



DRUG HARM REDUCTION AND EDUCATION POLICY

Title:	Drug Harm Reduction and Education	Date of Group Chat:	20-22/04/20
Proposer name:	Matt Hayes	Role:	President
Seconder name:	George Mason		

Union Notes:

- 1) The NUS survey 'Taking The Hit' reported that 4 in 10 students who responded currently use drugs and a further 17% have done so in the past. 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. Furthermore, "heterosexual students were less likely than their LGBT+ peers to say that they self-medicate for an existing mental health problem"
- 2) Some drugs are often 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.
- 3) Aberdeen, Sussex, and Manchester's Students' Unions all currently provide their students with access to drug checking kits and harm reduction information.
- 4) In 2019, 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." 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) Among the most likely to use drugs for ongoing mental and physical health problems are those from liberation groups (notably LGBTQ+ and disabled students) and we as a union have a duty to acknowledge the issues these groups face and work to improve their welfare.
- 3) By providing students with education 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 hold the stance that the university should fund 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.
- 3) To hold a stance of that the university should not adopt a punitive or zero-tolerance approach to drug use and should instead work with counselling & wellbeing teams to support the students throughout their studies.

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 information from harm reduction charities about the dangers of particular drugs and combinations of drugs, they will be able to make more informed decisions and reduce the risks of harm or death.

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