STRATEGIC PLAN | 2023-26

Making life better for students at Bucks.

Second edition - October 2024

## A message from our President

**Brandon Tester**

President and Chair of Trustee Board, Bucks Students’ Union

Our main priority as a Students’ Union is to ‘make life better for students at Bucks’. Through dynamically supporting and representing our membership we will ensure they get the very best from their time at BNU. As an organisation that prides itself on progressive development, that support and representation can take many forms that we will touch upon in this plan.

From personal experience, I know that my time at university would not have been as transformational without the interventions and opportunities created by my Students’ Union, and I truly believe that membership of Bucks Students’ Union makes the BNU experience uniquely rewarding.

We have engaged in extensive consultation with our stakeholders and believe this plan is taking us in the right direction to meet their expectation. This will ensure that our offer represents the diverse interests and requirements of the communities we serve and that both students and staff are well equipped to make a positive impact.

This document not only gives us focus for the next three years but also enables us to clearly communicate our intent and the way we wish to go about our business, which we hope will inspire those around us to engage with our vision and mission and share our values.

Knowing the Union as I do, firstly as a student beneficiary of our work and now as a member of the team, I am fully confident that we will deliver on our commitments and meet our goals. This enables the Union to continue making positive change, placing us at the heart of the University’s offer, while amplifying our members’ voices as the tenacious, credible and proactive ‘critical friend’ the institution deserves.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has contributed so far and give thanks in advance to those who will be part of our story over the next few years.

“It really is an exciting time to be part of the Union, and we are pleased to be sharing our vision for the organisation and the aspirations we have for our members.”

## An introduction from our CEO

**Tristan Tipping**

Chief Executive Officer, Bucks Students’ Union

This document outlines our strategic vision for continued progress and development of our organisation and is a series of commitments to building on the solid foundations we have established over recent years. Once again it is not a radical departure from our previous work, of which we rightly are proud, but does take us in new directions, sets fresh priorities and ensures we are responding to the changing environment and the evolving priorities of our membership.

We have shaped these commitments following thorough consultation with our stakeholders and having reflected on the progress of the last three years, with every part of this document being influenced by the membership. We are extremely confident that this approach will take us in the right direction to serve their needs whilst enabling us to remain agile and ambitious enough to take on new challenges and opportunities, as and when they arise.

Our previous strategies successfully captured and defined the ‘character’ of the Union and sharing this with our members, staff team and the wider community has been a key factor in our ongoing accomplishments. We have developed a credible brand and our stakeholders know what we stand for. It is now important that we continue to role model our values and strive to meet, and where possible exceed, the high standards we have set ourselves.

Detailed operational plans, focusing on how we will continue to improve our diverse services and overall offer, support the delivery of this vision and I have every faith that our driven and dynamic team will continue to achieve great results.

We approach the next three years with renewed enthusiasm and are confident the

institution will continue to grow and develop. We will continue to work hard to inspire

the next generation of BNU students to enjoy the benefits of their membership, fully

engage with the opportunities we provide, become influencers in what we do and leaders in their chosen areas.

“It is now important that we continue to role model our values”

## A vision for our members

**Everything we do will create an environment where our diverse membership feel they belong. We will create inclusive, supportive communities based on shared interests, values and ideas.**

Where the Union is an effective, trusted and credible agent for change and champion of all students of BNU.

Where our members are inspired to embrace and explore a broad variety of accessible educational, developmental and social opportunities which will support their successful student journey.

Where our members are encouraged and supported to create opportunities for others,

developing into leadership roles throughout an organisation they feel truly part of.

Where the collective strength of the membership is recognised, respected and valued for its unique contribution both within the Union and our wider community.

Where opportunity is never defeated by circumstance.

## Our mission

Making life better for students at Bucks

To achieve our vision, Bucks Students’ Union is wholly committed to the ongoing support and development of our members.

We will continuously build credibility with partners and stakeholders, being recognised as the voice for students at BNU.

We will respond dynamically to challenges facing our members and be the champion they rely on, trust and value.

Celebrating diversity, we will reach out to our membership to encourage broader participation and better understand their needs in order to effectively represent them.

We will work tenaciously to show our members the value of deeper engagement with Bucks Students’ Union through the scope of our activities and opportunities.

We will identify valuable new opportunities for all our members and provide a robust platform on which they can play a leading role, developing the co-curricular experience and providing the inspiration for each and every one to make the most of their student journey.

We will equip our organisation with the resources and tools it needs to perform effectively and provide our teams with the knowledge and skills to reach their full potential. We will diversify our income to provide even greater financial stability and a broader base for our operations, which in turn, enables our organisation to grow and meet the demands of the membership.

## Who are we?

We will be identified by the following ways of working. They are the characteristics and personality of our organisation and represent the behaviours we expect from our staff, volunteers and officers.

**Inspiring**

We inspire our members to actively participate in the broad range of Union services and developmental activities, including opportunities to help and motivate others, making their time at university a valuable and worthwhile experience, broadening horizons.

**Tenacious**

The Union represents our members in a committed, determined and respectful way to consistently deliver the best for the students of BNU.

**Dynamic**

We are a fast-moving, progressive and flexible organisation which is agile in responding to and meeting our members’ needs. We address challenges and opportunities with energy and enthusiasm and encourage those around us to do the same.

## How will our members, partners and stakeholders describe us?

We asked our members what they most value from our organisation and what they expect from us as their Students’ Union. These are the behaviours, attitudes, approaches, ways of working and values that we will role model throughout all that we do:

* **Trustworthy**
* **Fun Professional**
* **Kind Authentic**
* **Innovative**
* **Responsible**
* **Coherent**
* **Passionate**
* **Dedicated**
* **Supportive Proactive**
* **Reliable Inclusive**
* **Credible**

## Our progress

### Our strategic themes and goals are chosen carefully

Our strategic themes and goals are chosen carefully. They represent the key tenets of our mission and align to our vision to enhance the lives of the students whom we represent.

As a high-performing organisation, we have set ambitious and challenging objectives. We know these goals are achievable - our steady determination, collaborative approach and stakeholder engagement ensure that we can be trusted to deliver on our commitments, both ethically and responsibly. To make our Union the best that it can be, we will be transparent and accountable. Each department will develop plans which outline how their specific actions will contribute to the Union’s overall strategic goals.

Measurable targets will be agreed, and progress will be tracked at both a strategic and operational level throughout each year of this plan. Our Trustee Board and management team will take responsibility for overseeing our performance. We will communicate the impact of our work openly so that our members and stakeholders can track and understand our progress.

“As a high-performing organisation, we have set ambitious and challenging objectives”

## Building a better Union

Bucks Students’ Union has performed well over a number of years and we are proud of our achievements. However, we remain committed to challenging ourselves, driving the organisation forward for the betterment of the experience our members will enjoy.

**We will:**

* Promote and support a culture within our organisation where our values are recognisable in everything we do and fundamental to our behaviours, actions, planning and decision-making.
* Celebrate our successes whilst consistently challenging ourselves to be better.
* Maintain an excellent understanding of the environment in which we operate, factors influencing both our members success and wellbeing and developments in the sector.
* Benchmark our services, performance and offer against our peers and continually learn from the best in the sector and beyond.
* Prepare and equip the Union to dynamically respond to opportunities and demand.
* Develop and grow our organisation and our available resource to best meet the needs of the membership.
* Routinely evaluate and challenge our policies, structures, ways of working and general offer with the energy and courage to innovate, adapt and transform what we do for the benefit of our members.

**Throughout the period of this plan, we will have ensured:**

* The Union’s consistent position at the top of the National Student Survey league table is consolidated.
* Our high performance, levels of engagement and participation rates will be consistent and reflective of the different demographic groups and areas of study.
* Recognition and high performance in independently audited accreditations across the breadth of our work is maintained.
* The Union’s funding and income streams are sustainable and investment in our services ensure they are fit for purpose, meeting our member’s needs.

# Inclusivity and belonging

Through our unique offer we will create a positive and welcoming community, that is inclusive and accessible to all. This is at the very centre of our decision making, planning and delivery Our vision is that all students at BNU feel a sense of belonging while studying with us and that the Union is recognised as a champion of fairness and access whilst at the forefront of removing barriers to participation and engagement.

**We will:**

* Ensure that through the considerate development of our programme and services that our members will always find our opportunities and support easy to access and readily available, whilst being supported by the Big Deal principles and our partnership with BNU.
* Have the feedback mechanisms in place and the organisational agility to respond effectively and in a timely manner where barriers are identified.
* By being mindful of our growing international student community, and the changing demographics of the student body, tailor elements of our offer so that there is equity of opportunity for our diverse membership.
* By immersing the Union in the work of equality, diversity and inclusion, and staying abreast of progressive developments, ensure that these are fundamental elements of our decision-making, planning and delivery. Our members will feel at home when engaging with their Union.
* Support student leaders of clubs, societies, teams and student groups so they are properly equipped to welcome and attract all students to their communities, and they have the necessary skills, resources and confidences to create a positive environment for all members.
* Make the building of a sense of pride, for all our members, one of our ongoing priorities, by communicating and celebrating their successes, shining a spotlight on the value and positive impact of individuals, communities and diverse cultures and promoting opportunities to collectively engage in shared experiences.

“We will build the sense of pride among our members”

**What will we recognise as positive achievements in this area of our work?**

* We will have secured the resource and support to grow and develop the Big Deal, and wider Union services, in such a manner that barriers to participation and engagement are fully removed.
* Equality impact assessments will be completed and regularly reviewed for all aspects of our work.
* Engagement with Union services and programmes is fully reflective of the demographics of our membership and we maintain sector high levels of participation through our diverse offer.
* Our members recognise us as inclusive, fair and accessible across the entire breadth of our work.
* We have fostered a culture where the communities we create and support are respectful and supportive of their peers.
* The Union’s part in BNU’s international welcome and support programme is first-rate and highly valued, leading to wider recognition in the sector for our institution.
* We will be recognised as a champion for all our students, as individuals, and as part of their communities, and our EDI work is known for supporting and maintaining a safe, rewarding and inspiring environment for all.

## Employability and life after Bucks

We will further develop a highly valued co-curricular programme and strong support networks that prepare our graduates for life beyond university.

#### We will:

**Enhance the employability of our membership and prepare students to be ready to succeed in the world of work.**

We will continue to build and promote an attractive co-curricular programme of opportunities, taster sessions, workshops and certified courses which align with the core skills and competencies required by the industries and sectors served by the University’s degree programmes. Our members recognise that their degree is only part of their journey to future employment and that transferable skills will enhance their success in the employment market. We will take measures to identify emerging leaders amongst our membership and help them map a path to success.

**Build strong and collaborative relationships with academic teams.**

We will proactively seek opportunities to work on shared projects with our academic colleagues. This will enable us to shape our offer to best meet the needs of the student body. A closer working relationship with academics, and supporting their understanding of students’ demands, will lead to the programme being more relevant and the Union benefiting from academic colleagues promoting the value of engagement with our organisation.

“We will take measures to identify emerging leaders amongst our membership and help them map a path to success.”

**Expand the range of volunteering and leadership opportunities offered to grow student’s confidence and enable them to build competencies.**

We will identify and continuously pursue new volunteering opportunities to support our members to reach their full potential, improving their experience and enhancing their knowledge and skills. Through the Leadership Academy, we will identify the routes to obtaining and succeeding in leadership roles and support participants through a programme of developmental activity. We will continue to develop a diverse range of Union leadership roles ensuring maximum opportunity for members to grow and thrive, building the confidences necessary to take successfully take their next steps.

**Helping students into their next opportunity.**

We will further embed the Bucks Award, helping our members record their achievements and experience, working with individuals so they can articulate their personal value and present themselves effectively to future employers. We will develop our relationships with local business and trade organisations whilst we grow our JobShop to offer a greater number of students paid work and opportunities to engage with industry so that our members are best equipped for life beyond University. Furthermore, we will seek feedback from our networks to ensure developmental activity is underpinned by the transferable skills employers require in their organisations. By focusing on our members preparedness for the workplace we will play a part in further growing the value of our graduates to industry.

**What are we hoping to achieve?**

* We will have secured the resource to fully support cohorts of 100 students per academic year within our Leadership Academy and can demonstrate how participation helps students secure valuable, worthwhile and meaningful roles and opportunities.
* Take up, and recognition, of the Bucks Award grows significantly and is commonplace, and we have established powerful advocates for the scheme amongst the BNU academic community.
* Employers actively seek our support to recruit our members and consider them as highly valued employees.
* Valuable partnerships are built with external involvement, from both industry and alumni networks, in initiatives such as our STRIVE festival, careers fairs, mentoring schemes. The Leadership Academy and enterprise schemes continue to grow, broadening opportunities for our membership.

## Student success and wellbeing

The Union will support student success and wellbeing by creating a vibrant campus experience, through a first-rate co-curricular programme, building strong inclusive student communities and providing the support our members need to navigate university life. Each individual member will define their success in their own way, and we will acknowledge this by being agile and adaptable in our delivery to best enable their personal journey.

#### We will:

**Support students as they begin their journey into higher education.**

We acknowledge that the transition into higher education is challenging so we will find ways to adapt our co-curricular programme to provide students with the skills and capabilities they need to succeed. Our orientation programmes and pre-arrival communications will equip students to commene their studies with confidence and excitement.

**Foster student pride and a sense of belonging through shared experiences.**

We will seek high levels of participation by our membership in our popular co-curricular programme and series of showpiece events such as Freshers’ Fortnight, Varsity, Union Awards, FestiBall and student charity events. We will share our successes to build institutional pride which will support retention.

**Create opportunities to provide vibrant, accessible and diverse student communities.**

We will offer all members the opportunity to take part in a wide range of societies, clubs, teams, special interest groups, collective activities and community initiatives which will allow them to form friendships, grow experience and benefit from a supportive and inclusive environment.

**Create an exciting and developmental extracurricular programme.**

Students will be encouraged to forge communities through high- quality social interaction in safe and inclusive environments. Strong friendships will help to support student retention with co-curricular activities serving as an excellent way to combat the stress and challenge of study and promote a healthy work-life balance.

**Support our members’ wellbeing through advice, support and guidance**

We will provide a first-rate, accessible and independent service through our Advice Centres to support our members in dealing with any challenges they encounter and remove barriers to progression and success.

**Provide academic support and advice, alongside an effective representation system, maximising our members’ potential to succeed**

Our Union will be best placed to support our membership in all aspects of their education, through professional, knowledgeable and experienced staff in our Advice Centres to a well-trained, properly briefed and highly motivated network of student reps. At BNU, all students will feel they have excellent guidance with people prepared to fight their corner and an opportunity for their voices to be heard.

**How will we know we are moving forwards?**

* The support we offer and the opportunities we create are recognised by our stakeholders as enabling progression, continuation and completion of study programmes.
* We have maintained our Mindful Employer status and are actively engaged in seeking out and adopting best practice from across the sector. This will be demonstrable through our annual review processes.
* Our Advice Centre continues to perform remarkably in their externally audited accreditations.
* 100% of our service users would recommend our support to their peers.

## COMMUNITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

We will become a respected pillar of the local communities in which our institution is embedded. As part of this work, we will maintain a strong commitment to sustainability and encourage our students to be active citizens.

#### We will:

**Build partnerships with community organisations and service providers.**

We recognise that our University campuses are a major part of their communities and that our students make important contributions economically, socially and politically. In addition, our members rely on services provided by local community organisations and providers. Consequently, the Union will grow formal and informal relationships in order to support collaboration and integration between our students and the communities we endeavour to support.

**Harness our commitment to sustainability.**

The Union has a strong track record of securing excellent outcomes in accreditations designed to scrutinise our ethical, environmental and sustainability work. As an organisation committed to fairness and battling climate change, the Union will look to extend our work in this area during the course of the Strategic Plan to grow the number of student leaders running sustainability projects on campus and in the communities we serve.

**Grow the Union in a sustainable and responsible manner.**

While we look to grow and develop the organisation, we will be forever mindful of our environmental impact, ensuring we are working within best practice, promoting Fairtrade and sustainability throughout our communities. We will commit to operating our services ethically and responsibly in line with our values.

**Further develop student volunteering in the community.**

As a Union, we recognise the importance of volunteering in helping overcome society’s challenges, as well as the role it can play in helping students to acquire skills, knowledge and expertise that contribute to their personal growth and development. Consequently, the Union will expand its volunteering programme and increase the number of students volunteering through community projects.

“We will become a respected pillar of the local communities in which our institution is embedded”

**Open up our spaces and events.**

The concept of ‘town and gown’ recognises the fact that members of the public often feel detached from the academic institutions in their local communities. The Union recognises the role that Union spaces and events can play in opening up our campuses. We will work to find more ways, through public hire, community events and other initiatives to help bring the local community onto the University estate, build a deeper understanding of our work and appreciate the value we can provide locally.

**What progress do we expect?**

* Through developed opportunities and the emergence of Opportunity Modules we will see a significant increase in the number of students volunteering in the wider community.
* Our members appreciate, and can articulate the value of engaging with volunteering, community work and sustainability projects in terms of building skills, experiences and confidence, the benefits to their future employability and for the good of those around them.
* There will be a demonstrable growth, year on year in the number of students leading and participating in sustainability campaigns and projects on and around our campuses and within the community.
* An increase in the number of formal and informal partnerships with community organisations where Bucks Students’ Union is seen a valuable resource.
* Maintaining the Excellent level accreditation in the NUS Green Impact scheme.

## PEOPLE AND DEVELOPMENT

Our members, staff and volunteers are our most important asset; they drive the us forward, leading our Union across all our activities and ensuring we achieve our goals.

We will invest our time and resource to enable our people to be successful in their endeavours and continue to contribute so impactfully to the Union’s progress. We continue to value student officers, volunteers and employees with ideas, dynamism and tenacity and believe that proactive and vibrant people positively shape our organisation.

To be truly successful we must perform as an organisation which encourages diversity, innovation and resilience. We will attract, engage, develop and retain a team who demonstrate the skills, experience and values required to achieve our mission of making like better for students at Bucks.

Our staff will be empowered and inspired to make positive change for the benefit of our members. Our People Strategy 2023-26 will run in parallel with the organisations main plan, underpinning everything we do.

#### We will:

**Attract the best talent for our organisation**

Continue to be an employer of choice through sharing our success and the benefits of joining our team. Inclusive recruitment procedures will encourage applicants from a diverse talent pool and ensure our selection processes remain fair whilst considering fit to the organisation’s values and behaviours.

**Engage our employees**

Through promoting a culture of inclusivity and positivity, we will empower staff and inspire innovation and dynamic approaches to our work. We will consistently review policy and best practice, encouraging and developing a customer service focus whilst maintaining robust on-boarding procedures.

**Develop our people**

Champion continuous professional and personal development, exploring alternative methods of knowledge sharing and encouraging wider networking opportunities to absorb ‘best practice’ from throughout our sector and beyond.

“Our staff will be empowered and inspired to make positive change.”

**Retain our talent**

Succession planning will be recognised and communicated ensuring team members are aware of progression opportunities. We will effectively employ benchmarking to continuously review our reward package, whilst promoting a positive health and wellbeing culture. Regular feedback will be sought from employees promoting a culture of honest and open communication.

**Perform to high standards and deliver great results**

Through a highly engaged, well supported and properly equipped team of staff and volunteers operating in a positive environment, underpinned by a robust management systems and structure, we will encourage and maintain a culture of high performance.

**What does success look like?**

* We continue to develop inclusive recruitment practices that result in our student leaders, staff and volunteers reflecting the demographics of our membership.
* Our staff engagement levels remain at 85%+ and ahead of our comparative set.
* We maintain our positive rates of staff retention.
* Employees understand their contribution to the achievement of the organisation’s goals.
* Our EDI work within our staff team is recognised externally.
* We retain our Real Living Wage Employer status.
* We are an employer of choice in our sector.



QR code 1 - Our People Strategy

Our People Strategy, supported by progressive policies and procedures and training plans, underpins our main Strategic Plan, enabling the Union to fully support our people and their development. Use the QR code above to view current People Strategy.

## RESOURCING AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE

We will ensure the Students’ Union is relevant and fit for purpose by planning effectively for our future, remaining compliant with relevant guidelines and legislation, managing our resources and taking a dynamic approach to the development of our offer to members.

#### We will:

**Maintain strong governance**

Routinely and robustly review the effectiveness of our governance structures to ensure they meet the needs of the organisation as we grow and develop. As a democratic organisation, we need a simple but effective structure that enables student leadership, promotes collectivism, transparency and responsible practices with a professional approach to meeting our goals.

**Ensure the organisation remains relevant to our membership**

We will proactively engage in research and benchmarking and will welcome innovation to meet the expectations of our diverse and evolving membership. We will fully understand the priorities and requirements of all segments of the membership and ensure our offer caters for their needs.

**Effective planning and risk management**

The Union will actively review our strategies and business plans, welcoming contributions from our stakeholders and scrutiny from the membership. We will dedicate time analysing and identifying risk and deploying all available resource to mitigate against it, ensuring the sustainable operation of our organisation.

**Diversify revenue streams and grow our income**

The Union will proactively explore opportunities for new income streams and commercial activity whilst working to deliver the best possible results from our existing services. We will make new connections with local businesses and community organisations to identify mutually beneficial opportunities and we will maximise the potential of our available resource. We are committed to growing and diversifying our revenue streams, allowing us to continuously invest in student-facing services.

“The Union will actively review our strategic and business plans, welcoming contributions from our stakeholders and scrutiny from the membership”

**Manage our resources effectively for the best return on investment**

We will secure the best possible value and return on all purchases and contracts in which we are involved and take an active approach to maintain our facilities and manage our resources in the most effective and efficient manner guaranteeing the best value for our members.

**What are our aspirations in this area?**

* We will build and maintain free reserves no less than £100k and no more than £150k through surpluses derived from our commercial activity.
* We will have secured investment in refurbishment and redevelopment of our facilities to ensure a first-rate and highly competitive experience for our members.
* We will have remodelled our annual operating budget to allow for the creation of a capital investment reserve.
* Over the course of this plan, we will have consolidated existing and established new income streams, growing our trading revenues by 15% allowing for further investment in our services.
* We will secure funding that supports a well-resourced staff team with the capacity to manage demand and explore new opportunities.
* Our income levels will allow an appropriate balance between staff investment and our annual operating expenses as agreed by the board.

## THE BIG DEAL

The Big Deal is our unique package of co- curricular opportunities that is at the heart of our offer to the membership. From events and entertainment, societies and sports to recreational activities and personal development, alongside wellbeing initiatives, cost-of-living support and rewarded representation schemes, The Big Deal is free to access and underpinned by the following objectives:

* **Fun** - To enhance student life, bringing vibrancy to our campuses by creating a diverse and exciting extra and co- curricular experience that compares favourably with our competitors within the sector, making campus a place our students want to be.
* **Accessibility** - To support inclusivity, celebrating our diverse student community by removing barriers to opportunity.
* **Belonging** - To cultivate a sense of belonging through supporting and promoting a healthy community, active student groups and a university environment of which we can all be proud.
* **Learning** - To develop and enhance opportunities that support our students learning and course-based activity.
* **Employability** - To develop our learners’ confidences, transferrable skills, graduate attributes and general employability through readily accessible paid employment, personal development programmes and volunteering opportunities.
* **Wellbeing** - To enrich our members physical and mental wellbeing through a wide-ranging portfolio of support, activity, welfare provision and personal development.
* **Recruitment** - To maintain an easily communicable and marketable ‘offer’ as a unique selling point for the Institution.

## COMMUNICATING WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

The Union will constructively engage with the students of BNU to improve the understanding of the benefits of membership as well sharing with our wider stakeholder groups the positive impact of our work.

#### The Union will:

**Enhance our brand**

Within the period of this plan the Union will review our brand, in consultation with our stakeholders to ensure the language, tone, messaging and visual imagery we use accurately portrays the Union as the organisation we have become and reflects how we are moving forward. Our branding must be contemporary, authentic, credible and instantly identifiable to our members.

**Sharing success**

We will proactively share the successes and achievements of the Union and our members in order to promote what we offer, attract higher levels of participation and increase institutional pride. Developing and communicating our progress will build a better understanding of the impact our organisation makes, in turn enhancing our reputation and strengthening relationships.

**Communicate our goals and values in a clear and effective way**

We will ensure that we have built, and are effectively using, the most appropriate channels to properly express our values, embedding them in everything we do, sharing our vison and our goals and effectively communicating the impact of our work to all stakeholders. The Union will expertly promote the benefits of engagement with Union activities, growing the base of deeply engaged members.

**Building relationships**

We will work to demystify the Union’s purpose and motivation in order to foster more constructive working relationships with key stakeholders. We will use all the resources at our disposal to promote the contribution of the student body to the local community to nurture a more progressive environment in which our members can become valued citizens.

**Grow capacity and expertise in research and data management**

We will explore and engage with varied avenues of consultation and research, managing the data available to us and enabling a thorough understanding of the requirements of our membership, the impact of our work and opportunities available to the organisation. We will work to grow capacity within the organisation to support valuable research and data analysis so that our decision-making and planning is well-informed, and our lobbying is compelling and effective. Our marketing and promotions of all services, opportunities and events will be sharply focused, utilising all the tools at our disposal and commercial practices and techniques to ensure our message is heard by all our desired audiences.

“Our branding must be contemporary, authentic, credible and instantly identifiable to our members”

Our Communications Strategy, supported by comprehensive brand guidelines, underpins our main Strategic Plan, enabling the Union to effectively engage with our stakeholders. Use the QR code above to view current Communications Strategy.

QR code 2 - Our Communications Strategy

## WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY

“Bucks Students’ Union looks to really care about students’ wellbeing throughout their studies, and puts the best interest in the quality of education, helping to develop academic skills, and teaching how to balance learning with the experience of meeting new people.”

“It makes me feel like part of a family and my university experience ten times better.”

“They have helped with both personal and academic issues that I have had to deal with over the course of my time at BNU. They are willing to help everyone and take feedback and act on it.”

“There are free opportunities for sport, volunteering, and food to allow an inclusive community surrounding the students, with a chance to gain new life skills and friends that will last a lifetime.”

“It’s a free Union that every BNU student is part of that offers many nights out, workshops, day trips and more. Bucks Students’ Union is what makes being a student here so special. “

“It provides opportunities inside and outside of the University that are valuable monetarily, personally, and socially to students. I personally started my own society which led to meeting new people, putting on events and fundraising.”

“The Training and Development team always provide individually catered opportunities in leadership, careers, skills, and whatever pathway students have in mind, they find endless opportunities.”

“It is a safe space for all students no matter their sexuality, gender, or race. Everyone is respected, welcomed and cared about when in the Students’ Union.”

“It gives students the ability to add to their skillset and improve on skills through opportunities like student reps, leaders, elected officer roles, committee roles etc.”

## OUR JOURNEY

We’re proud of our journey over the last 50 years, bringing us to where it has today, and always striving to make life better for students at Bucks.

* 1977 - J. Flaig elected as first Union President
* 1989 - Student societies and representation introduced
* 1994 - ‘Building for our Future’ plan introduced
* 1997 - Bucks SU takes on University sport
* 1999 - SU advice centre opened
* 2004 to 2006 –
  + Student volunteering department created
  + Freshers Helpers lent a hand for the 1st time
  + Trustee Board created
* 2007 to 2008 –
  + Trip to USA, where the Big Deal was dreamt up
  + The BIG Deal is born!
  + Employed 25 staff
* 2008 to 2009–
  + Union saves campus catering
  + 1st issue of The Bucks Student
  + Rusty finds Bucks
  + Student Buddies project begins
  + Union Awards started
* 2010 - Money advice service joins the union
* 2011 - Bucks SU becomes a charity
* 2012 to 2013 –
  + 1st CEO appointed
  + Sound impact accreditation
  + Union takes on recreational sport or ‘Sport for Fun’
* 2013 to 2014 –
  + Investing in Volunteers
  + ‘Varsity’ with Roehampton introduced
  + Established Bucks Trading
  + Awarded best live music venue
  + Inter campus bus service begins
  + New strategic plan and SU rebrand launched
* 2014 to 2015 –
  + NSS ranked 21st
  + HR function introduced
  + New website and demographic reporting capability
* 2015 to 2016 –
  + Rusty’s Radio founded
  + NSS ranked 12th
* 2016 to 2017 –
  + Advice Quality Standard achieved
  + Performance management system established
  + NSS ranked 11th
* 2017 to 2018 –
  + 86% employee engagement
  + NSS ranked 6th
* 2018 to 2019 –
  + Union JobShop created
  + Employed 40 staff
  + Only Union in the UK to receive 100% in mystery shop
    - Gold Best Bar None
  + Number 1 Students’ Union in the UK
* 2019 to 2020 –
  + Bucks Award introduced
  + Gold Best Bar None
  + 2019-22 strategic plan revealed
  + ‘Excellent’ Green Impact accreditation
  + Leadership Academy launched
* 2020 to 2021 –
  + NSS ranked 3rd
  + Achieved ‘Excellent’ in all 12 QSU criterion
* 2021 to 2022 –
  + Shortlisted for WhatUni five straight years in a row
  + NSS ranked 2nd
  + EDI committee re-established
* 2022 - Granted Mindful Employer status
* 2023 to 2024 –
  + We became a Real Living Wage employer
  + Number 1 Students’ Union in the UK for the second time!
* 2024 onwards –
  + Disability Confident Employer
  + Mindful Employer
  + Safe Place Project
  + NSS ranked 3rd

## AWARDS AND ACCREDITATIONS

Alongside consistent and conscious benchmarking of

our activity against that of the wider sector, the Union

fully engages with a wide range of externally audited accreditations to ensure we are operating to high standards and employing best practice across all our services. Some of these accreditations include:

**Real Living Wage Employer**

The Real Living Wage is the only UK wage rate based on the cost of living. We pay it because we believe our team members deserve a wage that meets everyday needs. We also encourage other local organisations, who employee our members, to pay them more fairly.

**Quality Students’ Union**

The NUS initiative is an externally audited accreditation that recognises good practice. Quality students’ unions are sustainable, impactful, and achieve great things for their students and society. Bucks Students’ Union was the first union to achieve excellence in all categories at the first time of asking.

**Green Impact**

Green Impact is a sustainability learning accreditation to inform and support the staff and students of organisations to identify and make effective changes to sustainability and social responsibility.

**Mindful Employer Charter**

As a mindful employer, we have made a commitment to support the mental wellbeing of our staff.

**Mental Health at Work Commitment**

Signing up to this commitment is our declaration that positive mental health and wellbeing at work is a top priority for Bucks Students’ Union

**Fairtrade**

The Fairtrade University and College Award, delivered in partnership with the Fairtrade Foundation, gives recognition to institutions that have embedded ethical and sustainable practices through their curriculum, procurement, research and campaigns.

**Best Bar None**

The national programme that recognises corporate social responsibility, customer care and welfare, compliance and industry best practice throughout the licensed trade sector.

**AQS**

The Advice Quality Standard (AQS) is awarded to organisations that give advice on legal issues. We must demonstrate that we are accessible, effectively managed, and employ staff with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of our members.

**WhatUni Awards**

Bucks Students’ Union has been shortlisted in the WhatUni Awards “Students’ Union of the Year” for seven consecutive years. These shortlists are compiled directly as a result from student feedback.

**Disability Confident Committed**

Committed Employer demonstrates our intentions to lead the way to positive change with regards the recruitment, development and retention of people with disabilities.

Bucks Students’ Union

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