Activities Forum

4. Accessible Sports Clubs

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Decision(s): To refer to Council

Union Notes

1. In UK higher education in 2019/2020, 17.3% of home students identified as disabled (1), increased compared with previous years.
2. Disabled university students are less active than their non-disabled peers, despite similar benefits from activity such as benefits to physical and mental health (2).
3. One survey noted a lack of accessible options as a significant reason for the non-involvement of disabled people in sports (3).
4. Studies have identified a range of barriers to activity in disabled students, including organisational and environmental factors. Students with multiple or severe disabilities report the greatest barriers (2).
5. Universities such as Loughborough (4) and University of East London (5) provide accessible sport options including Para sports teams, however Imperial currently does not offer any.
6. Student unions have a duty under the Equality Act (6) to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students, including anticipatory reasonable adjustments (i.e. common adjustments made in anticipation of their need, before students request them).

Union Believes

1. That all students, including those with significant disabilities, are equally entitled to engage with sports clubs.
2. That work should be done by all teams to increase the inclusion and accessibility of their club to disabled students.
3. That teams should educate themselves and their coaches on how they can support disabled students and make themselves more inclusive.
4. That teams should provide clear and effective means for students to raise accessibility issues and work to address each submission within a reasonable timeframe.

Union Resolves

1. To conduct a review of current accessibility practices with an aim to complete this before April 2027. This review should be conducted by Disabilities Network, Sports Sector Chair, Sports Sector Secretary, ICSM Clubs and Socs Chair, the Deputy President for Activities and the Deputy President for Welfare.

2. To deliver a mandate that all union sports teams should have at least one coach with specific disability inclusion training, to discuss which teams may be exempt and the reasons for this. Where clubs don't have formal coaches, those conducting the training should be encouraged to complete the training. Where clubs have more than one coach, clubs should provide clear justification for their choice of which to send for training, prioritising those who would have the greatest positive impact on disabled members.
3. To compile a list of union-approved training courses, with priority given to sport-specific provision, while ensuring appropriate alternative options are identified for sports where no tailored training currently exists.
4. For Union to provide funding for said training, to minimise the impact on club finances.
5. To provide incentives for compliant clubs such as Imperial Athletes Badges and to prioritise hiring of new coaches with those qualifications, where appropriate.
6. To integrate more guidance and training for student committee members, including an advice page on Freshdesk, to improve the accessibility section of risk assessments to ensure sufficient consideration is given to reasonable adjustments and online training for committee members.
7. To ensure clubs provide formal channels by which students can disclose their access needs and how clubs could accommodate them (such as online forms), as well as safeguarding disabled students from ableism through providing clear channels for reporting feedback to clubs and serious issues to the DPA, disabilities network and Sports Sector Chair so that they can be addressed.
8. To provide clear targets for timeframes within which to address feedback.
9. To begin implementation of this over the next academic year, with an aim to have at least 70% compliance within 5 years.

References

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