



IDEAS FOR COUNCIL

30/10/2017





The Final Straw

Reduce Number of drinking straws used on Campus

Details:

Attempting to reduce the amount of plastic drinking straws within the University and the local community especially at the Bar. The average drinking straw takes 200 years to decompose and often ends up in the oceans having detrimental effects on marine animals. The University should attempt to minimise its effect on the environment with this being a relatively simple way of doing so. This can be done by having straws behind the bars and only offering them if asked as well as working with the NUS on the #TheLastStraw campaign. Within the community attempting to work with local cafes and bars to reduce the number of straws used as well as hopefully educating people about their impact.

Submitted by: Matt Poulton





Campus Compost

Provide compost bins outside university accommodation

Details:

Compost is comprised of green waste (food waste and organic matter) and is high in nutrients so an excellent growth medium for small trees and flowers. One of the charms of the Aber campus is the large amounts of vegetation around the site. Therefore my proposal involves the addition of compost bins outside of the university accommodation as well as food waste bins within the halls. A way to educate people about recycling and food disposal i.e. posters should be put up in the all the accommodation blocks. Overall this will have the effect of keeping our uni looking as fresh ad preserving the campuses green spaces.

Submitted by: Matt Poulton





We want a President

Name change, Development to "President" for ease of communication.

Details:

The recent change in the Great Repeal Bill, was not clearly communicated to the Student Body who are unclear of what the Union Development officer does and who the leader of the Students' Union is. We propose a change of title to assist with communication and clarification of the current Sabbatical structure.

The Student Body would prefer having a President as the title of its lead officer, as the role entails chairing the AberSU board of Trustees. The Student Body also believes that it would line up with current NUS structures as they have a national President, why don't we?

The Student body also notes that we have Presidents as the leads of each Sports Clubs and Societies, so it would follow suit to have a President as a full-time sabbatical officer.

We are not proposing any changes to the remit of the role, just a simple name change using the following solutions:

1. Change the name from "Union Development Officer" to "President" and update all relevant policy to reflect this change.
2. The remit of the role will remain the same.
3. This will come into effect for the coming election in March 2018, for sabbatical roles in 2018/19.*

Submitted by: Bruce Gardiner





Make the gym 24 hours.

24 hour gym.

Details:

Everyone knows exercise is beneficial. But for someone who suffers from chronic depression and anxiety, it can mean the difference between coping moderately well or feeling like you are drowning. Furthermore, on days that are a struggle and boosts of energy and motivation can only be found in the early/late hours of the day (11pm-5am). Many 24 hour gyms do not have the amount of staff you might think you would need to do this, many settling for just one member of staff on call, or one member watching cctv, though the benefits for a university with a mental illness problem could be drastic. In a town as small as Aber, many students, including myself, feel like medication is the option that is pushed upon us with no real backup, and for those students who can't wake up in the morning but suffer from symptoms such as chronic insomnia, or those who are anxious the majority of the time, being able to go to the gym and naturally increase their dopamine and serotonin levels could see a radical change in attendance, results and general wellbeing.

With the university losing so much money from giving each student living with them a free gym membership, they could even charge for the privilege of using the overnight equipment, and checks could be put in place for each student, for example a mandatory advance induction could be set in place before the student is allowed to enter the gym during overnight hours.

In short, I believe there are many positive changes that can be achieved by allowing students to use the gym, regardless of the things that hold them back during their day to day lives and I hope this is something you sincerely take into consideration and you view from every angle to ensure every best effort is given to making this important step happen.

Submitted by: Jebbs Bowers





You've heard of Elf on a Shelf, but have you heard of Zones are small, so lets open them to all!

Zones for all!

Details:

Zones are currently a good medium of discussion for Students to have the voices heard, the current membership structures restricts the access to who can attend zones. I propose we drop the restrictions and allow any member of the Student body to attend these zones.

Submitted by: Bruce Fraser Wight





TEFinitely Not

Ensuring the TEF happens in students' best interests

Details:

THE FACTS:

1. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is intended to be a mechanism for assessing the quality of teaching in higher education institutions in the UK, which started as a minor Conservative Party pledge during the 2015 General Election and was set out in their Green Paper titled "Fulfilling our Potential".
2. Institutions in the UK can opt in to the TEF to be assessed on a series of metrics (National Student Survey (NSS) scores, retention data, graduate employment data) and a 15 page submission written by the institution, which does not have to include participation from students or students' unions at the discretion of the institution.
3. The TEF is assessed by a group of academic, student, and expert assessors and panel members.
4. Institutions are rated Bronze, Silver or Gold. The initial intention was to link TEF to fees but the recent fee freezing announcement means the link is now unclear
5. The TEF is currently operating at stage 3 (out of a minimum of 3 proposed stages) and a subject-level TEF is being trialled this year for 2 years
6. Welsh medium education is assessed in the TEF at a minimum of 5 credit study.
7. Aberystwyth University was one of very few institutions in Wales who did not enter TEF 2 last year, and last year's Officer team were involved in this decision making
8. Aberystwyth University have decided to submit an application to the TEF this year, with the support of AberSU Officers

THE OPINIONS:

1. The National Union of Students (NUS) and many students' unions agree that the metrics used in the TEF are not accurate measures of teaching quality, and some were not designed to measure teaching quality.
2. 76% of students are opposed to TEF and 87% of higher education students don't realise the implications of the link between TEF and tuition fee increases (Save The Student, 2016).
3. Tuition fees are already at £9,000, in addition to already increasing living and maintenance costs and changes to maintenance support. Increases in tuition fees could isolate some prospective students from applying to and attending university, and leave students with higher amounts of student loan debt.
4. Education is devolved in Wales, and Welsh Government should be able to decide whether or not the TEF as it stands should apply in Wales, whether Wales should have a TEF-equivalent with adjusted metrics, and whether institutions in Wales can raise tuition fees.
5. 5 credits is not an accurate measure of the quality of Welsh medium teaching, and this minimum threshold should be increased to at least 40 credits.
8. It is important that when Aberystwyth University write their TEF submission, AberSU Officers are involved in that submission, in the best interest of Aberystwyth students.

THE SOLUTION:

1. AberSU will consult on any proposed changes to TEF and call for more accurate measures of teaching quality.
2. AberSU would potentially support a Wales specific/coordinated TEF or TEF alternative if one were to arise, coordinated by Welsh Government.
4. AberSU believes that the minimum credit weighting for assessing Welsh medium education should rise from 5 to 40, and will work with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to lobby on this.

Submitted by: Emma Beenham





Shine Bright Like A Diamond

Supporting the Diamond Review recommendations

Details:

THE FACTS:

- The Diamond Review is a review into Student Finance and Funding in Wales, chaired by Professor Sir Ian Diamond.
- The Diamond Review reported to Welsh Government in September 2016 and made recommendations for change to student finance and maintenance support in Wales.
- Welsh Government responded to the Diamond Review and recommendations, which has proposed a progressive funding package which tackles the cost of being a student where pressure is felt the most – in maintenance, the cost living and supporting students who need it most.
- The Diamond Review also sets out a progressive part-time and postgraduate funding system, as well as mandating the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to publish full university costs regularly to minimise the impact of hidden costs on students.
- NUS Wales has responded to the Diamond Review recommendations on behalf of students in Wales, including input from AberSU and students' unions and organisations across Wales.

THE OPINIONS:

- The proposed funding package will widen access to higher education and increase the financial support available to students in Wales.
- An inclusive funding system is important for students, to ensure the fairest access to higher education possible, and to reduce the financial burden on students, including the impact of debt on student mental health.
- The proposed funding package is not totally perfect, and the student voice is important in suggesting improvements to the proposals.
- Students should have a say on important issues relating to their higher education experience, especially in terms of funding and the impact of funding changes.

THE SOLUTION:

- AberSU will support the Diamond Review recommendations, as they set out a progressive maintenance system which will offer increased and inclusive financial support to a wider range of students entering higher education in Wales.
- AberSU will work with NUS Wales to lobby on amendments to the recommendations, in particular to include additional support for certain student groups (e.g. students with caring responsibilities, care leavers, students with disabilities) and to further widen access to the proposed support.
- AberSU will proactively engage on issues relating to the Diamond Review to ensure the Aberystwyth student voice is heard and considered.

Submitted by: Emma Beenham





Online Connected Campus

*Wifi - Free - Everywhere** (In Aberystwyth)*

Details:

As the world is becoming the more and more online, I believe the university should primarily look to increase the download speed on Eduroam and have complete online connectivity across campus. Perhaps wifi points in every lamppost. When you walk anywhere in campus you should be able to get online, with free internet access that Eduroam gives to the student body.

Progressing this in the future, firstly look to have the campus and all accommodation with full wifi connectivity anywhere on campus.

As Aberystwyth town is small and closely linked to the university, the university should look to progress its relationship with town and seek out complete connectivity within the town, they should work closely with Ceredigion County Council on this matter.

Submitted by: Bruce Fraser Wight

