

UCASU MOTION

Motion Name: Creating Social Sanctuaries on Campus

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We Note:

- Many students **may experience stress or anxiety** during their studies, especially when facing academic pressures, personal challenges, or adjusting to university life.
- Several universities and student unions across the UK have successfully implemented dedicated social spaces for mental well-being. For example, the University of Liverpool, University of Surrey has a designated quiet space where students can unwind, meditate, or relax during busy periods. This initiative has been widely praised for reducing student stress and fostering a more supportive campus culture.

<https://news.liverpool.ac.uk/2021/11/15/social-spaces-for-students-on-campus/>

<https://surreyunion.org/your-spaces/>

- Current social spaces on campus are primarily multifunctional, meaning they don't cater specifically to relaxation and well-being. Many students, especially those dealing with mental health challenges, are left without a dedicated space on campus to destress and recharge.
- Creating designated social sanctuaries on campus will not only improve mental well-being but also foster a sense of community and help students from different backgrounds form connections in a calm and inclusive environment.
- Mental Health Foundation (MHF) research indicates that access to quiet, low-stimulation environments can help reduce anxiety, improve focus, and enhance emotional well-being. Creating such spaces on campus can provide students with a much-needed retreat from stress, contributing to overall mental health.
- According to MHF movement report **24% of young adults** (aged 18-24) report anxiety preventing them from engaging in activities. Creating inclusive social spaces can help address this by providing a safe, supportive environment (MHF - MHAW Movement -2024).

We Believe:

- Establishing dedicated "social sanctuaries" on campus is crucial for promoting mental well-being and improving the overall student experience. These spaces will provide a

safe environment where students can relax and engage with others in a stress-free setting.

- Social sanctuaries will help students manage their mental health more effectively, potentially reducing the risks of burnout and improving academic performance.
- These spaces will help more students connect with the student union by creating a positive link between the union and support for well-being. As students use the social sanctuaries and take part in activities like mindfulness sessions or wellness events, they will get to know more about what the union offers. This will strengthen the bond between the union and students, leading to more involvement in union activities and building a supportive community that fits with the union's goals.
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We Resolve:

- The Union will collaborate with the university to establish designated social sanctuaries on each UCA campus. These spaces will be co-designed with student input to ensure they meet the diverse needs of the student body.
- These social sanctuaries will be open Monday to Friday during regular university hours, with considerations for weekend access during exam periods or high-stress times, ensuring flexibility for students to use these spaces when needed.
- Each space will offer quiet zones with comfortable seating, calming decor, and wellness resources, such as mindfulness tools and mental health literature, as well as opportunities for stress relief activities like yoga, mindfulness sessions, or simple relaxation areas.
- The Union will actively promote these spaces to make sure all students are aware of their availability. We will also gather feedback from students to keep improving these spaces based on their needs.

Financial Impact:

- Funding may be required to furnish these spaces (e.g., comfortable seating, wellness resources, and calming decor). UCASU will **collaborate** with the university to support the project's implementation.
- UCASU will use its **campaign budget** (after approval from Union Council members) to collect feedback from students, offering incentives like a **prize draw** to increase participation. The campaign budget will cover promotional materials and small rewards for students providing feedback.

