

Sustainable Period Products

The Student's Union at UWE

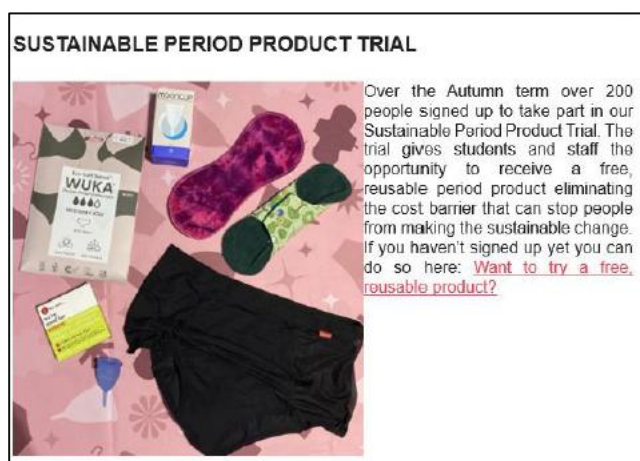
Introduction and context

The Students' Union at UWE runs a behavior change campaign which promotes sustainable period products and engages students in conversations around plastic pollution, as well as working to address period poverty within the UWE community. The campaign was started by a former Women's Welfare Officer, Daisy Wakefield and has grown over the past few years.

We provide free, eco-friendly period products in all Students' Union owned toilets and work with UWE Bristol to provide free products in a variety of toilets and spaces across the 5 campus sites.

Each basket of products includes signage pointing students to additional support should they need it. The QR code takes them to our Sustainable Periods page where they can find further information about our reusable period product trial, where they can find products around campus, as well as links to our Advice Centre and UWE's Money Service. Alongside the 'Caught Short' signage we also have our 'Need More Period Products?' poster which is in several bathrooms across UWE. The poster signposts students to The Students' Union 'Sustainable Periods' webpage where students can see all the locations across UWE where period products are available and access the sustainable period product trial.

The Students' Union has worked hard to make sustainable period products more accessible to students by running a free sustainable period product trial. This trial gives the opportunity to all UWE Bristol students and staff to receive a **free** reusable period product of their choice. The aim of this project is to spread awareness of reusable and more sustainable period products, give students a risk-free opportunity to trial products and remove the barrier of cost.



The products available this year are: period pants, menstrual cups, reusable pads or a menstrual cup sterilising pot.

Achievements and impact

Period product provision

From August 1st 2024 – 17th March 2025 we have provided **45,804 disposable period products across UWE**. As well as supplying products for the period product provision we have also given them out at our Fresher's fairs and period stalls throughout the year. This year we also worked with UWE's Central

Examinations team to provide invigilators with period products incase a student was unable to get to their bag under exam conditions.

In 2024/25, we added another 19 locations to our period product provision. This is an increase of 20.77%.

Sustainable Period Product Trial

267 students and 17 staff members signed up to the trial between October 1st 2024– March 20th 2025.

- We saved students a total of **£5,125.27** for the upfront cost of these reusable period products. See calculations below.
- We gave out 85 menstrual cups for free which would have cost students £10.90, we therefore in total saved them **£884**
- We gave out 169 WUKA period pants which cost an average of £20.99 each, meaning we have saved students **£3547.31**
- We gave out 26 reusable pad bundles, which would have cost an average of £25 per package, saving students **£650**
- We also gave out 4 reusable sterilising pots which would have cost students £10.99, saving them **£43.96**



$(£884+£3547.31+£650+£43.96=£5125.27)$

In total, we have estimated that we could have saved **4752g of plastic per year**. If students carried on using these products over 5 years, then this would mean **23,076g of plastic saved** over this time.

This is based on students using their reusable pads or pants for one day of their period, and student using their menstrual cups for three days of their period.

4 weeks after collection, trial participants are sent a feedback form to provide us with an insight into how they found their reusable product and any additional comments they may have about the trial.

Number of respondents: So far we have had 76 responses, 26.7% of those who took part in the trial.

Satisfaction of the product trailed was rated an average of 4.4 out of 5 by respondents

Question: How likely are you to recommend sustainable period products to a friend or colleague?

➤ Average rating of 4.5.

➤ 89% of respondents said they were either likely or extremely likely to recommend reusable products to a friend or colleague.

Questions: How often will you use this product in relation to every menstruating cycle?

- 13.15% said they would use their product every day of their period (5-7 days)
- 47.3% said they would use their product most days of their period (3-4 days)
- 38.15% said they would use their product sometimes (1-2 days)
- Only 1 person said they would not use the product they trialled again

Legacy

The Students' Union have listed our sustainable periods work as one of our key sustainability priorities for 2025-2026. As the provision has continued to grow and the delivery of it is now shared between The Students' Union and UWE departments, we hope the partnership will become 'business as usual'. We hope to further extend the provision to more locations around the campus sites and continue working with UWE departments and UNISON to identify new areas.

The sustainable period product trial will run again for the 2025/2026 academic year. We will use the feedback we received from participants to inform which products we include and the suppliers we buy from.

Resourcing

Period product provision

When receiving a request for a new location, we collaborate with the relevant department to include this space within our provisions. This collaboration involves providing them with baskets and products and they decide on a designated staff member within their team who is responsible for restocking the products or coordinating with the cleaning team to incorporate the new location into their regular rounds.

Our Community Project's Coordinator (Welfare) receives all new location requests and liaises with UWE's cleaning team or the relevant department to provide baskets and stock. They are also in charge

of ordering and delivering products across the campus sites. We bulk buy our eco-friendly disposable period products through The Students' Union shop, which allows us to purchase them at wholesale price.

Trial resourcing

To take part in the trial, students fill in an online form selecting the product they would like to have and sizing/flow types.

Their selected product is then ordered and can be collected from their chosen campus site. Around 4 weeks after collection they are sent a feedback form about their experience.

We buy the period pants from Wuka and have a business account with them so that we can buy them in bulk. For our menstrual cups, reusable pads and sterilising pots we have used Hey Girls and Dame. Orders are sorted on a weekly basis by the Community Projects Coordinator. We allow up to 4 weeks from signing up to the trial to collection so that orders can be done in bulk, instead of only buying a few products at a time.