

Policy Briefing – Use of Amazon Vouchers and Products

Welfare & Community Zone, May 2023

What is the current situation at UCL related to this proposal?

UCL does not currently have a policy for or against the use of Amazon vouchers due to the previous policy lapsing in February 2023. Amazon vouchers were previously used as a way to thank participants for taking part in a survey and/or research study. Students' Union UCL has since moved to [One for All Vouchers](#).

What is the relevant national/ international context to this situation?

There have been some attempts made by universities and students to avoid engaging with corporations they consider unethical. In addition to Students' Union UCL previously adopting a policy against the use of Amazon vouchers and products, further relevant examples are listed below:

- » Sussex University banned Coca-Cola products from the Students' Union over unethical practices¹
- » There is an awareness that universities engaging with companies perceived to have unethical practices should be reconsidered^{2 3}
- » Leeds University Union passed a policy to “ban unethical companies during Freshers' Week”⁴ based on an ‘Ethical Consumer’ index⁵. The presence of an Amazon Prime banner on campus seems to have sparked the introduction of this policy.

In the time since the previous policy was passed and then lapsed, Amazon's unethical practices have persisted. For example, Ethical Consumer write that. “Our research highlights many ethical issues for Amazon, including climate change, environmental reporting, habitats & resources, pollutions and toxics, arms & military supply, human rights, worker's rights, supply chain management, irresponsible marketing, animal rights, animal testing, factory farming, use of controversial technologies, political activities, and anti-social finance.”⁶

Are there any legal implications to this policy proposal?

No

¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/coca-cola-is-banned-from-students-union-over-unethical-practices-412455.html>

² <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/opinion/universities-should-rethink-their-complicity-corporate-bad-behaviour>

³ <https://www.macleans.ca/education/uniandcollege/universities-shouldnt-profit/>

⁴ <https://sites.google.com/luu.org.uk/luu-policy/better-union/unethical-companies-freshers>

⁵ <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>

⁶ <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/company-profile/amazoncom-inc>

Does this relate to any existing SU policy?

No

Are there any financial, resource or stakeholder/ public relations issues with this policy proposal?

No.

What would the next steps be if the motion passed?

Students' Union UCL would reinstate their lapsed policy. They will also identify relevant stakeholders (departments and individuals who usually give Amazon vouchers out) to understand their views on this matter, as this could directly affect how participants engage in studies. Help staff and students identify alternative providers who they can use instead of Amazon.