

## Safe Space UBU

### This Union Notes

- 1) We represent ALL Bristol students and endeavour to ensure their time at university is as enjoyable and rewarding as possible.
- 2) The NUS and many other SUs employ a 'safe space' policy which extends to all events in their Unions (in the case of NUS, all NUS events across the country). The principle values are to ensure an accessible environment in which every student feels comfortable, safe and able to get involved in all aspects of the organisation free from intimidation or judgement.
- 3) The NUS' Safe Space Policy looks specifically at language and behaviour used by delegates, NEC members, staff and visitors. Breach of policy and an invasion of 'safe space' is taken very seriously. In the past delegates have been removed from events for intimidating others through use of derogatory language and behaviour that was considered to be aggressive.
- 4) We have Equal Opportunities and Harassment Policies and Equality & Diversity is one of our core values. Inherent in this is the appreciation of an individual's right to a safe and welcoming environment
- 5) A discussion paper was taken to Student Council on 30<sup>th</sup> October. Student Council agreed with the principle and a few queries were raised. Welfare & Equality Exec have since worked on the policy (a membership which includes the Union's 6 diversity PTOs, who work on their own to promote and work with diversity groups).

### This Union Believes

- 1) We have a responsibility to create a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment in our Union for all students, this is inherent to our core value of equality & diversity.
- 2) That although UBU already has an Equal Opportunities Policy, minority groups can still feel unwelcome or uninvolved without going as far as a full breach of this policy.
- 3) No student should feel isolated and unable to attend any event that being held within their Union.
- 4) To make the existing policy of Equal Opportunities more explicit in relation to an individual's environment, it would be helpful to specify a safe space policy and having this will provide grounds and guidance to for UBU to act on if unacceptable behaviour occurs.

### This Union Resolves

- 1) To adopt the Safe Space Policy below and take steps to ensure a our Union is safe environment for all our students.

- 2) The Equal Opportunities, Harassment and Safe Space policies, or at least the fact we have and value them will be displayed in the Union foyer, bars and any other places deemed appropriate.
- 3) Contracts should state that Equality and Diversity is a core value to UBU and that we have Equal Opportunities, Harassment and Safe Space policies.
- 4) To note the guidelines in the appendix which aid interpretation of the policy.

**Word count: 448**

### **Safe Space Policy**

Everything that we do has equality and diversity at its heart. By enabling all of our members to participate in everything we do, we are helping to progress towards a fairer and more equal society. UBU is committed to providing an open-minded and safe environment, in which members can study, live and work in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance. Having a 'Safe Space' means that each and every member should feel welcome to participate in empowering, non-judgemental and non-threatening discussions, activities, services or events free from threats, intimidation, harassment – and free from fear of these – and the deliberate, or negligent, creation of unsafe or unwelcoming conditions.

UBU therefore has a Safe Space policy in regards to our environment that we control and the way that our members, staff and visitors behave whilst involved in our work or social activities.

1. UBU will provide a safe and comfortable environment for its members and will take reasonable measures to ensure this policy is enforced.

2. Anyone in the union, including but not limited to union events and meetings, or representing the union through activities is subject to this policy

A small amount of effort on your part can make all the difference in creating a genuinely inclusive and welcoming safe space, in which everyone can play a part.

### **Feeling Uncomfortable?**

We take all complaints seriously. If you have been intimidated, harassed, or made to feel uncomfortable, it is vital that you let us know about it. Speak to a member of the Union Executive Committee, who are responsible for ensuring that the Equal Opportunities Policy is upheld. Any breaches of this policy will be dealt with in line with the Union's Disciplinary Procedures.

## **Appendix**

A safe space policy is all about creating an open and welcoming environment within our Union so that all our members feel able to participate.

We have an equal opps policy which says “UBU are committed to Equality and Diversity and as such Equal Opportunities are fundamental to our work. People should not be subject to discrimination or harassment.” It also states “Disciplinary action will be taken against any person or groups of individuals breaking this Equal Opportunities Policy”.

This is about taking it one step further, about being proactive instead of just reactive. About taking a few small steps to ensure that all our students feel safe and welcome in our Union, and making sure we have grounds to act not only if someone threatens a student but also if they make anyone feel uncomfortable. We do not currently have an official policy that serves to support the Union’s aims and vision in supporting ALL students by ensuring a comfortable and inclusive environment is created, and upheld.

We strive to ensure that our events are 'safe spaces' - that participants observe our Equal Opportunities policy and respect the rights of others whether they are in a Union meeting, activities or social event. This includes listening to another’s point of view and using appropriate and respectful language at all times.

Sometimes, sticking to an Equal Opportunities Policy can seem a little daunting but please remember that a small amount of effort on your part can make all the difference in creating a genuinely safe space, in which everyone can play a part.

### **Feeling Uncomfortable?**

We take all complaints seriously. If you have been intimidated, harassed, or made to feel uncomfortable, it is vital that you let us know about it. Speak to a member of the Union Executive, who are responsible for ensuring that the Equal Opportunities Policy is upheld.

### **Consequences**

Students who are considered as being intimidating or making others feel uncomfortable and/or unable to participate will be warned about their behaviour or may be asked to leave. If the Equal Opportunities Policy is broken, the normal disciplinary procedure will apply.

### **Language**

Language is one of the many ways that it is easy to discriminate. Some of these ways are more obvious (for example, swearing or using aggressive language) and other ways are more subtle. Some words that are considered ‘every day’ can also cause offence or reinforce negative stereotypes. For example, using the phrase “it’s so gay” to mean that something is bad reinforces negativity about the gay community. Similarly, it is important to avoid using words such as ‘schizo’ or ‘insane’ out of their proper context, as it disempowers people with mental health problems. It can be difficult at times, but it is better to think carefully about your language than to upset or offend others.

**Debate**

Healthy debate and discussion play an important part in UBU. However, it is possible for debate to get out of hand. No matter how passionately you feel, there is never an excuse for allowing an argument to get personal, abusive or aggressive.

**Media**

The policy is about creating a safe environment so therefore print and other forms of media do not fall under this however they must still abide by the Equal Opportunities and Harassment Policies.

**Timing**

The policy is in place at all times and actively applied to all core Union events and activities. This means that the policy is just as strong and just as important during social activities as it is in Student Council or a campaign event. Societies and events run by the Union Ents Office must abide by Equal Opportunities Policy and may choose to promote a safe space environment.

**Social activities...**

We expect you to uphold the Equal Opportunities Policy at all times – even when at the bar, quiz or other social activities. Always bear this in mind and ensure your language, clothing and behaviour is appropriate. Respect other people's personal space.