

NUA Students' Union Strategic Plan 2015-2020

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1.1 Vision Statement

NUA SU will become the best small and specialist Union in the UK.

1.2 Guiding Principles

- To keep the needs of students as a number one priority above all else.
- To always be the voice of students within the institution and in a national context.
- To actively seek out new ways to improve the experience of NUA’s student body.
- Provide welfare, support and advice to any member of the Union who seeks it.

1.3 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small but stable income streams • A recognisable brand • Student accessibility • Support for clubs and societies • Good day time welfare, support and representational systems • Well trained and informed staff • Student employer • Good connection with NUS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of staff hours- limiting output • Small budget after wages – limiting financial growth • Not all students are engaged • Few methods of communication • Reliance on university block grant • Absence of commercial property • Small office space • No student run social space or dedicated area for evening events • Infrequent staff hours • Lack of financial, legal, marketing, welfare expertise • Inconsistent brand
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial services expansion • Increasing size and number of Clubs and Societies • Improving student engagement • Improvement of night-time welfare services • External partnerships • An advisory board for certain areas of Union development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in NUA block grant • Student apathy • Changes to government legislation • No nominations for SU Elections • Lack of high quality applicants – staff and elections • Poor NUA recruitment leads to downsizing • Staff and resources unable accommodate increased student numbers • Reputational damage

1.4 Strategic Priorities

The priorities laid out below are not in any order of importance.

Our strategic priorities are broken down into the 6 key areas listed below.

- *Effectively Represent NUA Students (2.1)*

- *Ensure NUA Provides the Very Best Environment for Students to Learn In (2.2)*
- *Effectively Communicate With Membership and Increase Engagement (2.3)*
- *Grow and Develop Welfare Services (2.4)*
- *Expand Student Activities and Societies (2.5)*
- *Generate New and Develop Existing Sources of Income (2.6)*

Each of these strategic priorities will be deconstructed and accompanied by a list of developments to make in these areas and commitments, which we will hold ourselves to. The organisation is not limited to the targets set in this document and is frequently involved in a number of beneficial ventures that may not be noted. Similarly if all of the listed milestones are completed then further developments will be added. Further developments may also be added if the goal is unlikely to be reached within the tenure of a single President.

The targets described in this document make a fractional proportion of the unions overall workload but are necessary if NUA SU is to achieve its vision and provide continuity throughout one or more President's tenures. All listed developments and commitments must be completed by the start of the next strategic planning period- 2019/20.

2.1 Effectively Represent NUA Students

Effective representation is key to achieving NUA SU's vision statement. The Union takes part in regular negotiations with the university, with the aim of achieving the best deal for students, even if they are unaware that this is happening. The outcome of these negotiations has a direct correlation with student experience and retention. Representative structures such as the Course Rep system, Student Steering Committee and Student Officers provide further representation, accountability and feedback mechanisms.

The Union President -This position is, and will always be, an elected position, ensuring the Union remains a democratic organisation that makes relevant changes for students.

Developments:

- To continue to work on the briefing and training of SU Presidential candidates receive before and after nominating themselves to give them as rounded understanding of the role as possible at this time.
- To use the elections as an opportunity to educate students further on what the SU does and engage them with the work of the Union.
- To develop an online system for voting which increases student engagement with the elections.
- To develop thorough a hand over document with key dates, information and guidance about the role to give to the new President and staff team.

Commitments:

- NUA SU will be committing to increasing voter turnout with prearranged yearly targets.
- To find new ways to promote the elections to increase voter turnout.
- To ensure that the election is as representative as possible by finding ways to engage groups who typically do not vote in the SU Elections

Liberation Officers -These Student Officer positions provide students who self identify within these groups a visible platform to campaign on issues that are linked to the

oppression of or on issues that are particularly applicable to their group. The elected officers are in a great position to further empower other students by working towards creating change around these issues.

Developments:

- To strive to build students understanding of what the Liberation Officer positions are and why Liberation Campaigns are important to all students.
- To provide the Liberation Officers with a good understanding of the SU.
- To provide the officers with training from both the SU and external sources which will enable them to be effective in their roles (in areas such as: campaigning, negotiating, events planning, managing a budget, public speaking, recruiting and managing a team).
- Support the officers to plan and put on awareness weeks around each of their campaigns.

Commitments:

- The Union will, in the first instance, strive to fill each of the 6 officer positions. Students will likely become more familiar with and inspired by the positions year on year, which will ease the process of encouraging nominees.
- Once this is the case the Union will further commit to increasing voter turnout in all 6 elections.
- To support and encourage these positions in engaging and effectively representing students at NUA.

Collaboration - With harmful political cuts to institution's Widening Participation Funding and Disability Support Allowance, the need to elevate the voice of NUA students to a national level is greater than ever before. A strong connection with the NUS has allowed the Union to promote campaigns and draw support from other Students' Unions in the East of England. By sharing resources, expertise, student numbers and links to press, campaigns with a mutual goal can come together as a cohesive whole, strengthening the overall effort and applying a greater pressure where appropriate.

Developments:

- To build on relationships with SUs locally, in the East of England and Nationally.
- Explore the potential of working more closely with other Arts Students Unions.
- Work on appropriate campaigns with other Students' Unions and the NUS.

Commitments:

- Have a presence at and encourage students to attend National Demonstrations on students' rights.
- To attend National conference each year and where appropriate present motions.
- Encourage and support students to campaign on local level.
- Get as many NUA students registered to vote as possible.
- Put on events and raise awareness around the 2015 General Election.

2.2 Ensure NUA Provides the Very Best Environment for Students to Learn In

It is crucial that the SU maintains an active role in helping NUA provide the highest quality teaching and resources for students. In an increasingly difficult jobs climate, it is essential that students are able to graduate with the highest degree classification that they can possibly achieve as well as a portfolio of the highest standard. The SU plays a pivotal role in progression of courses, through consolidating student opinions and issues to the

organisation of course focus groups. As the range of courses offered at NUA expands this working relationship must continue to run effectively under the increased workload. New courses will undoubtedly create some teething problems and it is the responsibility of both NUA and the SU to monitor these issues, ensuring consistently good levels of student satisfaction.

Student Representatives - Student Reps are one of the primary contributors to social and academic improvement at NUA. The system works as a line of communication to and from students allowing messages to be delivered quickly. The negotiations that Reps are involved in often secure a better deal for students and have a direct impact of student experience. Currently, Reps must attend one training session during the first term, which outlines responsibilities and provides the tools needed to fulfil their role.

Developments:

- Provide further training to help develop Reps' skills in areas such as negotiating and campaigning.
- Facilitate more meetings between the SU and Reps.
- Send out timed bulletins to Reps to feedback to students on what the SU is doing.
- As student numbers grow and new faculties are introduced, the Union will explore the possibility of recruiting Faculty Reps; to offer a single point of contact for all faculty wide issues and to promote interfaculty collaboration.
- Aim to create and distribute Student Rep guides at the first training session of the year.

Commitments:

- NUA SU has a firm commitment to ensuring that all Reps attend mandatory training and are effective in their role.
- Ensure more than 95% of Reps attend training

Focus Groups - Course Focus Groups allow small and larger issues to be resolved, which may otherwise go unreported. Offering students the chance to openly discuss their views on a course gives transparent feedback, which has a positive impact on student satisfaction as well as datasets such as the ISS and NSS. Maintaining a continuous dialogue with Student Reps is crucial for new courses, to offer another outlet for students to provide feedback.

Developments:

- Additional Course Focus Groups would ensure students are able to report any issue quickly, allowing issues to be addressed quickly.
- Explore hosting on going Focus Groups for other areas: Activities Focus Groups, Liberation Focus Groups, Faculty Focus Groups, etc.

Commitments:

- To continue to inform students about Focus Groups and strive to get as many students as possible to attend over their time on the course.
- To engage students who may not normally attend Focus Groups.

Union Workload -The current workload of the Union, with the added responsibilities required to achieve the aims described throughout this document, is already at maximum output. As new courses are introduced, current courses expand, and as student perceptions of what is expected of a university change, additional workload pressures will likely place an unmanageable strain on SU staff.

Developments:

- Research the role of Academic Officers in comparable unions and investigate the benefits that this position might offer to NUA students
- To encourage students who are engaged with the union to volunteer their time and services to our campaigns and events.
- Find appropriate ways to work collaboratively with students, Reps, Clubs and Societies and Student Officers.

Commitments:

- To increase staff hours
- To create a second sabbatical officer position (for example, having a Vice-President Academic would reallocate all of the tasks associated with academic issues, complaints, Reps, focus groups and student conduct to this position would allow the President to focus on student welfare, social and cultural experience and the growth of the organisation.

2.3 Effectively Communicate with Membership and Increase Engagement

Communication is the lifeblood of the SU and if this were neglected the organisation would encounter a number of problems. If students were not able to correspond with the Union we would quickly lose sight of what would make the lives of students better. If we were not able to relay messages to students, positive changes would not be heard which would likely effect retention. Student experience would also be affected, as members would be unaware of changes, improvements, events, clubs, societies and workshops, thus missing out on social development, discussion, collaboration and fun. If we were unable to communicate the needs of students to the university then change would be slower, and smaller 'quick fix' issues may be missed altogether. If there are members of the Union who do not know the organisation exists, then they won't be able access the support and representation offered to them. If there are members of the Union who are aware of our existence but don't engage in any way, the same problem occurs. In turn the more members that are engaged with the SU, the easier relaying messages to students will be. This dialogue is particularly important in a landscape of £9000 tuition fees with students often deservedly demanding greater 'value' for the additional money they must pay from their education and the resources they have access to.

NUASU.org - nuasu.org has provided a 'sharable', interactive, visually engaging platform that allows Union members instant access to our key information and updates. It is an essential tool for information delivery, allowing students even greater access to welfare and services information. Our website gives us the chance of communicating with students who aren't otherwise engaged with the intranet or social media.

Developments:

- Explore the potential to run the SU President elections and Liberation Officer elections online.
- Expand the range of products available in our online shop.
- Explore the potential for Club Officers being able to edit their club's page to provide up to date events and news to students.
- Consider having a 'Reps page' for reps to feedback to students.
- Run opinion polls and priority campaigning through the website.
- Explore the potential of selling advertising space on the website.

Commitments:

- Continue the development of nuasu.org; maintain a contemporary aesthetic and ensure the content is useful and relevant.

Priority Campaigning - Priority Campaigning is a mass feedback mechanism and method for ensuring that the Union's time and resources are allocated proportionately to what students feel are their most important issues.

Developments:

- To build on student participation with Priority Campaigning to ensure that the issues we are mandated to work on are representative of the highest amount of students possible.
- To effectively advertise the Union's successes from Priority Campaigning to reach as many students as possible
- To create a consistent branding mechanism for Priority Campaigning to help familiarise students with it and build on participation year on year.

Commitments:

- To continue to commit to working on the top five issues of Priority Campaigning for a year and if any issues remain unresolved to roll them over to the following year.
- To update students when an issue has been completed from Priority Campaigning

The Future - The ways in which the SU communicates with its membership must be fluid to keep pace with rapid enhancements in technology, new trends and an expanding student body. NUA students are and will always be driven by creativity so imaginative and visual methods of communication remain the best way to engage with hard to reach members. Social media is a successful, interactive and engaging way of communicating a message but is limited in terms of its potential reach. Mass emails are guaranteed to target every student but may not be read. NUA's student numbers remain small enough that word of mouth is still one of the most effective ways to convey a message but only if the issue affects the majority of the student body. We must continually evaluate and update our ways of communicating with students to find a way that will engage the highest amount of students possible.

Developments:

- Build an awareness of groups who are and are not engaged with the Union and find ways to reach out to them.
- Collect bi-annual data to find demographics that are least involved in the Union and make every effort to ensure that these groups engage.
- Redevelop the SU's intranet, providing up to date and useful information for students.

Commitments:

- Retain the existing branding to further promote the SU and provide continuity for students
- NUA SU must continuously evaluate, expand and improve communication methods to ensure the maximum engagement from its membership.
- Continue to develop the reach of NUA SU social media platforms and expand to new platforms where necessary.

2.4 Grow and Develop Welfare Services

With cuts to Widening Participation funding and Disability Support Allowance on the horizon, university will become an even more challenging place for many NUA students

Housing- Aside from tuition fees, housing is likely to be the most expensive factor of a students' time at university. Many students do not feel equipped to tackle problems they may face within the housing sector whether it be knowing the warning signs when looking at a property, dealing with a landlord or letting agent or unexpected costs which they may face from not fully understanding a contract before they sign it. This is an area that NUA SU is committed to helping students gain better skills around and to campaign to improve the student housing rights locally and nationally.

Developments:

- Run 'Ready to Rent' or similarly NUS approved workshops to educate students on skills around renting, contracts and student housing rights.
- Campaign for the abolition of Letting Agency fees.

Commitments:

- Explore the potential of setting up or collaborating with other Norwich SUs on a Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

Engaging Mature, Post Grad and International Students - The Union's role is not just to cater for the most typically engaged students. As the university expands and the percentage of international students increases, NUA SU must ensure that the needs of this distinct group are catered for. We must also strive to seek out home students who do not typically engage with the Union, such as Post Grad students and mature students to help build NUA SU into an organisation which is able to support the diverse needs of a diverse student body.

Developments:

- Continue to give a speech to new students during International orientation week.
- Try to run collaborative events with the International Lounge to support international student wellbeing.
- Encourage the development of societies for mature students, post graduate and international students.
- Run events and campaigns with the needs of all students in mind.

Commitments:

- Fill every Student Officer position.
- Engage in dialogues with Mature, Post Graduate and International students get feedback on how the Union can support them.

Student Support Service and NUA SU's Welfare Support Role - Frequent anecdotal evidence tells us that without NUA's Student Support service, a number of current students would not be on their courses today. Dyslexia screening and support, advice, coaching and external services information provide many of the tools needed to help students become empowered and continue with their education. NUA SU will continue to find ways to engage student with and collaborate with Student Support to provide students with rounded welfare support.

Developments:

- Continually seek to improve our signposting for external services which benefit students.
- Seek to promote the role of the Union and Student Support on NUA's website.
- Find suitable ways of supporting students outside of office hours.

- Explore the potential of having a Welfare Officer and if this could be a paid or voluntary role.
- Provide better support for students suffering with hand in stress.
- Provide better support for students suffering with results stress.

Commitments:

- Have information on Union welfare and Student Support within our Welcome packs to new students.
- Continue and refine training on our Student Guide scheme for new students during Welcome Week.
- Provide Student Support at with a space free of charge at our Welcome Week Fair.

2.5 Expand Student Activities and Societies

Clubs and Societies make a huge contribution to NUA's overall student experience; not only through collaboration and social experiences but often as a first introduction to the Students' Union, which can provide vital support throughout university. It is important that students also have time for rest, discussion and reflection, all of which clubs and societies offer in abundance. Perceptions of what the university experience should be vary greatly from person to person. For example, Post-graduate and many undergraduate students typically see cultural and educational events that expand on their studies as preferable to joint UG and year 0 focused parties. Both though, are equally important in order to form strong communities within the university.

Events are not limited to the stereotypical nocturnal student parties, with NUA SU organising discussion groups, debates and artwork sales to name a few.

Expansion of the student body will create more clubs, societies and student run events; offering students richer and more diverse social engagement. If NUA SU is to achieve the goal of Best Small and Specialist in the UK then our clubs and societies must be diverse, managed professionally with a suitable and sustainable financial model.

Funding Model for Clubs and Societies - The current funding model for clubs and societies only allows a slow expansion to the number of clubs, which would drop significantly if the Union did not gather a reasonable profit during Welcome Week. At present the Union provides an annual £300 budget to each club with 10+ members however if every club withdrew their entitlement the Union would fall into deficit. Looking to the future, the Union must review how clubs and societies are funded, with a number of options available:

1. Reallocating the annual budget to accommodate a greater clubs and societies expenditure.

Advantages: Allows for an immediate increase to the number of clubs.

Disadvantages: Allocation will cause a detriment to other areas of the Union, places an even greater reliance on Welcome Week income.

2. Requesting a block grant increase for clubs and societies expansion.

Advantages: Removes the difficulty of Club Officers having to recruit paying members from a small student body, doesn't require change to SU constitution.

Disadvantages: Additional funds would not be received until the following academic year, requires approval of VC and Governors Council.

3. Changing to a part funding model where clubs are expected to collect a joining fee from their members and undertake more fundraising. SU funding for each club is reduced.

Advantages: Once approved this provides a more sustainable funding model that could allow for a rapid increase to the number of clubs, provides clubs with initial start-up funding.

Disadvantages: Creates a greater strain on smaller or bespoke clubs with fewer members.

4. Remove all funding for clubs and societies, asking clubs to gather all of their funding through membership fee and fundraising.

Advantages: Once approved this allows for an unlimited amount of clubs to be created, frees Union expenditure.

Disadvantages: Will put off students from opening clubs, significantly limits the income of small and bespoke clubs, if clubs have a smaller recruitment they may close mid-year.

Developments:

- Continue to explore and review funding models for Clubs and Societies.

Commitments:

- Find a model that works for our Clubs and Societies.

Supporting Clubs and Societies and their Officers:

If clubs and societies are to increase in number and size the SU must be ready for the additional support that will have to be provided. Currently, we have a student friendly constitution template (required for any new clubs and society) as well as a document containing advice and information for new Club Officers; Club Officer training is provided at the start of the autumn term and frequent best practice meetings are held throughout the year; Nuasu.org can be used as a platform to advertise clubs to current and prospective members and the Clubs and Societies festival is an engaging way of recruiting students. All of these developments have been made to help alleviate some of the increased workload that expanded clubs and societies will create, with Union staff already under a great deal of pressure. In order to effectively accommodate this greater workload, Union staff hours must be expanded.

One difficulty that Club Officers currently face is the limited ways in which they can try to recruit new members. Notice boards throughout NUA have been removed or placed out of general sight making it difficult for clubs to advertise their existence or upcoming events with posters. Social media is now the most common format used for clubs to communicate with prospective members but this is limited in terms of potential reach. Nuasu.org provides a page for each club to exhibit photos, offer a synoptic description of what the club is, and provides a link to an external site, blog or social media page if applicable.

Developments:

- Launch a refreshers event in Spring term to support clubs and societies recruitment.
- Further support Club Officers in their recruitment of new officers
- Encourage the creation of a student run raising and giving group
- Create a 'Fundraising Support' pack.
- Reach a target number of 25 active clubs.

Commitments:

- Work collaboratively with students to continuously improve the clubs and societies festival
- Introduce an advanced Club Officer training session
- Continue to organise termly best practice sessions.

Activities Officer - All events and activities put on by the SU are time demanding and the (0.4 FTE) SU Activities Officer is under an increasing burden with the management of larger clubs, events and campaigns. The hours of this position must be expanded to increase the frequency of enrichment activities.

Developments:

- Provide more accessible documentation for students considering starting a club or society.
- Continue to recruit Event Team volunteers and develop their training and roles.

Commitments:

- Fulfill targets as specified by the Activities Strategic Plan 2014-18.
- Explore funding options to increase the hours of the SU Activities Officer.

2.6 Generating New and Growing Existing Sources of Income

The single greatest inhibitor to most aspects of Union growth and development is our lack of income. This affects clubs and societies, accessibility, student events, campaigns, training and attendance at national events. The SU must find new sources of income to meet the needs of a growing student body and to reach the goal of being the best small and specialist Union in the UK.

Guidance- Every NUA SU officer, and often every member of union staff, is a recent graduate of the university. The team have a wealth of creative expertise and are well suited to provide support, events and a number of different services to other young creatives. There are, however, pronounced knowledge gaps within legal, financial, charitable, HR, political and creative industry fields. If the union is to grow as an organisation and reach its goal of becoming the "best small and specialist student's union in the UK" then these gaps must be plugged. Recruiting a board of advisors from these fields would offer essential guidance throughout a period of rapid development. To ensure that the advisory board remains a body with the best interests of students at its heart, a number of places will be reserved for students and advisors from other students' unions.

Developments:

- Research and recruit relevant advisors who's expertise would be beneficial to the Union.
- Consider ways the Union could develop from advice received from the board.

Commitments:

- Set up a NUA SU Advisory Board and recruit advisors with a diverse range of backgrounds and expertise.

Commercial Activity - The re-launch of the NUA clothing line has been popular amongst students, generating regular sales and giving the union the opportunity to offer garments in exchange for design work, a cheaper alternative to cash payment. NUA SU have also invested in an on-campus NUS Extra Card printer which gives students access to their card in moments, reduces the union's carbon footprint and gives us a greater commission per card sold. A combination of on-campus printing and greater NUS Extra advertising has more than doubled the income from card sales, currently surpassing the £2000 mark.

Developments:

- Explore the opportunity of selling advertising space on the nuasu.org.
- Explore the opportunity of designing an online shop within nuasu.org.
- Ensure the NUA clothing range adapts to future trends and explore the opportunity of widening our stock range.

Commitments:

- Continue to promote physical and online NUS Extra card sales.
- Seek out new, ethical commercial opportunities.