

# NUS Group Social Responsibility & Sustainability Statement

## Introduction

This statement outlines the NUS Group's commitment to ethical and environmental issues, illustrating our expectations of our own operations and the organisations we work with. We aim to continuously improve policy and practice to address our social responsibility and sustainability.

### 1. Our values

#### Student focused

"We are committed to ensuring that students can thrive. We respect and understand the importance of student leadership and champion our member students' unions."

#### Collaborative

"We treat each other with respect without fail, promote diversity and seek out new partnerships."

#### Learning and growing

"We take responsibility for constantly improving ourselves and others. If we make mistakes we'll learn from them and make things better."

#### Change agent

"We never stop trying to improve things; we experiment, challenge the status quo and never, ever do things because it's the way we always have."

#### Striving for excellence

"Quality is at the heart of everything we do. We prioritise work on the areas that have the biggest impact on students' lives and celebrate our successes."

### 2. Our ethos

The student movement has for a long time led social thinking and activism on ethical issues. Students' unions and the NUS Group have a proud history of campaigning for change, and the movement has played a part in many of the major social justice issues of the day during NUS' 90 year history.

The student movement is also recognised as showing leadership on environmental issues, building on our evidence base that shows students are worried about climate change.

As a student-led organisation, we have a duty to continue to take leadership on ethical and environmental issues and be open and transparent about the practices of the organisations and suppliers that we have relationships with.

We are committed to ensuring that the ethical and environmental concerns and priorities of our members are reflected in our business decisions, particularly when considering purchasing consortium suppliers.

We will actively seek out businesses, partners and individuals that have complementary ethical values to our own. We will use our

influence with suppliers and partners to encourage ethical practices and the reduction of environmental impacts.

### 3. Environmental statement

We are committed to both minimising the negative environmental impacts of our operations and seeking opportunities to increase our positive impact on the environment.

We have identified our most significant environmental impacts as the products we procure through the purchasing consortium, the electricity, gas and water we use at our offices; business travel by staff; travel by visitors, volunteers and delegates attending meetings and events; the manufacture and printing of our publications and promotional items; the waste we send to landfill.

We will engage staff through our Green Impact programme and by investing in innovative sustainability features within our facilities. We will be both proactive and innovative in working to reduce, reuse and recycle our waste streams. We will ensure that our desire to reduce our negative environmental impacts is embedded within our daily operational decisions, and through the individual actions of our employees and volunteers.

### 4. Ethical statement

We will ensure that our ethical values are embedded throughout the NUS Group and are reflected within the daily decisions of all departments.

We have identified our most significant ethical impacts as: the practices of the suppliers, partners and businesses we have a relationship with, particularly those that operate outside the UK; the products we buy and the services we use; our financial dealings and investments; the treatment of our employees and volunteers.

We will engage with the organisations we have relationships with to understand their ethical standards, with the aim of working

predominantly with those organisations that have high ethical standards and improving practices wherever possible.

### 5. Issues for consideration

#### Environment

The NUS Group takes the following views on environmental issues:

- We will comply with all local environmental legislation and expect our suppliers to do the same in all the countries in which they operate. For suppliers with operations in developing countries we will encourage them to exceed minimum legislative standards and actively promote best practice.
- We are against the exploitation of wild plants and animals and the destruction of natural forests.
- We are against the use of persistent organic pollutants, endocrine disrupting chemicals and PVC packaging and will seek to avoid these in the products that we list and buy.
- We are against unnecessary and non-recyclable packaging, but are for biodegradable packaging.
- We have a purchasing preference for recycled products and we favour recycling over disposal, and encourage our members and suppliers to do the same.
- We are wary of genetic modification.
- We seek to encourage biodiversity around our offices and encourage our suppliers to do the same.
- We promote sustainable travel and encourage our members and suppliers to do the same.

#### Workers' rights

We expect that all our suppliers will meet the core values of the International Labour Organisation, as outlined in our [Sound Sourcing Guide](#). The exploitation of workers is unacceptable. The notion of unionism and the freedom of association are particularly important values to us within our supply chain.

Equal opportunities are a founding principle for the student movement. We value diversity and we expect our partners to have policies and practices relating to prohibiting discrimination

on the grounds of age, being or becoming a transsexual person, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or having a child, disability, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), caste, national origin, religion, belief or lack of religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation, union membership or political affiliation.

## **Youth employment**

Where possible, we will give preference to working with organisations that have a demonstrable commitment to supporting young people through employment, training and development.

## **Oppressive regimes**

We are keen to work with companies that proactively invest or have operations in countries whose structures are open, democratic and accessible. We believe that companies should use their position to challenge oppressive regimes.

## **Finance and student debt**

With increasing levels of debt within society, and increasing levels of student debt, where possible we will only work with suppliers that have an acceptable policy to minimise debt and have responsible marketing and promotional strategies.

## **Bribery & corruption**

The NUS Group has a zero tolerance of bribery and corruption, extending to all business dealings and transactions. We will not tolerate any director, board member, management, employee, officer or third party in their relationship with the company, being involved in bribery, whether by offering, promising, soliciting, demanding, giving or accepting bribes or behaving corruptly in the expectation of a bribe or an advantage.

## **Supply chains**

We seek to trade with companies that have considered and acted upon ethical and environmental issues within their supply chains. Being implicated in arms manufacture, the

pornography industry, unnecessary animal testing, factory farming of animals or the fur trade will lead us to consider not trading with that company. We are wary of genetic modification. The NUS Group is committed to assessing all its direct suppliers on ethical and environmental issues.

## **Campaigning**

The NUS Group will use its position as the national campaigning voice for students to lobby for change, highlight injustice and campaign on matters which impact upon students.

Campaigning on ethical issues is not a means in itself, but when used alongside other tactics can bring about lasting societal and corporate change. We will use our significant influence with our suppliers to positively effect change on ethical issues of concern to our shareholders.

## **Community**

We expect all our suppliers to be genuinely corporately socially responsible, operating ethically and with integrity at all times and maintaining good community relations wherever they do business.

## **Responsible marketing**

The suppliers and partners we work with should practice ethically responsible marketing. We are wary of companies that use marketing irresponsibly to the detriment of society. Although not an exhaustive list, we expect all our suppliers to market alcohol responsibly, market breast milk substitutes responsibly, respect advertising standards and not to be anti-competitive.

## **6. Our approach**

We seek to integrate the above values into our daily operations to make sure we are practicing what we preach. Individual members of staff, and volunteers representing the Company, will go about their duties in an ethically responsible manner in line with our values.

We are supportive of ethical investments, charitable initiatives and have a purchasing preference for socially-positive products such as Fairtrade.

## **7. Constructive engagement**

The NUS Group favours constructive engagement over boycott and actively seeks to use its influence within commercial relationships to effect positive change within our supply chain.

### **Dom Anderson**

**Vice President (Society & Citizenship)**

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Macadam House  
275 Gray's Inn Road  
London WC1X 8QB  
t 0845 5210 262  
e [nusuk@nus.org.uk](mailto:nusuk@nus.org.uk)  
[www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

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