



Bristol SU

Vision & Strategy



Vision

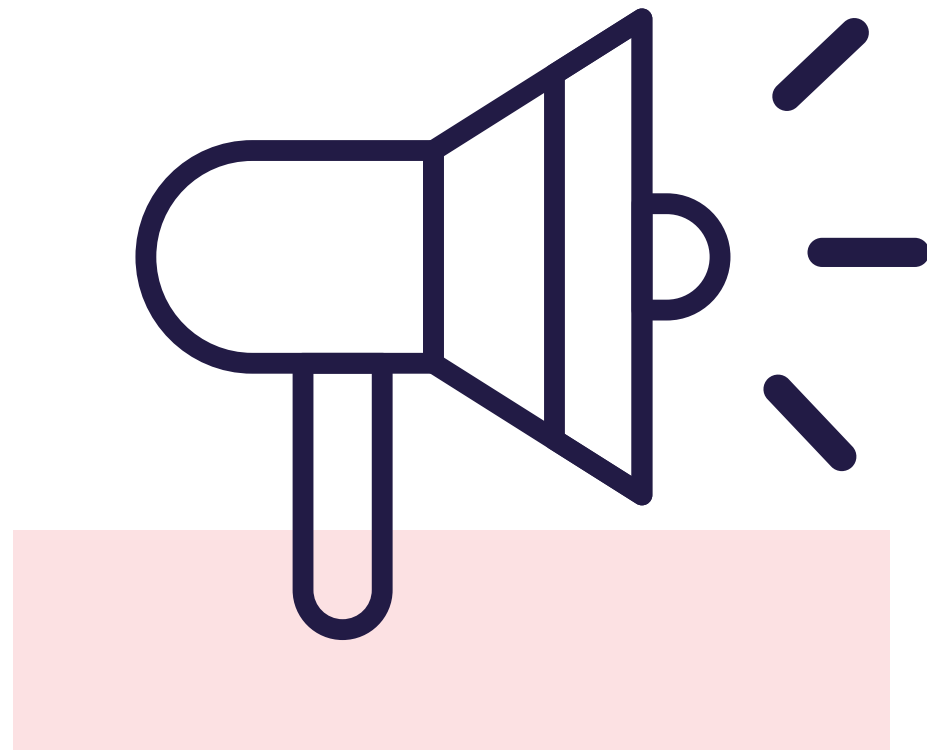
A Union for all students



Who we are

The community and voice
of Bristol students

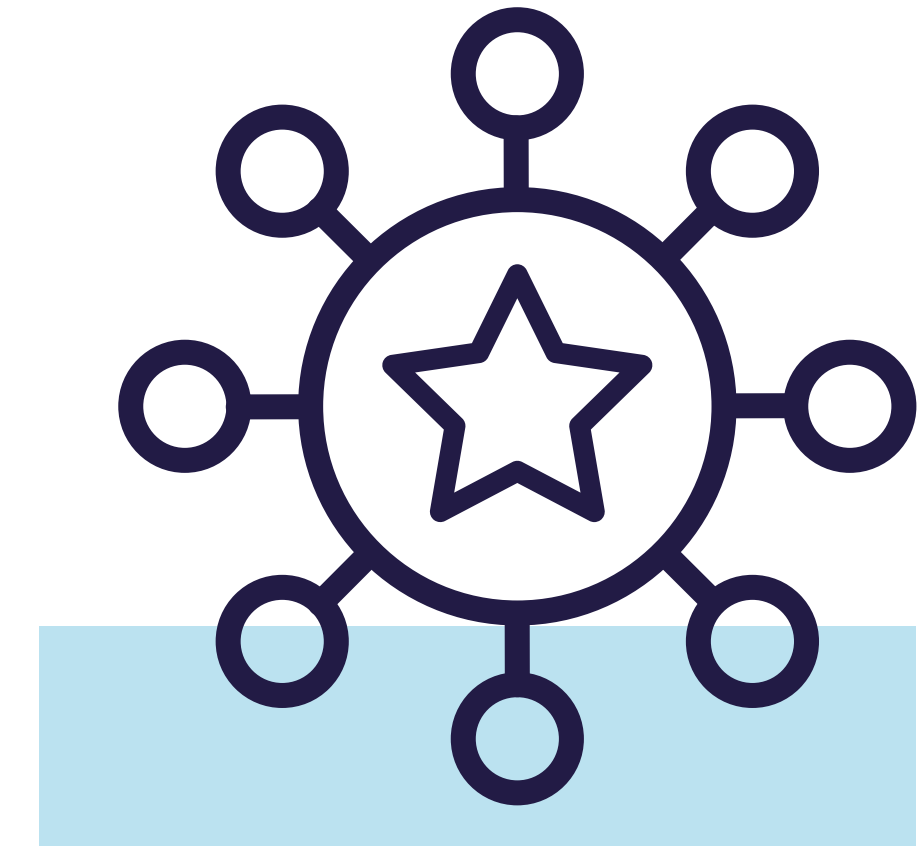
What we do



Our elected student representatives are **the voice of the whole student body**, using insight and research, they campaign and advocate for students' rights and ensure students remain at the heart of everything the University does.



Our highly experienced staff and student representatives offer **expert advice, support and information** to all students who need it, when they need it, in ways they need it; supporting all aspects of university life.



We are the **hub of student groups, communities, activities, and events**; a fun place to make new friends, develop new skills and pursue new or existing interests.

What we stand for

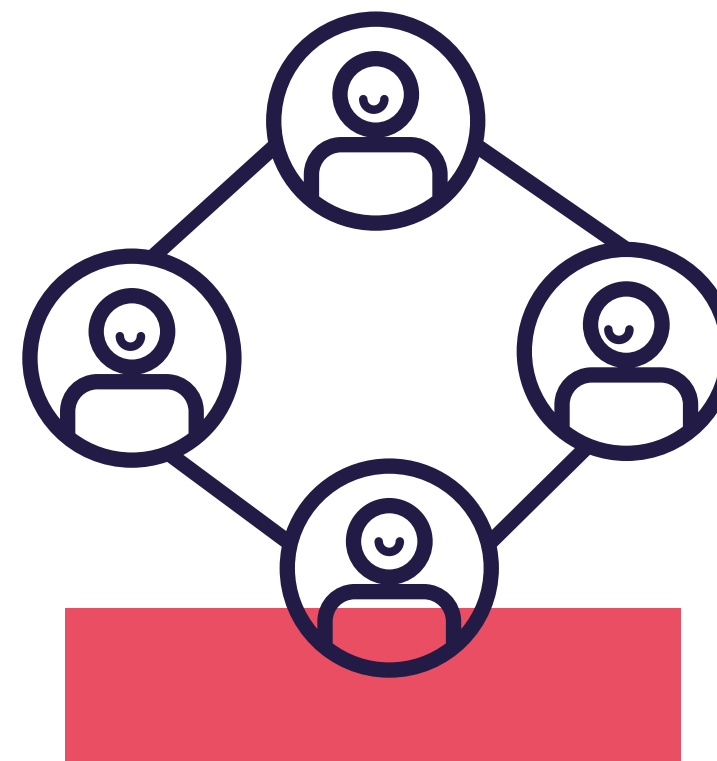
It's not just what we do that matters, it's how we do it.
We will reflect what is most important to our students.



We are loud and proud about **equality, diversity, and inclusion**.
We are a Union for all students.



We want our students to thrive,
so we support the **wellbeing** of
our students through the services
that we offer and the campaigns
that we run.



We believe **community**
matters; we create a sense of
belonging across the student
body through our student
groups, networks, events, and
spaces.



Sustainability underpins all that
we do; we want our Union, our
University, and our planet, to be
here for the long term.



We believe opportunities for
joy, humour and positivity
are important, we want our
students to have **fun** whilst at
University.

A Union for all students

We are a union where everyone can feel they belong. We create student communities. We provide supportive spaces. Regardless of background, interests, or characteristics, we are a Union for all.

This has always been important, but it is needed now more than ever. Covid has been seismic. Our students are ready to make up for lost time, and so are we.

We are focused on how historical injustices have created modern structural inequalities. Our student body is increasingly diverse, and we are determined to tackle these issues across our University and Union.

Our University is ambitious, it is growing and ever-changing. Yet Government cuts to the sector are a distinct possibility. We will work in partnership with the University to make sure students are at the forefront of every decision and that the University goes from strength to strength.

Media attacks on campus life continue. Our students expect us to fight these, and we will. We believe the answer is in open debate and transparency. We welcome a wide range of views and we support the right of free speech.



Our students, quite rightly, have high expectations of us.

Our new strategy sets out our ambitions, our intentions, and our pace of transformation. It's a big challenge but we have big ambition. We will not achieve it easily or quickly, or within our current capacity. We will set clear goals, break down our plans into milestones, and measure our progress.

Where we need to improve, we will listen with an open mind, try to understand and be open to challenge. We will be solutions focused, practical and pragmatic. And we will continue to do this, over and over, until we get it right – and then we will do it more, because learning never stops.

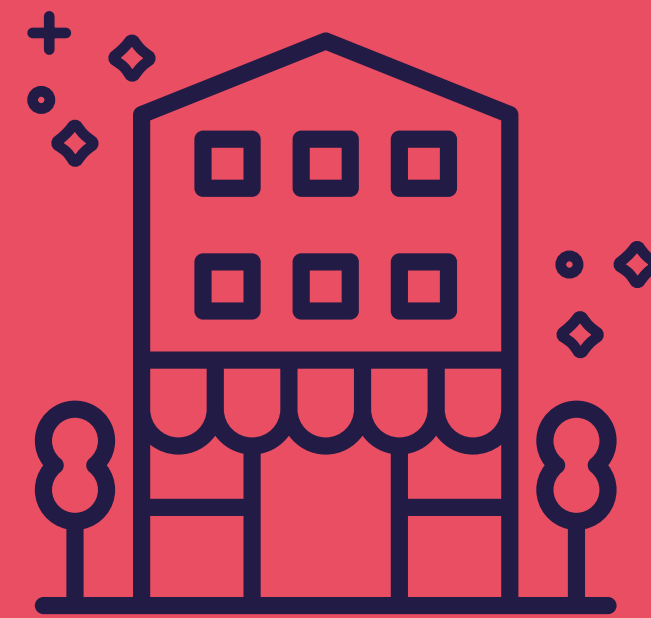
We are proud of our Union, of everything it has achieved to date, and we are excited to write our next chapter.



Snapshot: who we are

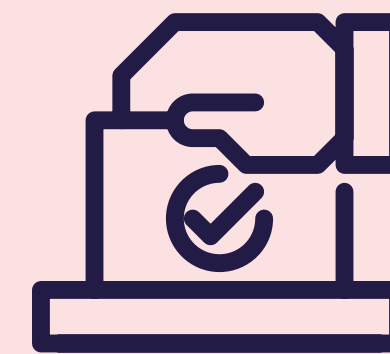


30,000
members



A broad
physical
footprint

The Richmond Building, Senate House,
and plans to expand further



59,000
votes cast in our last election
- twice the national average!

350-400



clubs & societies



60
sport clubs

35 in BUCS



1000+

events, workshops, training &
development opportunities

800+

student
representatives
across all faculties



175 community sports
teams (intramural)

2500+ participants

From record levels of student participation, UK leading rates of election turn out, an amazing professional staff team of over 70, strong leadership, good governance, and high quality services, we are a healthy and robust organisation; rooted in our values, focused on the future, and always putting our members first.

We elect, train, mentor and guide seven students each year to become Full Time Student Officers and a further 800 students to become academic reps. They work across the University, advocating for students as the voice of the whole student body.

Our 18 student networks create communities that students love to be part of. They socialise and campaign for change on the issues that matter to them. Our networks are especially important for those who are marginalised.





We support over 1800 students through academic processes each year. These students achieve fair outcomes because they have access to independent advocates.

More than 5000 students have somewhere safe, affordable, and secure to live because of Bristol SU Lettings.

Our welfare campaigns, including suicide prevention and harm reduction, help students find the support they need when they need it. We're also pioneering an innovative approach to peer to peer support.

We offer a wide range of activities and opportunities including a year-round events programme, from speaker events to plant-potting, theatre to craft workshops.

These events are focused on community, connection and wellbeing and there's something for everyone, without a focus on alcohol.

We have more student groups than most other students' unions – over 350 at the last count! We also run intramural sport for 175 sports teams with 2000+ participants and have a wide range of volunteering opportunities, which lead to 40,000 volunteering hours per year.

During Welcome Week we run over 100 events including our Welcome Fair which attracts 12000 students and hosts 400+ stalls.

Students say we are the student experience. And it's why they love their time at Bristol.

Our strategic ambition

Our overarching ambition is to be a modern and exciting part of the Bristol experience.

We will be relevant to all students and make a real difference to their lives by offering advice and representation, and the chance to make new friends, develop new skills and discover new interests. Known for being progressive, respected and impactful.

A Union for all students

Our Plan 2022 - 2025

The plans to follow outline our roadmap to making our strategic ambition a reality.

Diversity & Inclusion

A Union for our diverse student body

Evidence & Insight

We will use evidence to guide and drive our decisions

Places

Vibrant, visible social spaces located where students need them

People

Talented people, delivering quality outcomes, in a compassionate culture

Access & Participation

Diversifying and widening participation

Communication

A vibrant brand and respected source of information

Digital

A digital culture that enriches engagement and empowers our community

1



Diversity & Inclusion

A Union for our diverse student body

Where we are now

Every single student matters to us. We're proud of the progress we've made on diversity but know we have much more to do.

Our officer team is increasingly diverse, but the representation of our staff team is only just catching up and there's still room for improvement. We have created networks to help students self-organise around identities, but we haven't yet found the right model of support for them.

We created the first full time International Students Officer, but it hasn't yet resulted in greater engagement from all international students, particularly those from South and East Asia.

Our students of colour, women, and LGBTQ+ students report being more satisfied with us, but disabled students less so. We have campaigned on the students of colour awarding gap, decolonisation and trans inclusion, amongst others, but we still hear that not all our students feel safe, seen and heard at Bristol.

We know that on some key issues we struggle to take all our student body with us. We intend on changing that.

Where we are going

We want to be a Union for all students. A Union that is a safe, welcoming place regardless of race, sex, gender, disability, socio-economic background, home country or any other characteristic. A place that recognises historical and structural inequalities and is impatient to tackle them. A place that students know respects them, advocates for them, and understands them.



Diversity & Inclusion

A Union for our diverse student body

What we will do

- Working with student leaders of various liberation identities, we will review our Student Networks, ensuring they have impact and are safe and supportive.
- Take meaningful steps to diversify our staff team so to better represent our student body. We will do this by recruiting differently, being confident to take affirmative action where our applicant pools aren't diverse and build a culture of affirmative inclusion to retain our staff. In the first instance we will focus on people of colour and disabled people, as we know these are priority areas for us.
- Using data and insight, we will review student engagement with all our services and activities, with the view of understanding any under-representation and taking steps to address this.
- Develop a dedicated communications plan for international students, in their home language if needed. We want them to feel as at home in their Union as all students.
- Learn from our partnership with the Global Lounge to make this as effective as possible.

2

Evidence & Insight

We will use evidence to guide and drive our decisions

Where we are now

We hold a wealth of insight into student views, behaviours, and preferences; ranging from quantitative and qualitative data to narratives on lived experiences. However, we are not maximising the potential of having such a rich and strong evidence base to guide our work. We know we could be better at combining it, analysing it, and using it.

Where we are going

If we are to be truly driven by student need, then we need to ensure student data is driving our thinking, decisions, and actions. From cutting edge research, to a laser sharp understanding of the student experience, to robust and sound evidence, we will put this insight to better use.

It will inform our work, provide us with critical evidence and be a catalyst for positive change across the University, the city and even the country.

What we will do

- Invest in our team's skillset so they are better able to maximise the potential of our rich data sets
- Use the data to better understand the impact the Students' Union has on students, and how we can ensure continuous improvement
- Use the data to better understand how we can build relationships with groups of students who don't normally engage with what we offer
- Using the knowledge, skills and experiences gained from above, we will establish a Student Engagement Agency that will take on paid work exploring student experiences across the UK. This will add a vital funding stream into the union, as well as honing our expertise in this area, which will strengthen what we do internally
- Review all procedures to ensure we are holding and using information in ethical and legally compliant ways

3

Places

Vibrant, visible social spaces located where students need them

Where we are now

Students who regularly visit us have positive experiences, but too many students don't visit our spaces; they do not know we are there, they do not feel our spaces are for them, or we are simply not where they physically are.

Where we are going

We want to be highly visible and right at the heart of student life year-round, a place students want to visit. We will use our warm welcome to encourage and create long term engagement between ourselves and students.

What we will do

For the sites we currently have, we will review what we offer there and how we offer it. And we will consider what new spaces we should be occupying across the Bristol campus:

- Continue to maximise our presence in Senate House, conducting outreach and actively offering more events and services closer to where students are
- Work with the University to find ways we can have a bigger and more meaningful presence on the Clifton Campus, Temple Quarter and Stoke Bishop
- Re-imagine our presence in the Richmond building, making the common spaces more welcoming, more appealing and reclaiming our Students' Union identity
- Maximise the potential of provisions like the Balloon and Beckford cafe-bars for students, reviewing our partnership operating model and introducing fresh features, ideas and provisions to better meet the needs of students.

4

Access & Participation

Diversifying and widening participation

Where we are now

The students who engage with what we do, whether events, support services or representation, tell us they like and value what we do. But there are too many students who do not feel what we offer is for them, or simply don't know about us. And for some there are issues around time, cost, language, culture, and confidence. These are all barriers to participation.

Where we are going

We are a Union for all students, we will continually review our offer so there is something for everyone, and tackle barriers to participation that are within our power to change.

What we will do

- Grow, strengthen, and support our current student groups, helping them to be truly inclusive and welcoming to all students
- Ensure everything we offer is value for money, whilst also reducing the financial barriers that some students face.
- Build on our recent successes of offering opportunities that are designed to be accessible, such as Intramural, Give it a Go, and flexible volunteering opportunities
- Continue with our full and varied events programme which has the potential to reach all students under the umbrella of fun, friendship, and community, building back beyond pre-Covid levels
- Invest in peer-to-peer mental health and well-being initiatives, ensuring they are safe, accessible, and effective; and complements, rather than duplicates, what the University already offers
- Review and enhance our University wide representation system, making it even more accessible, rewarding, and engaging for potential representatives, thus giving the student body an even more powerful voice
- Consider new services that our student body might need and generate income to the SU, focusing on the areas our students tell and show us are the priority for students, including the affordability of university life, financial support and opportunities for employment

5

Communication

A vibrant brand and respected source of information

Where we are now

Those who engage with us, understand what we offer and rate what we offer. We are recognised and trusted for our expertise. However too many students do not understand our role or impact, and others feel we do not talk to them. Even those who are aware of our student groups and rep system don't realise we run them. However, over recent years we have invested in our communications capacity and modernised our approach in this area. We have increased our reach and engagement, something we were particularly proud of during Covid. But we know there's more to do.

Where we are going

We want a brand that is well known, well understood and well respected. By students, the University and the wider Bristol community and education sector. We want our communications to be trusted, clear, effective, and useful. The go-to place for everything students need to know about student life.

What we will do

- Develop a brand identity that asserts the Students' Union's relevance and impact to all students and key stakeholders, and distinguishes us from the University
- Seek to align more closely with the activities of student groups and to brand academic reps as Students' Union reps
- Become a trusted source of information and guidance on issues that matter to students, such as health, wellbeing and safety; as well as information that might be of interest to them, such as social opportunities and events
- Develop the ability to segment our students so we can more quickly connect them with part of the Union that interests them most
- Invest in content creation, including student content creators, to ensure we have a vibrant, relevant, and engaging social media and web offering
- Develop a strategic approach to stakeholder comms to maximise our influence with decision makers and partners

6

Digital

A digital culture that enriches engagement and empowers our community

Where we are now

Over recent years we have made investments into digital. We have invested in new technologies, new staff and developing digital approaches across the whole organisation. Covid was a challenge, yet it tested our online capacity and capability which meant we learnt many things. We will now apply that to business-as-usual.

Where we are going

We have made progress and are ambitious to make the next big leap. We are going to embed digital across all that we do, allowing us to reach more students and enhance what we do face to face. We will continuously review our UX in our digital offer, proactively prioritising and utilising student feedback. Digital will help us scale what we offer, how we offer it, and who we offer it too.

What we will do

- Invest in digital skills and capacity, as well as building a culture of digital innovation and imagination across the organisation
- Equip every member of our team with the tools and with a base level of digital skills through training, and invest further in digital champions in each team
- Our digital offer will aim to broaden our reach and engagement. It will be utilised where relevant to enhance our in person offer and everything we do
- Continuously review any requirements for a new digital system or process to aim to meet the needs and expectations of our students and staff. We will review what we can produce in-house and what we may need to partner with external organisations, all with the outcome of increasing student engagement and staff efficiency.

7

People

Talented people, delivering quality outcomes, in a compassionate culture

Where we are now

The Students' Union is a great employer. It is a progressive, compassionate, caring and enjoyable place to work. We have talented and motivated people, a fantastic culture and a united sense of direction. Staff feel very positive about their colleagues, and the supportive and caring organisation we have created. They are proud to be supporting students and to work on issues that really make a difference.

Where we are going

Whether it's sexuality, gender, or any part of identity, we want staff to be able to bring their 'whole selves' to work and live authentically. We want to embrace the ever-changing nature of supporting students, whilst also helping staff keep a work life balance.

We want to embrace technology and flexibility whilst also maintaining high quality outcomes. We want to be an employer of choice, somewhere people admire, respect and want to work for.

What we are going to do

- Challenge ourselves to be an even better employer and ultimately become a leader in our community
- Develop a progressive culture, including policies and processes that embed cutting edge staff wellbeing and inclusion
- Build capacity across the organisation by increasing our block grant and maximising enterprise income whilst reviewing and tightly controlling spend, to ensure our staff can be responsive to student need while continuing to deliver quality and work healthily
- 'Think outside the box' to redesign the Full Time Officer role to make sure it's as positive and rewarding an experience as possible
- Invest in time together so we are able to regroup as One Team in the post-pandemic era, giving us the energy, comradery and spark to deliver this exciting strategy

We are a union where everyone can feel they belong.
We create student communities. We provide
supportive spaces. Regardless of background,
interests, or characteristics, we are a Union for all.



Bristol SU

bristolsu.org.uk

