



The University of Stirling Students' Union  
Strategic Plan 2011 - 2014





## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section 1 Strategic Vision, Mission, and Organisational Values</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Section 2 Progress, Challenges, and Context</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Section 3 Strategic Aims</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Section 4 Enablers of the Strategic Plan</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section 5 Development Monitoring and Review</b>	<b>16</b>



## Introduction

This strategic plan sets out a framework of development for the Students' Union over the next three years, in order to assert the Union's vision: 'we exist to make students' lives better'. It outlines our mission, organisational values, and establishes a series of strategic aims.

The plan is a blend of continuity and change. It recognises existing strengths, areas of development and opportunities for growth, seeking to reinforce and develop these qualities to meet the challenges to fulfil our ambitions.

A challenge for our Union is to ensure that all students are represented, having a credible voice to the University and being regarded as a critical friend, constructively informing on any possible areas of institutional improvement and development. This plan seeks to create 'a manifesto for change' based upon consultation with our membership.

The Union also works collectively with other Student Unions and the National Union of Students (NUS) to ensure Stirling's Students have a national platform and input into national policy.

Important as it is to set out a strategic framework, the Union's success will depend on the implementation of detailed operational plans which link into this strategic plan, these plans were constructed to ensure delivery of the strategic aims on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.



## Section 1 - Vision, Mission and Organisational Values

### **Vision**

We exist to make students' lives better

### **Mission**

Our mission is to be a dynamic, ambitious, and sustainable Union to inform and empower all students in order to shape and enhance the content and quality of their own learning journeys. Underpinned through and demographically aligned within relevant, democratic, representative, and social structures.

### **Organisational Values**

In everything we do and every decision we make, we shall undertake to operate within the parameters of these core values:

- To be Student Led
- To be Sustainable – both financially and environmentally
- To be Ambitious, Dynamic, Creative, Resilient, Consistent, Effective, and Professional



## Strategic Aims

### We aim to

- Be a powerful student voice –(to create ‘a manifesto for change’ ensuring that engagement with and representation for all is our core activity)
- Enhance the cultural and community life of students and support a vibrant, student journey through co-curricular activity
- Ensure the Student Union is financially and environmentally sustainable

### Enabled by

- Committed, flexible, and skilled people
- Effective marketing, communications, and digital technology development
- Partnership working and productive collaborations



## Section 2 - Progress, Challenges and Context

### 2.1 Progress

#### Governance, Democracy, Representation and Engagement

- Governance reviewed and a new constitution enacted (for continuity and expertise external trustees now serve on the trustee board)
- Risk Register compiled and enacted (Reviewed annually)
- Improved democratic engagement evidenced through large election, 24% turnout (second highest in the UK and the highest in Scotland)
- Identified more effective representation methods (development of a new school representative system)
- Developed and delivered new programmes (including Student Leadership Programme (SLP) and Recognising Achievement in Teaching Excellence (RATE).

#### Co-Curricular and Cultural Activity

- Applied for and secured external funding in order to deliver an International postgraduate orientation buddy scheme
- Developed for all clubs, societies and sports clubs a training and dissemination conference; delivered for clubs and societies an awards dinner.

#### Financial and Environmental Sustainability

- Introduced new finance systems and controlled expenditure especially within central office and commercial areas (deficit turnaround)

- More effective student facing administration services( with increased online activity)
- Moved the green/environmental agenda forward, the Union secured the National Union of Students (NUS) Silver Green Impact Award 2010/11

#### People Focused

- New management willingness to drive change, with enhanced staff flexibility and a more diverse skill base
- Encouraged proactive continuous professional development
- Started working towards Investor in Volunteers (IIV) accreditation

#### Marketing, Communications and Digital Technology Development

- Secured major sponsor for Fresher's
- In 2009 introduced SAGE finance system and EPOS till system.
- Increased use of facebook and twitter

#### Partnerships and Collaborations

- Sabbatical officers' continued strong democratic networks and committee presence (University, NUS)
- Positive engagement with the University and Colleges Union (UCU) and other campus based Trade Unions.



## Section 2 - Progress, Challenges and Context *Continued*

### 2.2 Challenges

#### Governance, Democracy, Representation and Engagement

- Union executive not meeting or working appropriately (counterbalance to Trustee Board)
- Appropriate representation of changing student demographic (postgraduate, international and mature)
- Being able to effectively evidence and articulate the positive impact of Student Union activities, programmes and interventions
- Low course representative (rep) engagement/ course rep system not closing feedback loop

#### Co-Curricular and Cultural Activity

- Developing graduate attributes and employability (addition to transcripts could be based on volunteering and co-curricular activities)
- Community building

#### Financial and Environmental Sustainability

- Commercial financial fluctuation/volatility (risk)
- Investing for return

- Financial constraints due to legacy deficit issue and uncertain block grant funding.
- Not accepting the status quo, securing external funds/exploiting fundraising opportunities

#### People Focused

- Continue to develop productive and effective relationships between elected officers and staff
- Appropriate reward and recognition of all staff and volunteers
- Capacity building and resource flexibility issues linked to two semester construct over all areas of work
- Increase interaction with Alumni

#### Marketing, Communications and Digital Technology

- Develop a strategy for communications and digital media
- Develop an effective interface between internal systems

#### Partnerships and Collaborations

- Lack of confidence/credibility in light of past failure (aim for partnership with the University)
- Lack of continuity in relation to network building, mainly due to time limited timescale of sabbatical officer role

## Section 2 - Progress, Challenges and Context



## 2.3 Context

### Political Perspective

- Tuition fees debate
- Widening access
- Globalisation of the Higher Education (HE) Market
- Increased emphasis on 'citizenship' and 'volunteerism'
- A changing Scottish/National political landscape – Scottish National Party (SNP) majority government
- UK political landscape – Conservative and Liberal coalition
- A restructured NUS, incorporating Association of Managers of Student Unions (AMSU) and Student Union Evaluation Initiative (SUEI)
- Internationalisation strategies across Universities
- Higher graduate unemployment
- Focus on research over teaching and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects over arts and humanities

### Economic Perspective

- UK wide recession
- University cuts - threat to block grant funding
- Local competition and effects on market share
- Cost of keeping up to date technologically- web based innovation  
Inability to invest
- National Union of Students Services Limited (NUSSL) consortium membership and purchasing power

### Social Perspective

- Changing student demographic (e.g. increased numbers of international and postgraduate students) - effects on service and representational provision
- Increased levels of student debt
- Rise in number of students undertaking part time work to fund university
- Skills and employability agenda- lack of employment opportunities
- Changing student social habits, drinking culture
- Developing brand influence, effect of financial constraints on disposable income
- Increasing awareness of mental health issues within HE and impact to students
- Expectations of customer service - student as consumer within the HE market
- More students living at home or undertaking flexible study and changes to the campus environment



## Section 2 - Progress, Challenges and Context Continued

### 2.3 Context continued

#### Technological Perspective

- Information Technology (IT) role in operational effectiveness of running activities
- IT strategies - ability to impact upon many business processes
- Dispersed/remote membership - revised approach to web based technologies
- Increased student demand for instant information, technology enabled access to information/services
- Potential for capturing information about the 'market'/membership
- Technology as a means of social interaction and democratic participation
- Participation in University's learning technologies

#### Legal Perspective

- Employment, Health & Safety, Corporate Law etc.- effect upon the regulation of the employment relationship, structures and systems and staffing resources
- Employment relation legislation and working time directives
- Licensing Scotland Act
- Data Protection - effect upon information systems
- Increased external recourse to action
- OSCR Charities Law, Equality Act

#### Environmental Perspective

- Students at 'satellite campuses' effect upon access to service(s) and representation
- Focus on environmental impacts of the Unions operations- Green Agenda
- Emergence of 'Student Communities' and related competition



## Section 3 - Strategic Aims

### 3.1 Be a powerful student voice -ensure engagement with and representation for all is a core activity

We aim to empower all students in order to shape and enhance the content and quality of their own learning journeys through 'a manifesto for change'. Develop a culture of evidence led activism and campaigning, ensuring that students are influential over all areas of policymaking. Deliver representation on individual and group basis, providing a voice at every level of local, national and University decision making. In addition, ensure that democratic structures operate in line with the constitution and schedules and that Officers are accountable for their decision making to their electorate.

#### We will achieve our aim by

- Developing and embedding 'a manifesto for change' through a Stirling specific course representation structure aligned to quality enhancement within newly formed academic schools facilitated through the Union
- Increasing staff capacity and expertise to deliver academic representation casework and be the first point of contact for students who are experiencing difficulties and are in need of individual representation
- Facilitating a strong student voice by ensuring the Union's electoral process is appropriately publicised and administered, and adheres to the constitution and schedules
- Driving student participation in all surveys including; the National Student Survey (NSS), the Post Graduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Post Graduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- Delivering effective programmes, such as Recognising Achievement in Teaching Excellence (RATE)

#### We will measure our success through

- Delivering a yearly 'manifesto for change'
- Embedding a new course representative structure and training scheme to all schools over the life of the plan
- Ensuring electoral turnout increases year on year
- Increasing both NUS election turnout, attendance at Conferences and members on committees and engagement with MSPs and MPs
- Recording the direct impact of all campaigns in relation to influencing policy
- Review and analyse relevant NSS/PTES/PRES results and use results to influence change within the University
- Increase RATE programme participation and evaluate outcomes



## Section 3 - Strategic Aims *continued*

### **3.2 Enhance the cultural and community life of students - support a vibrant, student journey through co-curricular activities.**

We aim to provide resources and an environment to facilitate and enhance personal development, informal /social learning experiences and social activities. Facilitate valuable volunteering opportunities, supporting equality and embracing diversity within a community context. Embed employability into the student experience outside of the classroom with volunteering, leadership and development opportunities across all the Union activities. Retaining relationships and networks, post University life, to enhance the graduate experience.

#### **We will achieve our aim by**

- Facilitating and delivering co-curricular activities, empowering and developing clubs, societies and sports clubs through clubs conference, and individual support
- Improving club profiles and administration, make being a member of a club, society or sports club a value proposition
- Encouraging and supporting the development of employability skills through awards such as the Student Leadership Programme (SLP) and internship opportunities
- Providing volunteering opportunities linked to the community and forging strong links with Alumni Ambassadors
- Delivering dynamic and relevant Union branded social events, services, products and publications

#### **We will measure our success through**

- Increased clubs, societies and sports clubs participation year on year
- Achieving Investing in Volunteers accreditation by February 2012
- Increased participation in SLP and measure employability impact of programme
- Clear alumni involvement in the Students' Union through monthly meetings with the Alumni Office
- Achieve best bar none silver and gold awards



## Section 2 - Strategic Aims *continued*

### 3.3 Ensure the Union is financially and environmentally sustainable.

We aim to be financially sustainable by employing creative and enterprising approaches to enhance growth in both representative and commercial services. Continue to develop robust financial monitoring and reporting systems, capitalising on new funding opportunities aligned to mission. We will improve the environmental efficiency of the Union, reducing the environmental impact of our activities, and develop new areas of sustainable activity.

#### We will achieve our aim by

- Negotiating and securing from the University an appropriate model for block grant funding going forward.
- Reviewing all management reporting and aligning it with relevant and progressive key performance indicators (KPIs), ensuring that quality is embedded in all systems and processes
- Continuing cost control and providing small tactical investments to grow commercial services providing social facilities that are friendly, comfortable and meaningful to all
- Securing funding streams in order to develop new programmes, encourage and support fundraising activities including maximising gift aid opportunities
- Vigorously pursuing environmental efficiencies and activities

#### We will measure our success through

- Performing positively in areas against budget and prior year
- Ensuring reserves are built up over three years to a minimum of £50k
- Achieving a Student Union Evaluation Initiative award (the Quality award for student unions)
- Achieve Green Impact Gold Level award
- Decline in consumption of utilities (saving CO<sub>2</sub> and expenditure)



## Section 4 - Enablers of the Strategic Plan

### 4.1 Committed flexible and skilled people

Our people are our greatest asset. We will continue creating a dynamic working environment, catching people 'doing things right,' rewarding and recognising the excellent performance of our staff, setting expectations, appropriately managing poor performance and creating a positive and energetic place of work. We will be 100% truthful and 100% kind to our people and expect in return 100% effort to achieve and deliver the Unions aims. We will engender a culture of mission quest i.e. 'Making Students Lives better' with all Union staff.

#### Aims will be enabled through

- Staff flexibility – align staffing to capacity required during semester (proactive planning)
- Encouraging and supporting continued personal development of staff and officers
- Ensuring all HR news or interventions are communicated consistently and fairly applied
- Encouraging frequent staff/team meetings embedding a 'FISH PHILOSOPHY' throughout the workforce.

#### We will measure our success through

- Ensuring all staff have a performance review once a year
- Conducting a yearly employee satisfaction survey – communicate and action the outcomes
- Conducting exit questionnaires for all staff and monitor staff turnover/benchmark
- Monitoring and responding to member feedback- good and bad
- Increased organisational revenue



## Section 4 - Enablers of the Strategic Plan *continued*

### 4.2 Effective communications, marketing and digital Information technology development

Integral to every part of the Union will be an effective, consistent and energetic marketing, communications and IT operational plan. The Union must clearly communicate and engage with all students and other stakeholders in regard to events or services they may want to develop or participate in. We must ensure that students and University staff understand the Union's aims and ensure we have communicated the impact these aims have in relation to delivering every component of the student experience.

#### Aims will be enabled through

- Developing IT and related infrastructure, interfacing and aligning to management systems; enhancing working practices across all areas
- Developing an organisational marketing and communications strategy with a coherent and consistent brand/message
- More effective use of digital media, including the Union website and any other appropriate applications
- Being ambitious delivering events which maximise profile and deliver a unique student experience

#### We will measure our success through

- Increased commercial revenue and effective campaign engagement
- Delivering accurate and timely accounts and reporting systems
- Delivering digital media development and increased member usage
- Delivering the plan



## Section 4 - Enablers of the Strategic Plan *continued*

### 4.3 Partnership working and productive collaborations

Mutually beneficial partnerships are important in virtually every aspect of our activity. They allow us to provide an extensive variety of services and programmes for students. These partnerships, especially through NUS, can also enable our collective voice to be heard. A challenge for the Union is to ensure that students are regarded as critical thinkers; the University's critical friends that constructively inform on any possible areas of institutional development.

#### Aims will be enabled by

- Working collaboratively externally with NUS, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and other Student Union's
- Building credibility from a University perspective, moving towards a partnership relationship
- Collaboration in regard to Graduate School set up and Alumni Office

#### We will measure our success through

- Increasing productive external relationships
- Achieving budgeted financial results (building confidence)
- Delivering strong impact evidence and reports



## Section 5 - Development, Monitoring and Review

This plan was developed over the last two years through utilising feedback from two student surveys, a visioning process and extensive trustee, student and staff consultations.

This three year Strategic plan is supported by operational plans for each department of the Students' Union

- Activism and Welfare
- Sports Union
- Marketing and Events
- Clubs and Societies
- Central Office
- Robbins
- Shop

These annual operational plans specify more precisely the challenges, targets, expectations and risk involved for the representative, democratic and commercial areas of the Student Union.

It is the responsibility of the management team to deliver this strategy through the operational plans. The strategy and operational plans will be reviewed on a yearly basis.