

UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON STUDENTS' UNION

# Strategy

## 2024-2028



uwlsu





**OUR 2024–2028**

# Strategy

**2024 marks the beginning of our new five-year strategy and our continued growth and development as a sector leading Students' Union.**

Over the last decade we have been on a journey – to improve and develop the way in which we support and engage with all our students and communities. We now deliver this strategy as one of the leading Students' Unions in the country set out to make sustained, positive changes for all.

In developing this new strategy, we've consulted with students as our members, and the staff in our SU team who work every day supporting students, to identify the most important areas of work on which to focus and develop. We have also assessed how the landscape we are working in might change over the duration of this strategy, and thought about how we in the sector can influence our own ideas and initiatives to further support students.

We have also consulted with key organisations in the sector and our partners, UWL, to provide insight and guidance on strategic challenges and themes that students in higher education are experiencing. As a result, this strategy outlines actions focused on 5 core areas – Engagement; Attainment; Employability; Wellbeing; and Community

We can only deliver this strategy through continued collaboration with all stakeholders and by holding ourselves to account in following a meticulous strategy implementation plan, continued reporting to Trustees and UWL, and of course keeping our students up to date.

As a students' union, we recognise the importance and value that our elected Sabbatical Officers bring, we strive to support, mentor and empower officers to truly represent the values and views of students. With elected students potentially changing each year, it is important to guide each of them to understand our strategy, but also to represent the changing views of students and ensure we are dynamic in our approach.

## Delivering the 2018–23 strategy, our key achievements:



**RANKED #1 STUDENTS' UNION IN THE COUNTRY**  
for 4 of the last 5 years

**92%**

of UWL staff recognise we have a positive impact on the student experience



**ACHIEVED REPRESENTATIVE DEMOGRAPHIC ENGAGEMENT**

**BY 11%**

**EXCEEDED UWL RETENTION RATES FOR STUDENTS**  
engaged in SU-led activity



**FOREWORD FROM OUR**

# Sabbatical Officers

Hello! We are the current Sabbatical Officers for the University of West London's Students' Union. We are Maisie, President; Ayan, VP Education, Ayan; Yash, VP Activities. We would love to welcome you to UWLSU's new five-year strategic plan.

As elected Sabbatical Officers, we hold these positions for 1-2 years to ensure that student leadership remains an important part of our Students' Union direction. To all future sabbatical officers reading this strategic plan - We really encourage you to tell as many students as possible about this strategy and our main areas of focus for UWLSU. You will be the ones to bring new, exciting ideas to the table that can contribute to changing students' experiences and lives at university, so we wish you all the best.

We're really proud to see this strategy created using a huge insights from UWL students and UWLSU support staff. These insights mean the plan is

completely centred around students, which is our main priority here at UWL.

When reading this strategic plan, we instantly realised that, in addition to all the amazing things we do here, the plan will continue to improve and impact the next five years for all incoming students. In the ever-changing higher education sector, it is imperative that our SU remains vigilant and able to adapt to new ideas and developing trends with students - and we're really pleased this commitment has been cited in the theory of change model we are adopting.

We're really happy with the Vision and Mission statements, and that the words within them have been specifically chosen to be inclusive for all students who are part of the SU, no matter their backgrounds, experiences and life circumstances.

Thank you for taking the time to read this!



# How we got here

**UWLSU's strategy for 2018–2023 has concluded with some excellent results.**

UWLSU as an organisation has been ranked #1 Students' Union in the country for 4 of the last 5 years and consistently engaged high numbers of students in initiatives and support programmes.

The development of a new strategy for 2024–2028 is defined within this document which encompasses a comprehensive review of past performance, higher education sector insights, and student and staff consultations.

## **THE STAGES OF THIS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

**Stage one:**

Scope and Review of 2018–2023 Strategy

**Stage two:**

CounterCulture external research into higher education themes and issues

**Stage three, part A:**

UWLSU Student Consultation

**Stage three, part B:**

UWLSU Staff Consultation

**Stage four:**

Strategy Development and Stakeholder Engagement

**Stage five:**

Finalisation and Marketing

You can find out more about how we got here in our Strategy Development report

# Strategy design

**Vision**

**Mission**

**Area 1**

**Area 2**

**Area 3**

**Area 4**

**Area 5**

**KPIs**

**Values**

**Principles**

**Theory of  
Change  
Statement**





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**VISION STATEMENT:**

**To shape our  
Students' Union to be  
a truly memorable  
and inclusive home  
where we have had  
a positive impact  
on every students'  
journey with us**

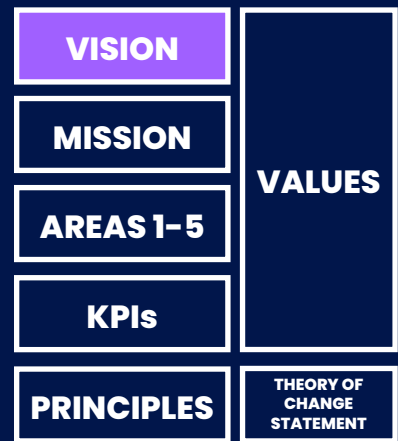




# Vision

The vision statement encompasses sentiments of student ‘feeling’ rather than operational terms associated with their experience, support or environment. It is designed to give a sense of where we would like students to connect emotionally with UWLSU, and how this can be carried forward after they complete University.

The inclusion of ‘home’ centres this approach, and informs the behaviours, objectives and principles that we adopt to shape this feeling. The statement also includes a longevity angle, suggesting that students can reflect on their journey while continuing to address the ‘present’ moment of being in an inclusive home. Our vision is, however, not complete, nor would we argue that it will ever be attainable, but the key phrase of ‘shape our Students’ Union’ demonstrates that we need to continually develop what we do and how we support students.







**MISSION STATEMENT:**

**To deliver an inclusive and transformational student experience that equips students with skills, networks and confidence to determine their futures and fulfil their life goals**

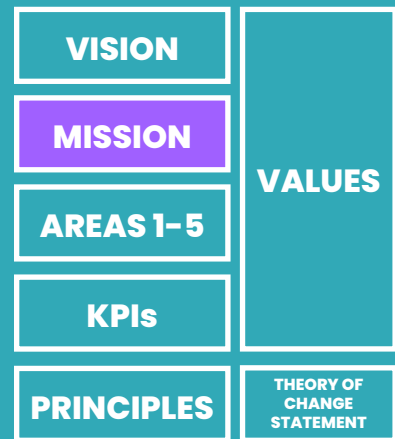




# Mission

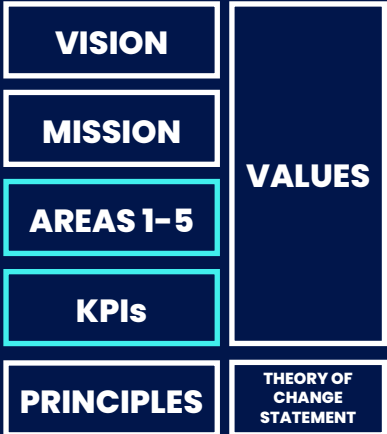
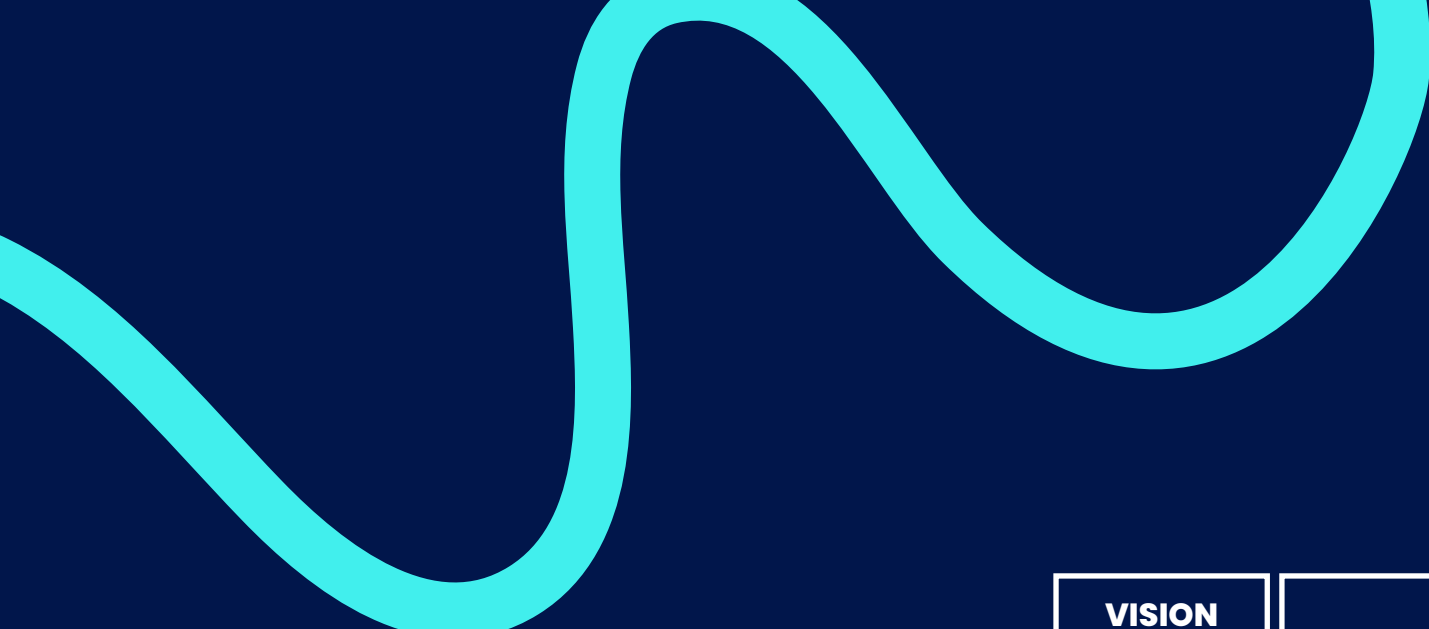
The mission statement key terms include 'inclusive' and 'transformational' – a demonstration of the environment we want to create for students and our expectations for how they experience their university. They are 2 very important philosophies: to ensure students feel welcome and want to make a real change in their lives. The statement also includes key areas we feel are of the utmost importance for students to succeed not only at university, but in later life.

The inclusion of 'skills', 'networks' and 'confidence' demonstrates our commitment to developing these areas and having them underpin our programmes of work.









**OUR**  
**Objectives**  
**and KPIs**

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## AREA 1:

# Attainment

A strong, persistent theme which consultations found to be one of the most important aspects for students at University. This has also been a consistent strength within the Students' Union work in relation to student voice and advice.

The importance of supporting students to obtain a strong degree has been a focus of students' unions for some time, including providing 1-1 academic advice, student voice programmes and representation initiatives such as elections. UWLSU recognise that many other factors contribute to strong attainment, which are present in our other areas of focus (including high engagement, wellbeing, strong communities)

Our focus will be to ensure that UWL's pedagogy is centred on co-creation

with students, since many studies have strongly supported this approach. We want to ensure that each student feels able to communicate their views, feedback and ideas of their needs to obtain better outcomes in assessments. This will involve continued collaboration with UWL's academic schools; academic quality departments; Vice Chancellors Executive and key support services such as the Library.

To achieve this, UWLSU strives for representation across each of our academic courses and at all major academic boards and committees in UWL. This allows strong lobbying and collaborative potential, in addition to supporting our confidential advice service for students with academic challenges.

# KPIs



## **PLACED IN THE TOP 3 STUDENTS' UNIONS**

each year in the NSS scores for the SU question

# 90%

## **OF STUDENTS REPORTED THEY VALUED THE SUPPORT RECEIVED**

through the SU Advice service



## **MAINTAIN STRONG STUDENT VOICE**

through ensuring 95% of all UWL courses have student representation





## AREA 2:

# Engagement

A consistent theme during the consultation phase emphasised our continued engagement with students. In particular, this tended to link back to how we can support students' success throughout their journeys at UWL, with a focus on our visibility to students and how we plan to improve this.

UWLSU's engagement strategy has been at the forefront of our approach to our identity as a students' union. We engaged approximately 70% of our student population this last academic year, which we believe is reflected in our high NSS satisfaction rates. The more engaged students are with a SU, the more they are able to know what support is available, involve themselves with retention-focused activities, and develop their social circles.

All our activities and programmes contribute to engagement statistics, from becoming student-elected leaders all the way through to attending a wellbeing retreat activity. They are designed to measure how many students we capture through our programmes: however, we plan to develop this into assessing the number of students with whom we are meaningfully engaging.

Our presence at all campuses was a strong theme in our consultations, particularly with students at our Paragon and Reading campuses. This is therefore reflected in our KPIs along with a continued effort to achieve representative engagement – ensuring that international students, student-parents, disabled students and other key demographics are equally engaged with the SU.

# KPIs

**85%**

**ACHIEVE AT LEAST 85%  
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**  
with the Students' Union



**ACHIEVE REPRESENTATIVE  
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**  
across all demographic groups +/- 5%



**PROVIDE PARTICIPATION  
OPPORTUNITIES**  
in SU activities across all UWL  
teaching locations





### AREA 3:

# Wellbeing

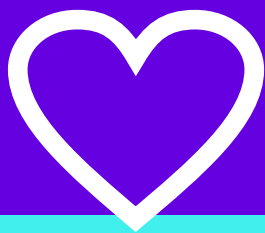
A sector-informed area of focus, wellbeing has been a consistent and vital focus for universities and Students Unions alike, with organisations such as the Office for Students and Universities UK mandating universities to have actionable plans to support this. Students and staff within this consultation process additionally noted its high importance, and commented that the Students' Union should develop its responsibilities and resources to further support this.

We aim to approach this area holistically, with a focus on how we can embed wellbeing into all programmes and initiatives for students. This does require specific interventions in addition, however, which our wellbeing strategy will be formulate and focus on delivering.

The goal is to enable all students to feel healthy – physically, mentally and socially, and to feel that they are able to easily access UWL and UWLSU services should their health decline. This will require significant collaboration with UWL's wellbeing department, and require us to build upon existing, strong relationships, in order to continue to meet students, requirements for health support.

This area of work will also require a review of existing programmes that can be attributed to student wellbeing primarily, giving UWLSU an indication of how engaged students are in supporting their own wellbeing. For example, our low-commitment sports programme is a strong intervention that has many physical, mental and social wellbeing benefits.

# KPIs



## **CREATE A WELLBEING STRATEGY**

and deliver all parts of the strategy in full

**90%**

of student staff and volunteers report that

## **UWLSU SUPPORTS THEIR WELLBEING AT WORK**



UWLSU deliver an annual programme of events and activities that primarily

## **ENHANCE WELLBEING**





#### AREA 4:

# Employability

This was another strong theme in consultations and presents a good alignment to UWL's 'career University' mission. This was supported with regards to developing 'life skills' for students, which is regularly discussed within university and student-centric spaces.

As a Students' Union, our key outcomes for students relate to developing skills future use; opportunities to engage with industry contacts or networks to learn key sector skills; and developing confidence and resilience in unique student challenges such as imposter syndrome.

UWLSU will strive to maintain the many activities that already support this area of work which include employing 80+ student staff across our commercial operations to build practical work skills;

electing approximately 700 volunteers across our course rep programme and committee programme to support with leadership qualities; and connecting students on courses to build professional relationships. This also underpins the CounterCulture research that strongly advises the sector to consider cost-of-living support for students.

Our focus on employability also links with UWL's Career and Volunteering operations, a department that prepares students for life after University and gives them tangible skills to apply to the job market. They have recently developed an employability strategy which looks to embed career-enhancing skills into the curriculum and further opportunities to connect with industry, including alumni networks.

# KPIs

**90%**

of students in their final year of study are provided with an opportunity to take part in a

**COMMUNITY, COURSE  
OR CAREER-ENHANCING  
ACTIVITY**

**90%**

of student staff and volunteers report that working with the SU has enhanced their

**CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS  
FOR THEIR FUTURE CAREERS**

**500**

**STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN  
LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY  
OR PROFESSIONAL SKILLS  
WORKSHOPS**

delivered by UWLSU each year





## AREA 5:

# Community

A newer theme within higher education research, the building of community as a concept has been linked to improving student outcomes, particularly progression and satisfaction at University. This theme came through strongly within the consultation phase, with several links to the impact of Covid and the unique challenges our students have such as increased commuting times, lack of university accommodation, and socialisation skills.

As a new measure of success, we are defining the positive outcomes for students related to how we can effectively build student communities. This includes developing our clubs and societies programme; ensuring that liberation, cultural, religious and nationality are positively and actively represented; and our online

communities continue to grow as technological reliance on these platforms also increases.

As outcomes, we want students to feel that UWL is home. We want students, through their own communities, to develop a sense of belonging and obtaining lifelong friends who they can continue relationships with post university. We also strive to ensure that each student's own identity is celebrated, understood and recognised by UWLSU and their university.

There is a new project with UWL to support this objective: we will work closely with UWL's new Student Experience department along with Marketing and Facilities to create a university space that students feel excited and comfortable in attending.

# KPIs

**20%**

of the student population are part of a  
**STUDENT GROUP, SPORTS CLUB OR SOCIETY**



**ALL LIBERATION GROUPS ARE REPRESENTED**  
through a student group and student leadership positions

**20%**

**INCREASE IN ENGAGEMENT**  
on UWLSU online and social media platforms from 2023 levels



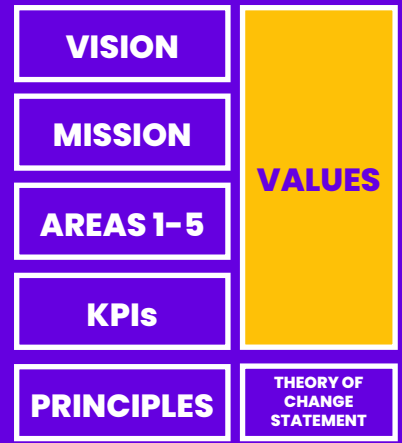
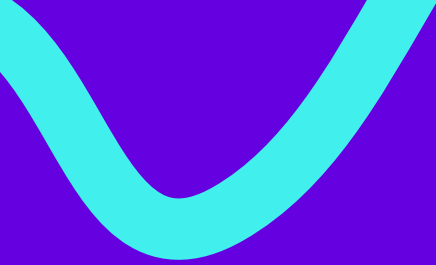


**UWLSU**

# Values

Our UWLSU values form a significant part of our strategy and are often well received by staff members. To determine values, UWLSU staff were asked as part of consultations to define what behaviours and traits were needed to support students. Students were also asked to define what behaviours and traits they would like SU staff to adopt in order to best support them.

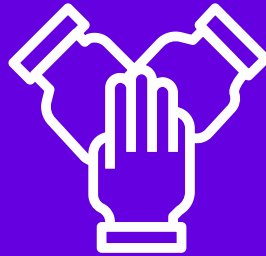
Based on the outcomes, here are the Values of the strategy, the first 3 are continuing and the last 3 are new.



**We are....**



**Inclusive**



**Collaborative**



**Informed**



**Committed  
(new)**



**Empowering  
(new)**



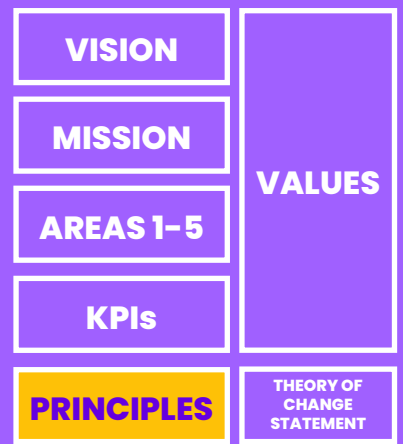
**Innovative  
(new)**





# UWSU Principles

The adopted principles draw on the experiences and views communicated within the consultation stage.



## We will be...

- ✓ **Advocates for embedding Equity and Diversity in all activities**
- ✓ **Guided by Student and Sector Insights**
- ✓ **Effective with Finance and Governance**
- ✓ **Accessible to all Student Study Locations**
- ✓ **Creators of Community and Social Opportunities**
- ✓ **Partners with UWL**
- ✓ **Supportive of Elected Officers' Priorities**





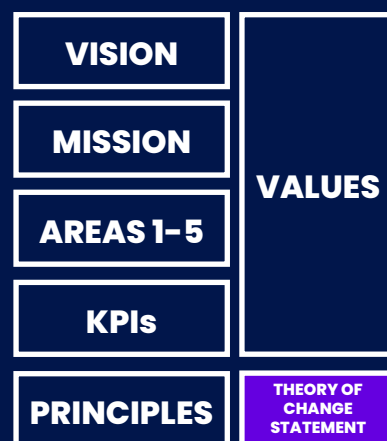
# Theory of Change statement

Underpinning all our strategic areas, KPIs, values and principles, it was important to consider the accountability through which we enact and deliver this strategy for students. The Theory of Change derives from planning tools to create strong developments, social change and programme evaluation. It is designed to create a mapping tool of how each of the strategic priorities intends to solve problems or create opportunities for new ideas to flourish.

This model can be utilised to set out a mapping structure to analyse the progress of KPIs; in addition to identifying how many factors are involved in strategically meeting targets such as stakeholders, resource allocation, risk identification and more. Our Theory of Change statement specifically references how students will be put at the forefront of firstly, identifying what their issues are; and then how we will strategically map out how we will best tackle these issues as a Students' Union.

## Our Theory of change statement:

UWLSU will adopt a Theory of Change model to maximise the impact that our initiatives, activities and support will have on student lives. This approach will ensure that we are strategically aligned to our objectives and that the voices of all our students enact long-term, sustainable success.







COPE TO DAY  
STRONG ON

UNIVERSITY  
OF  
*West*  
EST. 1968  
LONDON

# What our students say

“ The SU helped me when I needed advice and resources to help me bounce back mentally.

**ALADIN, AIRLINE + AIRPORT MANAGEMENT**

“ Here I feel supported and taken care of by lecturers and the SU, it really feels like a second family to me.

**LUCA, AIRLINE + AIRPORT MANAGEMENT**

“ I love being a course rep because I can use my voice for the good of other people.

**CASSIE, BA(HONS) MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH FOUNDATION**

“ Being part of a team with students and the SU has been one of my best experiences.

**TOUKA, CIVIL + ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING**

“ I feel supported by the SU as all their facilities are accessible and everyone is so friendly.

**NOREEN, BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE**

“ Being in Aviation Society helps me to meet new friends and engage with industry experts.

**MARCELL, BSC(HONS) AIR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT - AIRLINE AND AIRPORT SPECIALIST WITH FOUNDATION**



**UWLSU**



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