

Students' Union at Bournemouth University

Plastic Policy

The Union notes:

1. SUBU recognises that waste plastics pose a global threat to the marine environment. Within the context of our Environmental Strategic Theme we commit to minimising our use of plastics, to reducing the environmental impact of waste plastics and to support BU in its efforts to reduce its use of plastics.
2. Although none of the waste from BU or SUBU (when disposed of in a campus bin) should enter the ocean, this policy is important in order to raise awareness of the issue to students, staff, visitors and suppliers.
3. Not all plastic that ends up in the ocean is waste. Fabrics that contains plastic (e.g. man-made textiles such as polyester, nylon, 'lycra' etc) can give off small microfibers when washed and these can enter the oceans through the waste water systems.
4. SUBU supports the BU strategy of Reduce, Reuse, Repair and Recycle (in that order) as our way to manage and reduce waste.
5. Plastics come in different categories – single use, recyclable, recycled, and biodegradable.
6. The disposal of these different forms of plastic is complex and is not always as effective as expected. The different types of plastics require careful disposal planning – and some should be avoided as no viable disposal mechanism exists (e.g. in 2019 there is no viable biodegradable plastic disposal stream at BU).

The Policy:

1. Measure our use of single-use plastics and set targets for reduction as the 'worst offenders'.
2. Develop an assessment of the environmental impact of plastics we buy and use to inform the purchase of goods and services. The primary aim should be to avoid the use of plastic where a viable alternative exists. This should include full understanding of the supply, capture, reuse, recycling or disposal of the different options available - single use, recyclable, recycled, and biodegradable. This assessment should include but not be limited to: catering disposables (e.g. cups, straws, pots), clothing, packaging, decorations and equipment.
3. The viability of plastic alternatives should include measures on reduction of ocean waste, landfill waste reduction and carbon footprint.
4. Where the use of plastics is unavoidable, aim to buy only those plastic products that can be easily reused or recycled.
5. Seek and encourage innovative recycling opportunities for the plastic waste we and our supply chain partners produce in our buildings, cafés and daily operations.
6. Work with our supply chain to develop capability and capacity for recycled plastic products (not just recyclable products).
7. Work with students, staff and suppliers to encourage them to take practical steps to reduce the use of plastic and the production of plastic waste.
8. Promote behaviours that reduce reliance on plastics, particularly encouraging the use of tap water over bottled water and the reduction of plastic packaging waste.
9. Support and encourage student and community initiatives to remove plastic waste and litter from the environment.

10. Work in partnership with NUS, BU, suppliers, and other stakeholders to meet these policy objectives
11. SUBU will have process that ensure visiting organisations see this policy and submit their own plan prior to visits outlining how they intend to comply with the policy. Particular attention will be given to preventing 'give aways' that are not intended for any reasonable future use (i.e. they are just disposable).
12. SUBU will encourage BU to consider research into the sustainability of plastics, use of alternatives and protection of the marine environment from plastic waste. SUBU should also expect BU to encourage the sustainability use of plastic and protection of the oceans to be included in academic programmes.
13. SUBU should apply this policy across all aspects of its activities including commercial services, activities, visitors, freshers fair, campaigns, media.
14. Nothing in this policy should negatively impact any student, staff member or visitor. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring people with disabilities are not disadvantaged.