**Top 5 Negative Environmental Impacts**

The City, University of London Students’ Union represents all of our students here at City. We operate in the Tait building and our facilities include our office, reception area and a staff kitchen space. The Union recognises that all of our products, activities and services have an impact on the environment (local and global) and we are committed to managing the environmental and social impacts of our work.

This year we have been working mostly on site, with 1-2 online/remote days each week.

It is difficult to complete a full audit of our environmental impacts as the Union does not have its own building. Therefore, unfortunately, we cannot assess our own energy bills. This report is based upon our known impacts.

In order to assess and state which our 5 most significant environmental impacts are we have used the following matrix.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Impact severity → | 1 - Very low | 2-Low | 3 - Medium | 4-High | 5 - Very high |
| Frequency  ↓ |
| 1 - Very infrequent |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 - Infrequent |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 - Medium |  |  | Energy use in home (9) |  |  |
| 4 - Frequent |  |  | Energy use in office (12) | Waste (16) |  |
| 5 – Very frequent |  |  | Incentives (15) | Student Engagement (20) |  |

1. **Student engagement:**

Student engagement is the environmental cost of the material we provide to build engagement. Student engagement material includes the promotional material procured, one off events and does not include staff items and stationary.

As our on-campus presence is almost back to normal, the portion of freebies and giveaways we handed out to students greatly increased. Some of the items we used for promotional material this year are badges, hand sanitizers, lanyards, pens, sweets, tote bags, rain ponchos, posters, leaflets and flyers. We also ran our year-long Study Well campaign, for which we needed to purchase multiple items for events such as Pottery Painting and Bath Bomb Workshops.

A high number of posters and fliers were printed for Welcome, Autumn Elections, Spring Elections, Awards and other key engagement periods this year. Use of paper and printing is damaging to the world’s natural resources and produces waste on campus once the promotional material is no longer needed. As ordering posters and buying items for student engagement was very frequent this year, it is number 1 on our list. However, we are trying to mitigate our impact by also looking at the carbon emissions/manufacturing of products, and by buying vegan and vegetarian food options when possible. Lastly, in order to reduce our environmental impact through paper-based student engagement, we have been using several electronic methods to encourage engagement, such as social media and via our website and articles.

1. **Waste:**

As the Union is constantly producing waste, it is our 2nd highest environmental impact. Here is a list of our main waste types in the office.

* Non-recyclable material
* Recyclable materials
* Paper waste
* Food waste
* Water waste
* Textile waste

Whilst at home, staff uses their own waste options to dispose of waste. When in the office, we have a mixture of non-recyclable and recyclable bins and staff are strongly encouraged to dispose of items appropriately. Our waste disposal is managed by City, University of London. Food waste from our kitchen is put into food waste bins appropriately. This includes staff’s personal food waste and any waste from Union events.

1. **Incentives:**

As an organisation that runs frequent events both in person and online, we know that the incentives we use to promote our events can have a significant impact on the global environment. This includes: Purchasing vouchers and products via Amazon Prime due to the increased emissions, greenhouse gasses and packaging waste that this causes, the amount of single use or virgin plastics on food deliveries and the general impact of postage and packaging.

Our incentives vary from gift vouchers and restaurant vouchers (Elections) to sweets such as chocolate eggs (Catering survey). Unfortunately, many of the sweets we gave out were in single use plastics. Also, whilst vouchers have no physical/material impact on the ecosystems and environment, where we choose to put our money does, especially when it is linked to wasteful production, energy uses and emissions.

This is our number 2 impact this academic year due to the fact that throughout 2021/22, we have run several events, surveys and projects that have incentives attached. To mitigate this impact, we have written guidance to our staff to support in purchasing: ethical, sustainable, accessible and international incentives. Check it out at: Sustainability (citystudents.co.uk)

1. **Energy use in the office:**

The main form of energy use in our Students’ Union facilities is electricity. The Students’ Union uses electricity in the office for computers, office equipment and lighting. The second highest use of electricity is our printers, screens and lights. These are used less frequently throughout the day, however, are still used to some extent daily. The lights in our office are on a ‘dimmer switch’ to allow staff to use the necessary amount of electricity to ensure a good light level in the office. We also have sensor activated lights in some areas of the office for when the office is empty.

Our kitchen area also uses energy to power appliances such as the fridge, microwave and kettle. Water is used by staff through the sink and a drinking water tap. This tap helps to reduce our water use by stopping flow once the handle is released, it also provides near boiling water to help us reduce our use of the kettle and microwave.

1. **Energy use in the home while working:**

Most union staff members have 1 or 2 ‘working from home’ days to reduce the chances of catching the COVID-19 virus. Whilst this has been helpful to reduce our travel, material and in office environmental impacts, we recognise that while working from home, we are still using a large amount of electricity and energy.

For example, all staff work daily on a laptop or similar device which uses the energy from the National Grid and also energy to power our Cloud and Shared Drive storage. We use OneDrive to access and work on documents; with a staff team of around 20 staff and Sabbatical Officers, we know that our energy use at home has gone up over the pandemic.

**Conclusion:**  City, University of London Students’ Union will continue to monitor and reduce our environmental impacts and complete surveys and assessments of these 5 key impacts. The Students’ Union are committed to an ethical and environmental future. We identify sustainability as an enabling factor in our City, University of London Students’ Union Strategic Plan 2019-2022.