

University of Northampton
**Students'
Union**



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON STUDENTS' UNION

Operational Update October 2020

Exec Summary



Term 1 is off in full swing and it has been good to be able to encourage and enable students to come together. The Engine Shed has been host to the PGR induction, families carving out pumpkins and staff learning British Sign Language. This diverse and varied foot fall is starting to bring The Engine Shed to life and it is great to see our Union in action. Our sports teams and societies are active, meeting and training in line with government guidelines and University expectations. Commercially we are 'doing ok', balancing the on going restrictions and changes to operations with what students want and expect from us was never going to be easy. But we believe we are making the most of where we are, with a detailed review of our commercial financial position included as part of our Q1 review.

The month in brief;

- We have successfully **appointed new Part Time Officers** following the Bye Election, we now have students in post for PGT, BME Officer, Non-Portfolio Councillor.
- We are picking up our approach to campaign by the **launch of Campaign for Change** which will be an umbrella for a joint University and Union Consent project, Tackling Bias and a Healthy campus campaign planned for early 2021.
- Work is underway to take **Big Plans to Student Council for approval in December 2020**, work is being led by a student working group underpinned by a staff team. Further consultation on emerging themes will be shared with colleagues during November.
- In light of increasing numbers of students isolating, we now offer a click and collect for essential groceries and medication, offering a 'fun' addition to the University's care pack with flats able to request recipes to cook, films to watch and activities to do.



Campaign for Change launched as the platform for all proactive campaigning activity the Union leads, in order to lobby for change, to positively effect student experience or to improve awareness.

STUDENT PERSONAS



Student Personas was approved as a joint Union and University project to bring to life our students. Bringing them in to our strategy development and decision making.



As a Union are investing in and consolidating our **advice services**. Increasing the size and diversity of the team able provide early support and intervention.



EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

As an employer are looking after our people. Investing in their skills, balancing workloads in order to grow and retain the best talent.



Following the ending of free school meals for many and the start of half term we made our feelings clear by offering free lunches to the children of UoN Students. It was great to see families using the Engine Shed.

PEOPLE



IN BRIEF

- Employee Lifecycle project is now in action, focussing on improving and resolving current issues and piloting new approaches with staff joining in the immediate future.
- We are addressing our recruitment processes to remove triggers of unconscious bias (.e. requesting of a degree, including names at shortlisting)
- We have implemented staff rewards to enable peers to recognise each other and celebrate successes
- All staff were awarded the 1.2% salary increase in line with the University.

PRIORITIES

- Resolve any outstanding contract or JD discrepancies post re-structure
- Complete end of year reviews (19/20) and agree next year development requirements (20/21); focus on capability growth and stretch targets (through to Dec 2020)
- Establish a Staff Lifecycle to ensure that staff are treated fairly and consistently

OPERATIONAL TARGET 20-21	CURRENT	MOVEMENT	COMMENTARY	OWNER
To improve Pulse Survey responses (more positive sentiment)	ACHIEVABLE		Q1 review due in November, focus on reaching a critical mass of Responses	SPT
To improve our investment in staff development i) direct link to objectives ii) measures of success	ACHIEVABLE		All PDRs complete, and development requests are now structured and linked to stretch targets	SPT
To provide meaningful opportunities for people to experience different areas of Unions operations; improving individual and organisational capability	ACHIEVABLE		A number of roles have had to adapt to reflect emerging need which has provided some differing perspective but not consistently.	SPT

RISK	IMPACT	MITIGATION	BY WHEN	OWNER
There is a risk that the lack of dedicate HR resource continues to impact our ability to support our people consistently	HIGH	Short term project identified to address immediate concerns and future focussed activity. HR Administrator role currently being scoped	December 2020	SPT
			December 2020	RW
There is a risk that due to our dispersed operations we are not able to maintain a 'safe place' in response to Covid-19	MEDIUM	Risk Assessments have been completed and reviewed; subject to on-going management and interventions	On-going management	RW

FINANCE



IN BRIEF

- Year-end closed and Audit completed; final accounts expected at end of November
- Q1 review and reporting in progress, due to completed end of November
- Revised Sports financial reporting has been agreed and is being implemented; improving transparency and reduce management over head
- Financial Audit actions (minor) identified by University audit procedures are currently being resolved
- HMRC VAT investigation has concluded; with an anticipated VAT rebate of circa £50k
- Anticipated positive outcome for insurance claim against commercial business disruption (Covid-19) circa £50k.

PRIORITIES

- To identify 'quick wins' to improve process and procedure; followed by addressing longer term needs
- Move to quarterly reporting format to improve planning and financial management

OPERATIONAL TARGET 20-21	STATUS	MOVEMENT	COMMENTARY	OWNER
To start Quarterly financial reporting to improve our transparency and ability to forecast and plan	ACHIEVABLE	↑	First report at Trustees 24.09.20	SMc
To enable clubs and societies to manage their own financial accounts	ACHIEVABLE	↑	Opening balances for 20/21 have now been loaded into SUMS	SMc
To improve financial accountability across the Union; by devolving responsibility and improving capability	ACHIEVABLE	↑	Financial regulations and thresholds under review	SPT

RISK	IMPACT	MITIGATION	BY WHEN	OWNER
There is a risk that existing processes utilise too much capacity to be able to make systemic improvements within Finance	HIGH	Identify team priorities, understand what other activity may need to be stopped or slowed as an interim measure. Clear communication to manage expectations	October 2020 UPDATE: In progress, processes being revised with impact reducing.	SMc

UNION: CAMPAIGNS & PROJECTS



PROJECT	ISSUE	RESPONSE ACTIVITY	STATUS	COMMENTARY	WHO
Student App	There is a need to increase student engagement with the Union	Procure an App to act as an intermediary interface	UNSURE	Current financial and resource availability means this is not currently a viable project. Union Management recommendation is to re-visit in early 2021	Sabbs
Campaign for Change	There is a need to develop a consistent and accessible approach to student focussed campaigning	Develop and launch 'Campaign for change' Allocate 'bid- able' resource Identify ways for it to be a recognised activity e.g. change maker awards	ACHIEVABLE	This project is now live.	Sabbs CEO
Union/ University Student Partnership	There is a need to revisit the Union University Student Partnership to move forward shared Union and University initiatives	Initial conversation with the University centred around improving Course Rep provision and a joint project focussing on retention and progression	UNSURE	Project and proposal to be scoped	CEO (initially)
Union/ University Student Personas	There is a shared need to better represent student in decision making	Project scoped and approved	ACHIEVABLE	Project approved, planning and early engagement due November – December 2020	CEO
Tackling Bias	There is a lack of awareness of how bias affects what we do and how we act toward others	2 phase campaign. Phase 1 is centred around awareness and developing an evidence base. Phase two is focussed on taking action.	ACHIEVABLE	Due for launch W/C 16th November	President and CEO
Healthy Campus campaign	Addressing the role of sport in positive mental health	Varied campaign across the term that will see the delivery of training, opportunities and raising awareness	ACHIEVABLE	Due Term 2	VP Welfare & Activities Sports co-ord
Isolation Support	Bridging the gap and offering an alternative support mechanism for isolating students on and off campus	Click and collect for essential groceries and medication, offering a 'fun' activity pack	ACHIEVABLE	Delivery processes in development for pilot testing W/C 2 nd November	Deputy CEO

COMMERICAL



IN BRIEF

- Work is still required to maintain a covid secure environment, continued support from local authorities to achieve this.
- Financial outlook is favourable, noting considerably lower targets than previous years
- Emphasis on growing our student experience including offering free events and non-revenue events e.g. Sunday Funday with Popular Music Students; pumpkin carving and films. Utilising The Platform for Student Groups to enable them to meet in a safe and controlled environment.

PRIORITIES

- Safe opening and management of all commercial operations
- Improve financial position to break even
- The Platform to be established as a share Union Space
- Commercial activity can evidence the impact to the Student Experience

OPERATIONAL TARGET 20-21	STATUS	MOVEMENT	COMMENTARY	OWNER
To improve financial position to break even	UNSURE		It was agreed at the BoD (03.09.20) that the ambition for 20/21 was not to make a profit, but to break even and where possible reduce the financial support required from the Charity (to benefit 21/22). Detailed review of financial position planned W/C 2 nd November.	SPT
To increase space utilisation (across all venues) by student groups	ACHIEVABLE		It was agreed at the BoD (03.09.20) that the conference venue should be available FOC to student centred activities Monday-Thursday 6pm-10pm	MN
To maintain attendance at core nights @The Platform for terms 1 and 2	ACHIEVABLE		We are currently 'at capacity' on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday	MN
RISK	IMPACT	MITIGATION	BY?	OWNER
There is a risk that students behave differently due to Covid-19 and this negatively impacts our ability to meet existing financial land number targets	HIGH	Number and financial planning is reduced to reflect 'best guess' assumptions and is reviewed termly and included with quarterly financial planning	December	MN (SMc)
There is a risk that local Covid 19 requirements negatively impacts our ability to meet existing financial land number targets	HIGH	All venues and activities are risk assessed and these are reviewed and acknowledge by Environmental Health Remain in touch with authorities and University; take proactive action	Complete On going	MN MN (SPT)

ADVOCACY



IN BRIEF

- Just under 400 course reps were recruited and are now undergoing training; emphasis on building great skill rather than maintain high volumes. Consultation with the Deans planned for November for an alternative delivery mechanism.
- Chair training for committees is in progress
- Bye-Elections completed and all positions open were filled since this event 2 additional vacancies have been released.
- Liberation working groups are being established – to focus on having more impact and improving action to benefit students

PRIORITIES

- Review services and approaches in light of Covid-19
- Review of by-laws so they are consistent and easier to access and understand
- Improve our support for chairs of committees
- Agree a scope and approach for the Advice Hub to piloted and tested 20/21
- Annual Elections in 2021

OPERATIONAL TARGET 20-21	STATUS	PREVIOUS	COMMENTARY	OWNER
To increase the number of staff able to triage and signpost students needs prior to accessing the advice service	ACHIEVABLE		Mental health first aider training to be undertaken by aprox. 8 staff (5 male staff) each to subsequently provide 2 office hours/per week to support students Resignation of Advisor has resulted in a temporary capacity gap that is being managed by er-prioritisation of activity.	SPT
To establish relationships and working practices with University departments to improve student outcomes	ACHIEVABLE		No progress has yet been made	SPT
To increase engagement in 2020 Elections by i) increasing voter turn out ii) numbers of students running	ACHIEVABLE		Elections planning has now begun, with a focus of bringing awareness activity to the start of term 2 to improve opportunity for engagement	SPT

RISK	IMPACT	MITIGATION	BY WHEN	OWNER
There is a risk that operational demands limit our ability to make longer term decisions	MEDIUM	Identify team priorities and be clear what is being stopped, or de-prioritised. Be clear what is 'good enough'	End of October. UPDATE: this will remain an issue whilst we have a capacity gap.	MOS

ENGAGEMENT



IN BRIEF

- Project to scope the re-working of the website is underway; scoping assessment expected end of October.
- Student group finance is now visible and final amends to balances are being made.
- Emphasis is now on delivering group and team training to improve how the run and engagement with the Union.
- Healthy campus campaign planned for the start of term 2
- Likelihood of varsity happening in 2021 is low due to the lack of sport activity in term 1 (and possibly term 2) at University of Bedfordshire. Options remain under review.

PRIORITIES

- All Student Groups are Covid-19 safe
- Revised marketing approach is embedded into practice
- Freshers Programme is delivered, safely.

OPERATIONAL TARGET 20-21	STATUS	MOVEMENT	COMMENTARY	OWNER
To complete the Website Re-fresh (and establish sustainable capability to manage it)	ACHIEVABLE		Stage 1 begun with Phoenix Creative- Stage 2 due to start Nov	RH
To reduce the management overhead of managing student finances	ACHIEVABLE		SMc working with SUMS to identify how this can be achieved	SMc
To establish a refreshed approach to the development and investment in sports clubs	ACHIEVABLE		Development and accreditation scheme is drafted and now under review.	BD
To develop a Union Marketing approach that is scalable	ACHIEVABLE		Request and scheduling approaches shared with Union Staff 15.09.20	ZN

RISK	IMPACT	MITIGATION	BY WHEN	OWNER
There is a risk that the lack of a consistent data supply to the UNSU management system limits our ability to consistently engage students.	HIGH	Requirement escalated to IT	November	SPT (RW)
There is a risk that Student groups breach local and national guidance on Covid-19, bringing both Union and University in to disrepute	HIGH	Clear comms and briefing to Student groups on the expectations All activities are risk assessed; No-tolerance approach to breaches.	Ongoing	RW
There is a risk that operational demands limit our ability to make longer term decisions	HIGH	Identify team priorities and be clear what is being stopped, or de-prioritised and what is 'good enough'	October	RH