



IMPACT REPORT 2021/22



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
About Us	4
Our Year in Numbers: An Overview	5
Our Strategy	6
Welcome 2021	10
Connecting with Students	15
Connecting with the Campus and the City	16
Roses 2022	18
Elections 2022	19
Removing Barriers	22
Empowering Student Voices	24
Celebrating Success	29
YUSU's Accolades	32
What We Missed	34
Our Finances	36
Conclusion	38



INTRODUCTION

The 2021/22 year saw us confidently reopen student life at York, after the more intrusive restrictions and disruptions in the previous year, due to COVID-19. The effects of the pandemic were still evident for the organisation and our students. Therefore, we strived to regain some confidence, however establishing some new routines and the right type of post-COVID support was always going to be a challenge. We knew that we didn't have the furlough scheme to rely on to support career staff and student-staff jobs. We were unsure about how many people would return to clubs and societies, or to major events like Summer Ball and Roses. Our venues were reopening, but with significantly new staff teams, and unknown student trends and routines.

We stepped into the year feeling a little battle scarred from two years of disruption, but knew that our students needed us to be purposeful. With the intention of supporting students and the Students' Union to resemble pre-COVID times, we sprung into action. Over the year, we worked to: expand our Activities Access Grants, modestly invest into getting venues back open, increase our range of student jobs, campaign on rents, provide student support, and to understand the needs of those students who might be isolated or vulnerable. Whilst the effects and lessons from the pandemic are long-lasting, we can also see some signs of successful recovery.

Club and society memberships look as strong as ever, and turnover has returned to pre-COVID levels, albeit there is more work to be done to return our reserves back to the required level. Recruitment, after a period of huge change to personnel, has started to settle back down, thanks to work on our employer brand and our remuneration package (particularly at student-staff levels and at some other key organisational points where we were not benchmarking well). Events participation started to grow again, with high levels of engagement with Roses, which made a full return after two years, and the run of Summer Ball.

All of this reflects the resilience and determination of our Union from our student members and staff, through our team of incredible Part-Time and Academic Representatives, the student volunteers, student groups and student media and up through our elected Sabbatical Officers, staff and trustees. We really are the sum of our parts. Thanks also to those who have encouraged, funded, supported and collaborated with us. Our partnerships are an increasingly key part of our connection to our community, and help us to deliver on a belief of collective power and strength.

Ben Vulliamy, Chief Executive Officer of The University of York Students' Union

ABOUT US

We are the University of York Students' Union (**YUSU** for short!). We're a separate organisation from the University, and a meeting point for student ideas, activities, and support services. We're here for it all, throughout all stages of study, offering: student support, student services, student activities and student representation. Our aim is to make sure that all students **#LoveYork** for all that it has to offer!

“

Our aim is to make sure that all students **#LoveYork** for all that it has to offer!



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS: AN OVERVIEW

Throughout the year, we provided **421 opportunities** for students! These opportunities consisted of...



In 2021–2022, **10,153 students** bought at least one membership to take part in our activities (for all of our activities, including volunteering and network memberships!).

We provided financial support to over **230 students**, enabling them to purchase memberships, equipment and cover other costs of our activities, with our Activities Access Grant. This is an increase of **172 students**, compared to 2019!

2021/22

2019/20

£81,800 was raised by our student fundraisers through YUSU's RAG, Clubs, Societies and Volunteering Projects, and Colleges at York. This money benefitted various causes and not just our beneficiaries– including **48** local, national and international charities and causes!

In November, **£35,559** was raised for Movember, for men's mental health, with our sports teams leading the charge. The University of York was in the **top 10** of all universities in the UK raising money for Movember in 2021!

Our IT Support Service has a **4.9** average customer satisfaction rating!



4,408 students voted in our 2022 Elections!

5,594 YUSU event tickets were bought over the Welcome period!

A total of **8,030** students attended major YUSU events throughout the year! This includes: Comedy Night, Viking Raid, Freshers' Festival, Roman Raid and Summer Ball!

£160,500 in grants was provided by YUSU for: Sports Clubs, Societies, Media Groups, Volunteering Projects, and Liberation, RAG and Volunteering Networks!



OUR STRATEGY

“
Building power
and connection
amongst
our student
community.”

This academic year was the first with our new YUSU organisational strategy. The core themes of **POWER** and **CONNECTION** were embedded across our work, but our main focus was concentrating on the strategy's 'enablers', to ensure that the organisation was ready to evolve, adapt, and continue to meet membership demand.

These enablers are to provide:

- **Deep insight**
- **Powerful communication**

From this work, we also launched our **Culture and Values Framework**. The framework aims to acknowledge that in order to deliver the strategy, we must nurture (as well as challenge) ourselves and others to continue to grow and evolve alongside the organisation and our members. Our core values are:

Ambition

We are unashamedly ambitious. Students and their success is the reason we exist and we will do everything in our power to work to their unique needs, journeys, experiences and communities.

Innovation

We're not afraid of failure. We bring creativity, sensitivity and integrity to all our work, meaning that when things don't pan out how we expected, we own it, learn from it, and always try again.

Social Conscience

Care deeply about all that you do. Show empathy to those around you– ask how they are, then ask again. Consider the impact of your actions and what a difference just small, consistent acts of kindness can have on others.

Partnership

We recognise that we can't work alone– we know and are open about our limitations and believe that collective action and solidarity is what makes our work special. We weave and connect what already exists, build on common ground and focus on what unites us rather than divides us.

Authenticity

We are authentic and honest– building trust, rather than just focusing on our own power, privilege and legitimacy. We are always open about the needs, complexities, opportunities and challenges that we all face now and in the future.

We also worked closely with local filmmakers 'Hewitt and Walker' to produce our first ever '**Working for YUSU**' video, which aimed to give students and prospective employees a flavour of what the above values look like in our staff members.

THE CREATION OF OUR FIRST DIGITAL STRATEGY

To gain 'deep insight' and to use this information to inform, improve, and better analyse the impact of our work, we created YUSU's first Digital Strategy. This was created through consultation with staff, Sabbatical Officers, student leaders and students, and will guide us over the next three years.

The aims of this strategy are all about building **POWER** and **CONNECTION** amongst our student community. The strategy focuses on the following three areas:

- **Skills and behaviours**
- **Accessibility and usability**
- **Data and insight**

[The full strategy can be found here.](#)

Furthermore, we're exploring a new partnership with ElbowSpace – a provider of SU specific digital platforms, to better prepare our core functionalities when providing memberships, events, information, and digital services for students.

Our partnership with ElbowSpace is something very new, something more customised to York students and the Students' Union at the University of York. It's a long term project, and unashamedly ambitious! However, we need to be bold to ensure that more of our students can benefit from our services, activities, support and representation work in the future.

Improving Accessibility

Alongside this strategy, we have launched our **Digital Accessibility Framework**, which outlines the accessibility standards we are striving for, to reduce barriers to our services for disabled students. This idea was championed by the 2021-2022 Disabled Student Part Time Officers!

Aims for the Digital Accessibility Framework:

- To provide clear guidelines on how to make content accessible – making it easier and more natural for staff to design for accessibility.
- To increase staff awareness of digital accessibility. This allows staff to be responsible for digital accessibility in their own work, but holding us accountable for providing the right support, training and resources.
- To identify and outline the operational processes that we should follow to make our digital services more accessible, such as regular website audits and testing processes used in the design process.
- To provide a clear review process and communications plan for our digital accessibility, ensuring that we remain relevant, accountable and transparent.

COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

The YUSU Strategy puts 'powerful communications' as one of the core enablers to ensure that we empower, serve, and connect with our diverse membership.

In 2021-2022, we undertook a comprehensive review of our communications, consulting with students, staff, officers, and other University and city stakeholders. The review aimed to garner an understanding about how these stakeholders felt about YUSU, our purpose, and our services.

“

The review has challenged us to think about how our members can enjoy their connection with YUSU in whatever area of participation and involvement they like!

One of the key findings from this work was the disparity of our visual identity across our channels. Our 'brand' is out of date and varies across our digital and physical spaces. This causes confusion, a lack of recognition and awareness, and in some cases– a feeling of mistrust within our members. Additionally, many students don't associate our incredibly important and popular sub-brands, such as our York Sport Union and our venues, with YUSU.

The review has challenged us to think about how our members can enjoy their connection with YUSU in whatever area of participation and involvement that they like! As a consequence, work is now being undertaken to rectify this, through the creation of a Communications Strategy, design brief, and proposed timeline for reinvigorating our channels and brand (but more on that in 2023!).



MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

Over the year, we worked with students, officers, staff and the charity Student Minds to co-produce **YUSU's Mental Health Strategy**. This will give **power** to students and staff to look after their own mental health, seek help when they need it, and to look after the people around them. The strategy, aligning with Student Minds' Mentally Healthy SUs Framework will **connect** YUSU and students, and enable us to take a **whole-Union** approach to mental health and wellbeing.

“
a whole-Union approach to mental health and wellbeing.

STUDENT MINDS

We entered the third year of our partnership with **Student Minds**, which we value immensely. Not only did they help us to develop our Mental Health Strategy, we have been part of their **Student Union Support Programme (SUSP)**, designed to empower the Union to become a leader in supporting student mental health and wellbeing.

Our aims are:

- To develop a **whole-Union approach** to support mental health and well-being. This will ensure that systems, processes and procedures are embedded and are sustainable across all areas of the organisation.
- Students will be **empowered** to advocate for their mental health and wellbeing, and will be able to access the services that they require.
- Students, staff and officers will be **equipped** with the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil their roles in supporting mental health and responding to disclosures.
- We will foster an **inclusive and accessible culture** around mental health and wellbeing.

As part of the SUSP this year, we have...

- Upskilled **12 members of staff** through **'Look After Your Mate'** training;
- Delivered **'Look After Your Sabbs'** training, where we identified how staff can support Sabbatical Officers with any challenges that they may face;
- Reviewed ways to **support staff and empower students** to make impactful change through campaigning, in our Campaigning and Co-Production workshop.

WELCOME 2021

In September 2021, **9,871 new students** arrived in York, ready to begin studying at the University. For context, that's more people than York Community Stadium can accommodate! An overwhelming number of students were ready to engage with everything that YUSU has to offer: over a quarter of new students had engaged with our activities, and almost half had participated in our Welcome events by the end of the second week of term!

“
An overwhelming number of students were ready to engage with everything that YUSU has to offer.

SUPPORTING HULL STUDENTS

Unfortunately, at the start of the year it became clear that a group of students would have to live in student accommodation in Hull, and commute to York. This was because York's housing stock had declined at the same time that applications had increased.

To alleviate this issue, we secured an **accommodation discount of 25%** and free buses for affected students, so that they could commute to York with no financial stress. We also negotiated a deal with Hull University Students' Union to give access to their Students' Union. This included deals such as: providing credit in their campus shop, for campus food and drink, access to their venues, student activities and student support. Our work didn't stop there: we made several trips over to Humberside, to offer events and support to the affected

students in Hull, and also ran free events and tours for them on campus in York. By January, we had managed to work with the University to make accommodation on campus available, and so the affected students could come and live in York! To welcome them we offered free credit at our Campus East venue, The Glasshouse (drinks on us!).



Some of the affected students being shown around campus by 2021-22 YUSU President, Patrick O'Donnell.

WELCOME 2021

During the Welcome period, we made sure to provide an array of events for new students to create memories, build friendships and to engage within their communities in York.

A few of these involved...

2nd Oct



3rd Oct



4th Oct

5th Oct

6th Oct

7th Oct



8th Oct

9th Oct

**FRESHERS'
FESTIVAL**

10th Oct

WELCOME 2021

“
An array of
events for
new students
to create
memories.

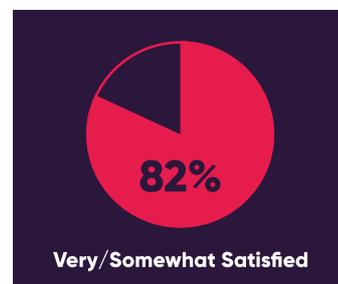
Freshers' Fair



We kicked off our Welcome period with the **Freshers' Fair**, which attracted a large crowd of **13,000 students!**

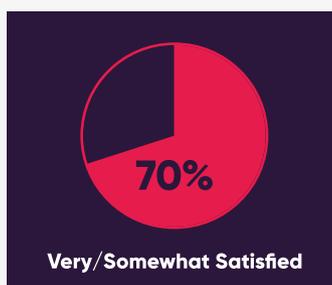
We offered both a virtual and physical option for the Fair, so that students could pick which method they would prefer to engage with us, as we were coming out of restrictions put in place due to COVID-19. We also provided a discount at YUSU venues to students who handed in their 'YUSU Freshers' Fair Guide' at one of these venues, to be recycled properly. This gave students the chance to get something out of our venues, whilst contributing to making our campus a more sustainable environment.

From our annual First Impressions Survey, we found that **82%** of students who attended our physical fair were 'very/ somewhat satisfied', while **63%** of students who attended our virtual fair were 'very/somewhat satisfied'!



Viking Raid

Our extremely popular bar crawl, Viking Raid, saw 2,787 tickets purchased. The Freshers stormed the city of Jorvik in style, wearing our specially designed t-shirts for the night! Out of all of the people who responded in our First Impressions Survey who attended Viking Raid, just over 70% of students were 'very/ somewhat satisfied' with the outcome of the event!



WELCOME 2021

Freshers' Festival

For our Freshers' Festival, **1,303 tickets** were purchased, and we welcomed Kellie-Leigh to the stage! Just under **70% of students** who attended the event and took part in our First Impressions Survey felt that they were 'very/somewhat satisfied' with the Festival!



Very/Somewhat Satisfied



“

The Freshers' Festival was one of my favourite events, there were plenty of things to do whilst waiting for the next act to perform too which I liked.

Response from First Impressions Survey



Our venues were particularly places full of energy within the Welcome period, with our total commercial sales over Welcome Week amounting to **£56,572!**

We are proud to reinvest this profit to create amazing opportunities for students!

We sold...



**773 pints of
Carling**



**693 hot
drinks**



**1,899 double
vodkas**



**136
pizzas**

...in the first week of the Welcome period!

WELCOME 2021

YUSU x Colleges

During the Welcome period, we collaborated again with the Colleges at the University of York to ensure that Freshers had the best time, for the best value!

Over **150 College events** were hosted across the Welcome Week, which enabled students to feel part of their College community. Without the amazing effort that the College Committees made for Welcome Week, we would not have had the wonderful feedback that **79%** of new students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt part of their College community after Welcome Week!

Furthermore, **75%** of new students were satisfied or very satisfied with the timetable

of activity put on by their College in 2021. Our collaboration did not end there: our YUSU x College bundle tickets were popular during the Welcome period. Out of **4,269** College tickets sold, **402** of them were the College x YUSU Bundle!

Available to purchase both as a separate YUSU ticket and as part of the **YUSU x College Bundle** ticket, we hosted Comedy Night, a more relaxed event without any expectation to drink alcohol. We had a lineup of hilarious comedians such as Josh Jones, Louise Young and Suzi Ruffell! **This received a 64% rating of 'very/ somewhat satisfied' for people who attended and filled out our First Impressions Survey!**

STAYING SAFE

We worked closely with Part-Time Officers (PTOs), safety services, and York Parties (our nightlife partner who runs the termly student club nights) to develop a cohesive and informative campaign about staying safe on nights out, both on campus and in the city.

This campaign included increasing awareness of anti-spiking messaging, setting up joined up reporting systems, and providing easy-to-access safety information. We also made products such as Spikeys and StopTopps readily available to all in each of our venues.



CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS

'Acakedemics'

This year, we reintroduced 'Acakedemics': an event series held across various departments, where we put on a platter of cakes and serve hot beverages in a relaxed atmosphere. These events aim to build connections with students and departmental staff, aligning with the three Cs: Cake, Conversation, and Community!

Our 'Acakedemic' events have really strengthened our partnership with University departments, and created important relationships with department Student Wellbeing Officers (SWOs). This was a useful opportunity for SWOs to chat to students about the support that they offer!

“

Thank you so much for putting this on. It's a really good idea.

Student attendee



“

Please keep putting on events like this. They bring life into the department. The 2nd floor is usually really quiet.

Staff attendee



CONNECTING WITH THE CAMPUS AND THE CITY



1,134 volunteers

were involved in volunteering across our 23 volunteering projects during the 2021/2022 academic year



13,561 hours

were given by project volunteers



This is equivalent to

£134,253

in the Real Living Wage (as of May 2022)!

Tea and Coffee Club

This is our longest running volunteering project, which has been around for over 30 years! The Tea and Coffee Club aims to bring together students and older people living in the community, who may be feeling lonely or isolated. During the pandemic, they adapted and provided

a phone call service to participants. After measures eased, in-person sessions made a comeback with activities such as quizzes, games and photo sharing sessions, where old pictures were shared alongside the memories behind them.

Tea and Coffee Club said...

'[In Spring term] [w]e had some new elderly members which was lovely to hear about their life experiences. Most sessions involved board games, such as scrabble, and quizzes to keep the elderly entertained. We also hosted bingo for the last session of the term and handed out prizes to the winners, which was a success as both the volunteers and elderly seemed to enjoy it!'



Hedgehogs on Campus

This project seeks to make the University of York campus a hedgehog-friendly place, where hedgehogs and other wildlife can thrive! Throughout the year, **Hedgehogs on Campus** carried out activities such as creating feeding stations, refurbishing bug hotels, building hibernaculums and

fundraising. Because of their effort, the group was awarded a **Gold Hedgehog Friendly Accreditation**, from the British Hedgehog Preservation Society in recognition of impactful changes to support hedgehogs and wider biodiversity on campus!

Hedgehogs on Campus said...

'[About Spring term] we have made great progress establishing and maintaining links to the wider community – most importantly with the York St John sustainability team, who we have been wanting to familiarise ourselves with for a long time. This is great for future joint events and raising awareness further into the community of the city.'



All Should Eat

Working to tackle food poverty and valuing community, sustainability and social justice, **All Should Eat** is a volunteering group that seeks to bridge the gap between the City of York and the University community. During Spring term, **over £700** was raised from fundraising with other societies, where this

money was donated to a local food bank! By the end of the academic year, All Should Eat set up **eight donation boxes** across the University to support local community hubs and food banks, and collaborated with other projects and societies to fundraise for local food banks.

All Should Eat said...

'All Should Eat is a project born out of a desire to make a difference for those affected by food poverty. We value equality, social justice, accessibility and sustainability, and strive to implement these into how the project is run. Our members bridge the gap between the university community and that of the city of York, and there is a real sense of accomplishment to even the smallest events, because we feel we are making a change every step of the way. As the project grows, we hope to provide opportunities for our members to grow along, all while directly supporting those affected by food poverty in York.'



ROSES

2022

Our annual varsity against Lancaster University, **Roses**, is always a popular event here at York. After taking a two year hiatus due to COVID, Roses was back in full swing, with **over 100 fixtures!** The tournament was held in Lancaster, with over **1,300** York students travelling to compete in a variety of sporting and non-sporting fixtures. This was the **56th** annual competition and it didn't disappoint! XAX

The event was broadcast live by our multimedia groups, our student journalists also provided match reports and live scores online, so those in York and afar could keep up with all the latest news.

The winner takes it all, and Lancaster took the trophy for Roses 2022, winning **241 points** to York's **102 points**. Hopefully we'll have better luck next time!



**Over 100
Fixtures**



**Over 1,300
York Students**



**56th Annual
Competition**



ELECTIONS 2022

“
focussed
on being as
inclusive as
possible.”

Securing Deadline Extensions for Candidates

A huge win for our elections was the introduction of extension deadlines for academic assignments, for candidates! This policy ensured that **the University would allow candidates extensions on their coursework during the physical campaigning period, and for two weeks after the results were announced.**

Students' mental health benefited greatly from this policy, for they didn't have to choose between running for elections and managing their University workload. As well as this, the policy may have enabled students with caring commitments, and mature/ working class students who worked part-time, to run as a candidate! Importantly, **13% of students with caring responsibilities nominated themselves,** a

huge step towards addressing barriers to inclusion and making sure that students from all backgrounds can nominate themselves in the elections period. The extension for University assignments has been a significant improvement implemented this year, with the policy influencing **14% of candidates** to run in the elections.

This year, we used tech to help engage voters more than ever before! This included displaying live infographics across the YUSU website and across campus, such as Greg's Place. This method showed a running total of votes cast, how much money these votes had raised, and how much money had been knocked off drinks at our venues.

46

nominations in total

All Part-Time Officer (PTO) positions were filled

for the first time in at least five years!

19

of 20 positions

were filled during the YUSU elections, with only one passing to the by-election. This is the lowest number of positions going to the by-elections in at least five years!

POLL CARD

The Students Placed Their Vote...

We had **4,408** voters in 2022 – a **25%** increase compared to 2021!

2022 (4,408 Voters)

2021 (3,523 Voters)

Voting happened at double the rate of 2021, with an average of **1,102** votes a day, compared to **542** votes per day in 2021, where we had a longer voting period!

A grand total of **34,897** votes were cast, an increase of **14%** from 2021!

With every vote, the University kindly donated **75p** per voter. This led to a staggering **£3,306** raised for charity, split between YUSU's Raising and Giving (RAG) and the Student Hardship Fund.

“

**A staggering
£3,306 raised for
charity.**

The Results Are In...

Candidates felt more supported during the election period, with a **50% increase** in positive feedback regarding this! Many students said that they both enjoyed the candidate experience and appreciated the new assessment deadline extensions policy.

We really loved to see that the improvements that we made enabled people from different backgrounds to be heard. For example, all Liberation Part Time Officer roles were filled, with the **LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Queer) Officer role being the highest contested of all positions!** A particularly high proportion of candidates who **identified as having a disability** also ran in the elections. We were also really pleased to see students with **experience of being in care, estranged from their parents and with caring responsibilities** engaging with the elections too!

Students also voted for one of our **most racially diverse Sabbatical Officer teams** including three BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) students, two of whom are International students. Furthermore, our Part Time Officer Team largely consists of people who identify as women or non-binary, showing a positive future for underrepresented voices being heard at YUSU!



Our 2022-23 Sabbatical Officers on Elections Results Night!



REMOVING BARRIERS

“

A huge step in the right direction to make communications more inclusive.

Creating Positive Change

A huge improvement that we have worked with the University to achieve this year was to ensure that students could input their chosen name easily on e:Vision, without having to email student services to do so. This is a huge step in the right direction to make communications more inclusive at the University, and to avoid calling students by their dead names.

Dead-names are the names assigned to people at birth, before they have

transitioned or changed their name to one that fits with their gender identity. Calling people by their dead-name can be really harmful, and undermines and invalidates that person's gender identity.

This idea to make University communications more inclusive was made by **Cath Brislane** (Arts & Humanities Faculty Rep 2021/2022) and **Kelly Balmer** (Wellbeing & Community Officer 2021/2022).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI)

The University of York generously funded a one year EDI lead role in 2021, to help us to strengthen our values of diversity, inclusion, liberation and equality. This role ensures that these values are enacted in every department of YUSU– from Central Resources to Student Voice. We have also secured two new external trustees, who have copious amounts of EDI leadership expertise!

Within the latest Charity Commission Report (2019), it was revealed that 92% of trustees are white, two thirds are male and the average age is between 55 – 64. Throughout the year we aimed to develop a more diverse trustee board, by reducing the average age of our trustees, increasing the amount of trustees who identified as women or people of colour.

“

Throughout the year, we aimed to develop a more diverse trustee board.

Tackling Period Poverty on Campus

Another success this year was our collaboration with Free the Flow, the University, and the GSA to provide free menstrual products on campus.

YUSU helped Free the Flow to secure funding from the University; the scheme was launched on the 23rd April 2022. In the first week alone, **1,500 free menstrual products were given away**. This shows

just how fundamental this scheme is to students, and how we can work to eliminate economic barriers when accessing essential menstrual supplies.

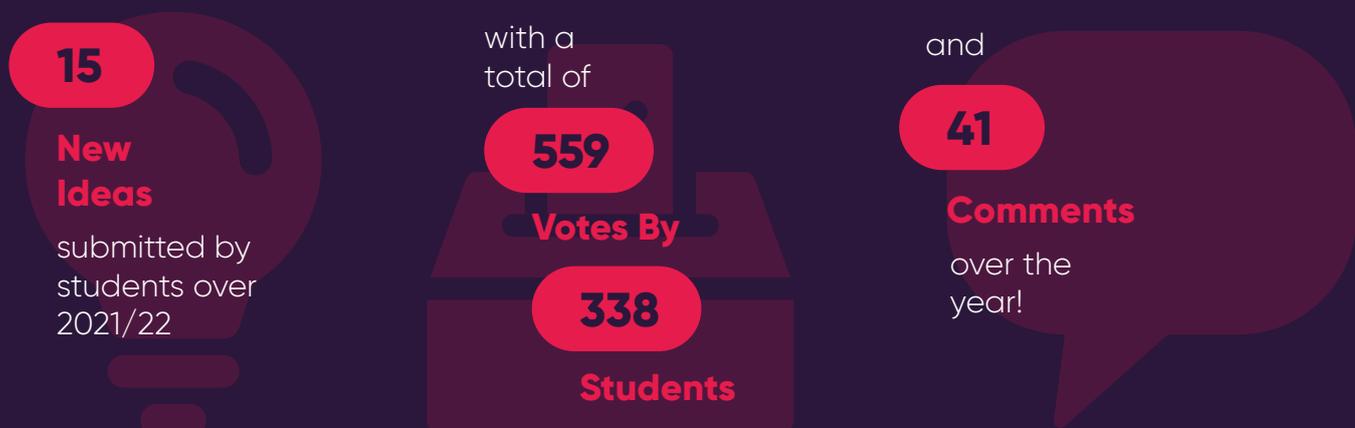


The Ideas Process

YUSUggestions is a platform where students are able to vocalise their ideas for improving the University, YUSU, or the community where they live! Students can vote for ideas made by other students. If these ideas receive enough votes, the

Student Ideas Panel categorise these ideas between 'Action' (ideas that can be carried out straight away) and 'Policy Proposal', which needs further consultation from students before implementation!

How many people interacted with our Ideas platform, YUSUggestions?



From this, we are starting to bring to life some of these ideas that students have made. We are striving to better represent commuting students, and discussions are in place to have art murals that students can contribute to around campus!

EMPOWERING STUDENT VOICES

Industrial Action

Throughout the academic year, many University and College Union (UCU) members went on strike to protest for better pay and working conditions.

In response, we:

- Asked students to complete post cards which were publicly delivered to the Vice Chancellor's office. This allowed students to express dissatisfaction with the industrial action that was taking place, and how this affected their quality of education.
- Hosted roundtable discussions that allowed students to hold University senior management and UCU members to account for disrupting their learning.
- Provided specific guidance and resources for students about industrial action. This covered their rights, expectations, and options for raising issues if their academic studies or personal circumstances were affected by strikes.

Working with the Student Expert Panel

As part of the University's Student Expert Panel, the University-led Access and Participation Committee involves both University and YUSU staff, who work to make University an inclusive place for students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. Throughout the year, YUSU worked with the University and the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) to host events such as **Middle-Ground**, which aimed to normalise conversations about race on campus.

“

Using my experiences as a young Black woman to help improve the lives of others, especially in the current climate of the Black Lives Matter movement, has been a privilege and pleasure. [...] Hearing the perspectives from a diverse range of backgrounds, including care leavers and mature students, has enriched my capacity to think critically about the issues faced by the student community.

Student Panellist for the Student Expert Panel

ACCESSIBILITY IN ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS

Student Sport Development Hub

We took on a new project to improve our personal development opportunities for students. This involved the creation of the **Student Sport Development Hub**, which has three tiers of financial support for students completing professional courses such as coaching or refereeing. This idea began as the Referee and Coaching Network, developed by 2020–2021 York Sport Union President **Maddi Cannell**. From this, the scheme was transformed into the Student Sport Development Hub by 2021–2023 York

Sport Union President, **Franki Riley**.

22 students were supported through the programme in 2021/22, in a range of sports from volleyball and football, to powerlifting.

As part of the financial award, students use their skills to help the York sporting community, through coaching their club members or refereeing College Sport fixtures.



Access Fund and Activities Access Grants

YuFund– a University fund that provides students with opportunities for projects run by student clubs and societies, departments and colleges– gave us funding to support the **Access Fund**. The Access Fund exists to reduce financial barriers that students may face when wanting to participate in YUSU activities. Through the Access Fund, we have managed to contribute a total of **£16,261** to improving accessibility across student life.

Within the year, we used the Access Fund provided to us by YuFund to create the **Activities Access Grant**, which financially supports students

to participate in YUSU societies, sports and volunteering projects.

Over 230 students were supported through the Activities Access Grants, an **increase of 172** compared to 2019! Through the Activities Access Grant, we distributed an amazing **£11,223** to students!

Alongside this, the Access Fund supported workshops for student leaders run by Beyond Equality.

Over 60 students attended the Beyond Equality workshops and learned about boundaries and communication, consent culture, inclusion and belonging.

£11,223

Distributed to Students

Here's what our students have to say about the Access Fund:

“

It has put me under less financial pressure when deciding which clubs to try out during freshers week, and which to ultimately sign up for. I was less concerned over the varying cost of memberships of the different sports I wanted to play, giving me freedom to pick those I preferred, rather than those that were cheaper.

It's been great to help me access social opportunities that I wouldn't otherwise have, being able to bond over shared interests has been amazing.

Unity Health

In March 2022, after lobbying from Sabbatical Officers, we were given access to the old Health Centre Building and transformed it into much-needed student group storage space. To ensure that the space would be utilised to its full potential, we applied for funding by YuFund, where we were awarded **£3,917** for storage improvements!



ADAPTING OUR VENUES

After shutting down our venues at the height of COVID-19, we were pleased this year to successfully re-open our venues, whilst keeping students safe.

In April 2022, the Government introduced a law requiring calorie information on restaurant menus. We realised that this could be detrimental for students who may be personally triggered by this, so we needed to handle this topic with care within our venues. That's why we **worked with students to provide calorie information on our menus in a way that would not alienate or distress our members**, who may have a difficult relationship with food.

We also conducted our first student annual survey that focuses on our events and products sold at our venues. The feedback given by students told us that our venues were considered good value for money and offered a great range of products. We are always looking to adapt and improve our services, however this was a huge win for us!



SHOWING SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE

Like many across the country, the Russian invasion of Ukraine sent shockwaves across the student community at York. We were inundated with student groups and individuals desperate to help in any way they could. York, once again, proved its dedication to human rights and supporting our international community.

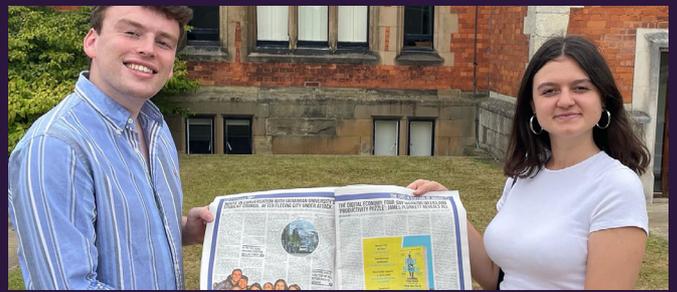
Donations

We partnered with our friends over at York St. John Students' Union to receive, organise, package and distribute hundreds of bags of clothing, household and personal hygiene items, baby clothing and more to be sent to Ukraine. Over the three days of the donations drive, we were overwhelmed by the generosity of our student and staff community, who arrived in their droves to help out in any way they could. These donations were then sent to charity Yorkshire Aid to distribute to Ukraine, Greece, France and Poland.

Partnership with Kharkiv University

As a result of the University's partnership with Karazin Kharkiv National University, we became very close with Vitalina Shevchenko – their student rector. Vitalina, like many others, was forced to flee as her home was heavily bombed. During her time visiting us in the UK, she generously shared stories of the student experience in Ukraine with YUSU publications York Vision and Nouse, and

even delivered a speech at our Love York Awards. To show our gratitude, the Sabbatical Officers nominated her to receive an honorary degree from the University, which she was awarded in July.



Vigils

YUSU society, Amnesty International, brought students together on campus for a vigil to commemorate the lives lost in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Students were invited to speak, share any writings or poetry and come together in a show of respect and solidarity with those affected by the conflict.

Patrick, YUSU President, also spoke alongside the Archbishop of York, the Lord Mayor, and local MP, at a city centre vigil which was highly attended by both local residents and students.



CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Excellence Awards

These awards received **412 nominations** overall, with strong numbers again for Supervisor of the Year, and Teacher of the Year. The night was made even more

special as we held our first in-person awards ceremony in three years!

412
Nominations

Love York Awards

The prestigious Love York Awards received **244 nominations** in 2022 – with the most contested award category being 'Student Group of the Year'. This category was ultimately won by Technical Theatre Society, who:

'[h]ave worked tirelessly throughout this year in order to support other student groups to put on their events after being unable to for the past two years. In this academic year they've supported over 40 events, with 9

of these being a week long. They work hard to provide professional standard lighting, sound and video and they greatly value working with all the societies they support!'

Anonymous nominator

The awards returned to their rightful home of Central Hall on Campus West and welcomed **over 300 guests** – including nominees, University staff, and city friends, such as the Lord Mayor of York, David Carr!

Over
300
Guests



Colours Ball

Our annual York Sport Union Colours Ball celebrates the fantastic achievements of our **62 University Sports Clubs**, and rewards the students who have dedicated their time and efforts to make York Sport Union a vibrant community!

The 2022 Colours Ball also celebrated its 24th anniversary, and was held at The Principal Hotel! **12 awards** were given out, alongside Full and Half Colour awards.



New for 2022: Activities Awards and College Sport Awards!

Activities Awards

The Activities Awards celebrates the achievements and successes of the incredible student-led societies and volunteering projects which we support. It was a brilliant night, where students were able

to celebrate with their peers and were recognised for their achievements. **18 awards** were given out, and the event was well attended by students, and supported by TechSoc and YUSU Bars!



College Sport Awards

The College Sport Awards is a chance to reflect on the amazing achievements of the College teams, consisting of **15 sports and 10 different Colleges!** This was a great opportunity to award students

who dedicate their time and efforts to College sport. A total of **11 awards** were given out, and lots of students turned up to celebrate!



Summer Ball

Our annual Summer Ball came back with a bang in 2022 after a break since 2019. We hosted just under 3,000 students at York Racecourse.

YUSU's Summer Ball allows students to celebrate their achievements and their time at York, and this year we hosted headline acts such as Circa Waves, Sigma, and Lovely Laura, as well as several student bands across our main and secondary stages.

3,000

Attendees

“
Summer Ball
allows students
to celebrate their
achievements and
their time at York.”



YUSU'S ACCOLADES

Excellent for Green Impact!

For 2021/2022, YUSU was awarded **'Excellent'** for the National Union of Students' (NUS) Green Impact Student Unions Programme!

YUSU was **one of only five** Russell Group University Student Unions who participated, and one of four who received 'Excellent'!

NUS Green Impact

EXCELLENT AWARD

Delivered by Students Organising for Sustainability - UK

Did You Know?

Because of the Latte Levy scheme that YUSU and the University of York operate, we saved one million cups from going into the landfill in February 2022!

YUSU Bars Win Gold with Best Bar None

At the National Union of Students' (NUS) Best Bar None Awards, we were awarded Gold for our bars (the highest rank!). During this process, we were reviewed by the offering that we give students, as well as the cleanliness and safety of our venues. Thorough inspections of all venues and of the core policies of the organisation were completed. Therefore, to be part of the top tier of students, with a **98% pass mark** was amazing!

“
We were
awarded Gold
for our bars
(the highest
rank!)”

Becoming a Real Living Wage Accredited Employer

In 2021, we registered our commitment with the Living Wage Foundation, committing ourselves to pay our staff and student-staff fairly. Over the year, we implemented a Real Living Wage for all of our staff and student-staff, with our accreditation achieved in August 2022.

Because of this commitment to the Real Living Wage, we paid our student-staff a total of **£499,304** – which is **£612,586** when including the salaries of our Sabbatical Officers!

“

We implemented a Real Living Wage for all of our staff and student-staff.



Becoming a Disability Confident Employer

Alongside becoming a Real Living Wage accredited employer, we are dedicated to becoming a Disability Confident Employer. We are pleased to have been certified **Level 1: Disability Confident Employer Committed** in the 2021/22 academic year, and we are determined to strive towards **Level 2: Disability Confident Employer** status in 2022-23.

“

We are dedicated to becoming a Disability Confident Employer.

WHAT WE MISSED

IT Systems

Throughout the year, we experienced some issues with our IT systems– such as experiencing downtime on the website

during peak periods, and limitations on what our systems could handle in some areas of operation.

What We Are Doing About It:

We are monitoring these disruptions and making minor improvements, along with using our long-term plan for digital infrastructure to move across to a new Content Management System (CMS) provider. To mitigate disruption during our busiest period, for Freshers' 2022 we staggered the release of Freshers' tickets.

This resulted in minimal disruption to our digital offering.

Looking ahead, we have started to develop a long-term partnership with external software provider **ElbowSpace**, who are experienced with providing digital solutions for Students' Unions, and who can help us to manage content for our growing audience!

Course Rep Elections

Unfortunately, we experienced less engagement with our Course Rep elections than we expected, with only 177 nominations being submitted, which was 38% less than 2020.

Because of this, fewer students were elected into positions, and some departments had little to no Course Rep representation, with only 56% of Course Rep

positions filled through elections.

We think that the process of running in an election poses a huge barrier to participation for many students. With in-person teaching making a comeback on campus, students may have also wanted to get involved in clubs and societies in their spare time.

What We Are Doing About It:

We used this setback as an opportunity to look forward. We organised focus groups with students, where we asked them for their feedback on the Course Rep role, and how they would change the Academic Representation structure. From this emerged our Rethinking Representation work, which includes the development of Student Action Groups for the year 2022/23.

This pilot project has been funded by the University of York, and pays £200 per term for student Champions, who work together and alongside staff to find solutions to help certain groups of students who may have issues in their department. This pilot project is helping us test future approaches to representation, to ensure that we amplify student voices as best we can.

Student Centre Consultation

Over the next few years, we will be seeing the construction of a shiny new Student Centre building. This process involves various stages of planning, which included a consultation phase in 2022. For this, students were invited to see the plans for

the building. However, during that delivery, it became apparent that there had been a lack of direct engagement with student groups, and they were barely mentioned in the plans.

What We Are Doing About It:

Because of this lack of communication, we lobbied the University and architects to revisit how they engage with student groups, and to actively seek out and hear their hopes and opinions about the new building. Our 2022/23 Sabbatical Officers are already making this a key priority, with our 2022/23 Activities Officer **Rohan Ashar**

communicating with student groups to allocate dedicated spaces to those groups who need it, which has been forwarded onto the Student Centre's design team. Rohan is also making sure that student spaces are cohesive, so no drums from BandSoc will be heard in the background of University Radio York's broadcasts!

Raising and Giving (RAG)

YUSU Raising and Giving (RAG) ran into a number of challenges this year. Unfortunately, with the uncertainty during the Summer of 2021 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the international landscape, the decision was made to only offer national Treks and Challenges this year. We decided that making Treks and Challenges within the United Kingdom was a better decision than to have students potentially lose money and be disappointed if international countries continued to impose COVID-19 restrictions.

Unfortunately RAG did not have a RAG Officer or Committee during the 21/22 academic year, meaning that a lot of

student-led activity was paused. In place of a RAG Committee, our Sabbatical Officers stepped in to make sure that we could still raise money for RAG. Due to its two year halt, we found that students did not know what RAG was or how to engage with it, a challenge Unions across the country are facing— as the National Student Fundraising Association (NASFA) Conference reported.

We also know that fundraising behaviours and trends have changed dramatically over the last few years, with the decline in the use of physical cash, shifts in donor priorities, and COVID enforced changes to the types of activities that could be run.

What We Are Doing About It:

Our newly elected RAG Officer is working hard with their committee and YUSU to review RAG and revitalise fundraising on campus. Across 22/23, there will be a number of events to showcase the incredible work RAG does, and we will be exploring opportunities to trial new, modern

methods of fundraising.

We will also be returning to offering international Treks and Challenges, with Elephant and Hill Tribes Thailand and Nordic Wilderness challenges open to students from October 2022.

OUR FINANCES

YUSU's Income (Turnover) 2018-2022



YUSU's Expenditure 2018-2022



What a few years it has been. From the highs of 2018-19, opening new venues and trying new things, through the COVID-closures and restrictions on student group activities, to the green shoots of a great bounceback as together we start to rebuild a Union that works for students. We are grateful for the support of the University

when growing our grant year on year to strengthen our finances over a really difficult period. We are incredibly proud of how you have worked with us to innovate, to adapt and to grow, and are hugely optimistic for the emerging Union that is going from strength to strength.

YUSU Reserves 2018-2022



YUSU's Reserve Fund is the money we have available to both protect against any major change in either our income or expenditure, or to invest in developing and growing our services and creating new opportunities for students. At **12%** of annual unrestricted expenditure, our reserve levels are still pretty modest,

providing some protection against the unknown, but not yet giving us the space to both invest in new things, and still weather any storm. Our growing income is helping us to stabilise our reserves, but it will continue to be an area of focus for us over coming years.

YUSU's Student Group Grants 2021/22

Total: £221,453



In 2021/22, YUSU contributed a massive **£221,453** in direct grants to student groups. Money that helped student leaders develop and grow their activities, their membership and their support. This was in addition to the **£3,599,971** spent on booking facilities, ensuring activities, providing equipment, training, advice, support and representation, increasing access, laying on events and providing the best student venues on campus.



CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the Union's activity for this past year, having only been in office for a few months, feels rather strange. I was elected on a platform of change, and I stand by the need for it. I feel energised though by the manner in which the Union has taken on board mine and the other Officers' vision. Change is fuelled by our anger about continuing inequity, but remembering who we are, where we have come from, and what we have achieved, is essential for keeping that fire alive.

Clearly, there is no shortage of incredible achievements in the last year to be proud of, many examples of which are included in this report, and many others in the making that are not included, but I continuously hear about. I am impressed by how the best impacts are achieved by students themselves working with Union Officers, staff, and funders using our spaces and services. This tells an exceptional story of how effective this Union is when we work together. Despite all of this though, I have a strong sense of how much more there is, and always will be, to do.

Our student membership is growing. With this comes a need for more spaces, opportunities, and support within the Union, as well as an increased offering of quality and affordable housing and services, at the University and in the city. The effect of two years of restrictions has taken its toll on our members, who

frequently tell us that they feel fragile and left out. The political context suggests austerity is returning though; that hostility to minorities still exists from parts of our society; and that students' economic vulnerability is not understood and their financial wellbeing not invested in. The perpetual threat of industrial action further adds to the disarray, jeopardising students' teaching, value for money, and staff community relations across the sector.

From one crisis to the next, our response needs to be just as strong. Our work to help students stay safe, rebuild their confidence, and feel optimistic, needs to be strengthened. It requires us to be more creative about student jobs, financial support, discounts, reducing living costs, and hardship funding.

To succeed when addressing these challenges, we have to ensure that we show an ability to partner and collaborate with each other. We should use our history and previous experience as a foundation for ambitious change. Most of all, we must show solidarity and compassion to our people and our community in the broadest sense. This is our vision for this Union, and I hope that our members, our staff, our funders, and our wider community and friends share this as well.

Sincerely,
Pierrick Roger, YUSU President 2022-23



yusu.org



@yorkunisu