

Thames Valley University Students' Union

Strategic plan 2009 - 2012

Introduction

Thames Valley University Students' Union (the Union) wrote its last strategic plan in January 2005, since then there has been a significant change in the organisation. The Union now has a fully functioning Student Council with representatives elected from different constituencies across the University. The Societies Committee made up of representatives from the different student societies, meets regularly and allocates resources to student groups in a fair and democratic manner. Sports teams and participants have been encouraged to be in control of the development of sports at TVU with the development of a Sports Association to plan, review and celebrate successes within this area.

The core activity of the Union, the representation of students is now at a more sophisticated level than in January 2005. Student input to senior committees of the University has improved through attendance at meetings but also through elected representatives being proactive in contributing to the University's committee agenda.

The student representatives' system and student engagement has not progressed as much as the Union anticipated however; there have been major milestones of achievement. Higher education student representation is still at the same stage as it was some years ago, with a patchy level of commitment from across the University regarding the full implementation of student representation and engagement at course level and faculty level. In further education the Union has initiated pioneering work regarding student representation. Although the University carries out quantitative research regarding the further education student experience at TVU the qualitative engagement has been limited. To this end the Union has designed bespoke literature and training for this group of students

Communicating with a large diverse student community is a challenge of which the Union understands. To this end the Union has developed its digital communication, in that for many students the primary mechanism of obtaining information regarding the Union is through and will increasingly be through the Union's website. Most University students' unions have well established student magazines which help create community and mechanisms for the Union to communicate with their members. Lack of resources has for a long time meant that the student magazine has been poor in quality and irrelevant to most students. It is only recently that the Union has taken the magazine back under its control in order to make it a truly students magazine produced by students for students.

With the above perspective the Union has an aim to enhance the quality of the student experience within the teaching, learning and research environment, but importantly through the extra curricula experience, in order to facilitate our members gaining further value added core skills. The Union believes that through these opportunities our members will feel more connected with the University Community and be able to assimilate more with the community and transfer knowledge gained into the economy and increase opportunities available to them.

The Union recognises that it should develop a strategic plan, spanning over the period from 2009 to 2012, to achieve short, medium and long term objectives. This plan has been designed to be a useful tool for the Union in planning the next stage of its development. Each of the activities has been created with a view to be SMART (strategic, measurable, attainable, realistic and tangible). Towards the end of the time span of the Strategic Plan the Union aims to join SUEi which is a 'quality assessment model that assists in improving the services and activities delivered to members of Students' Unions by indicating areas for continuous improvement' SUEi website February 2009.

Strategic objective: Democratic Processes (Students' Union Governance)

To develop the democratic processes in order to encourage participation of members

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
Review of governance	Membership led	Draft review of governance	July 2009	Engagement / take up at Executive Committee and Student Council level
Review of terms of reference of all SU Committees	Committees stronger more strategic Committees less operational	New construction	July 2009	
Democratic Processes	Transparency of information that is received A greater understanding of information received. Leading to the right decisions being made			Increase in membership activity Number of students standing for Executive Committee posts
(Marketing) Engaging students into the democratic process	Increase the amount of membership taking part in the democratic process	Yearly monitoring of election results	Every March	Number in votes Number in candidates
Democracy Professional advice (Trustee Board)			Annual review of effectiveness of the Trustee Board	

Strategic objective: Student engagement in University Governance

To support student engagement within both the governance and the quality assurance mechanisms at all levels and all sectors

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
Standard Comprehensive Student Rep System across the University	Enhance the student experience	Implementation of the Student Rep module	Piloting the implementation of the Student Rep module by 2009 - 2010	Number of Student Reps
Student Rep Co-ordinator				
To work with the University on the student Rep Module	<p>Increase in the retention rate</p> <p>Student Reps to be accredited for their time and commitment. To increase the Students Reps activities and develop a sense of community.</p>	Rolling out the comprehensive system/ pilot at the University	<p>Piloting the comprehensive Student Rep system before rolling out 2009 -2010</p> <p>Carry out a review in 2011-2012 of the system.</p>	<p>Number of Student Reps who go on the module and succeed</p> <p>Number of Student Reps who attend basic training</p>
Formal and informal mechanisms for students and Student Reps to inform and influence the University's and the Union's policies.				

Ensuring the feedback loop is fulfilled				The measure of participation and student engagement in University Governance and Quality Assurance mechanism at all levels and all sectors
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Strategic objective: Student Rights (Regulatory Frameworks)

To inform and engage with students representing them both individually and collectively regarding their rights as students in the University community both internally, to government and other professional organisations

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
As a Students' Union to facilitate the voice of students, irrespective of their mode or level of study, ensuring systems are in place to enable this	Ensure parity of student treatment, whilst recognising the diversity of student needs	Establishment of different mechanism for student feedback		Monitoring student involvement in mechanisms for attaining feedback
To pro-actively engage students to enhance their knowledge of their rights, within regulatory frameworks and to facilitate student empowerment	Empowered students with knowledge of their rights			Statistics of casework and enquiries
Engage with students to represent their views and develop a highly analytical, representative, student submission, representing the views of students to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education	Student Written Submission (Institutional Audit 2011).	First draft available by Summer 2010	Approval by Autumn 2010	Level of engagement of students in the process of Student Written Submission
To work with the				

strategic objective of student engagement				
Be proactive in our involvement in campaigns and involvement in issues which affect students	To actively defend and promote the rights of students to government, and other professional organisations			Qualitative, quantitative and time related evaluation of campaigns
To engage with a number of external stakeholders including the local communities	To enhance the opportunities of our members			

Strategic objective: Commercial Activity

To provide quality, well utilised commercial membership led services to our diverse student community

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
Conduct a student survey to collate information on student needs, at each campus	Obtain greater knowledge and understanding of students needs To identify and target activities to meet these needs	Results from the survey Issue and monitor survey on an annual basis.	April/May 2009	Level of response Quantify the rate of student satisfaction
Review commercial services currently in place, in order to consider realistic change, and development, subject to the University's estates plans	Improve the delivery and success of our Commercial Services Maximise earnings potential, and minimise losses	Incorporate the results from the student survey and implement any necessary changes	End of each financial year (July)	Quantify the impact on turnover and surpluses
Endeavour to ensure our commercial activities embrace the Fair Trade agenda with the exception of quality enhancement	Support and gain Fair Trade status	Create an ethical policy in support of Fair Trade within the Constitution	July 2009	
Identify and analyse the diversity of students by ethnicity, age, level, fee status, and disability	To reach out to as many groups of students as possible	The availability and supply of student demographic information to the		

		Students' Union and appropriate stakeholders To report student figures in the annual accounts		
To liaise with the University in order to access timely student figures and information	Timely information available	Student unique card swipe records		
Consider measures to quantify and monitor student footfall on each campus	Measure participation	Coffee Shop need to devise a method. Slough and Reading Campus based on student visits/enquiries	January 2009	Student footfall Quantify any changes to participation

Strategic objective: Societies

To facilitate and promote well organised, safe, membership led, education, cultural, political, special interest and religious based groups.

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
Review and develop the infrastructure to support societies	Increased accessibility for societies to union recourses and increased accessibility to societies as a whole	Comprehensive administrative systems	Planning stage: 2008 - 2009	Sustainability and growth of societies over a number of years
Allocate further administrative staffing resources	Continuity and quality Ensuring that the societies are more accountable for the resources allocated to them	Society's Officers training implanted	Implementation: 2009 - 2010	Level of growth of assets in the Societies Asset Register
In partnership with the University, giving societies exposure to the student community	Increase recruitment and raise awareness	The Union having knowledge of the society's members participating		Measure change in the number of societies and in participation
To review the Health and Safety strategy	Provision of safe activities, which also safeguard the recourses of the union			
Develop training program for principal Society Officers	Clearer understanding of the role of principal Societies Officers to both their society and the union		Review: summer 2010	

Strategic objective: Sports

To actively encourage and facilitate participation in student led team and individual sporting activities acknowledging ability

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
To put pressure on the University as well as work collaboratively with them to free Wednesday afternoons for sport	Increase opportunities for students to participate	University making changes in timetable	September 2009	Measuring number of students able to participate, and measure success rate
Providing comprehensive opportunities across all campuses for individual and team sporting activities	Sports for all	Activities in place across all campuses.	Annually reviewed	Participation levels and range of activities on offer
Establish / improve links with local sporting organisations to promote their facilities to students	Increased opportunities available to students	Development of sporting partnerships (listed on website).	September 2009 – annually monitored	Number of sporting partnerships and sport participation
Promote and develop individual competitive sporting opportunities	An increased and accessible range of activities	Participation in University leagues	July 2010, April 2010 review time	Entering and sustaining seasons in the leagues

Strategic objective: Human Resources

To invest and manage our staff in recruitment, training, ongoing professional development and retention

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
To benchmark the quality of our service against the Student Union Evaluation Initiative (SUEi)	An evaluation on how the SU compares with similar organisations	An outline of areas under review.	October 2009	
	Striving towards accreditation such as the Investors in People	A detailed plan of areas to develop	December 2009	
To review and consolidate our policies, procedures and protocols	A clearer understanding of policies, procedures and protocols	Draft staff handbook	July 2009	Statistics on rate of retention
To consider ways to improve communication	Keeping staff informed on the Union's developments and improving staff motivation	Regular staff meetings. Staff bulletin newsletter. Feedback assessments	April 2009	Attendance at meetings
To evaluate staff training opportunities	Increase staff effectiveness, motivation and development	Memorandum to assess individual training needs and views on how they belong to the Union		Rate of satisfaction

Strategic objective: Student media

To facilitate quality student led informative student media in collaboration with our partners

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
Media strategic plan with working calendar	Timely interaction with our members Each media component being complementary	Working document	Annually reviewed starting July 2009	Measureable interaction with our members, measureable through participation
Vision e-accessibility	E-accessible	Digital strategy in place	July 2009	All literature distributed Hits on the website Feedback
The magazine being financially and politically antonyms	To develop independent media reporting to students	Self funding Executive Committee role of silent partner to magazine	Annual monitoring, fully operational by end of strategic plan (2013)	
Review of election media (voting site).	Election media display a likeness to SU brand (corporate identity).			Based on upon review
Review of how student media is supported by the Executive Committee	Politically focussed and supported by elected members	Implementation of review	Feb 2009	
Virtual SU	Placing the whole of the SU in the public domain	Web-trained, competent and confident Administration staff	July 2010	Level of information on line Percentage of competent and confident staff

Strategic objective: Estate

To provide equitable services and facilities to our member at all our main campuses

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
Visit Other Unions	Ideas being generated about what we can do with our union		August 2009	
To review the space used currently by the Students' Union	Define how we use the space we have at this present time	How we intend to use our space	August 2009	
To have informative meetings with the University regarding their estates plan. In order to understand their vision	To be able to produce a Union estates plan	Discuss with stakeholders regarding plans		
To formulate a plan expressing the unions needs for the long term		To have informative meeting with the key members of the University about their estates plan	February 2009	
To liaise with the Unions' key/ external stake holders	<p>To have a longitudinal plan that is flexible to the changing needs of the union</p> <p>To discuss the plan with the whole of the Executive Committee</p> <p>To consult with SU staff regarding plans</p>	To have a greater understanding of the union needs for the present and in the future		

Strategic objective: The Green agenda

To actively participate in the green agenda to reduce the carbon foot print TVUSU leaves on the planet

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI's
Recycling within the union both commercial and Union	Being responsible about the Unions waste management system <i>Ranking in the Green League tables</i>	Having recycling points around the Union and being collected	July 2009	Monitoring that we are carrying out recycling within the Union at all times
All projects to have an environmental angle to them	All projects would have an eco-friendly angle to them To become a paperless environment as far as practical	Annual report to Student Council the Unions green agenda	January 2009	Reporting to all regulators regarding the Unions input to the Green agenda
Explaining how easy it is to recycle to staff and students	Communicating guidelines within the Union	Policy documents in place	Ongoing	
Any estate redevelopment should take into account the environmental impact	Develop a green environment for students			
Actively take part in being on University committees and push the green agenda	To ensure that the SU is there during the planning stages and that ethical choices are made			

	Attendance at all these meetings			
To develop a green transport policy for the Union	Letting our members know what we are doing	Ensuring that the SU is represented at all relevant committees To have and implement policy		Reported in annual business to Student Council

Strategic objective: Management Risk

Though the democratic and the management structures to consider and manage risk

Activity	Outcome	Milestones	Timescale	KPI
The Trustee Board to review the Management Risk Assessment Register.	Through the regular review of Risk Management to mitigate the risk element of Students' Union activities.	Each area of the Union to have a separate Risk Assessment in order to influence the 'Activity'.	To be reviewed annually by the Trustee Board unless there is a significant change in risk to the Union.	To monitor change and movement in risk using a nomenclature that identifies the degree of risk to the Union