2017 Masud Abdulkadir was elected to the position of VP Welfare & Community.
- 2) That the VP Welfare & Community-Elect made on several occasions in his manifesto and during his campaign claims regarding medication and mental health conditions, namely
 - a. that “research on the effect of exercise on depression and other mental and physical illness show how BENEFICIAL exercise can be on the human body and mind”.
 - b. that ending the provision of free sports would lead to fewer students “engage[ing] in sports and physical exercise, and instead reach[ing] for the easier MORE ACCESSIBLE option, and for all we know CHEAPER alternative using PILLS which we are now GROWING IMMUNE to, that does nothing but HARM US in the long term” (sic).
 - c. that students indulge “in cannabis, coffee, cigarettes, alcohol and other non-prescription drugs”, concluding that drug education is needed to expose the effects of drugs “some of which may lead to harms such as overdose, injury, infectious disease and mental illness... Even those ‘designed’ to help you”.

- 3) That such claims were supported by uncited research and evidence concerning antibiotics and analgesics.
- 4) That the VP Welfare & Community made little or no mention in his manifesto and during his campaign of SU Advice, Student Support, Residence Life, the Health Centre, Nightline, and other services on campus within and without his competence as VP Welfare which can assist students with disabilities and mental health conditions.

Union Believes:

- 1) That ambiguous and vague statements conflating prescription and non-prescription drugs, supported by uncited sources, are unhelpful and irresponsible.
- 2) That focusing only on the provision of sports to treat mental health amounts to negligence towards disabled students or students suffering from physical conditions for whom sports is not readily available.
- 3) That judgmental statements towards drug users and students suffering from mental conditions are not helpful or constructive, and may in the long term be harmful where such claims lead to students disregarding medical advice.
- 4) That treatment and recovery in mental health conditions does not come in a ‘one-size-fits-all’ form, and that lifestyle changes (including but not limited to physical exercise), medical treatment and talk therapy are known to help patients suffering from mental illnesses.
- 5) That stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health conditions can be caused or worsened by academic failure, financial worries and administrative problems.

- 6) That the VP Welfare & Community ought to work with other relevant officers and representatives to tackle mental health conditions across the board.

Union resolves:

- 1) To treat all students, no matter their mental health conditions or disabilities, with dignity and respect.
- 2) To encourage the all Sabbatical Officers to work with Liberation Officers and reflect on how their work can improve the experience of students with disabilities and mental health conditions.
- 3) To support and empower them to make healthy lifestyle choices and to follow professional medical advice.
- 4) To help and assist students through their Studies by way of the administrative support and correct signposting to support services within and outside of the Students' Union.

Policy Lapses – March 27, 2020

Policy renewed – 8th Dec 2020

Policy Lapses – 8th Dec 2023

Policy: Liberation Budgets for Community Officers

Aims of the policy:

This policy aims to ensure that our community officers should have a guaranteed, ring-fenced budget for their campaigns throughout the academic year.

Relevant information:

The community officers that should be included within this policy, are Black Officer, Asian Officer, Women's Officer, Students with Disabilities Officer, LGBTQ+ Officer, Trans Officer, Mature Officer, Student parent and Carers officer and Loughton's Person of Colour Officer. Colchester campus' community officers should receive at least £600, per community officer, per academic year and community officers for liberation groups in Southend and Loughton campuses should receive at least £400, per community officer, per academic year.

At the start of each academic year, the amount should be decided by the respective community officer and signed off by the SU president.

Why this is needed:

- This is needed so there is a set budget that is ring-fenced which should not be spent on any activities other than Liberation events that will be organised by the community officers (which have been mentioned above).
- A ring-fenced budget is needed so there would be no conflicting funding, as these campaigns raise awareness

and support marginalised and minorities on all three campuses

Actions to take:

- Increase the budget for community officers in Colchester campus to at least £600 each per academic year
- Increase the budget for community officers in Southend and Loughton campuses to at least £400 each per academic year
- Replace the old Liberation Budgets Policy with Liberation Budgets for Community Officers Policy

Amended 8th Dec 2020
Policy lapses 8th Dec 2023

Information sharing with Student Media

Submitted By: James Potter

The University of Essex Students' Union is committed to sharing requested information with the University of Essex Students' Union Student Media team wherever possible. Any request for information made by Student Media must be dealt with by the Students' Union within 10 working days.

Information will not be shared when it would place the Students' Union in conflict with the law or where the Trustee Board of the Students' Union has rejected a request. The grounds of rejection could include, but not limited to, confidential information and information regarding Students' Union staff.

In the case of a request being rejected the Chair of the Trustee Board must provide a written explanation as to why the request has been declined to the relevant Student Media team.

Policy Lapsed – September 30, 2019

Reapproved – 27th November 2019

Policy Lapses – 27th November 2022

Proposer : Jan Laska

Deck Chairs

Aims of policy :

- To ensure that the Students' Union makes available deck chairs for students

Important information relevant to this policy:

- Colchester Student Parliament passed this policy back into the policy book
- A policy passed at that Parliament in November that had not been amended to meet the requirements of the new policy aimed to improve accessibility
- During summer months, these deck chairs can be hired for a small fee by people who want to relax by the lakes
- During the winter months, when the lakes are less popular, the deck chairs could be made available in other areas such as the secret garden or square 3

Why this policy is needed

- It allows for students to enjoy the beautiful vistas of Colchester campus in a positive way

- Ensures that the SU is providing opportunities for students to spend time with others outside while not actively exercising

Actionable items that will effect change or proposed solutions (resolves):

- The Students' Union to make Deck Chairs available for hire by students and other visitors to our beautiful Colchester campus, especially the lakes
- The hiring to be paid by a refundable deposit paid by the user of the deckchairs

Policy lapses June 2020

Policy lapses Nov 2023

FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX STUDENTS' UNION TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE UPCOMING UCU STRIKE

THE IDEA:

Motion: For the University of Essex Students' Union to actively support the upcoming UCU Strike.

This motion calls for the University of Essex Students' Union to actively support and show solidarity with the UCU lecturers in their upcoming strike action. To recall: the strike will take place at 61 universities over a 14-day period. These strikes are in response to the changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) that will lead to the average lecturer losing £10,000 in their annual pension, and around £200,000 altogether. These changes will affect many in the higher education sector – demoralising our staff and affecting us as students as well.

The University of Essex Students' Union Executive Committee has released a statement claiming that in the interests of their '15,000' student membership, 'the SU Executive Committee supports the right of UCU members to take action' but since the University has not supported the proposed USS pension scheme changes, the SU will work with the UCU local branch and the University to 'minimise the impact on your [students] university experience'. While the purpose of Essex SU is to represent the views of students, the SU's current position would do more to hamper students experience than enhance it for at least two reasons:

- Firstly, the nature of being a lecturer means that the attempt to disrupt and have an impact on

management – the purpose of the strike – is difficult to detach from disruption to the 'university experience'. While lecturers wish they could strike without disrupting our education, to do so would limit the impact of the strike and its purpose of stopping these damaging changes to the USS pension scheme. Instead students' concern for their education must be directed at those who have proposed such changes to the USS pension scheme (and the management and the institution heads that support it).

- Secondly, the strike action taken by our lecturers is not a decision taken lightly and is an attempt at ensuring that higher education has a future in this country. The changes to USS pension scheme – a massive money grab at the expense of lecturer's pensions – are a manifestation of the dire state of contemporary higher education. For many students who want a future in higher education, these are the dire circumstances await them – the lecturers are striking not just for themselves but also for you.

As such, Essex SU must go further and claim outright support and solidarity with the UCU lecturers going out on strike. This support entails:

1. For the SU to publicly show solidarity with the striking lecturers. This can be done by putting up posters in support of the strike, putting messages on the TV screens (i.e. between squares 3 and 4), and sending out emails to students.
2. To support acts of solidarity: meetings on the strike, demonstrations and fundraising for striking staff who are in the most economically precarious positions.

3. To inform students when and why the lecturers are striking.
4. Encouraging students to support the strike.

Students can support the strike by:

- Writing in protest to the head of the University of Essex and our local MP about the untenable position that our lecturers are being put in and the dire state of higher education today;
- Organising and participating in acts of solidarity with striking lecturers, such as attending: outdoor assemblies, pickets, workshops on strike actions and broader issues such as the marketisation of higher education, and banner making sessions

In a time of increasing marketisation of our higher education, this government will attempt to drive a nail between students and university staff – pitting students against lecturers. As such, it is up to us – as students – and our SU to ensure that students and lecturers stand united. A significant way to ensure we are united is to stand in support with our lecturers.

IDEA BY:

Jake Parkins

Policy Lapses Feb 26 2021

Supporting our Student Parents with a Child Friendly Space (Replacing previous Child friendly space Policy that lapsed Nov 2020)

Aims of policy:

- Provide a safe space for student parents to study effectively on campus while having children with them
- Ensure student parents are not excluded from essential academic, support, and wellbeing services that all students are entitled to

Important information relevant to this policy:

- Union policy includes a child friendly space policy that is due to lapse on November 26th
- The Union recently introduced a new SCO role for Student Parents and Carers
- Student parents have been affected massively by COVID-19 and are already juggling many responsibilities as well as studying
- A Goldsmiths SU report found that there needs to be more leniency for student parents with regards to mitigating (extenuating) circumstances. “With kids at home, sometimes you don’t need a major event to completely upset time management for your studies”
- Student Parents will almost always be expected to fit the mould of the average student where their needs are extraordinarily different due to their care commitments¹

- University policies compound difficulties that student parents face¹
- There will be increased study space available to the University in the upcoming AYs due to the finished construction of CTC.
- Student parents may find it difficult to learn with their children distracting them

Why this policy is needed:

- The current policy is not fit for purpose and has failed to deliver
- Student parents and their needs have been ignored by the University for too long
- Student parents are disproportionately affected by a lack of leniency due to their caring commitments for their children
- All students should have access to facilities and services that the University provides
- Study space can be effectively provided for all students without increased University expenditure including space specifically for certain students

Actionable items that will effect change:

- Revoke Child Friendly Space policy, replace with this policy
- Lobby the University to provide study space specifically for student parents where children can remain entertained while student parents can get work done and ensure that

¹Supporting Student Parents in Higher Education: A policy analysis. Final Report. Dr Marie-Pierre Moreau (IRED) & Charlotte Kerner (ISPAR), University of

Bedfordshire. October 2012

<https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Moreau%20Student%20Parent%20report%20-%20Full%20report%20October%202012.pdf>

this space has baby-changing facilities and pamphlets with key links and guides for online library repository, FASER, Moodle, and LEAP, as well as contact details for IT helpdesk. This could include underutilised spaces such as computer labs on floor 1.

- Lobby the University to ensure that student parents are not unfairly affected by University policy around extenuating circumstances and call for the University to review extenuating circumstances with involvement in the process from student parents.
- Student Parents Representatives and/or Student Parent and Carer Officer to be involved in any conversations with the University regarding the creation of a child-friendly space and improvement around extenuating circumstances

Lapses Nov 2023

“Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Motion”

Submitted by: Tamer Baransi, Gabriel Valenzuela

Amended by: Yusur Al-Salman

Reaffirmed by: SRF on Feb 26, 2015

Union Notes:

- 1) That the call to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) came in 2005 from over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations and is fully representative of Palestinian civil society in its call to the international community to hold Israel accountable.
- 2) That there is (an inter)national campaign to boycott Israeli goods in other academic institutions with motions passed to boycott Israeli products and/or terminate contracts with companies that profit from the violation of Palestinian human rights (such as the campaign against G4S in King's College London (KCL), SOAS, Kent and the University of Southampton).
- 3) That the National Union of Students' Executive Council voted to join the call of the BDS movement (August 2014).
- 4) That the NUS Black Students' Conference has endorsed BDS (August 2014)
- 5) That the NUS supported the BDS call during Apartheid South Africa and has passed a motion

calling for freedom for Palestine and an end to the siege on Gaza.

- 6) That Israel in its complete disregard of the human rights of the Palestinians and in its illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank is in breach of over 30 UN resolutions as well as in complete violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- 7) That Israel's continuing oppression of the Palestinians both inside Israel proper and the Occupied Territories has been compared by South African trade unionists and activists to the Apartheid Regime; nowhere is this more visible than in the construction of the illegal Apartheid Wall.
- 8) That Israel has denied the right of return for Palestinian refugees recognized under The United Nations UN General Assembly Resolution 194 which was passed on December 11, 1948. Now, there are more than five million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA, more than one million of them are stateless.
- 9) That Palestinians living within Israel proper and the Occupied Territories are treated as second-class citizens with no equal rights confirming that Israel is not a democratic state for all its people.
- 10) That BDS movement has had several victories in the past year and has helped in bringing the end of the occupation and colonisation of Palestinian lands closer. For example : Dutch pension fund PGGM divesting from Israeli banks, the divestment of both

the Bill Gates Foundation and of the US Methodist Church from G4S, which has led to G4S' yet-to-be-implemented decision to pull out of Israel.

Union Believes:

- 1) That under the UN definition of Apartheid, Israel is an Apartheid state. The UN definition of Apartheid from 1973 is as follows:
Denial to a member or members of a racial group or groups of the right to life and liberty of person
 - (i) By murder of members of a racial group or groups;
 - (ii) By the infliction upon the members of a racial group or groups of serious bodily or mental harm, by the infringement of their freedom or dignity, or by subjecting them to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
 - (iii) By arbitrary arrest and illegal imprisonment of the members of a racial group or groups;
 - (iv) (b) Deliberate imposition on a racial group or groups of living conditions calculated to cause its or their physical destruction in whole or in part;
 - (v) II(c): Any legislative measures and other measures calculated to prevent a racial group or groups from participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country and the deliberate creation of conditions preventing the full development of such a group or groups, in particular by denying to members of a racial group

or groups basic human rights and freedoms, including the right to work, the right to form recognized trade unions, the right to education, the right to leave and to return to their country, the right to a nationality, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association

- 2) That boycotting campaigns against South Africa was an important part of the resistance bringing down Apartheid and that the same means can help bring down Apartheid again.
- 3) That in light of the Apartheid policies inflicted on all Palestinians by the State of Israel, it is not adequate to separate between settlement products and Israeli products. Instead, it is necessary to highlight the State's role and its full complicity in the occupation and Apartheid by applying pressure through the Boycott.

Union Further Believes:

- 1) That on these grounds Essex University Student Union should continue to Boycott Israeli products and settlement products on campus.
- 2) That we should help build and join the movement to boycott Israeli goods and urge the university to do the same.

Union Resolves:

- 1) To boycott Israeli and settlement goods from being sold on Student Union premises.

- 2) To terminate contracts with companies that profit from the violation of Palestinian human rights (such as but not limited to companies that provide technical and logistical support for the occupation).
- 3) To pressure the University of Essex to boycott Israeli and settlement goods from being sold on the University of Essex premises and to terminate contracts with companies that profit from the violation of Palestinian human rights.
- ~~4) *To affiliate with the BDS movement.~~
- 5) To ensure that information is distributed around the university so that students are made aware of the reasons for the boycott.

Policy Lapses – March 21st 2021

**No body to affiliate to so not possible to achieve*

PLASTICS POLICY JUNE 2018

PROPOSER: TANCREDE CHARTIER

INTRODUCTION

The SU promotes the recycling and reuse of plastics. We endeavour to create operating models that prevent plastics from ending up in water bodies and elsewhere in the environment and promise to always look for alternatives that are efficient and cost effective.

1. Reducing usage

- SU stores only provide plastic bags on request and charges 5p per bag.
- The SU also provides alternatives for plastic bags in its Everything Essex store: such as cotton tote bags
- Paper bags are used in the Kitchen
- Small micro plastic particles pass through waste water treatment plants into water bodies risking ending up in food chains and household drinking water. The SU removed the products containing such particles from our shop shelves.
- Plastic straws are being removed from the SU bar, Sub Zero and SU Lounge, and the Kitchen and Starbucks are looking at how to reduce their straw usage and alternatives are being investigated
- The SU is not always able to control the packaging products come in from suppliers but the SU are always

challenging suppliers to come up with alternatives that are cost effective.

- The Kitchen already provides wooden stirrers rather than plastic and provides discounts to those bringing own mugs
- The SU Lounge will introduce bring your own cups or containers for take away food/drink
- The SU Lounge sells travel mugs and offer 5p off hot drinks when this or their own cup is used.
- Southend - Plastics cups are currently supplied at the water dispenser. These will not be reordered when stock runs out and will encourage students and staff to bring their own water bottles.
- The SU will only use recyclable or biodegradable balloons and ensure that they are disposed of in an appropriate manner

The SU regularly audits what we purchase in all campus's and what actually gets used by our customers, with particular focus on

- plastic wrap
- plastic utensils
- plastic straws
- plastic to-go containers
- plastic storage containers
- coffee cup lids

2. Collection and recycling; recovery of plastic waste

- The SU encourages its customers to reduce and recycle plastic waste and provide customers with suitable facilities in all our venues, in addition to the recycling bins that the university has provided on all the

squares. In Southend there are two recycling bins in the SU Lounge and one recycling bin in the SU office.

- The SU provides reusable water bottles and hot drink cups to buy.
- The Kitchen and SU Lounge provides discounts to customers using the above items to encourage usage as much as possible
- The university has installed water fountains throughout the campus
- The plastic waste from stores and venues is directed to reuse.
- SU staff are trained and know the correct way to recycle all products
- We have established staff policies, protocol and training (i.e. always ask customers, "Is this for here or to-go? Did you bring your own mug or container? Do you know about our discounts?")

Policy Lapses: 22nd June 2021

Policy Proposal by the SU Asian Student Network “Definition of Islamophobia” Policy

February 2020

Aim

The goal of this policy proposal is to:

- Help the Students' Union identify what Islamophobia is and improve the experience of the Muslim communities on campus by pressuring the University to adopt the same policy, and other recommendations
- Help students know what they can identify as Islamophobic
- Give students confidence in their Students' Union when it comes to taking Islamophobia seriously on campus and the University at large

We are aware of the issue of legitimate criticism of religion and actual cases of Islamophobia, this policy proposal aims to:

- Clarify the difference for all parties.
- Implement a greater role of the Students' Union in tackling Islamophobia on campus by way of awareness

Proposal

1. This Student Parliament moves to help the Islamic Society in promoting their events during Islamophobia Awareness Month, which takes place every November. The Students' Union will do this by recognising, endorsing, distributing material, raising awareness for, and educating about Islamophobia Awareness Month. The Students' Union itself will not hold events or be responsible for events during this month but will just support and facilitate the Islamic Society's efforts and help in promoting and raising awareness.

The Students' Union will hold a vigil during this month as an official Students' Union event, to mark the deaths of all those Muslims who have died because of Islamophobia (such as in the Christchurch terrorist attack, and the Finsbury Mosque attack).

2. This Student Parliament moves to develop and implement effective training to educate Students' Union staff in relation to this policy and train them accordingly, as well as working to ensure the security team is made aware of this policy and moves to pressure the University to adopt this policy in full and assist them in developing and implementing effective training in order to educate staff and security personnel in relation to this policy. Also, to make society executives aware of this policy, and ensure their activities do not conflict with this policy.

3. This Student Parliament moves to initiate a root and branch review of the effectiveness of existing reporting mechanisms and processes in order to identify failings that will allow the development and implementation of a robust and accessible reporting framework.

4. This Student Parliament moves to pressure/support the University in recognising and accommodating religious festivals and religious observance on campus (such as fasting during Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr, and Eid-ul-Adha) especially in relation to coordinating exams around Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr where possible.

5. This Student Parliament moves to pressure the University in tackling all forms of discrimination in the workplace through targeted interventions at all stages of recruitment, retention,

and promotion. This will ensure that university staff are reflective of the experiences of their students and are able to approach situations with nuanced understandings and sensitivities, but also allows students of minority identities to have role models that are meaningful to their experiences.

6. This Student Parliament moves to work with the existing reporting system to make it more inclusive, making them aware of the definition that has been adopted, and working with them to ensure interpretation of potential cases of Islamophobia are in accordance with the definition of Islamophobia and accompanying guidelines outlined below, whilst being cognisant that these guidelines are non-exhaustive and that cases should be assessed in line with the spirit and context in which these guidelines have been developed. Such considerations should be applied to all potential cases, including micro-aggressions, wherein a single instance may not present an obvious case of Islamophobia, but through a holistic understanding of context it would be reasonable to conclude that the cumulative consequences of such occurrences serve to nullify or impair the ability of the recipient to access opportunities to engage with socio-political and economic structures on an equal footing with other members of society.

7. The Student Parliament moves to officially adopt the following working definition of Islamophobia and the guidelines and examples provided, recognising they are non-exhaustive:

Policy Lapses: Feb 2023

Definition:

“Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.”

Guidelines:

- Islamophobia (in line with anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia, sexism and other forms of hatred and discrimination) is a tool used to gain and maintain power.
- It is inextricably linked with socio-economic factors, and frequently reflects the underlying inequalities within society.
- Is a prejudice, aversion, hostility, or hatred towards Muslims and encompasses any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference against Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.
- Islamophobia is demonstrated in, and articulated through, speech, writing, behaviours, structures, policies, legislation or activities that work to control, regulate or exclude Muslim participation within social, civic, economic and political life, or which embody hatred, vilification, stereotyping, abuse or violence directed at Muslims.

E-Mail Response Time Policy

Proposed by: Julia Heimann, PGR SCO 2020

Aims of the policy:

- Provide a basic framework of expectations for e-mail response time for full-time elected officers (henceforth: FTO)
- Create a measurement for holding FTO accountable
- Improve FTO awareness of their duties
- Create transparency across the SU
- Bringing students closer to our organisation
- Increase the SU's reputation by decreasing response times

Relevant information

Why this is needed:

- It is the duty of the members of parliament to hold FTO into account over their (in)activity.
- However, it is difficult to hold into account a course of action without a certain standard to which these actions, or inactions, can be measured against

Actions to take:

- The number of active working days (this excludes days of annual leave) a student may wait for an e-mail reply from an FTO is not to exceed full five working days. This means that if a student has submitted a request during, or after working hours on Monday, a reply is due on the Tuesday of the following week, so long as the FTO has not undertaken annual leave within this time. If annual leave was undertaken, the due date is

extended by the number of days claimed as part of annual leave.

- If the request by the student cannot be answered, or fulfilled, to satisfaction at the current point in time, the responsible FTO must state this and provide a reasonable time frame in which the student can expect a reply from them.
- If the member has failed to reply to a request within five active working days, the affected student may raise this issue with the parliament where the officer must justify the reasons for failing to respond in time.
- An FTO should be reasonably expected to respond to any email that asks a direct question, or poses a problem that it is clear to the FTO needs to be fixed
- Where possible, before coming to Parliament, the member should, where practicable and possible, follow up with the FTO first at least once to rectify the situation.

Policy lapses Nov 2023

