

Policy Proposal: The Union should add an information poster next to prominent calorie displays in SU outlets. This poster will define the relevance of calories, nutrients, and food variety and promote an intuitive approach to eating.

What would you like the Union to do?

The Union should add an information poster next to prominent calorie displays in SU outlets. This poster will define the relevance of calories, nutrients, and food variety and promote an intuitive approach to eating.

Why would you like to do this?

Background and Rationale:

As the Women's Officer, I have been approached by numerous students and observed the impact of calorie displays within our Union's outlets. Overwhelmingly, there is a consensus that these displays have the potential to be triggering and detrimental, especially for students facing challenges with eating disorders and body image-related illnesses.

Feedback and Supporting Evidence:

Prominent displays of calorie information can cause distress and discomfort. As evidenced by students sharing their struggles and concerns regarding the negative impact of such displays on their mental health and overall well-being. This aligns with broader research* indicating that calorie displays can contribute to triggering behaviours and exacerbate eating disorder symptoms, leading to increased stress and anxiety among students.

Despite providing relevant information, the current displays do not distinguish between calories and nutrients, and as a consequence, seem to promote "diet culture" and "calorie counting" rather than allowing for students and customers to make informed dietary decisions.

* <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/events/events/2024/jan/lunch-hour-lecture-impact-englands-calorie-labelling-policy>

How will this affect students?

Purpose and Expected Impact:

By adding to its current calorie displays, the Union would aim to prioritise the mental and emotional well-being of its student body. This change will promote a more welcoming and inclusive environment within our Union's outlets, fostering a sense of comfort and safety for all. It's crucial to create spaces that support individuals who may be vulnerable to these triggers, allowing them to access services and enjoy campus facilities without fear or anxiety.

Effect on Students and Customer Experience:

This addition to the current calorie displays will significantly improve the customer experience for all individuals. Students and customers previously confronted with potentially distressing information while making food choices will be provided with additional elements to make an informed decision.

This adjustment ensures compliance with legal requirements while also aligning with our commitment to providing a supportive and accommodating atmosphere within our Union's establishments. Ultimately, this change will contribute positively to the mental health and well-being of our diverse student population.

In conclusion, explaining the relevance of calorie displays is a proactive step towards fostering a campus environment that prioritises inclusivity, education, mental health, and positive well-being for all students.