

YOUR BEST STUDENT LIFE.

2023-26 Strategy



HELLO!



Over the last eight years we have been on a journey of continuous improvement and growth - we are now a more capable, effective, and impactful organisation with a solid governance and financial foundation.

Looking ahead, there are opportunities to continue this progression and to do more, and to do it better, for and with students - but there are also significant challenges and uncertainties ahead for the higher education sector and for students themselves.

At the same time as we have been developing our new strategy the University has been developing its 'Vision 2030' - a new strategic plan until the end of the decade. As organisations that work in partnership, we have drawn across from Vision 2030 into Your Best Student Life to ensure that between us, we have a coherent approach to supporting and empowering students at Canterbury Christ Church University.

As an organisation we need to focus on doing core activity really well, and so Your Best Student Life is deliberately shorter and more focused than its predecessors in light of the anticipated operating context. We have developed a strong foundation for success over the past eight years, but looking ahead our main focus will be on:

- Demonstrating our relevance to all of our Members;
- Delivering results and impact; and
- Foregrounding the work and success of our Student Leadership Team.

Overall, our aim is to harness the power of students to Make It Happen, and we couldn't be more excited to get going.

BEN MACPHEE
CEO

MAX ELVIN

President (Engagement & Sports) 2022-24

Chair of the Board of Trustees 2023/24

WHAT WE'VE HEARD.

As part of the development of Your Best Student Life, we engaged hundreds of students and stakeholders to ask them what they want to see from their Students' Union, their University experience, and their hopes for the future.

Many students don't recognise the difference between the Students' Union and the University

Certain groups of students, and commuting students and postgraduate students in particular, don't see the Students' Union as relevant to them

22% of students say they would only or primarily engage with the Students' Union online

33% of students would love to get involved with something at university outside of their course, however, factors that limit this include a busy schedule and lack of awareness about what is available

There is a general lack of awareness of the Union, both in terms of where we are and what we do

40% of students don't feel that there is enough help to support them during their university experience

40% of students have struggled with support around finances or mental health

62% of students are satisfied with their experience at the University, however, 20% have expressed dissatisfaction with their experience

Most students are likely to turn to family and friends for support, with only 4% of students saying they would turn to the Students' Union

OUR MISSION.

Guided by our values, driven by our mission, and fuelled by our ambition.

Our Mission

"your best student life"

Our Vision

"to support and empower every student"

Our Ambition

"to play a central and exciting role in the lives of students through inclusive representation, comprehensive support, and student-led opportunities that help individuals shape their experiences and achieve their ambitions, now and in the future"

Our Values

Inclusive, Supportive, Exciting, Dependable, Ambitious, Independent



WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE.

1. Students have a clear understanding of how the Students' Union benefits, supports, and champions them in their studies and student life.
2. The Students' Union actively contributes to the University's priorities: to improve student recruitment, retention, outcomes, and overall satisfaction.
3. The Students' Union supports brilliant student representatives who inspire and empower others, and make student-led change that improves students' experiences.
4. The Students' Union helps students to find student communities, and fosters a sense of belonging at the University.
5. The Students' Union acts as an effective advocate for students - making life easier and challenging barriers to participation and belonging.
6. The Students' Union is there for students - championing their achievements, but also compassionately supporting them when they are in difficulty.
7. The Students' Union helps to develop students' life-ready and employability skills that helps them meet their ambitions post-university.
8. A tailored Students' Union experience that meets students' needs and aspirations irrespective of study location.



OUR FOUNDATIONS.



1. Governance

Students' Unions' are unique organisations operating within a complex and burdensome regulatory framework. Strong and effective governance is an essential bedrock to everything we do.

The Students' Union starts 'Your Best Student Life' with an effective governance model, but this will need to be reviewed during the life of the Strategy to ensure it continues to act as both an enabler of our student-led ethos and our independence, and not a bureaucratic barrier to getting things done.

2. Finance

Without well managed finances we can't hope to achieve our ambitions. The Students' Union has transformed its financial management and position in the last strategic period, which has helped to build confidence in us from both Members and stakeholders.

However, like many universities and SUs, we face significant financial uncertainty ahead. We are over-reliant upon the University for funding, and so to help ensure our ambitions are deliverable we need to investigate new areas of income generation and continue to focus on value for money and impact for our Members, and ultimately, the University as our major funder.

3. Partnerships

We can't do everything, and so to succeed for and with our Members we have developed effective partnerships with others to further our Mission and Vision.

To help ensure a greater impact, we will need to continue to deepen our partnerships with students to co-create and deliver activity, as well as other values-driven organisations that share our mission to create your best student life.

Our major partnership is with Canterbury Christ Church University, and is one of mutuality and respect. As our primary funder and regulator, we must hold ourselves accountable for delivering key aspects of the student experience, demonstrating our impact, our effectiveness and our value. But we also need a relationship that empowers and respects our right to constructively disagree with and challenge the University by advocating for positive changes on behalf of students in a positive and productive way.






OUR ENABLERS.

1. People & Culture

Great people help to create a great culture. The Students' Union should be an aspirational and inclusive employer for values-driven people who actively embrace change and want to support and empower others.

We start from a good place, but we can't lose sight that as a small team with a constant churn of staff and student leaders, we need to continue to work at this to succeed in building and maintaining a high-performing team that is reflective of our student membership.

Our People & Culture Sub-Strategy details how we will recruit, develop, and retain great people and help to ensure their time with the Students' Union is exciting and transformative.



2. Insight

Research, evidence, and insight should inform all of our work, drive improvement, empower our people, and deliver and demonstrate impact for students.

Our Insight Sub-Strategy details how we move from knowing our Members to understanding them in a way that helps us to more effectively communicate with, and advocate for them.

3. Engagement

Our Vision, Mission, and Ambition are about empowering and supporting people. We simply can't do this without effective people engagement.

Our Engagement Sub-Strategy details how we will deliver dependable direct and co-created student-led services to meet our ambition of offering at least one thing that excites all students, whilst all the time pushing for even deeper engagement.



4. Communication

Students are busy, and getting our message across is ever more challenging, but it is vital to showcase all we do for, and with, students that can help you get Your Best Student Life.

Our Communication Sub-Strategy, drawing upon our Insight and Engagement Sub-Strategies, details how we will move towards engaging, tailored, two-way communication with all students to ensure we are relevant to you. This means ensuring you know what we do with you and for you, why we do it, and to communicate with confidence in your spaces to your preference.

5. Sustainability

The Students' Union acknowledges the climate emergency and the prevailing inaction on this across society. We also acknowledge that although our impact may be small in this space, we have a moral obligation, and therefore a determination to act.

Our Sustainability Sub-Strategy details how we will take direct action ourselves, to work and influence others, and to educate students on how we all can contribute to the societal changes needed to tackle ecological breakdown.



OUR FOCUS.

1. Your Course

At the core of what we do is representing and empowering students to shape their education by providing the spaces where their voices can be heard and amplified to help ensure they receive the best quality education.

Strands: **Representation, student rights, insight**

Services: **Full-time officers, Part-time officers, Course, School, and Faculty Reps, Education campaign**

2. Your Wellbeing

Striving to help ensure our Members are healthy, happy, and safe, but also informed and empowered to support others.

Strands: **Mental health, physical health, safety, money management.**

Services: **Advice, Wellbeing campaigns**

3. Your Self

Higher education has the potential to be transformative for people at all stages in their lives. It inspires and drives people to look at things how they could be, rather than how they are, to find themselves and find and accept others as they are.

Strands: **Liberation, representation, student rights, insight**

Services: **Campaigns, Education, The Lounge, The Hub, Societies**

4. Your Communities

We commit to creating and supporting life-changing student communities, to breaking down barriers that hinder participation, and to actively celebrate diversity.

Strands: **Inclusion, diversity, community, campus experiences**

Services: **Medway, Sports, Societies, The Lounge, The Hub**

5. Your Success

We believe that learning extends beyond their course, and we are here to empower them to gain skills and experiences that prepare them to attain your future career and ambitions.

Strands: **People & Culture, representation, sustainability**

Services: **Volunteering, Sports, Societies, Advice, Representation**



MAKE IT HAPPEN

Christ Church Students' Union