

STRATEGIC PLAN 2027



STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY



The background of the page is a photograph of a crowded event, possibly a trade show or conference. People are seen from the back or side, looking towards the left. A semi-transparent red overlay covers the right two-thirds of the page, where the text is located. The text is in white, with page numbers highlighted in dark grey boxes.

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STRATEGY

FOREWORD



Our 2023-27 strategy will guide our work and underscores our commitment to shaping an excellent university experience for every student at the University of Northampton. As the President of the Northampton Students' Union, it is with immense pride and enthusiasm that I introduce this strategic plan, one that has been shaped by the collective aspirations of our diverse student body.

The strategy will see us strive to be at the heart of student life. This vision is not just a statement; it is a promise we intend to keep. Together, we strive to improve the university experience by inspiring the creation of strong communities, empowering students to effect positive change, and providing robust support throughout their academic journey.

As we embark on this transformative journey, we invite you to join hands with us. Your support and collaboration are invaluable as we work towards creating an environment where every student flourishes individually and collectively. Together, we can turn this vision into reality, ensuring that Northampton Students' Union remains a beacon of excellence and a catalyst for positive change.

BHAVYA MOHAN

SU PRESIDENT 23-24

ROGER WESTON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Welcome to the Northampton Students Union's strategic plan for 2023-27, "Strengthening our Community." As the CEO, I am thrilled to present this comprehensive roadmap that reflects our commitment to enhancing the university experience for every student we serve. Our thorough consultation process was reassuringly loud and clear, students want more opportunities for engagement, more meaningful representation and better links to the local community.

As an organisation we've been through unprecedented levels of change in recent years which has included moving to the University of Northampton's £330 million Waterside Campus in 2018, dealing with the pandemic and a number of senior staff changes over that period. Throughout that period we have been determined to ensure the best possible experience for our members, but now is the right time to move onwards and upwards with an ambitious and impactful strategy.

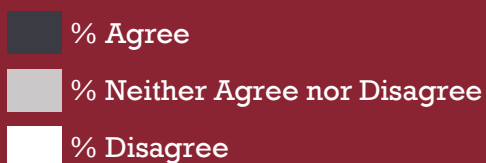
"Strengthening our Community" is not just a vision on paper; it's a dynamic blueprint for action. We will increase engagement, enhance our partnership with the university, and connect students with the best Northampton has to offer. Together, we will create a transformative experience for every student, leaving an indelible mark on our community and the future of Northampton Students' Union.



NOW VS 2027

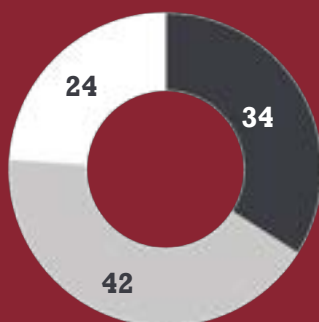
Our research when developing our strategy gave us a deeper understanding of our students need from their Students' Union. The strategy research also gave us a chance to build a stronger conversation with the University to ensure we are meeting the needs of the wider University of Northampton community. We have outlined some of our main objectives and where we want to be in 2027.

2022-23



2027

The has had a positive impact on my social life

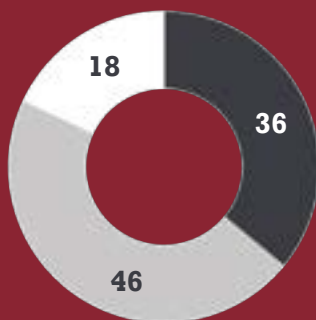


TARGET

45%

AGREE

The Students' Union has a positive impact on my wellbeing

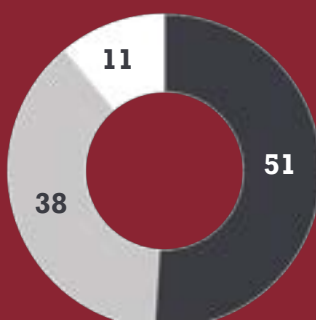


TARGET

45%

AGREE

The Students' Union helps students overcome challenges that may prevent them from completing their course

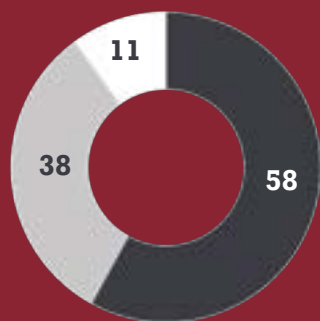


TARGET

62%

AGREE

“The Students’ Union plays an important role in developing student communities”

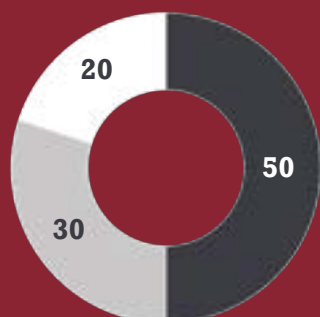


TARGET

70%

AGREE

“I would turn to the Students’ Union if I needed help or advice”

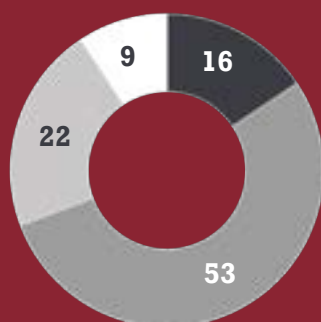


TARGET

60%

AGREE

The Students’ Union effectively represents my academic interests



TARGET

78%

AGREE

Elections Turnout

2023 ACTUAL

19%

2027 TARGET

35%

As part of measuring our progress against the new strategy, we will also track progress against two new objectives:

- The Students’ Union actively works to create a more inclusive student community at the university. (Target 65%)
- The Students’ Union campaign effectively on behalf of UON students’ (Target 60%)

OUR STRATEGY

OUR VISION

We are at the heart of student life, ensuring our students have an exceptional university experience

OUR MISSION

Together we strive to improve the university experience by:

- Inspiring students to build strong communities where they flourish individually and collectively.
- Empowering students to make positive changes on behalf of the student community.
- Supporting students through their academic journey.

OUR GOALS

Goal 1: A Better Students' Union

We will be at the heart of student life, increasing student engagement in union activities, involving them more in decision-making, listening to their views, and broadening our appeal.

Goal 2: An Excellent University

We will curate a strong partnership with the university at all levels by becoming a reliable and credible source of insight, establishing ourselves as a vital stakeholder, especially when decisions are made affecting students. We are firm in our belief that by responding to student opinion, the University will make effective and experience-improving changes.

Goal 3: Maximising Our Town

We will connect students with the best Northampton has to offer, as well as working with local stakeholders to improve students' experience when living and/or studying in the town.





OUR THEMES

Theme A: Building strong student communities.

We are dedicated to the development of student communities on and off campus. We want to bring students together to improve their experience and sense of belonging to the union, university and the town.

Theme B: Empowering students to co-create an outstanding academic experience

The SU empowers student reps and groups to provide a strong, coherent voice to the university and wider community, ensuring decision making is always informed by student opinion. Our core responsibility is to make sure student voice is valued and acted upon in all areas of the university.

Theme C: Ensure our students have the support they need to help them succeed at university

We will develop and improve SU services, and partner with UON and community support services to give students the wraparound support they need to flourish in Higher Education.

EMBEDDING OUR APPROACH

We have created a matrix for our Goals and themes that provide nine clear areas to guide our investment and measure our impact. All annual planning will provide clear reference to how we are embedding the three identified themes through our own services, in our influencing work with the University and in how we connect students to the town.

OUR VALUES

We are Northampton Students' Union, we are:

COURAGEOUS

We boldly and unapologetically champion the rights and interests of students, advocating for positive changes in education, policy, and community engagement at both the institutional and societal levels.

EMPOWERING

As part of our everyday work we empower students to take the initiative, lead, and contribute actively to the Union's activities, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

AUTHENTIC

We are genuine, transparent, true to our beliefs and dedicated to the community we serve. We maintain honesty and integrity in all interactions and activities, and through this we foster an environment where individuals can express themselves without fear of judgment and where decisions and actions are aligned with the organisation's true purpose and the needs of its members.

INCLUSIVE

We embrace and celebrate diversity in all its forms, creating an inclusive environment where individuals from all backgrounds feel welcome, valued, and represented.

INNOVATIVE

Not afraid to try new approaches, we adapt to changing student needs and the evolving higher education landscape by embracing a culture of continuous learning,





PEOPLE STRATEGY

ATTRACTION

Employer of Choice

- We have an outstanding employer brand across the SU sector and further afield in HE and the local voluntary sector that is attractive to people of all backgrounds.
- We have the best possible benefits package for our staff within our resources, ensuring that we are attractive to the best talent available.
- We use insights (Staff pulse surveys, Employee Engagement Survey, exit interviews etc) to regularly review our approach to our people

Committed to Fair Process

- All staff conducting interviews will receive recruitment and selection training to ensure a fair process is followed.
- Our recruitment and selection processes are as objective as possible, using clearly defined criteria to ensure unconscious bias doesn't obstruct our decision making
- Our recruitment processes are flexible to allow us to assess in the most appropriate way for each role.
- We provide an exceptional application experience for candidates, with excellent communication from start to finish, transparency with our process and effective feedback provided to unsuccessful applicants

Strong Online Presence

- We have an excellent landing page for all prospective applicants which provides all necessary information for a candidate to learn about the organisation and feel confident to apply.
- We encourage, support, and provide time for our staff to tell their professional story online to keep our presence high and build understanding our organisation and its work.
- We maximise opportunities to celebrate the successes of our people.

Measure of Success

% staff vacancies filled within 6 weeks

I would recommend the SU as a good place to work *

*Annual Employee Engagement Survey

2027

90%

90%

DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

Setting Our Staff Up to Succeed

- Our staff are onboarded in an efficient and transparent way, with induction plans agreed and delivered within the first 26 weeks.
- New employees and line managers meet regularly to ensure feedback can be provided by both parties.
- Staff passing probation co-create a clear set of objectives beyond 26 weeks, and have an agreed development plan in place to support their on-going professional development.

Improving our People

- Every member of career staff is allocated funds upfront for professional development to be agreed with their line manager. This is to remove bureaucracy and allow staff to own their development locally.
- We have a comprehensive internal induction and development programme where we develop the skills and experience of our own staff for internal progression
- We share best practice within committees and at All Staff and departmental training events.

Investing in Our Networks

- Our staff invest in their networks at the University, within SU's and in the local community to make sure we are aware of best practice and can open doors for our students when required
- We are proud of our work and will present best practice of our own at training events and conferences.



Measure of Success

% staff vacancies filled within 6 weeks

I would recommend the SU as a good place to work *

*Annual Employee Engagement Survey

2027

90%

90%

VALUED STAKEHOLDERS

Consulting Staff

- Insights are at the heart of our work with staff, with leadership leading on action plans to ensure we are responding to identified issues.
- We foster an open, accountable culture in our staff team where staff feel they can approach and provide feedback to management and leadership in the knowledge that their views will be listened to.
- Staff are consulted and fed back to on any planned changes within the organisation.

Employee Health and Wellbeing

- We monitor and react to staff absences to ensure our employees are supported through issues at the earliest opportunity
- We have an employee health and wellbeing action plan in place which specifies the interventions in place to improve support for employee health and wellbeing
- We value the diversity of our staff team and regularly review our approach to flexible and hybrid working to ensure we are as accommodating as possible for staff who have more complex lives.

Developing a Supportive Community

- We celebrate the achievements of our staff collectively at events and through clear and timely communication
- We run a number of events throughout the year that appeal to the diverse nature of our staff that focusses on building a strong team and providing opportunities to regroup during quieter work periods.
- We have systems to allow effective peer feedback in a respectful and timely manner

Measure of Success

My ideas and opinions are given serious consideration*

This organisation cares about its employees*

*Annual Employee Engagement Survey

2027

90%

90%

HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE

Striving for Excellence

- We co-create objectives with our people to ensure that KPIs align with strategy. Our people are bought into and motivated by their objectives.
- Open, honest conversation is the norm between employee and manager. We continuously explore how to improve our performance, always striving to achieve.
- We reward exceptional performance through periodic awards as well as via objective annual pay reviews.

Fair, Consistent Process

- Staff development and performance is reviewed monthly, with effective verbal feedback provided, as well as written records kept in our HR system
- There are high levels of compliance with all essential management processes

Motivated by our Cause

- Our staff have a strong understanding of our strategy, their departmental operational plan and their role in the organisation's success
- Our staff have a strong connection with students and understand what they need from their Students' Union



Measure of Success

I feel I understand what our students want and need from the organisation*

I work with skilled, competent people who are good at their jobs*

*Annual Employee Engagement Survey

2027

85%

90%



COMMS STRATEGY

RECOGNISABLE BRAND

Developing Students' Affinity

- Our staff understand our brand, champion our values and are a vital brand touchpoint for our members. It is vital therefore that staff are trained and supported to live our brand through their work so that students develop an understanding of the organisation when they work with us.
- We clearly, concisely, and regularly communicate our successes with students to develop their understanding of what we are doing to enhance their university experience both with them, and on their behalf.
- Develop and embed an organisation tone of voice so that we are consistent in our communications and students become familiar with our approach.

Building a Strong Reputation with the University

- Our staff understand our brand, champion our values and are a vital brand touchpoint for our members. It is vital therefore that staff are trained and supported to live our brand through their work so that UON stakeholders develop an understanding of the organisation when they work with us.
- We clearly, concisely, and regularly communicate our successes with UON stakeholders in all areas to develop their understanding of what we are doing to enhance students' university experience, and how they can support our work.
- We work alongside the University on communications activities such as Welcome Week, Open Days, and key cultural events to ensure that both organisations can get their messages through in an effective and supportive way.

Enhancing Our Partnerships

- Our staff understand our brand, champion our values and are a vital brand touchpoint for our members. It is vital therefore that staff are trained and supported to live our brand through their work so that community stakeholders develop an understanding of the organisation when they work with us.
- We celebrate collaborations with local partner organisations to further our reach and expand our social capital as an organisation for the benefit of our students.

Measure of Success

% students recognising that the SU works to improve the student experience

% university stakeholders recognising that the SU works to improve the student experience

% community stakeholders recognising that the SU works to improve the student

2027

60%

60%

60%

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Connecting Students To Opportunities

- Our communications effectively increase understanding of students' union services and how students can involve themselves in SU activity.
- Our website provides a regularly updated calendar of events, providing students with an easy way to involve themselves in union activity.
- We effectively use the Students' Union development ladder to communicate opportunities to the correct audience, ensuring pathways for student development are clear.

Content by Students, Featuring Students

- We encourage and regularly share stories and profiles of student volunteers, working alongside them to celebrate their involvement and their journey with the Students' Union.
- We work with faculties to utilise students across paid and voluntary roles, to support our brand and comms delivery.

Increasing Student Influence and Decision Making

- We effectively communicate democratic processes and increase member understanding, articulating how students, as members, can influence SU work and the SU can amplify their voice.
- We regularly publish the decisions of students and how they have influenced University and Students' Union decision making.
- We place officers at the forefront of our comms and increase their visibility, ultimately increasing student understanding of the role they play in their university experience.

Measure of Success

% students feeling well informed about what is going on at the SU

% students feeling they can influence decisions made by the SU

% students understand what the Sabbatical Officers do

2027

45%

36%

30%





RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME, RIGHT AUDIENCE

Right Place

- We ensure our physical locations are impactful, ensuring our brand is clearly recognisable and reflects the image of the Students' Union as a place to support students and provide opportunity.
- Our social media reflects current trends and the needs of our members. We ensure we are using platforms that are relevant to our audience and ensure content is engaging and informative.
- We effectively utilise e-comms, ensuring this is relevant and exciting, increasing our reach directly with students.
- We use our website to effectively communicate our services and key information to students. Any students accessing the site have everything they need at their fingertips, and this is easy to navigate.

Right Time

- Our communications are timely and well planned in advance. As a result, we are relevant to students and produce high quality content which is engaging and impactful
- We use live video content to engage students in our work and celebrate everything the Union and its members offer.
- We recognise when we need the support of partners or need to use channels outside of our own and ensure key messaging utilises University and other stakeholder channels wherever suitable to increase our impact.

Right Audience

- We understand which content and which style is right for each channel and make changes regularly to reflect this and the audiences we are reaching, ensuring our approach is adaptable to changing trends and needs.
- We effectively use segmentation in our e-comms. Identifying the most appropriate content based on a range of characteristics.
- We recognise the importance of communicating to stakeholders to both support our work and increase our engagement. We ensure content shared is relevant for stakeholders and communicate this to them through the most suitable channels.

Measure of Success

% student feeling that the SU communications are relevant to them This organisation cares about its employees*

2027

47%

FINANCE & COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

IMPROVING FINANCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Streamlining Financial Processes

- We will have developed clear and comprehensive financial policies and procedures that align with best practices, ensuring transparency, accountability, and compliance with relevant regulations and guidelines.
- We will provide training and professional development opportunities for both finance and non-finance staff to enhance their skills in financial management, accounting, and software proficiency.
- We conduct regular reviews of our financial processes with all stakeholders, with the aim of streamlining our work to ensure maximum value from our investment in our finance activity and developing trust in our work.

Financial Accountability

- We will establish and strengthen internal controls, such as segregation of duties, the safeguarding of financial assets, procurement, and reconciliation procedures, to minimize the risk of fraud or financial mismanagement. We will regularly review and update these controls to adapt to changing needs and risks.
- We will conduct regular audits of finance activity either internally or in partnership with the University to ensure we are operating to the highest standards.

Digital First

- We will invest in advanced accounting software and financial management tools to automate processes, enhance data accuracy, and provide real-time financial insights. This will enable better budgeting, forecasting, and financial decision-making.
- We will strive to integrate activity across the organisation where possible to ensure improved efficiency and accuracy.

Measure of Success

Improved assurance rating from UON auditor

Increased efficiency in finance operations

2027

Reasonable Assurance

-



MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS

Effective Allocation of Resource

- We will implement activity-based budgeting which will see us move towards an approach where resources are allocated based on the expected outcomes and impact of each initiative or project. This will ensure efficient resource allocation and maximise our impact. We will prioritise spending on initiatives that directly benefit students and the core mission of the Students' Union.
- We will implement a robust budgeting process that involves collaboration with internal departments, student representatives, trustees and the University. Our processes will ensure transparency and accountability in budget allocation, monitoring, and reporting.
- We will establish a process for periodic financial reviews to assess the financial performance of various departments and projects. This will help identify areas of improvement, cost-saving opportunities, and potential revenue streams. By regularly reviewing and analysing expenses we can identify areas where cost reductions can be made without compromising the quality of services.

Empowering Decision Makers

- We will improve the quality and accessibility of our financial reporting by providing clear and concise information on the financial position of the students' union in a timely manner. We will implement dashboards and data visualization tools to make financial information easily understandable and accessible to stakeholders.
- We will enhance the financial literacy among volunteers and staff students by launching financial literacy programs and workshops to educate them about finance management, budgeting, and the financial operations of the students' union. Empower students to make informed financial decisions and develop financial responsibility. We are firm in our belief that sound financial management comes from empowering decision-makers at all levels.
- We will foster a culture of innovation and efficiency by encouraging innovative ideas and efficient practices within the finance department and across the students' union. We will establish mechanisms to gather feedback and suggestions from staff and students, embedding a culture of continuous improvement.

Strengthening Stakeholder Relationships

- We will collaborate closely with student groups, the University, and trustees to understand their needs and align resource allocation accordingly. We will curate effective communication channels to ensure transparency and accountability in financial decision-making.
- We will integrate sustainable financial practices into the operations of the finance department. Through this we will encourage responsible spending, cost-saving initiatives, and environmentally friendly practices. We will also explore opportunities for revenue generation through partnerships and fundraising activities.

Measure of Success

Introduction of activity-based budgeting from 25-26

Collaborative budgeting process introduced in 25-26

2027

Complete

Complete

REVENUE GENERATION AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Diversification of Revenue Streams

- We will look to diversify our revenue streams through the implementation of new revenue-generating initiatives with the aim to reduce reliance on traditional funding sources and create additional financial sustainability.
- We will monitor and evaluate financial performance through the implementation of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the financial performance of various initiatives, projects, and revenue streams. Regularly review financial data helps us to identify areas of improvement, cost-saving opportunities, and revenue growth potential.
- We will look to strengthen our alumni engagement by developing strategies to engage alumni and create a strong network of supporters as a potential revenue stream for our student groups. This will involve establishing an alumni giving program to encourage financial contributions that can support student initiatives and enhance the overall financial health of the students' union.

Financial Sustainability

- We will strengthen financial forecasting by developing a robust financial forecasting model that takes into account historical data, trends, and potential external factors to project future revenue and expenses accurately. This will enable proactive financial planning and resource allocation.
- We will provide appropriate levels of funding to invest in income-generating opportunities, providing that they that either align with the interests and needs of the student community, or generate an ethical bottom line for reinvestment in student activity.
- Develop an appropriate approach to reserves to ensure there is an appropriate amount available to deal with unforeseen circumstances. We will develop a clear approach for accruing reserves, and see regular assessments to ensure we have a balanced approach to its growth over time.



Demonstrating Impact

- We will have well researched business cases when developing new opportunities, with an understanding of market we are entering before proceeding with any investment. A data led approach will be key to our success.
- We will have clear business plans for all of our ongoing commercial activity, with a justification for each trading area. These business plans will define both financial return to the organisation and contribution to strategic objectives.
- We will produce impact reports from our finance and commercial activity each year, displaying the contribution made to the organisations strategic objectives, as well as the wider social impact of our work and practices.

Measure of Success	2027
Increase in commercial profitability	£100,000 pa contribution
Free reserves in line with policy agreed by Trustees	Complete
Commercial impact report by 24-25	Complete





Learning Hub
Creative Hub
New Engine Shed

Students Village
Car Parks 3 & 4

Students' Union
At the Engine Shed



northamptonunion.com