

University of Northampton
**Students'
Union**



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON STUDENTS' UNION

*Operational Update September
2020*

Exec Summary



Over the summer both Trustees and Board of Director Away days have been held, the message from both groups is clear: re-connect with our students to inform the way we work, decide and invest; to close out 19/20 our Impact Report detailing key achievements.

- Strategy Development is underway with consultation activity underway with students, staff and the university. A Student Council and staff sub-group will be formed to generate insight in order to draft the first strategy outline for review in Q2.
- The 20/21 financial year has taken longer than expected to get off the ground due to the additional time required to close down the accounts for 19/20. The first financial quarterly review and budget approval will be undertaken by the Trustees on 24.09.20. Our Financial position is stable and in line with expectations; there is a significant effort required to improve our transparency and accountability, with a clear requirement to start contributing toward a reserve.
- Across all areas of Union activity there is a risk that operational demands limit our ability to make longer term decisions. Therefore we need to remain focused on priorities and make tough calls as to what 'needs to happen now' and where we can afford to stop or slow activity to create capacity to benefit our impact our students, officers and staff.

PEOPLE



TARGETS



FINANCE



September: all status' set to Amber whilst reporting is implemented

Unlocking the Union; Covid Response

- The Union is now fully open to all staff and officers. On-going management is required to ensure that we remain safe.
- All Union areas and activities have a completed and reviewed Risk assessment.
- Staff briefing held 15th September: Unwell? Stay away.
- The Platform has visibility by the University Business Recovery Group and Estates; positive site visits undertaken by Licensing and Environmental Health.
- Commercial budgets remain unknown/untested until we start to see and understand student trend and expectation.
- All student groups have been briefed in regulation and expectation; affiliated groups that breach regulation will be reported.
- Sports activities remain possible an din line with guidelines and regulation.
- Sport and societies 'gatherings' are limited to groups of 6.

Term 1: in brief

- **Increasing our student facing advice office hours** by approximately 16 hours/week and 8 members of staff attending mental health first aider training in order to improve access to both male and female staff able to triage, sign post and support.
- **Freshers Week and safe Union operations**; our Freshers programme is now live and in delivery. 43 events run from 19th September through to 4th October, a combination of face to face, online and evening activities are scheduled and available for booking. Beyond Freshers activity sports and societies will require ongoing management to ensure activities remain safe and in line with local and national guidelines
- Launch of **Campaign for Change** an umbrella campaign to provide a consistent Union message that we *are* a campaigning organisation, improving impact and enabling us to generate student insight. This is leading with two Sabb campaigns in term 1; 'Ask Angela' a welfare centred campaign supporting students who may need to access support and not feel safe to do so; and a second campaign focusing on addressing bias. Staff, students and officers are able to propose campaign ideas.
- **Improving Staff and Financial Operations**: identifying quick wins to improve our day-day management reducing duplication, focusing on continuous improvement and consistency



PEOPLE



IN BRIEF

- Staff end of year reviews are nearing completion; focused on setting tangible objectives through to Dec 2020
- Pulse Survey as Lunched and been run in August and September; improved staff return required to generate measurable insight. Actions to date include the introduction of an Open Forum and Employee of the Month to increase ease of reward and recognition.
- All Staff on Furlough have now returned to work, with all staff and officers to return to 'the office' and commercial operations. Local and national guidance will require on going review and management.
- Short term HR project as been identified to address outstanding restructure issues, to improve utilisation of Croner and to improve the employee experience through the development of a consistent lifecycle.

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	RESPONSIBLE
To improve Pulse Survey responses (more positive sentiment)	ACHIEVABLE		Quarterly review Jan 2021	SPT
To improve our investment in staff development i) direct link to objectives ii) measures of success	ACHIEVABLE		Objective setting is in progress, focus on first term	SPT
To provide meaningful opportunities for people to experience different areas of Union's operations; improving individual and organisational capability	ACHIEVABLE		MHFA initiative, HR project, Freshers week support	SPT

RISK	IMPACT	MITIGATION	BY WHEN	OWNER
There is a risk that the lack of dedicated HR resource continues to impact our ability to support our people consistently	HIGH	Short term project identified to address immediate concerns and future focused 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.	September 2020	RW

FINANCE



IN BRIEF

- Stuart McCulloch joined the Union Mid-August to as our Head of Finance.
- Year end still in progress; expected to be closed end of September.
- Revised sports financial reporting has been agreed and is being implemented; improve transparency and reduce management over head.
- 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.
- Unsuccessful in securing emergency Covid 19 Heritage funding; option to re-scope project is being reviewed (£5-10k)
- Awaiting the outcome of the Northamptonshire Community Covid-19 fund; £10,000 to enhance our advice and support services.

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	RESPONSIBLE
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		Requirements understood, move to implementation	SMc
To improve financial accountability across the Union; by devolving responsibility and improving capability	ACHIEVABLE			

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	SMc
There is a risk that we cannot 'catch up' on our financial reporting and remain behind for 20/21	MEDIUM	Additional resource to resolve this by end of September Change to reporting protocol to reduce management overhead	October 2020	SMc

UNION: CAMPAIGNS & PROJECTS



PROJECT	ISSUE	RESPONSE ACTIVITY	STUDENTS AFFECTED	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	All members	UNSURE	Current financial and resource availability means this is not currently a viable project. Union Management recommendation is to revisit in early 2021 Sabbs to present recommendations to trustees	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. employability awards	All members; Notably those impacted by respective campaigns	ACHIEVABLE	Agreement with Exec to develop approach Early campaigns identified Wider staff and student process in development	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 focusing on retention and progression	All members; Notably those impacted by agreed areas of focus	UNSURE	Project and proposal to be scoped/	CEO (initially)

COMMERICAL



IN BRIEF

- All commercial activities have undergone Covid-9 related risk assessments and will require on-going management
- Fire risk assessment undertaken and passed
- All staff are now back from Furlough with some staffing changes 1 member of staff has left the organisation, 1 on a 50% share with the Charity and a temp transfer of role for 6 week prior to maternity leave)
- Over 60 applications for student staff, 35 staff appointed and training planned
- Freshers tickets are now on sale 16/09 (delayed from 07/09), with events running over 2 weeks
- Ongoing work with local authorities to ensure that The Platform is open and remains safe.

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	RESPONSIBLE
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)	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	UNSURE			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	September On going	MN MN (SPT)

ADVOCACY



IN BRIEF

- Higher case load than usual – due to an increase of misconduct cases,
- Refresh of course rep training completed, ready for delivery.
- Chair training for committees, Council dates
- Working on the Academic Review; focus on addressing Covid 19 concerns and 'big ticket' issues.
- Liberation working groups are being established – to focus on having more impact and improving content to benefit students
- Campaign for Change: umbrella campaign for officers , students and staff
- Advice Hub to be located in The Engine Shed
- Academic Review
- Exploring options for Mental Health First Aider Training to increase student facing support we can provide.

PRIORITIES

- Review services and approaches in light of Covid-19
- Review of bye-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; Bye-Elections October 2020

OPERATIONAL TARGET 20-21	STATUS	PREVIOUS	COMMENTARY	RESPONSIBLE
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 approx. 8 staff (5 male staff) each to subsequently provide 2 officer hours/per week to support students	SPT
To establish relationships and working practices with University departments to improve student outcomes	ACHIEVABLE		Contribute toward the projects arising from the Academic Review; joint Union and University partnership projects	SPT
To increase engagement in 2020 Elections by i) increasing voter turn out ii) numbers of students running	ACHIEVABLE			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'		

ENGAGEMENT



IN BRIEF

- Main focus is the preparation for freshers activities (Megan Bowers will support this through to end of Freshers); the biggest challenge remains delivering a virtual Union Day; this is to be supported by SUMs who will be providing structure for the fair;
- Project to scope the re-working of the website is underway; due for agreement 17.09.20
- Risk assessments for all student activities have now been drafted and are in review
- Effort is still needed to get student group finance visible before start of term, approach has been agreed but further work is needed to close down 19/20 balances

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	RESPONSIBLE
To complete the Website Re-fresh (and establish sustainable capability to manage it)	ACHIEVABLE		Requirements currently being agreed with Phoenix creative	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			BD
To develop a Union marketing approach that is scalable	ACHIEVABLE		Approach shared with Union Staff 15.09.20	ZN

RISK	IMPACT	MITIGATION	BY WHEN	OWNER
There is a risk that the lack of support from UoN IT will negatively impact our ability to make any website ad management system improvements.	HIGH	Requirement escalated to IT and COO 15.09.20	September	SPT (RW)
There is a risk that Student groups breach local and national guidance on Covid-19, bringing both Union and University into disrepute		Clear comms and briefing to Student groups on the expectations All activities are risk assessed; No-tolerance approach to breaches.	August & September September	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'	September	RW