

Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free Policy Proposal

Contact details

Your name (Proposer of the policy)	Philippa Williams
The name of a person who supports the policy (Seconder of the policy)	James Warren

Student Impact

Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how.	<p>Yes. I have consulted with students at various stages of the Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free Campaign via Facebook, the SU App, Twitter, emails, via a Survey Monkey Questionnaire, Union Council and at the Sports Forum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Su App: 669 • Twitter: 134 • Survey Monkey Questionnaire (Barriers to Engagement): 488 • 46 anonymised comments received from Facebook (although this is not the total amount of students that engaged in the posts.)
How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students?	<p>From the feedback I have gathered, many students find that the current timetabling policy is limiting their ability to engage in extra-curricular activities. This is course and faculty specific, and therefore there is a non-uniform student experience for all depending on their course. This proposal plans to create uniform accessibility for all students to extra-curricular activities, regardless of their course or year of study.</p>

Policy Proposal

The Union Notes (Facts) This section should include facts, not reflection or opinions. Please provide references where possible.

1. NUS passed policy at National Conference 2016 to support students' unions in running Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free (KWAF) campaigns on their campuses (<https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/keep-wednesday-afternoons-free-sus-making-the-case>)

2. "Physical activity stands apart from more traditional treatments and therapies for mental health problems because it has the potential to simultaneously improve health and wellbeing, and tackle mental illness".

(Taylor & Faulkner, *Journal of Mental Health and Physical Activity*)

3. Higher physical activity correlates with an improved quality of life, and can improve symptoms of mental health difficulties including anxiety and depression.

(Schmitz, N., Kruse, J., and Kugler, J. (2004). *The Association between Physical Exercises and HealthRelated Quality of Life in Subjects with Mental Disorders: Results from a Cross-Sectional Survey. Preventive Medicine, vol. 39, pp. 1200–1207*)

4. Students volunteer to help people (60%), improve their CV/employability (52%), and to make a difference (55%).

(Data from 10 SUs that completed the Volunteer Engagement Survey 2016; NUS)

5. 51 per cent of recent graduates under 30 years old who are in paid work say that volunteering helped them to secure employment.

(https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/bursting_the_bubble_summary_report.pdf)

6. More than nine in 10 (94 per cent) of employers questioned identified a clear link between university sport participation and valuable skills and strengths in potential employees.

(<http://www.bucs.org.uk/page.asp?section=18560§ionTitle=Value+of+Sport>)

7. 73% of students would feel isolated if they were unable to participate in UPSU Clubs, Societies and Activities

(Barriers to Participation Survey, 490 responses)

8. 80% of students agree that Wednesday afternoons should not be timetabled from 12pm to allow time for students to take part in clubs, societies and activities

(Barriers to Participation Survey, 490 responses)

9. 30% of students agree that their Wednesday afternoons are currently NOT free from 1pm

(Barriers to Participation Survey, 490 responses)

10. In 2017/18 academic year, 2,247 unique sessions are timetabled on Wednesday afternoons (after 1pm). Business (233), Arts & Humanities (643), Health & Human Sciences (695), Science & Engineering (464), PUPSMD (212).

(Barriers to Participation Survey, 490 responses)

The Union Believes (Opinions/Beliefs) This section requires reflection on the facts stated in 'The Union Notes'

1. Wednesday Afternoons are sacrosanct to ensure that students can take part in Extra-Curricular Activities, including Volunteering, Societies and Sports, to practise self-care, to carry out a part time job, to carry out group work and to catch up on study.
2. Extra-curricular experiences are important to many students at University of Plymouth, and also offer opportunities for students to gain skills to enhance their employability.
3. The current timetabling policy at the university is not delivering upon its commitment to conclude all undergraduate study at 1pm on Wednesdays.
4. Around 30% of students have academic sessions on Wednesday afternoons, this means that extra-curricular opportunities for students vary depending upon their course.
5. Wednesday afternoons should be free from teaching from 12pm
6. That the university should extend the provisions to keep Wednesday afternoons free to students on all courses, including Postgraduate Courses.
7. That the university should extend the current policy to ensure that Wednesday timetabling is limited to 12pm, as this would allow more students to participate in the activities, particularly students that may be required to travel to away fixtures- Plymouth is very geographically isolated.
8. That, if lecturers are scheduled, the university should ensure alternative arrangements should be made, i.e. lecture capture or duplication of the session. Also, any sessions should be made in agreement with all students who would be required to attend and only with their agreement.

9. That if required the university should consider producing an absence policy, particularly for those participating in British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS), if there is further conflict with the Wednesday teaching.

The Union Resolves (Actions) Here you will describe the action you want to be taken, be specific.

1. To mandate the Sabbatical Officer team to continue to support the Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free Campaign and to lobby the university to ensure that the future timetable is considerate of keeping Wednesdays Free.

Appendices/supporting information Please include any supporting information relevant to your motion, this could include; consideration of how you would achieve any points in 'The Union Resolves', links to news articles or online publications

- A) Feedback from students
- B) Barriers to participation survey results
- C) Research from other institutions
- D) Current timetabling of Wednesday afternoons by Faculty- data derived from the report of timetabling

EXTRACT OF THE MINUTES 1ST MAY 2018

Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free

As the meeting is not quorate, it was agreed to allow absent members a vote via email after the meeting.

Philippa Williams – VP Sport explained that research was conducted earlier in the year regarding students' views about barriers to participation in extra-curricular activities. This broadly fell into two distinct areas; those that do not have sufficient time, due to university scheduling and other factors such as funding and accessibility. Whilst it is a principle of the university that students should have Wednesday afternoons free, it is not currently the practice across all courses.

Philippa presented a paper, which summarised the findings of the research, to the Student Life Committee and Timetabling Committee and has the support of the Vice Chancellor, Judith Petts and Deputy Vice Chancellor Education and Student Experience, Julian Chaudhuri.

Philippa noted that the this proposal is to ensure that the issue of keeping Wednesday afternoons free continues to be on the agenda across all levels of the university and the work done on this so far is not lost.

The speech against was waived.

It was noted that some courses schools do need to have assessments/activities scheduled on a Wednesday afternoon so as to fit in all course content, one example of this was the medical school. Philippa acknowledged that it will not always be possible to have each Wednesday afternoon free but, where possible, the opportunity to do so should be maximized.

Maja Smith – VP Education noted that the university currently offer too many modules to be able to keep all timetables clear on Wednesday afternoons, however, they are looking at reducing the number of module options available in order to raise teaching quality, this should also have the impact of condensing the timetable.

Philippa concluded that whilst it may not always be possible in every circumstance, the principle of Wednesday afternoons being free needs to apply in the majority of cases. James Warren – VP Welfare added that the issue is further complicated when academics book informal sessions on Wednesday afternoons, as these are not officially on the timetable, they are not always recorded.

For: 18

Against: 0

Abstentions: 1

As agreed at the start of the meeting, members absent from the meeting will have the opportunity to vote via email to ensure that quoracy is reached.

After email vote

For: 23

Against: 0

Abstentions: 1