

# Strategic Plan

## 2024-25









# Welcome

## From the SU President & Chief Executive

At SUBU we share a vision to supercharge the student life of our members – during their time at university and beyond, empowered by the brilliant people that work here and the outstanding services we provide.

This strategy has been developed jointly by our elected officers and our staff team, following extensive consultations with our students, our sabbatical officers' election priorities and research of the emerging trends in student engagement and expectations, financial constraints, increased student loneliness, mental health challenges and labour market uncertainty in the age of AI against the backdrop of ongoing political and environmental turbulence.

This is a fearless strategy, offering clear solutions fueled by the energy and aspirations of our students, ensuring that SUBU creates positive influence, fosters a vibrant and inclusive community, builds friendships that last a lifetime and offers experiences that transform lives.

SUBU's role in enhancing the sense of belonging and fun, students' mental health, and career readiness remains essential for students to fit in and thrive at BU.

By helping students navigate the complexities of their lives whilst managing a demanding academic curriculum, SUBU's compassionate support system will continue to empower success at university and SUBU's enriching social and cultural calendar and welcoming environment will remain a key factor to attracting and retaining talent at BU.

We are looking forward to an exciting next chapter with new leadership and new strategy which builds upon our successes and drives positive change for the benefit of all our students.



**Esther Chinenye Isaiah**  
**SUBU President**



**Andy Squire**  
**Chief Executive Officer**



# SUBU in numbers

## Best Students' Union

WhatUni Student Choice Awards - Best SU in UK **Shortlisted**, Best SU in South West **Winner**

**10,900+**

Votes cast in Full-Time Officers Elections.

**70+**

Clubs, societies, and groups opened for students to join these thriving communities.

**2000+**

Student issues cases resolved by SUBU advice in a year.

**200+**

Students employed by SUBU to run our venues, events, and create content.

**8000**

Students attended our Freshers Fair and 3700 went to Summer Ball.

**300+**

Nominations received for SUBU Awards.





**2660+**

Students self-defined as part of a marginalised community.

**85%**

Of students agree SUBU has a positive impact on student life.

**87%**

Of students say SUBU is helping them make friends and create networks for the future.

**2300**

Volunteering hours logged by students

**90%**

University departments represented by an academic society.

**85%**

Of students say SUBU is supporting their personal development.

**87%**

Of students rate SUBU's communications as good or very good.

**660+**

Student Reps elected and trained to represent more than 200 programmes (90% of all courses with 20+ students).

# Our Mission

To be dedicated in working for students' interests, with brilliant people and services.





# Our Vision

For every student to believe we  
supercharge their life – at BU  
and beyond.



# Our Values

In everything we do, we add a bit of **SPICE**



## **Support**

- We show empathy and compassion.
- We understand and respond to what people need.
- We share our knowledge, time, care, space, resources to help people thrive.



## **Progressive**

- We are innovative & forward thinking.
- We strive for better and stay ahead of the curve.
- We actively seek & respond to feedback.



## **Integrity**

- We are authentic & our actions and words align.
- We are open and honest.
- We are accountable.



## **Collaboration**

- We work together.



## **Equity**

- We listen.
- We recognise differences and different solutions.
- We are working for a level playing field.
- We focus on the process and not just the end result.
- We respect each individual's rights.
- We advocate and lobby on behalf of those who need it.
- We are proactive instead of reactive.



# Strategic Goals and Objectives

To reach our vision we will focus on four strategic goals.



## 1. Ending student loneliness

Every student to have a strong and supportive friendship and social network.



## 2. Activating experience for life and work

Every student to be aware and have access to experiences that build their independence, employability and confidence.



## 3. Attracting talent

Increase in students choosing BU.  
All students to be SUBU members.



## 4. Empowering with compassionate support

Students to be equipped with the right tools to navigate challenges. No student is lost looking for help.



# 1. Ending Student Loneliness

Every student to have a strong and supportive friendship and social network.

## Themes

### Community, Engagement and Belonging

Post-Covid, there is increased insecurity in our students' ability to create meaningful connections.

Less than half feel part of the university community and many experience loneliness and isolation. The recent trends of student absence are detrimental to their sense of community and belonging, but also could negatively impact academic success and long-term outcomes. With WHO declaring loneliness carries the same health risks as smoking and having a substantial impact on mental health, academic performance and

student retention, SUBU's first strategic goal is to eradicate student loneliness.

Friendships and social activities are the single most impactful contributor to positive student experience: enhancing their sense of belonging, mental health, happiness, and even career readiness. More mindfully structured time on campus engaging with other students and a varied social, extracurricular and engagement portfolio will allow our students to naturally fall into friendship and interest groups and fit in.

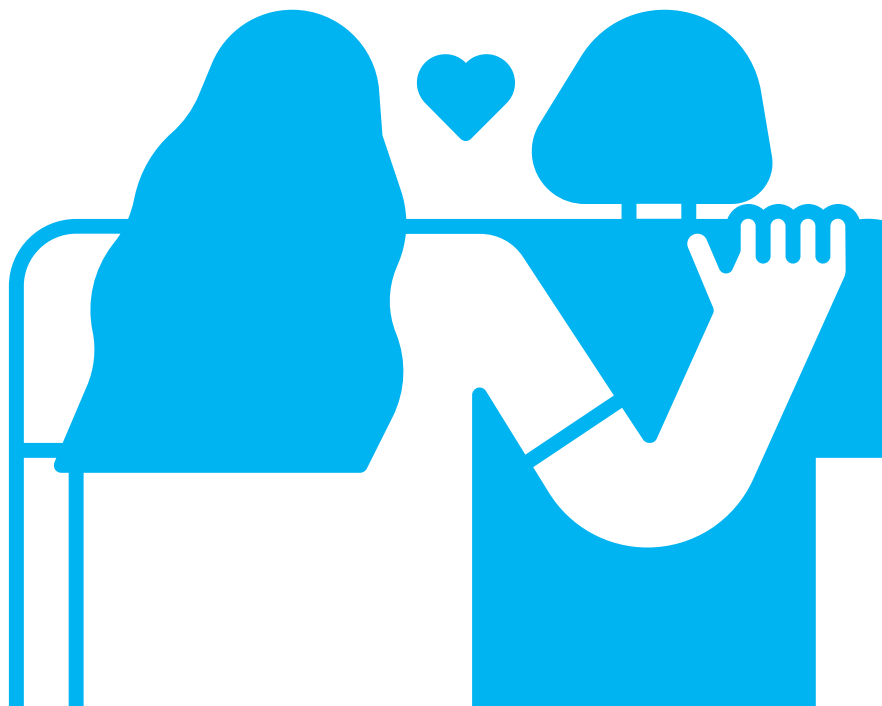


## Actions/ Objectives

- Implement SUBU's innovative engagement ladder to ensure every student contact is a meaningful opportunity to connect and signpost.
- Offer thriving and welcoming student clubs, societies, networks, communities, groups, encouraging all students to join and participate.
- A warm welcome: Developing and launching an exciting long induction calendar engaging all new students during welcome weeks.
- Roll out the Buddy Scheme to all students.
- Enhanced support for our Academic Societies and Academic Patrons to facilitate social and academic enrichment and identity.

## Measures

- % Students who have developed friendship(s) at university
- % Students feel part of a community at university
- % Students who rarely feel lonely at university
- % Students that are part of a SUBU facilitated group





## 2. Activating Experience for Life and Work

Every student to be aware and have access to experiences that build their independence, employability and confidence.

### Themes

Employability, Personal Growth and Resilience

The unprecedented changes in the economic, political, environmental and technological landscape mean students often feel lack of control over their lives and job prospects and find it hard to handle the challenges of becoming adults.

When thinking about the future, 9 out of 10 our students are worried about their career prospects and the majority are concerned

about their skills and employability, mental health and lack of confidence.

From a shifting job market in the age of artificial intelligence to the need to find part-time jobs to boost their student budgets, there is increased demand for SUBU to provide and connect students to experiential opportunities that develop their independence, employability skills and confidence.

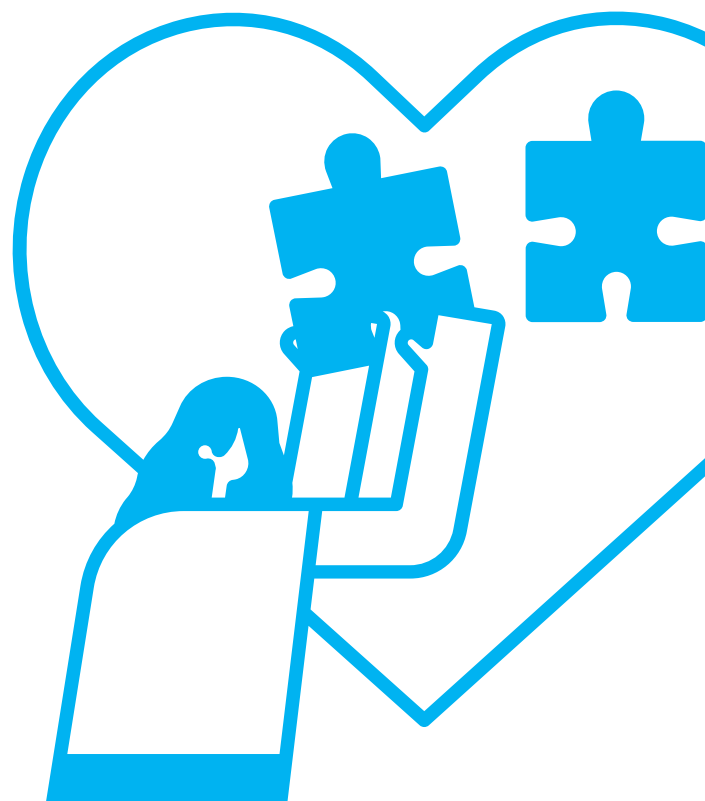


## Actions/ Objectives

- Deliver communication campaigns and collaborative events with CareersBU, enhancing student understanding of how participation in SUBU activities benefits their skills and employability.
- Develop growth and employability themed promotion of SUBU's leadership, social and extracurricular opportunities.
- Develop future leaders and entrepreneurs through SUBU's student training and development processes.
- Aligning the Student Volunteering Hub with BU Graduate Attributes and engaging more students to develop future skills through volunteering.
- Work with local employers and charities to highlight work and placement opportunities and support for all students, considering diverse student needs (international, students with disabilities, gaps etc).
- Support FTO employability projects, including masterclasses, conferences, placements, part-time jobs, student enterprise and business events.

## Measures

- % Students growing in confidence and employability by engaging with SUBU's life and work activities
- % Students believe SUBU has helped them develop life skills
- % Students highly engaged with SUBU and attending life and work activities/ events





## 3. Attracting Talent

**Increase in students choosing BU.**  
**All students to be SUBU members.**

### Themes

Student Life, Voice and Impact

The Higher Education sector is shifting and facing new challenges when it comes to recruiting students and BU is no exception to these trends with the number of applications from UK students dropping by a fifth between 2010 and 2023.

SUBU recognises that it has a key role to play in ensuring we continue to attract talented students from diverse backgrounds to BU, contributing to a vibrant student community and a high quality educational experience.

SUBU's enriching social and cultural calendar, engaging extracurricular offer and welcoming environment, along with Bournemouth's unrivalled student life by the sea appeal are key factors for potential students beyond their chosen degrees.



## Actions/ Objectives

- Student-driven and collaborative communications that showcase student life and highlighting Bournemouth as a study destination of choice and SUBU as a home away from home for students.
- Refresh and strengthen the SUBU brand bringing it in line with our student audience to ensure students are aware of when they are engaging with a SUBU provision.
- Engaging presence at Open Days, highlighting SUBU and showcasing opportunities.
- Continuing our sector leading student voice work, engaging students, staff and stakeholders with student voice intelligence and impact.
- Developing and sharing relatable SUBU narratives, including personal journeys, student voice and "our work for students" stories.
- Creating, showcasing and offering student spaces that are welcoming, exciting and well presented.
- Delivering WhatUni and NSS campaigns highlighting student experience.
- School Liaison collaboration and school/ college visits.

## Measures

- % Student members
- % of Students say the things SUBU has to offer encouraged them to apply/ come to BU
- % of Students say SUBU represents their academic interests





## 4. Empowering with Compassionate Support

**Students to be equipped with the right tools to navigate challenges. No student is lost looking for help.**

### Themes

Holistic Support (Cost-of-Living, Wellbeing, Personal)

It is easy to underestimate how much students are having to manage at university outside of a demanding academic curriculum; from fitting in and finding their voice and identity; budgeting amidst a cost-of-living crisis; adapting to a life in an unfamiliar environment; managing their health and wellbeing; and taking on household responsibilities.

Almost all students are worried about the

cost of living, many are cutting on food and essentials, or relying on credit and hardship funds. Many students are unaware of the support available to them when dealing with challenges – from housemates and landlords to mental health issues and accessing GPs and even preparing food on a tight budget. It is no wonder many are finding it hard to settle in and struggle to navigate a complicated university system and access the support they need.

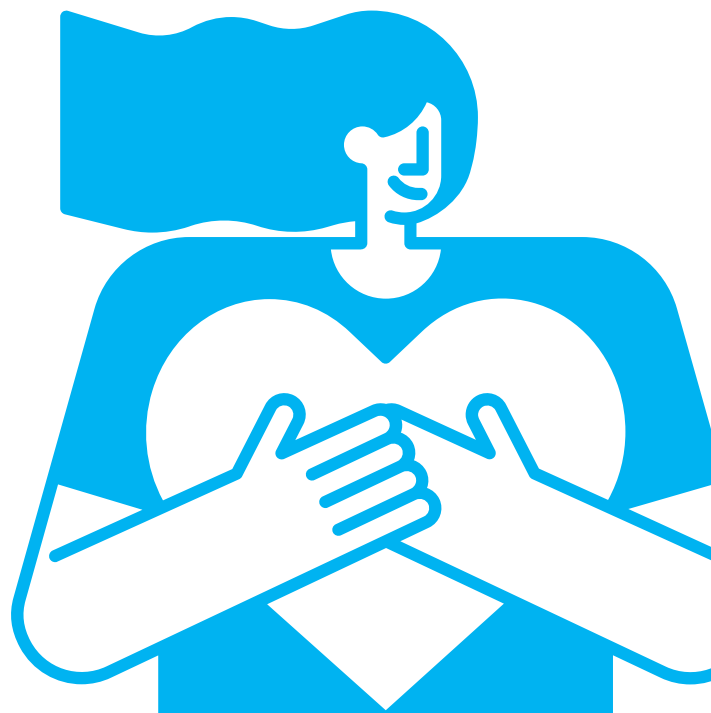


## Actions/ Objectives

- Smart Advice: Continuously developing and informing our SUBU Advice service with demand analytics and identified student need trends.
- Facilitate a wide range of events and campaigns supporting diverse community and liberation groups.
- Improving student financial management and support through budgeting workshops and financial awareness activities.
- Cost of Living support – building up on our trendsetting community kitchen work, including breakfast and supper clubs and emergency grants.
- Ensuring our student venues and events are safe, welcoming and informed by trends in student engagement.
- Support FTO projects – from cost of living digital hub to wellbeing cards and academic skills, developing student driven content for accessing support.

## Measures

- % Students know where to access BU/SUBU support (academic, housing, personal, wellbeing)
- % Students who have used SUBU services feel we have helped them navigate their challenges and would recommend us.
- % Students agree "SUBU empowers and supports me to be myself"



# Our Enablers

**We 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.

## People & 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.

## 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.

## 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.



# Measuring Our Success

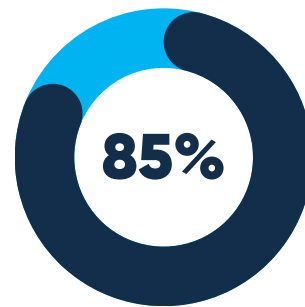
Our ultimate goal is to be established as one of the best Students' Unions in the UK.

We have a set of measures across our strategy to keep us on track of delivering our plans and we are committed to regularly share updates through our democratic and governance structures, as well as via our website and social media channels. We will also report annually on progress with our Impact Report.

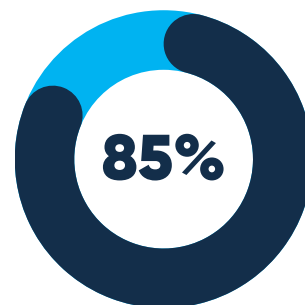
But our work for students is much more than a number. It is the relief on a student face when our advice team has supported them through a personal challenge, the pride in winning at SUBU Awards, the satisfaction of making a meaningful change at university, the laughter and friendship created at one of our club nights or events. Every member of staff, every team and everything we do in SUBU is to deliver the adventure of a lifetime for all of our students.



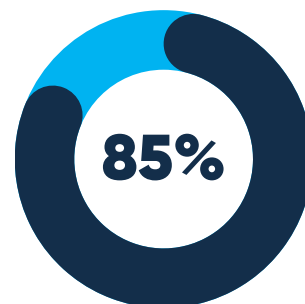
We aim that by the end of 2024-25 we will achieve at the minimum:



**Students trust SUBU to work for their interests.**



**Students agree SUBU has a positive impact on their lives.**



**Students feel SUBU plays a role in their lives.**



**Strategic Plan 2024-25**

**[www.subu.org.uk](http://www.subu.org.uk)**