



THE STUDENTS' UNION AT UWE: SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Green Impact Students' Unions (GISU) Case Study

The SU at UWE have been running the successful behaviour change campaign/event series to spread awareness about sustainable fashion to students and staff, provide opportunities for them to learn new skills and knowledge, and to make more sustainable choices when it comes to fashion. This campaign encompassed a whole range of events to engage staff and students in thinking more ecologically and ethically about their fashion consumption and raise awareness about the devastating impacts that the fast fashion industry has on people and the planet.

Swap shops

In total, in the 2022-23 academic year, the SU ran or supported 9 swap shops, which had presence across the three campus sites, with one open for a whole month. These were run by Union staff and student volunteers, and included collaboration with student societies. One event was run by Events Management students for their course, with support from the Union. VP Sports and UWE Snow Sports Club also arranged an event each - both of these were focused on exchanging sports equipment and clothing. The number of participants at the swap shops totalled **over 750**.

The success of our Swap Shop led to the University **creating a permanent location** for swapping items (including clothes, books, accessories, and household items): the **Sustainability Hub**. The Sustainability Hub is predominantly a swap shop, but it also acts as a networking and events space. Between 70-100 people use the space daily - it's situated in a great location with high footfall.



Placement Uniform Swap Shops

Since autumn 2022, the Placement Uniform Swap Shop has operated weekly at Glenside Students' Union to help alleviate the financial pressure faced by students on healthcare courses; it also saves unwanted or unused uniforms from waste.

Students are initially issued with 3 uniforms (free of charge), which are meant to last them the entirety of their course. When this uniform is no longer fit for purpose, either because it no longer fits, is damaged or stained, or students have graduated and its surplus to requirement, it can be donated to the swap shop and given a new lease of life for students, free of cost.



Clothes mending sessions

The Union also facilitated 7 clothes mending sessions across the three campuses. The Students' Union engaged 55 students and 8 staff in total, giving them skills in clothes mending and giving at least 36 pieces of clothing a new lease of life. One participant fed back: "I didn't know clothes mending was so easy, I'm going to go home and fix all my clothes!"



Charity Shop Crawls

We ran two charity shop crawls, one in Welcome (with 15 attendees) and one in Green Fortnight (with 8 attendees), bringing together Green Team volunteers and the LGBT+ Society. We had a pit stop during the crawls which worked really well as a way to socialise and for students to get to know other like-minded students.



Vintage Clothing Sales

Across the academic year, The Students' Union has partnered with Vintage Vera, Vintage Flamingo's and TVC Vintage to offer 3 vintage clothing sales.

Vintage clothes sales are very popular amongst students, and having a vintage clothes sale at the Freshers' Fair for the second year in a row meant that students were introduced to it from the very beginning of their time at Uni and were aware that this was an option that The Students' Union regularly offers.

Environmental Fashion Workshop

We organised with the fashion technicians at our Bower Ashton Campus to run a workshop on sustainable fashion called "Fashion Fictions" during Green Fortnight.

"[Fashion Fictions](#) invites you to imagine, explore and enact enticing alternative fashion Worlds."

The Fashion Fictions workshop was all about letting your mind and emotions run free to create sustainable visions of the future of Fashion. Using all sorts of creative mediums from clay to cut outs, between us we came up with radical ideas ranging from [a world in which peak oil leads to the cessation of material production](#) to [one in which footballers lead the way in transforming consumer culture](#). 8 students attended the 3-hour session, with feedback from one saying, "it was liberating to imagine these different worlds and the ways to make them happen".



Resource sharing

We produced and uploaded a blog post and accompanying social media post [The real cost of 'Fast Fashion'](#). In addition to this, [we posted about thinking sustainably about consumer habits at Christmas](#), highlighting that giving gifts of reinvented and revamped clothing or fashion is more eco-minded option, rather than buying new.

The Students' Union Marketing team also created an [Instagram reel of low effort and high impact ideas](#) about sustainability and fashion, including browsing charity shops for second-hand bargain, using Vinted or Depop to sell your unwanted items, and revamping your own items that need a little TLC.

Book Hunt Giveaway

In conjunction with the two above news articles, we ran a 'book hunt and giveaway' through our social media. We encouraged students to engage with the challenge to find hidden copies of Aja Barber's book 'Consumed'. This book exposes and explores the injustices faced in the consumer industries, bringing together race, equality, and climate change.

We accompanied the books with information about why we were giving away this book in particular, with the hope that those who found them would be able to learn from what it had to offer, 'learning' how to change behaviour and challenge a fast fashion society. We gave out 11 books to students across all three campus sites.



Engagement with Film Students

A group of UWE film students were making a documentary about sustainable fashion for their course. They were very inspired by the work that we have been doing on sustainable fashion, so they came to one of our clothes swaps to take some footage and [created this video](#), which they shared on their Instagram 'Hanging By A Thread', and which was also then shared on the Green Team socials.

