

Students Union Environmental Assessment re-visit

An environmental assessment was undertaken on Monday 6th January 2014. A summary of the key observations are summarised below;

1. PIR lighting systems are in place within the office areas, with older less efficient systems in place within the public areas of the Union. A lighting survey was completed in December 2012 in the Jordanstown Union which identified some areas for improvement. However, given the impending closure of the Union at Jordanstown as part of the University's wider campus relocation, it was decided not to upgrade the fittings as overall the environmental impact would be greater (i.e. whilst short term efficiency benefits would be realised, the upgraded fittings would almost certainly be decommissioned/ disposed of once the relocation took place). The new Union following relocation will include energy efficient fittings etc. as part of the wider campus construction, which is designed to BREEAM Excellent standard.
2. The Union in Coleraine is being relocated into a dedicated space in Central Buildings. As part of this, Union Management have been heavily involved in the design and specification of the space e.g. the installation of PIR controlled lighting and much more energy efficient lighting than currently exists in the Union in South Buildings.
3. It was observed that the Union is much more proactive in shutting down areas when the Unions are quieter e.g. in Jordanstown Union at the time of inspection, areas such as the Volunteering Centre and 'The Loft' were closed. In the previous inspection the lights were on despite no one being (and unlikely to be) in the areas.
4. Themed environmental awareness posters and signage specific to the Students Union (as part of the University's 'Sustainable Students at Ulster' initiative) were observed throughout the Union during the inspection. Specific examples included water conservation signage at washing stations, energy awareness and sustainable travel posters on noticeboards.
5. It was observed that the Union have moved to the use of recycled content office paper. This should be commended as a positive step, one which the wider University is yet to adopt.
6. One of the Union's black and white photocopiers have also been removed since the last visit (this was a recommendation of the previous assessment report).
7. The Union continues to use the University's main waste contract for the disposal of food waste, cardboard, paper, WEEE, mixed general waste and fluorescent tubes. This ensures that the amount of waste recovered and recycled from the Union is maximised (the University's waste is taken off site for sorting into recyclable and recoverable waste, resulting in <10% being disposed of via landfill).
8. The Union has its own disposal arrangements for the glass and used vegetable oil (both of which are recycled).
9. As part of the assessment, the Union's Environmental Policy and Aspects and Impacts Register were reviewed. The review has concluded that they both remain relevant to the Union's activities and therefore do not need to be amended.

Assessment completed by Adrian Davis, University Sustainability Manager.

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