



SUBU

**Our Strategy
2025 - 2028**



**Happier
students
get better
results**

Our 2025-2028 Strategy

As we celebrate SUBU's 50th birthday, this strategy reflects the ambition of what we can achieve as we embark on our next 50 years, driven by our commitment to be one of the best SUs in the country.

Happiness fuels success - in learning, in friendships, and in life. That's why we are aiming to make Bournemouth University students the happiest in the country.

We have been on a journey to redefine what a truly fulfilling student experience means. Through surveys, research, and lived experiences, we have seen the real challenges students face - from money worries or housing pressures, to loneliness, mental health, or uncertainty about their future. Against a backdrop of a tough jobs market, political division, economic pressures, and a fragmented online world, student life can feel sobering and bleak.

Yet, we see everyday examples that tell a different story. Students lifting each other up, volunteering for their community, cleaning beaches, growing gardens, and sharing stories of courage and purpose. Students building bright futures, leading societies, launching businesses, and campaigning for what's right.

Our new Strategy for Happiness is powered by that energy. It represents our next chapter; a refreshing change from a deficit model, focused on what's missing, lacking, or broken, towards an approach that celebrates what's possible and amplifies what brings joy and connection. Rooted in evidence-based research on happiness, this strategy will bring **Togetherness, Purpose, Wellbeing, and Identity** into every student's life.

We are proud to share our three-year plan - inspired by students and delivered by a union that believes happiness can (and should) be at the heart of university life.

Andy Squire

Chief Executive Officer

Esther Chinenye Isaiah

SU President 2025/26



SUBU

in numbers





A snapshot of the impact we made in 2024/2025

Photo: SUBU Freshers Fair

BEST

STUDENTS' UNION



SOUTH WEST

Two years in a row

2024 - 2025

★
WHATUNI?
STUDENT
CHOICE
Awards
2024

WINNER
STUDENTS' UNION
SOUTH WEST ENGLAND

★
WHATUNI?
STUDENT
CHOICE
Awards
2025

TOP 25
STUDENTS' UNION

★
WHATUNI?
STUDENT
CHOICE
Awards
2025

WINNER
STUDENTS' UNION
SOUTH WEST ENGLAND

Photo: SUBU Freshers Fair



100

clubs, societies, and groups created and run by students, marking 36% growth in one year with almost a quarter of students participating as members.

1,700

students sought advice from SUBU and 1,900+ cases were successfully resolved by SUBU Advice in a year.

160+

students employed by SUBU to run our venues, events and activities, and creating student driven content.

Data accurate for academic year 2024/25.



30,000

**visits to The Student Centre
in the first two weeks of
the 2025/26 academic year**

Photo: SUBU Freshers Fair



200+

nominations received for our annual SUBU Awards, with 15 awards presented at our May ceremony.

87%

of students say it is easy to get involved with SUBU.

2,660+

students self-defined as part of a marginalised community and 1,300 attendees joined SUBU's activities for social minority groups.

£40,000+

students' money saved through SUBU's advice service in a year, with 92% of students using SUBU's cost-of-living support initiatives finding these helpful.

Data accurate for academic year 2024/25.




A large, diverse crowd of students is gathered outdoors for a summer ball. Many students are wearing costumes, including a Star Wars character, a fireman, and a person in a blue cape. They are all smiling and waving their hands in the air. The background shows a beach, the ocean, and some buildings.

84%

**agree SUBU has a positive
impact on student life**

Photo: SUBU Summer Ball 2025 Survivor's Photo

A group of approximately 20 students are posing for a photo on a sandy beach. They are dressed in casual outdoor clothing like jackets, hoodies, and scarves. Many of the students are holding long-handled litter pickers and green plastic bags filled with trash. In the background, a long wooden pier with various structures, including a lighthouse-like tower, extends into the sea under a cloudy sky.

2,700+

**hours logged by over
1,800 students on SUBU's
Volunteering Hub**

Photo: SUBU Volunteering



95%

of university departments
represented by an
academic society.

81%

of students say that it is
important for them that
SUBU supports their
employability and life skills.

91%

of students find SUBU
communicates with students
'quite' to 'extremely' well.

630

student Reps elected and trained
- each rep representing around
25 students on their courses,
sharing over 14,500 pieces of
student experience feedback.

Data accurate for academic year 2024/25.

The background of the image is a photograph of a beach. The foreground is a dark, pebbly shore with some wet sand. In the middle ground, there are waves breaking on the shore. The sky is a clear, light blue with a few wispy clouds. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

Our Mission

**To make
students
happier**



Photo: SUBU Clubs & Societies



A group of young people, likely students, are gathered at a social event. They are smiling and some are raising their hands in a celebratory gesture. The background is decorated with warm white string lights, creating a festive atmosphere. The text 'Our Vision' is overlaid in the top right corner.

Our Vision

**Bournemouth
University
students to be
the happiest
in the country**

Photo: SUBU Awards

A vibrant outdoor festival scene, likely a summer ball, with many people, colorful flags, and tents under a blue sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**SUBU's
entire
purpose
is to make
students
happier**

Photo: SUBU Summer Ball

From continuation to progression, and from graduate outcomes to earnings, there are many ways to measure success during and after university.

So why position happiness at the centre of our thinking?

Because happiness is both an outcome in itself and a fundamental human pursuit. Our students have the right to be happy, not just to survive or to endure, but to thrive.

Research shows that happiness is a key factor influencing academic performance, resilience, and social belonging. Happier students are more motivated, engaged, and better equipped to meet the demands of their studies and university life. Moreover, evidence points to a bidirectional causal relationship between happiness and success: happiness fuels achievement, and achievement, in turn, enhances happiness. (*Bücker et al, 2018*)

By building our strategy on the drivers of happiness - togetherness, purpose, wellbeing, and identity - SUBU adopts an evidence-based approach that redefines what success means at university.

But what does happiness mean?

It is one of the areas we are most excited to explore. Happiness is deeply personal and can mean something different to everyone.

From a quiet sense of contentment and feeling safe and at home to moments of excitement, creativity and discovery that make life vibrant and unpredictable.

It can emerge from belonging to a community such as clubs, societies, and student networks; achieving personal goals, like being elected as a rep or officer, reaching a fundraising target, or simply feeling free to be oneself. It is also seen in one's ability to change their circumstances, whether on their course, on campus, or in the world.

Happiness is not a fixed state but a spectrum that shifts with circumstances, relationships, and personal growth.

Recognising this diversity of meaning will allow SUBU to shape experiences that support happiness in all of its forms, helping every student to define what it means to flourish in their own way.

Our Union-wide Actions and Objectives

Content and activities that show the many ways students can experience happiness and why we are passionate about it. Create a collection of 1,000 student happiness stories.

Develop a new Student Happiness Group, Tracker and Project toolkit, where staff are engaged with results and progress on student work, trends, and projects.

Deliver three new high impact happiness projects co-designed with students and across departments.



SUBU is recognised as a national leader and pioneer in student happiness. Bringing partners together with intelligence and projects that work.

Develop a network of students from relevant specialisms to develop a Student Happiness Framework and Index to inform our student project work.

Demonstrate evidenced-based connection between engaging with SUBU and student happiness, and long term success.



Strategic Goals 2025-28

Photo: SUBU Summer Ball



**To reach our vision,
we will focus on
four key pillars
of happiness...**

A photograph of two young women with long blonde hair at a summer ball. The woman on the left is smiling and holding a smartphone. The woman on the right is sticking her tongue out and has her arm raised. Both have colorful face paint and are wearing black halter-neck tops. The background is a blurred crowd of people with bokeh lights.

Togetherness

**Every student will have
regular social contact
and build meaningful
connections at
university**

Photo: SUBU Summer Ball

Themes

Community

Engagement

Belonging

Year after year, friendships are the top factor students say shape a positive university experience.

Decades of research, including the Harvard Study of Adult Development (Waldinger and Schulz, 2023), show that friendships are the single most significant contributor to long-term happiness, health, and fulfilment. More recent studies indicate that even brief, everyday interactions can meaningfully boost wellbeing (Singh et al., 2023).

Connections help students feel a sense of belonging, enhance mood, motivation, and performance, and even contribute to career readiness (Thomas, 2012; Pym et al, 2011).

SUBU's work fostering connections has led to measurable improvements in students' sense of community and belonging, with 83% reporting that they have developed good friendships at BU.

Yet, a majority (58%) of students still experience loneliness or social anxiety. These are common human experiences but can be stigmatising and carry health risks comparable to smoking, negatively affecting wellbeing, academic performance, and retention (WHO, 2023).

SUBU's first strategic goal is to ensure that every student can regularly experience human connection and build genuine friendships. By designing accessible, fun, and welcoming spaces where people can relax, talk, and connect, we enable students to naturally form friendships, share experiences, and feel part of something bigger.

We encourage them to be present, make the most of their time at university, and find their people and their place, strengthening both their academic success and long-term happiness.

Our Actions and Objectives for Togetherness

Every interaction will create a further opportunity for students to connect with SUBU's wider offer with SUBU's Engagement Ladder, utilising innovative collaborations between membership and commercial services.

Focus on the needs of all students through an exciting events calendar which removes barriers to access.

Our spaces, venues and events are safe, welcoming and informed by trends in student engagement.


An integrated offer for students across halls and campuses, including accommodation, within the SUBU family.

Engaging local organisations including colleges, housing providers, BCP Council and MPs.



Offering thriving and welcoming student communities, encouraging all students to join in. Enhanced support for academic societies and patrons to facilitate social and academic enrichment and identity.

A wide range of activities supporting diverse communities and liberation groups.



Delivering a strategic approach to the Freshers experience and extended inductions, engaging all new students during welcome weeks.

Purpose

A group of about ten young men are building a human pyramid on a sandy beach at sunset. The man at the top is wearing an orange t-shirt and has his arms raised in a celebratory gesture. The others are wearing various casual clothing like t-shirts, shorts, and a plaid shirt. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows the ocean and a clear sky with some clouds.

Every student
will have the
opportunity
to explore
their passion
and purpose,
building
independence,
employability,
and confidence

Photo: SUBU Clubs & Societies

Themes

Employability

Personal growth

Resilience

Having a purpose is one of the strongest predictors of happiness and wellbeing. Research shows that people who engage in meaningful work, volunteering, and extracurricular activities experience higher motivation, resilience, and life satisfaction (Damon, 2008; Steger, 2012; Hill and Turiano, 2016).

In a rapidly changing world shaped by political and economic uncertainty, environmental crises, technological disruption, and the rise of artificial intelligence, many students feel anxious about their futures and their place in it.

At BU, nine in ten students report worrying about their future careers, and most say employability and life skills are essential to their university experience (SUBU Speak Week, 2024).

When students look for passion, direction and meaning to their efforts, connecting study to aspiration and building confidence, is where SUBU comes in.

SUBU's strategic goal is to help students shape a purposeful and fulfilling future through meaningful opportunities - whether through paid roles, volunteering, enterprise, or leadership opportunities.

By expanding student jobs, leadership development, and volunteering, SUBU will empower students to grow, lead, and contribute to their communities. Collaborations with local charities, employers, and the University will diversify opportunities and support all students, including those from disadvantaged or under-engaged groups.

Our Actions and Objectives for Purpose

Increase the number of job opportunities available to students with SUBU.

Growth and employability-themed promotion of SUBU's leadership, enterprise, social and extracurricular opportunities.

A strong Student Leader Collective - develop future leaders through SUBU's student training and development offer.



Increase the number of students volunteering, aligning with Graduate Attributes and Employability Skills.

Work with local charities and employers to increase the number and diversity of volunteering, work experience and placement opportunities and support for all students, including diverse student needs (widening participation, students with disabilities, international, etc).

Provide employability projects, including masterclasses, conferences, placements, part-time jobs, student enterprise and business events.

Wellbeing



All students will thrive at university, knowing how to access support and navigate challenges with resilience

Photo: SUBU Community Garden

Themes

Cost of living

Wellbeing

Personal

Wellbeing is a strong predictor of happiness and a foundation for students' ability to thrive. This includes factors like managing stress, sleep quality, eating well, regular physical activity, and financial stability.

Research shows that maintaining wellbeing through healthy routines, supportive relationships, volunteering, and time in nature improves resilience, motivation, and academic success (Singh et al., 2023; WHO, 2021).

Yet, students face increasing pressures: from managing the cost of living and balancing work with study, to coping with stress, homesickness, and mental health challenges.

Nationally, over half of students report mental health difficulties, and the number disclosing a diagnosed condition has quadrupled in the past decade (Hubble and Bolton, 2023).


SUBU's work aims to strengthen wellbeing through empowerment, intervention, and community. Our initiatives, including the Community Kitchen, Meal Clubs, and Community Garden to financial advice, budgeting support, and volunteering, have helped students save thousands of pounds, manage challenges, connect with others, and learn practical coping skills. Nine in ten students are satisfied with SUBU's cost-of-living support, and eight in ten would recommend our services.

Going forward, SUBU will build on these successes by expanding student-led wellbeing initiatives, capacity-building workshops, and nature-based community projects. By helping students develop financial confidence, self-care strategies, and a balanced lifestyle, we will continue to promote a culture of wellbeing that underpins happiness.

Our Actions and Objectives for Wellbeing

Help students understand the benefits of volunteering and nature through sustainability and community initiatives such as beach cleans, helping the local community, supporting the Community Garden.

Impact-driven feedback systems: continuously developing and informing our SUBU Advice service and communication to students with demand analytics and identified student needs and awareness trends.



Work on SUBU Action and
Student Leader projects -
from the cost-of-living digital
hub to safety, wellbeing and
academic skills, developing
student driven content for
accessing support.



Identity

**Students will feel they
can be themselves at uni
and identify with SUBU
as their students' union**

Photo: SUBU Officer Elections

Themes

Brand identity

Impact

Student Voice

A strong sense of identity is a foundation for happiness. Research shows that when individuals can express their authentic selves and feel part of a community that reflects their values, they experience greater wellbeing, motivation, and purpose (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Haslam et al., 2018).

For students, this sense of identity extends beyond personal expression; it includes feeling represented, heard, and proud of their university.

In a higher education sector facing financial and policy pressures, identity also shapes reputation and attraction.

SUBU's distinctive brand and strong student community are vital to ensuring Bournemouth University remains a thriving, appealing study destination.

Our goal is to build a union that students see themselves in and feel proud to shape - one that celebrates the diversity of its members and amplifying the impact of their voices.

We will strengthen SUBU's visibility and recognition, ensuring students know when they are engaging with us and why it matters. We will renew our democratic processes, expand student-led campaigns, and enhance our presence at recruitment events.

By uniting identity and brand strength, SUBU will strive to achieve national recognition for our work. We will boost our visibility, celebrate student voice, and showcase the vibrant, inclusive community that defines life at BU and SUBU.

Our Actions and Objectives for Identity

Strengthen the SUBU brand, amplifying our visibility and impact with strategic student-driven targeted communications that reach all student groups.

We will showcase student life and all that is on offer at BU, SUBU and the wider Bournemouth area (NSS, WhatUni, You Said We Did).

Brand recognition
- ensure students know when they are engaging with SUBU.

Review and reinvigorate our democratic structures to make SUBU Democracy everybody's business.

Empower students to make waves in SUBU, BU, Bournemouth and the UK with a renewed focus on student action, campaigns and influence.



Launch an improved feedback tool and become a sector leader in student voice, engaging students, staff and stakeholders with intelligence and impact.

Implementing a system that works for all students and courses - all year round and develop a strong partnership with academic structures.



Strong SUBU presence at recruitment events with student-led content to support future growth.

Our Values



Photo: SUBU Officers



**They underpin
everything we do**

Supportive: We've got your back

- We stand with students through high and low - never alone, always supported.
- We show empathy and compassion.
- We understand and respond to what people need.



Progressive: Pushing for better

- We're bold, innovative, and always push for change that makes student life better.
- We pursue growth and learning to stay ahead of the curve.
- We actively seek, use, and respond to feedback.



Integrity: Doing what's right

- No shady stuff - we'll do what's right even when it's hard.
- We are authentic; our actions and words align.
- We are open and honest.
- We are accountable.



Collaborative: Stronger together

- 16,000 voices, one community - we make things happen shoulder to shoulder.
- We work together and have fun together.



Equity: Embracing individuality

- Everyone matters, everyone's included, everyone gets their shot.
- We listen, embrace differences and work for a level playing field.
- We are proactive and focus on the process - not just the end result.
- We advocate and lobby on behalf of those who need it.



Our Enablers



Photo: Dylan's Kitchen & Bar

A photograph of two young people sitting at a table in a cafe, laughing heartily. The person on the left is a woman with long dark hair and glasses, wearing a white shirt. The person on the right is a man with glasses and a red and black plaid shirt. They are both holding small cups. In the background, there is a large potted plant and a wicker basket hanging from the ceiling. The text "We will unlock our full potential by building on strong foundations" is overlaid in a bold, pink font with a white outline.

**We will unlock
our full potential
by building on
strong foundations**

Governance

- We are a complex organisation: led by students, but also a registered charity and employer.
- Our governing documents need to be robust, but able to adapt to keep us effective, legal & responsible.
- We will ensure we do things in a transparent way so students know how they can affect change.

Relationships

- Building and maintaining strong relationships is vital to our continued success.
- Communication and staying true to our word makes us a trusted partner.

Relevance

- It's in our name: we are a union of students, so all our members should feel the things we do are relevant to them.
- A deep understanding of our members' lives, excellent student leadership and clear communication about our work and successes will ensure we remain relevant to our members.

Finances

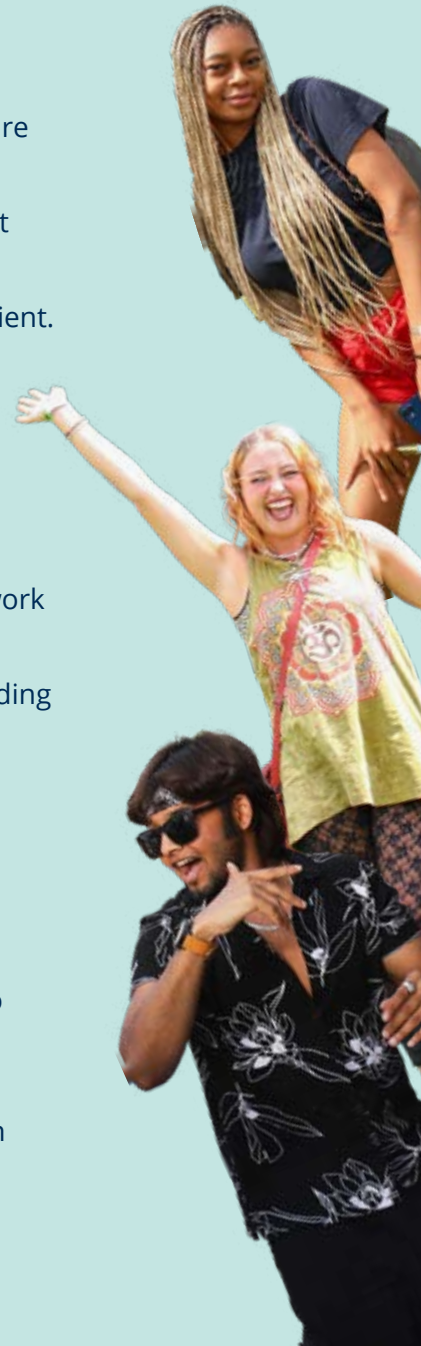
- For SUBU to continue to serve students, it is vital that we are financially responsible.
- We also seek to improve and diversify our income to invest more in our work for students.
- Our fundraising activities are targeted, profitable and efficient.

People and Culture

- SUBU benefits from the talented and driven people who work here, both permanent staff and students.
- We will attract and retain great people by offering a rewarding place of work with a supportive and collaborative culture.

Brand Affinity

- Delivering amazing support, activities and opportunities to students is not enough.
- We must create a relationship with every member that promotes a positive emotional connection with us through common beliefs and priorities.





Aiming high

With this strategy our goals demand innovation, ambition, and hard work.

Our ultimate goal is to create the happiest students in the country and be recognised as the national vanguard in student happiness.

This will make SUBU one of the UK's best Students' Unions.

Photo: SUBU Clubs & Societies

What we want by 2028/2029

90%

of BU students who say they are generally happy at university

90%

of students rating SUBU and Student Life as 'Good' to 'Excellent' (WhatUni - UK Top 10)

80%

of students satisfied with SUBU's representation of their academic interests (NSS - UK Top 25)

90%

of students aware of, and engaging with, what SUBU offers (services, spaces, events)

50%

of students mentioning SUBU as a decisive factor when choosing Bournemouth University

20%

of students engaging with SUBU are more likely to continue / complete their degree

95%

of courses and major demographic groups actively represented by Student Reps

25%

of student members voting in SUBU's Officer Elections

90%

of students are happier and more confident after using SUBU's services

SUBU

subu.org.uk

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