

York Students' Union Accountability Report 24/25

By Jacob Hartmann





TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
Executive Summary.....	3
The purpose of Accountability.....	3
Statement by the Union Affairs Officer.....	4
Statement by the Chair.....	4
PROGRESS UPDATE.....	5
Changes to the Accountability Chair role.....	5
Work Completed.....	5
1. Sabbs Update Videos.....	6
2. Yor Question Time.....	6
3. Annual Accountability Report.....	6
4. Development of Online Presence.....	6
5. Increasing visibility through Wonkhe Podcast.....	7
Feedback on the Accountability Role.....	7
SABBATICAL OFFICERS.....	10
Evaluation / Summary of Sabb's work.....	10
Union Affairs Officer - Lewis Parrey.....	10
Union Development Officer - Gen Andrews.....	11
Academic Officer - Fenella Johnson.....	12
Sports Officer - Tanisha Jain (TJ).....	13
Activities Officer - Kaitlyn Beattie-Zarb.....	13
Community and Wellbeing Officer - Freddy Russel.....	14
Equality and Inclusion Officer - Teddy Bland.....	15
Reflection.....	16
Areas of progress.....	16
Points to improve.....	17
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	18
1. Increase Clarity on SU Functions and Structures.....	18
2. Enhance the Visibility and Accessibility of Student Voice Tools.....	18
3. Implement/Improve Transparent Progress-Tracking Mechanisms.....	18
4. Utilise the Central YorkSU Social Media Accounts more strategically.....	19
5. Redesign the Website for Engagement and Interaction.....	19
6. Strengthen Sabb and YorkSU engagement with Public Accountability Events.....	19
7. Incentivising Engagement by Reducing Financial Barriers.....	20
CONCLUSION.....	22
ANNEX.....	23



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this annual accountability report, the first of its kind, is to provide members of the YorkSU (University of York's Student Union) with an analysis and evaluation of the work of their sabbatical officers. The aim is not only to hold elected officers to account, but to provide them with feedback and areas for improvement. This is especially vital for sabbatical officers who have been re-elected.

Executive Summary

This report outlines the transformation of the Accountability Chair role within York Students' Union (YorkSU), evolving from an elected, voluntary position to a hired, remunerated one. The shift aims to enhance inclusivity, professionalism, and accessibility, addressing structural barriers that previously deterred underrepresented students from applying. The new format positions the Chair as an impartial overseer of Sabbatical Officers, free from the constraints and perceptions of a politicised election process.

In the 2024/25 academic year, with Jacob Hartmann as the Accountability and Scrutiny Chair, the role has been expanded and defined through a series of initiatives. These include “*Sabbs Update Videos*,” initiating the first “*Yor Question Time*,” publishing this Annual Accountability Report, reviving the Accountability Instagram platform, and securing exposure via a Wonkhe podcast appearance.

The report also provides a detailed evaluation of each Sabbatical Officer's performance across their strategic priorities. It highlights key achievements, identifies areas for further work, and offers recommendations to improve transparency, implementation, and student engagement in the future.

The purpose of Accountability

There are two key purposes to accountability within the student union. First, an aim to ensure that students are empowered to hold elected sabbatical officers to account, providing mechanisms or events to scrutinise their work, encouraging progress on manifesto commitments and priorities. This, it is hoped, has the potential to also increase student engagement and trust in the Student Union and its elected officers. Secondly, in instances where student engagement falls or scrutiny from the wider student body is limited, the Accountability and Scrutiny Chair plays a direct role in



holding sabbatical officers to account, helping to maintain pressure for delivery and uphold transparency and scrutiny.

Statement by the Union Affairs Officer

“Duis autem vel eum iriure dolor in hendrerit in vulputate velit esse molestie consequat, vel illum dolore eu feugiat nulla facilisis at vero eros et accumsan.”

Statement by the Chair

“I am honoured to have worked with this year’s sabbatical team. All of them have put effort into delivering on their key priorities that I established with them at the beginning of their terms. However, engagement across the whole Student Union, including accountability processes, has been low. I hope that this inaugural report can help kickstart a move towards further engagement and transparency in the future. ”

- *Jacob Hartmann, Accountability and Scrutiny Chair 2024-2025*



PROGRESS UPDATE

Changes to the Accountability Chair role

The accountability role in YorkSU (formerly YUSU) used to be an elected, voluntary role. Following the merger of YUSU and the GSA, the role has reformed into a hired and paid role. This change was made to better reflect the nature of the position and to remove structural barriers to participation.

The Accountability Chair is intended to be an apolitical figure responsible for scrutinising sabbatical officers and ensuring they are held to account in line with their priorities. Given this function, it was considered inappropriate to subject the role to an election process typically associated with political mandates or campaigning.

In addition, public campaigning can act as a barrier to entry for some students. The requirement to stand in an election may discourage capable individuals from applying, particularly those who are less comfortable with campaigning or who are underrepresented in student leadership, including women and marginalised groups. By moving to a hiring model, YorkSU aims to create a more inclusive and accessible pathway to this important oversight role.

The decision also acknowledges the work carried out by the Accountability Chair. Formalising the role as a paid position allows the union to properly recognise and remunerate the student undertaking this responsibility.

Finally, the change helps ensure flexibility in future sabbatical leadership. Under conventions informed by Education Acts and Charity Commission guidance, elected student roles are commonly subject to a two-term limit. By removing the elected status from the Accountability Chair, the union avoids inadvertently preventing individuals from later serving two full terms as a sabbatical officer, should they want to run as Sabbs in the future.

Work Completed

Below you can find brief summaries of the work that Jacob Hartmann, as Accountability Chair 2024/25, conducted as part of his role.



1. Sabbs Update Videos

To improve transparency and engagement, we launched a series of regular, concise video updates featuring the Sabbatical Officers. These videos combined substantive and light-hearted questions to provide students with insights into what the Sabbs were working on and their strategic goals. The format aimed to promote the Sabbs' work while maintaining a focus on accountability and progress.

2. Yor Question Time

I have initiated and led the organisation of the first-ever *Yor Question Time* event at the start of the second semester. Inspired by the BBC's *Question Time*, this event invited students to attend in person or watch online as they posed direct questions to the Sabbatical Officers. It offered a formal platform for student scrutiny and real-time accountability, setting a precedent for a more engaged student democracy. It is hoped that this continues to develop into an annual event for students to hold their officers to account.

3. Annual Accountability Report

This report marks the first comprehensive annual review of Sabbatical Officer activity. Its core objective is to provide students with an informed assessment of the Officers' performance against their pledges while offering constructive recommendations to enhance their visibility, transparency, and engagement. The report sets a foundation for ongoing accountability in future years.

4. Development of Online Presence

In November, I assumed control of the previously inactive Accountability Instagram account, which was rebranded as [@YorkSUAccountability](#). Regular content was introduced from December onwards, leading to a substantial increase in visibility and engagement. The account achieved over 16,000 views, reached 4,900 unique accounts (a 1000% increase), and saw 223 content interactions (a 1900% increase). This digital platform has become a key tool in making scrutiny more visible, accessible, and engaging for the wider student body. Future advertising and sharing of this account by established YorkSU accounts would be beneficial.

**Stats from Meta Business Insights*



5. Increasing visibility through Wonkhe Podcast

To further elevate the visibility of accountability efforts at York SU, I participated in a podcast hosted by *Wonkhe*, a leading platform in the students' union and higher education sector. This opportunity enabled me to showcase the innovative approaches we're taking to embed accountability within our structures, share best practices with a national audience, and position York SU as a proactive leader in democratic engagement. The discussion also provided valuable insights from sector experts, helping to inform and strengthen our ongoing work.

Feedback on the Accountability Role

As part of the accountability process, I sought to garner feedback from the Sabbatical officers on their own feedback of this role, the work I carried out, and any improvements they would suggest. They have been collated and summarised below. Afterwards I provide short recommendations on the Accountability role for the future Chair, or the SU more generally, to consider. References to “the Chair” are of Jacob Hartmann.

Strengths:

Engaging Communication Methods

Multiple responses highlight the use of interactive formats such as Instagram reels, video interviews, and panel events. These are noted by the Sabbs as engaging alternatives to traditional, text-heavy accountability reports, making accountability and transparency more accessible and relatable to students.

Personalized and Thoughtful Interaction

This years' accountability process has been praised for asking personalized questions to Sabbatical Officers, which allows for richer, more insightful responses.

Accessibility and Approachability

Presence and consistent engagement with the Sabbs has made the Chair recognizable and approachable, contributing to a culture of openness.



Clear Expectations and Organisation

Feedback shows that the Chair was well-organized, communicated priorities clearly at the start, and provided sufficient time for responses.

Balancing Scrutiny with Support

The Chair managed to create an environment that balanced pressure with support. Accountability events were described as well-presented and fair, maintaining a tone that encouraged honest reflection without intimidating officers.

Facilitating Transparency and Engagement

Opening accountability sessions to student media and encouraging question-and-answer panels is appreciated as a step toward greater transparency and student involvement in governance.

Trialing New Formats Successfully

The Chair's willingness to experiment with new methods like panel discussions and media involvement has been positively received, marking an effective establishment and evolution of the role.

Areas for continued improvement:

Awareness and Visibility of the Role Among Students

There are some concerns that the broader student body may not be aware of what the Accountability Chair actually does and how the role enforces accountability. This gap is attributed partly to insufficient communication from the Students' Union (SU) as a whole.

Engagement and Participation from Students and Sabbatical Officers

While innovative formats like “question time” are praised, there is a desire for greater student engagement and turnout.

Increased Interaction with Sabbatical Officers

Several responses suggest that the Chair could add value by attending additional Sabb meetings or scheduling follow-up discussions after accountability check-ins. This could offer a neutral, external perspective to sabbs, encouraging reflective practice and progress monitoring beyond the formal accountability moments.

Future recommendations for Accountability Chairs:



Attend Sabb and Summit meetings regularly

Schedule attendance at key Sabb and Summit meetings to build stronger relationships, gather more insights, and provide timely feedback.

Increase awareness of the Accountability Role with YorkSU

Collaborate with YorkSU to create simple, clear materials explaining the role, and promote these via social media, campus events, and student newsletters.

Advertise Question Time and similar events more thoroughly

Use promotion including social media, email reminders, student societies, and posters well in advance to maximize student engagement and attendance.

Challenge more rigorously on key priorities

Some Sabb's suggested that the Accountability Chair has space to be more constructively critical. As such, regularly review sabbs' stated commitments and progress, and hold them accountable by asking for clear evidence of outcomes and timelines, pushing for transparency on any delays or obstacles.



SABBATICAL OFFICERS

Evaluation / Summary of Sabb's work

The following section runs through key points of interest, measuring progress against the Sabb's own 6 key priorities (Annex I).

Union Affairs Officer - Lewis Parrey

Lewis has made strong contributions in national advocacy and student welfare. He has actively lobbied in Parliament, alongside other students' unions, for improved maintenance loans. While no direct policy change has yet been achieved, efforts have contributed to advancing the national debate on higher education funding. Continued lobbying by future Sabbatical Officers, and York's Vice-Chancellor, will be essential to sustain this momentum.

On employability, Lewis has taken steps to improve student access to part-time work. He helped launch *Jobs in Short* and supported the creation of an employability hub.

Additionally, Lewis is collaborating with Leeds Joblink to develop a dedicated platform for York students. To ensure these deliver tangible outcomes, work to provide results in the next few months and ensuring the joblink site is set up before the next academic year would be wise.

Expanding cost-of-living support has also been a focus. Lewis helped oversee the extension of the *Fruit and Root* programme and student pantry on Campus East. These are practical interventions, though the next challenge lies in ensuring high levels of student uptake and awareness.

Lewis also supported student-led campaigns opposing cuts to college funding, working with college chairs and presidents. However, the Students' Union's broader stance on university budget cuts has not been clearly communicated. Increasing transparency and visibility on these efforts, especially on social media and YorkSU websites, could strengthen student trust and engagement.

In the area of housing, Lewis helped secure £99-per-week rooms on campus and was instrumental in securing university agreement on a wider accommodation strategy. Future



engagement with the City Council to address broader issues around the cost and availability of student housing in York, rather than just on campus, would be a valuable next step.

Regarding internal transparency at YorkSU, Lewis introduced some improvements such as *Summit* summaries and the *Sabbs on the Spot* initiative. Nonetheless, concerns flagged earlier in the year around insufficient use of the traffic light system and a lack of reporting on both successes and setbacks remain. A more consistent and open approach to both successes and shortcomings would help rebuild confidence in Union transparency. Overall, Lewis has laid a foundation in several key areas. Sustained focus on implementation, visibility, and transparency will be useful for building on this progress.

Union Development Officer - Gen Andrews

Gen has focused much of her approach to sustainability. She began reviewing banking systems used by the Students' Union, aiming to transition finances into more sustainable institutions. Alongside this, she initiated the development of a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy to formalise the Union's commitment to ethical financial practices. These are promising initiatives that require clear implementation in the next Sabbatical term.

In relation to environmental priorities, Gen held meetings with the University and expressed confidence in the University's investment policy. However, her primary focus has remained on aligning Student Union spending with sustainability principles.

Gen also worked with the University's commercial services team to promote the idea of campus as a vibrant, student-centred space. An outcome of this was securing Saturday opening hours for the NISA store on Campus East. While this is a positive step, further expansion, such as reopening or extending hours at Campus West locations for weekends during high-demand periods like exams would have been nice to see.

One area where less progress was made was in the proposed development of a fund to recognise and reward student leaders, such as society chairs and student representatives. While the concept is ambitious and understandably complex, particularly in the current financial climate, this year could have been used to begin addressing key structural



questions and drafting a basic framework. A preliminary blueprint would have provided the next Sabbatical team with a valuable starting point.

Academic Officer - Fenella Johnson

Over the past term, Fenella has made progress on several initiatives. A Postgraduate (PG) Transition Day is in development with the University, with sessions planned to be formally timetabled to improve engagement. To ensure a successful September launch, implementation must now be finalised to allow for proper planning and promotion.

New guidance for academic misconduct panels has also been introduced, aimed at clarifying procedures and improving communication with students. However, for full impact, this guidance must be made publicly accessible - via departmental pages or student handbooks - to promote transparency and trust.

Fenella has contributed to efforts to address assessment bunching, advocating for a more balanced workload across the academic year.

She has also advocated for online and distance learners in meetings with the university. The next step or ideal steps would be in securing tangible commitments to ensure progress, beyond discussion and communication.

A postgraduate researcher (PGR) community conference was successfully held, offering an informal space for sharing research and strengthening community ties. Given its positive reception, this should become a recurring event to build upon this success.

Finally, efforts have been made to raise awareness of staff office hours through departmental representatives. To improve reach, a more visible advertising campaign about office hours could have been established, however most students would likely already be aware of office hours. Overall, Fenella has shown commitment to her key priorities. Initial results have been delivered, they must now be fully implemented to ensure continued success.



Sports Officer - Tanisha Jain (TJ)

Tanisha has made progress this term in enhancing inclusivity, accessibility, and visibility within sport at York. TJ was supported throughout by a team of dedicated staff who helped develop research, reports and implement changes.

She played a role in fostering a sports community where students feel valued, launching research into the experiences of trans and non-binary student athletes.

Tanisha sought to introduce a mental health gym referral programme, aimed at bridging the gap between York's mental health services and physical wellbeing provision. While formal collaboration between the University and YorkSU has not materialised, the concept remains a good idea. It would have been nice to see more progress here, but ensuring the ball gets rolling for the next Sabbatical officer to take this forward is a good next step.

A report on the cost of participating in sport at York has also been produced by YorkSU staff and is due for publication.

Tanisha has further contributed to sector-wide initiatives through work on 'sports diplomacy.' She promoted Challenge Week at BUCS meetings, resulting in five other students' unions and universities adopting the same fundraising model; an impressive example of YorkSU-led innovation having a wider impact.

Additionally, Tanisha provided free fitness and strength sessions as part of the 'Road to Roses' campaign, supporting students' fitness in Roses. This was a good initiative, and it would be positive to see this expanded and supported in future years.

Activities Officer - Kaitlyn Beattie-Zarb

Kaitlyn has worked well lobbying for employment improvements for students, while some have stalled in the face of university funding cuts, she has been especially hardworking and collaborated with the careers and placement team to establish a new elective credit module, which takes into account part time jobs and extracurricular activities.

She has worked well on developing a new activities strategy, embedding new data about societies into the programme, to help direct future student engagement in areas that need it



most. The strategy should be published soon, and implementing it next year will be the next big test.

Kaitlyn has worked well on engaging with society and media committees, but acknowledges that more work could have been done on promoting committees and student involvement. Future improvement would be to work on said student engagement. Kaitlyn also worked on the student leader benefits package mentioned by Gen. This, as stated, has hit roadblocks in terms of financial cuts; continuing to plan this fund is where things can continue, in order to be prepared for when finances improve.

Kaitlyn has put a lot of effort into improving funding options for student societies, working to make grants more accessible and transparent. She acknowledged barriers in terms of gaining access to financial records in order to diagnose areas for improvement, and is passionate about continuing to tackle this issue.

To help train student leaders and improve engagement, training was revamped and leader development days restructured. Online training schemes were also adjusted to ensure they were more engaging.

Lastly, Kaitlyn has done well on engaging with student activities to better understand the problems and burdens they face in terms of student engagement. Though no direct plan or strategy was planned around this, the feedback seems to have been taken into account by Kaitlyn throughout her year as a Sabb.

Community and Wellbeing Officer - Freddy Russel

Freddy has achieved several outcomes this term, particularly in areas related to student welfare, housing, and accessibility.

A major development is the University's formal commitment to establishing a shared case management system, intended to improve coordination across student services. While the system's development is scheduled to begin next year and will require time, this marks a critical step forward. The sabbatical officer in this position during the next mandate should continue to oversee this and ensure timely and effective delivery.



In terms of wellbeing, Freddy has supported the introduction of wellbeing sessions within the library, offering students support in a familiar environment. This is a great start, but further efforts should be made to increase the frequency and visibility of these sessions.

He has also contributed to committee meetings and focus groups aimed at making Student Support Plans more proactive and responsive, particularly in the context of disability services. This consultative approach is an important foundation for long-term improvement.

On housing, Freddy has been a vocal advocate for better conditions both locally and nationally. His support for the Renter's Rights Bill and involvement in delivering student housing fairs demonstrates a commitment to tackling the student housing crisis.

A notable success has been the establishment of a student pantry on Campus East, providing food support to further students. He has also pushed for the expansion of the 'Fruit and Root' initiative to the same location, reflecting a practical approach to addressing food/cost of living insecurity.

Finally, Freddy has worked to shift cost-of-living funding from restrictive grants to more inclusive support models such as intervention-based programmes. Although a direct link between funding and the actual cost of living could not be established in light of university-wide budget constraints, the move toward broader access initiatives like the pantry and Fruit and Root are good steps forward. Overall, Freddy has demonstrated strong advocacy and delivery across key areas. Ongoing attention to implementation will be important to sustaining progress.

Equality and Inclusion Officer - Teddy Bland

Appointed partway through the year, Teddy has made a thoughtful start in tackling issues around social cohesion, classism, and student wellbeing.

Initial efforts to collaborate with international student societies to promote cultural sharing saw limited engagement. In response, he pivoted towards planning more inclusive welcome events and developing a scheme to provide part-time employment for students to teach English, with a focus on social and conversational skills. This holds strong potential both



for cultural exchange and student employment. Securing university support for implementation will be an important next step.

In addressing the needs of students with adverse childhood experiences, Teddy has taken a sensitive and constructive approach. Given safeguarding challenges, he commissioned research to better understand the experiences and needs of this group, with the aim of shaping more effective support structures. This is a valuable initiative and would benefit from continuity and development under future Sabbatical Officers.

On tackling classism, Teddy identified the lack of data as a major barrier. He is contributing to a broader research project led by new student researchers, focusing on the sense of belonging at York.

Overall, Teddy has demonstrated initiative and adaptability, particularly given the limited timeframe of his appointment. His projects reflect a foundation for future officers to build upon.

Reflection

Areas of progress

This year's sabbatical team delivered meaningful progress across several areas. Notable achievements include improvements in national-level advocacy, enhancements to student welfare support, and stronger groundwork in sustainability and academic policy. There was a clear effort to respond to cost-of-living challenges through practical initiatives such as food support schemes and employment access. Work was also done to strengthen inclusivity and community engagement, both within sport and across broader student activities. Several officers demonstrated initiative in launching new programmes, research, and structural changes that reflect long-term thinking. Importantly, most Sabbatical Officers showed responsiveness to student needs and used their mandates to begin reshaping institutional approaches in areas such as transparency, mental health, housing, and academic equity.



Points to improve

While foundations have been laid in many areas, there were some limitations in consistent visibility and follow-through. Communication and transparency fell short in some places, with students often unaware of ongoing work or its outcomes. Structural challenges, such as budget cuts and limited data understandably constrained some efforts; however, more proactive planning and clearer documentation could better equip future teams, and ideas in pilot or planning stages should be properly developed and passed over to the next Sabbatical team effectively to ensure progress continues.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Given engagement struggles over the past year, these recommendations focus on **increasing engagement and transparency**.

1. Increase Clarity on SU Functions and Structures

Sabbs and the Students' Union should improve communication around its internal structures and decision-making bodies. Clear, accessible explanations of what the SUmmit is, the roles of various committees, and how students can engage with them should be made available through all key channels (especially social media). Perhaps engaging posts, or short videos, explaining how the new merged SU works. At present, a lack of basic understanding is limiting meaningful participation.

2. Enhance the Visibility and Accessibility of Student Voice Tools

Platforms such as *YorBigIdeas* are underutilised due to woefully limited awareness. Ensure that this tool is consistently promoted and integrated into other communications about how students can influence Union priorities. Consider rebranding or reframing this space to encourage engagement.

3. Implement/Improve Transparent Progress-Tracking Mechanisms

Reinstate or improve the existing *Traffic Light* system to visually and clearly track the progress of Sabbatical Officers' goals. Current Sabbatical Officers have highlighted problems in updating the system; some were unaware of how to do so. Importantly, the system must also reflect setbacks and abandoned initiatives. Students value honesty; transparency about challenges builds trust and reinforces the legitimacy of the Union's work. I would recommend ensuring Sabbs put aside half an hour a month to update their progress regularly.



4. Utilise the Central YorkSU Social Media Accounts more strategically

The main *@YORKUNISU* social media account should be used more proactively to share progress updates, publicise setbacks, and drive traffic to accountability tools, such as the Accountability account. Though the sabbatical officers have often supported the online awareness of *@YorkSUAccountability*, limited engagement was put in place with the *@YORKUNISU* account despite also being invited as collaborators and tagged in posts. Advertising and supporting accountability content should be part of a consistent and planned engagement strategy.

5. Redesign the Website for Engagement and Interaction

While the YorkSU website was already redesigned as part of the merger, it is my personal opinion that the website could be redesigned to feature a clearly signposted section that enables students to:

- View what Sabbatical Officers are working on
- Submit ideas and suggestions
- Track progress of campaigns and initiatives
- Understand how decisions are made and by whom

This section should prioritise usability, clarity, and frequent updates to ensure continued relevance and engagement. While many of these are possible under the 'Student Voice' tab in the YorkSU menu, it is my opinion that a 'Student Voice' page or more prevalence on the YorkSU homepage, bringing each of these aspects together, may support more engagement. Students will no longer have to know explicitly what they're after - whether it's big ideas or a campaign or just to get into contact with their Sabb. They can simply head over to the student voice hub and be redirected from there.

6. Strengthen Sabb and YorkSU engagement with Public Accountability Events

Sabbatical Officers could demonstrate greater proactive engagement in accountability mechanisms that involve direct interaction with the student body, including those who may



be critical of their positions or appointment through political means. Public accountability is not only an obligation but also an opportunity to build credibility and trust.

Key events such as *Yor Question Time* and the *Annual General Meeting (AGM)* are central to this process. Their effectiveness depends heavily on student turnout and participation. Attendance at these events has been limited in part due to insufficient advertising and inconsistent promotion, particularly from the main @YORKUNISU social media channels. If these could be harnessed, I believe it would support turnout.

To address this, it is recommended that:

- Sabbatical Officers actively promote and participate in accountability events with enthusiasm and openness to challenge.
- A coordinated communications plan is developed for major accountability events, with scheduled promotion through the central YorkSU account and Sabb's networks.
- We continue to foster a culture in which transparency, dialogue, and constructive scrutiny are actively encouraged.

Improved promotion and officer engagement can reduce the risk of negative student press coverage around democratic apathy, such as that of the AGM, and reinforce the Union's commitment to student-led governance.

7. Incentivising Engagement by Reducing Financial Barriers

In some accountability process responses, Sabbs highlighted costs to student engagement - both in sports and in wider SU processes - that were some of their biggest challenges to enacting change. To address financial costs that limit student participation in Union activities and representation, particularly for students from lower-income backgrounds who may also need to take up part-time work to afford living at university, the Student Union should develop a structured incentive and rewards framework that ties tangible benefits to student engagement; akin to the student leader benefits package that Gen and Kaitlyn wanted to develop this year. This would both lower the cost of participation and encourage wider, more inclusive involvement across the student body. Of course, budgetary constraints are acknowledged, and so progress on this may take some time.



CONCLUSION

The Sabbatical Officers have performed well in advancing most of their key priorities this year. Progress was made in student welfare initiatives, enhancing academic representation, and increasing visibility around mental health support. Despite the challenges posed by limited resources and institutional constraints, they have tried to respond to pressing student concerns.

The next critical step is to improve engagement with the wider student body to ensure that their work truly reflects diverse student needs and aspirations, as well as strengthening the impact that YorkSU initiatives can have. Ultimately, we are all stronger together - and that is a key part of a Students' Union. Improving communication channels and promoting more participation will be essential to deepening student trust and involvement.

The introduction of the new Accountability Chair role this year represents an important development in strengthening oversight and transparency within the Sabbatical Officer team. This role provides a valuable mechanism for maintaining focus on delivery and reinforcing connections between Officers and the student community.

With continued commitment to listening and collaboration, the Sabbatical Officers are well positioned to build on their achievements and deliver even greater impact in the year ahead.



ANNEX

The priorities established with each Sabbatical Officer towards the beginning of their terms. Though all of them are elected on broad manifesto's, and we expect them to continue to deliver on those promises, I have chosen to evaluate the sabbatical officers in up to 6 key priorities, to ensure they focus on delivering *effectively* on their main aims. This decision was made following discussions with key educational and SU industry consultants on establishing effective accountability processes.

Please find their 6 key priorities, in their own words, below:

Lewis:

Campaigning on improving Maintenance Loans

Improving access to part-time work,

Expanding our cost of living initiatives especially improving accessibility to students

Supporting college committees to be able to make change happen

Housing and accommodation

Transparency at the union.

Gen:

To hold the Union accountable to sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility goals, so that we're more effective at holding the Uni accountable

- Looking at switching the Union's holding accounts from Santander to a sustainable bank
- Writing policy on sustainable fashion and merch sourcing at the Union
- Working with a student, Trixie Green, the campus lead for Insure Tomorrow, to write policy on the Union and University's approach to insurance companies who invest in fossil fuels



- To work with the Union's Commercial Services team and Sustainability Coordinator to develop a full emissions report for all Union activity
- Develop a CSR policy for the Union, which would specify criteria required of a company for the Union to collaborate with it (looking specifically at events such as Welcome Fair here)

To ensure Campus remains a vibrant place to be

- Invest more in East Campus spaces (such as by putting Union events on East)
- Challenge the Uni on their reduction of opening hours in most campus venues (currently you can't buy a coffee past 4pm on most of campus, and both Nisas are completely shut at the weekend)

Looking at how we reward and encourage Student Leaders in their activities, and developing a fund which can support this.

Tanisha (TJ):

1. Committed to fostering a sports community where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to participate through inclusive policies, diverse representation, and equitable opportunities.
2. Going with the above, establishing and supporting opportunities for all students to be able to participate in sports like the LGBTQ+ Sports Club, South Asian League, Disability Sports, etc.
3. A Mental Health Gym Referral program - a collaborative initiative between University Mental Health services and York Sport Union aimed at promoting mental well-being through exercise.
4. Review and Support for Cost of Sports at York
5. Sports Diplomacy Initiatives and Challenge Week
6. Roses - Road to Roses initiative, going into it with a healthy mindset, hosting a great event and getting a win!



Freddy:

1. A shared case management system for the university so students don't have to re-explain themselves.
2. Regular wellbeing sessions in the library for students run by student groups.
3. Working with the SSP project to implement a more proactive approach to disability services.
4. Work with students to advocate for better student housing in York and across the country.
5. Elevate our existing cost of living funding and increase its accessibility.
6. Make sure cost of living funding is directly related to the real cost of living for York students.

Kaitlyn:

- Employability (York Award, HEAR)
- Reviewing student group activities and leadership data ahead of the creation of a new activities strategy
- re-establishing societies and media committees, and promotion of these spheres
- Reassessing the financial options related to student funding, to make it as accessible as possible
- Reconsidering the training opportunities student leaders gain, and their engagement with such schemes
- Reimagining various aspects of student activities (such as welfare roles, terminology, rewards and recognition) to ensure engagement in societies is never a burden and is as simple as possible.

Fenella:

1. creation of a PG transition day
2. Increase in comms around academic misconduct
3. Improve assessment bunching.
4. creation of stronger communities for online and distance learners.



5. Informal research sharing for PGR
6. Increased comms for office hours and understanding student need for them

Teddy:

(Due to appointment part-way through the academic year, 3 priorities were established)

1. Support for international students, especially with social life and language skills.
2. Raising awareness of students with adverse childhood experiences which aren't currently talked about in terms of needing support, such as students from abusive homes, or dysfunctional families such as a family member with a mental illness or substance disorder.
3. Challenging classism on campus.