

DRUG HARM REDUCTION AND EDUCATION POLICY

Title:	Drug Harm Reduction and Education	Date of Group Chat:	April 2019
Proposer name:	Matt Hayes	Role:	Vice President (Science & Engineering)
Secunder name:	Amanda Campbell White	Role:	Vice President (Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences)

Union Notes:

1. The NUS survey 'Taking The Hit' reported that 4 in 10 students who responded currently use illegal/un-prescribed drugs and a further 17% have done so in the past.
2. 2 in 10 disabled students said they used drugs to medicate an existing physical health condition and twice as many said they used drugs to medicate an existing mental health condition.
3. "Heterosexual students were less likely than their LGBT+ peers to say that they self-medicate for an existing mental health problem" (Taking The Hit report)
4. Drugs can be contaminated and/or adulterated and by being able to test them, students will have as much knowledge about what is in them as possible before making the final decision whether to take them or not.
5. Aberdeen, Sussex, and Manchester's Students' Unions all currently provide their students with access to drug checking kits and harm reduction information.
6. When 112 ARU students were surveyed about drug use, nearly 50% of them responded "I don't want drugs on campus but students found with drugs should be given appropriate support as drug use is a health issue not a crime" and around 27% responded "I don't mind what other people do in their own time."
7. When asked what the SU should do in response, 76% of students believe we should offer support through our advice service, 78% believe that we should offer free testing kits to students and 69% believe we should offer holistic harm reduction information e.g. the dangers of mixing certain drugs. 26% also believe we should lobby the university to take a less strict approach to drugs.

Union Believes:

1. We should acknowledge drug use does exist on ARU campuses as it does everywhere in society and students do so for a multitude of reasons.
2. The university states "We're committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality. We seek to develop our people to be responsive, and equip our students for life in a multicultural and diverse society. Our aim is to provide a supportive environment in which to work and study" and, as such, we have a duty to acknowledge the issues liberation groups face and work to improve their welfare.
3. By educating students of the risks of specific drugs and combinations of drugs, those who still wish to use them have the knowledge to take precautionary steps in order to prevent greater harm, or death.

Union Resolves:

1. To provide easily accessible resources on drug harm reduction so that anyone who wishes to educate themselves can do so without having to ask and face embarrassment or judgement.
2. To provide Advice staff with specialist training so that they are equipped to deal with drug related issues.
3. To provide free reagent test kits so that students who choose to still use drugs after educating themselves on the risks are fully aware of what is in their drugs.
4. At university meetings and committees, we should hold a stance of ensuring that ARU does not adopt a punitive or zero tolerance to drugs.

Policy Summary:

In both national and ARU specific surveys, students have expressed that they would like to see a more holistic, harm reduction-focused approach to drugs. By providing students with access to drug checking kits, independent advice from our advice service and the dangers of particular drugs and combinations of drugs, they will be able to make more informed decisions and hopefully reduce the risks of harm or death.