



Drugs are a social care issue, not a criminal offense

Title:	Sensible Drug Policy	Date of Student Council:	04/04/17
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Union Notes:

1. Many students will use recreational drugs during their time at university.
2. Unsafe use of drugs or use of contaminated drugs can be deadly, even with infrequent or first-time use.
3. People using drugs are likely to lose education status or employment. It should also be pointed out that drug use is higher within certain liberation groups and also the police tend to target BME people more harshly when looking at drug offenses.
4. The Royal Society for Public Health and the Faculty of Public Health have both argue for the decriminalisation of illegal drugs.¹
5. Some students use recreational drugs so as to help them combat mental health or physical health issues. (For example the use of cannabis to combat anxiety or chronic pain.)
6. Mention students for sensible drug policy here: why they exist, what they do. They're just randomly introduced at the end.

Union Believes:

1. Students aren't always aware of the risk that drugs carry with them.
2. Fear of criminalisation, expulsion from a course, stigma, or simply lack of access to testing might put people off getting their drugs tested for safety. It can also cause people to feel like they aren't able to ask for help if drug use intertwines with mental health, either because their drug use negatively affects mental health, or vice versa if drug use is caused by mental health issues.
3. The criminalised nature of many recreational drugs currently is destructive and ultimately does more to fill our prisons with non-violent offenders (especially people of colour) than actually promote the wellbeing of drug-users.
4. Health problems that come with drug use aren't solved by more stigma or criminalisation.
5. Policy should always prioritise the safety of the students. Rather than making a moral standpoint about whether or not students should take drugs, it is more effective to keep in mind that students take drugs
6. While the safety of legal highs is often overestimated, there has also been a great push by the media to demonise those who make use of legal highs.
7. Drug use isn't always recreational, and can be used to deal with (among others) chronic illness and/or pain and/or trauma.
8. The War on Drugs in the UK (and in many other countries) has failed to overall increase the health and wellbeing those at risk of substance abuse.²

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/public-health-bodies-call-for-decriminalisation-of-drugs>

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24342421>

9. That for a successful drug policy to be implemented be must work with the students using PHSCE, NUS and other charities resources and pooling ideas with other Student's Unions who have already implemented a similar policy.

Union Resolves:

1. To argue that drug usage and substance dependence should be treated as (if the substances harm the individual) a health and social care problem.
 2. To move to the adoption of sensible drug policies that prioritise the safety of the students, rather than the fearmongering around drug use. This includes prioritising policy that might lead to an increase of safe drug use over policy that drives drug use down but makes it unsafe.
 3. To lobby the university to include a drug-testing service, where students and the wider community can get their drugs tested confidentially, freely, and without fear of persecution.
 4. TO lobby the university to include information on safe drug use in their Freshers week. This should include, but is not limited to: the effects that different drugs have, the danger of mixing different drugs, the dangers of mixing drugs and alcohol, where to get help if someone suspect they (or a friend) might be addicted, and how to know if the drugs one buys are safe.
 5. To advocate that the students union runs regular non-alcoholic social events, including in the evening in both SU bars
 6. To work with Students for Sensible Drug Policy.
 7. Advertise welfare support for those engaged in substance abuse at events and around campus.
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