

Ideas Scheme – One Year Review

Introduction

In September 2016 we relaunched the Idea's scheme, a platform for students to submit ideas for change, campaign for student backing, and work with the Executive Committee to implement these changes together. This platform is also designed to assist departments within the Union, to ensure we are constantly reviewing what we are doing and listening to and acting upon student feedback. It is crucial students see that their Union is acting on what they need us to. They lead the Union, they are why we exist and it is what separates us from other University services.

One year on

Since its launch it has been well used by students, with 48 ideas submitted and our current top three ideas at 203, 109 and 61 likes, the minimum needed for it to be taken forward as a Big Idea is currently 25. We ask students to gain the support or backing from 25 fellow students to ensure that what we are doing is as representative of the student body as we can, rather than using resource to implement big changes for one opinion.

Any Big Ideas are then taken to the Officer team to implement and update. The progress of these are then held to account at monthly Executive Committee meetings and Student Council.

Challenges

Initially the scheme was designed to act as a catalyst for improving the everyday issues faced by our students. We had hoped this would be a way for students to achieve "quick wins" and have a better overall student experience. However, the ideas that are being submitted are more complex than we had first anticipated and so have required a lot of work from the Officer Team and the Executive Committee.

In addition to this, due to the lack of deadline to achieve the 25 likes, most ideas will eventually reach the required amount to be taken forward. This has meant many ideas are unlikely to have been a priority for the majority of students.

Finally, aesthetically and operationally the webpage is not fit for purpose. The progress of ideas needs to be clearer and a process for the submitter of an idea to be initially contacted or notified should they receive comments or reach 25 likes. We can however download a list of students who have engaged with an idea.

Recommendations

Moving forward there are a number of changes we are able to make to improve both the user experience but also the implementation of the ideas;

- To create clearer guidelines and key messages for promotion
- To implement a 2-week time limit to reach 25 likes ensuring more representative ideas are prioritised
- To input a 'share to facebook' button enabling students to share theirs and others' ideas easily
- To work with MSL to improve the usability for both students and staff, including opt in/opt out email notifications and more flexibility in the design of the widget
- To consider an approval process before ideas are live on the webpage
- To work with the Communications team to create a communications plan to improve how the student body is updated on the progress of ideas

We are in a great position to be able to offer quick solutions to students compared with many university services and the ideas platform is an ideal way to achieve this. Although unrealistic to aim for all ideas to be achieved, we should be looking at the root of these suggestions and doing all we can to address them.

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