

Union Priorities 2026-27

This document outlines the annual priorities of Surrey Students' Union, providing a strategic foundation for this academic year that will be reviewed at each Executive Board/Union meeting. Each broad theme includes therefore a focus for the Students' Union in our representative activity for the year, a priority that students want to see from the University, and a shared goal to deliver in partnership.

In setting out these priorities, we formalise our joint commitment to improving the student experience by acting upon our students' needs. These priorities are built upon our wealth of student insight, the objectives of our elected student representatives, and are closely aligned with the long-term goals outlined in our Students' Union Strategic Plan 24-27.

Education Shaped by Student Feedback

This theme recognises the need for students to understand the influence that their feedback is having on their education, in order to feel empowered as members of an academic community.

Union Priority:

Improve student awareness of outcomes resulting from their feedback, from Course Rep wins to Sabbatical Officer updates.

Student buy-in to representative student voice channels increases when they understand the impact of sharing their feedback. Students across the University should be aware of the impact and importance of the collective student voice, and how this begins at a grassroots level through the Course Reps system through to the University's academic governance and the impact of sabbatical officers. We will therefore further develop our systems for collating the achievements of our Course Reps and elected Officers, and communicating these wins to students.

Measure: Awareness of Sabbatical Officer and Course Rep achievements to increase from 20% and 39% respectively (Student Life Pulse Survey)

University Priority:

Increase communication around plans to improve assessment and feedback by publishing an action plan to current students.

Recent National Student Survey (NSS) scores show that students are significantly less satisfied with their assessment and feedback than the rest of their student experience. The University is taking steps to address low student satisfaction with assessment and feedback. Students would benefit from greater knowledge around what the University is doing to improve the state of assessment and feedback at Surrey. In addition to the steps already being taken, we ask the University to publish a student-facing assessment and feedback action plan - increasing visible reporting and accountability, and allowing students to gain a better understanding of the work being done to improve in this area.

Measure: Assessment and feedback NSS questions to improve by July 2027.

Partnership Priority:

Build stronger partnerships between students, academic staff and Course Representatives by driving high engagement with the Students' Union's new Course Rep feedback platform.

Strong engagement with the Course Rep feedback platform will be key to ensuring that student feedback is captured, heard and acted on effectively. To achieve this, students need to understand the value of the Course Rep scheme and, importantly, know how and where to share their feedback.

Academic staff and Course Representatives have an important role to play in building this understanding and encouraging students to use the new platform. By working with the University to establish a shared and consistent approach to communicating the Course Rep scheme and actively promoting the feedback platform, we can increase awareness, drive usage and strengthen the partnership between students, Course Representatives and academic staff.

Measure: NSS measure for 'How clear is it that students' feedback on the course has been acted on' to increase (currently 77.9%).

Empowering Student-led Wellbeing

This theme highlights the growing complexity of student wellbeing, and the importance and benefits of shared knowledge, and early intervention.

Union Priority

Strengthen the visibility and accessibility of Union wellbeing initiatives.

Ensuring students know about available support services available and feel empowered to seek support relies on services being visible and easy to access when they're needed. We will increase the in-person visibility of Union-led student wellbeing initiatives, including our peer support services and our harm reduction initiatives. We will connect our work around student belonging and wellbeing, tackling the negative wellbeing impacts of student loneliness through support and human connection.

Measure: 'I would turn to the Union for advice' score in Pulse to increase from the current average of 53%.

University Priority:

Increase early intervention in the whole University approach to student wellbeing, as set out in the University Mental Health Charter.

Early intervention is crucial in student wellbeing, as it often prevents potential issues from disrupting student continuation and progression. The University's commitment to the University Mental Health Charter demonstrates how every area of the organisation should make mental wellbeing a priority. Pending the outcome of the upcoming assessment process in November, we want to see the University increase and expand its communication with students about the support available at Surrey, with a particular focus on early intervention. We'd also like to see the new approach to personal tutoring evaluated and expanded to benefit a wider pool of students.

Measure: NSS measure for "how well communicated was information about your University's mental wellbeing support services" to increase.

Partnership Priority:

Sharing expertise and knowledge for better student outcomes.

The Students' Union is uniquely placed to identify emerging trends and issues affecting Surrey students through our Union advice service which offers independent and confidential support, and through our Student Equality Network, which gives students from diverse backgrounds the space to discuss their experiences. We want to share more insight and expertise with the University, using what we are seeing and hearing from students to help inform and refine the support that the University provides. By working in partnership, we can ensure that services and approaches continue to respond to the changing and increasingly diverse needs of our students.

We also want to work collaboratively on staff training and development, ensuring University and Union staff are equipped to respond to the evolving issues. Through this partnership, we can work together to continually review and shape support provision so that it remains relevant, accessible and effective for Surrey students.

Measure: Increase in satisfaction among groups with lowest overall life satisfaction in the Pulse survey.

Student-Centred Campus Experience

This theme focuses on the physical campus, and the need to provide students with a future estate that meets their needs, with their feedback at the heart of the planning process.

Union Priority:

Increase our physical presence across campus, giving students more opportunities to engage in person with our Officers and staff.

Students engage with the Union in many different ways, and we want to build on the strong sense of community already created through activities taking place in our building by bringing our Officers and staff into more spaces across campus. We will increase our presence on both campuses through outreach, activities and events across Stag Hill and Manor Park, and use our 'Union2U' campaign to create more opportunities for students to connect with elected Officers and Union staff as part of their everyday campus experience. This will help us build relationships with an even wider range of students and ensure the Union is visible, accessible and connected across campus.

Measure: Increase in awareness of who the sabbatical officers are and what they do in the Pulse survey.

University Priority:

Ensure the student experience is the top priority in the University's campus masterplan.

As the University continues to develop its long-term campus estate, the Students' Union building should be recognised as a strategic priority for future investment. Improving our building is not simply an investment in a physical space; it is an investment in student life, engagement, inclusion and success. Across the sector, other Union buildings are seen as desirable destinations for student support, activity and socialisation. A continued lack of investment in the Union building demonstrates to students that their sense of belonging and 'home' on campus is not a University priority, and risks the ongoing failure of current and future generations of students while the building continues to deteriorate. A modern, welcoming and accessible Union building would strengthen student belonging, participation in clubs, societies and democratic activity, and better support wellbeing and connection. Any future development should hold student belonging and the social spaces that underpin this as a core focus of future development.

Measure: For the University to commit, through its capital planning process, to the future of the Students' Union building by publishing a way forward.

Partnership Priority:

Work together to develop our campus spaces to create a more accessible and inclusive environment for students, ensuring student voice is prioritised in identifying campus improvements.

The increasing diversity of the student population means that the experiences, interests and needs of students are more varied than ever. Improvements to the estate must reflect this diversity and ensure that all students have an inclusive and accessible place to live and study, both now and as the University grows.

We want the University to work collaboratively with students to identify and deliver practical accessibility and inclusion improvements for current and future students through the Campus Masterplan. The Students' Union's Equality Networks provide an important channel for bringing diverse student voices and lived experiences into these conversations, helping to ensure that developments reflect the needs of the communities they are intended to support. We will work with the University and our Equality Networks to ensure students have meaningful opportunities to shape practical improvements to the estate that make Surrey a truly inclusive place to live and study.

Measure: Five impactful accessibility projects to be completed this year, covering a diverse range of needs, identified in partnership with students.

Fostering Connection and Belonging

This theme recognises the importance of students feeling a sense of belonging where they live, study, and socialise in order to be happy and successful at Surrey.

Union Priority:

Create opportunities for greater student-led collaboration to empower our current and future student leaders.

Our active clubs and societies are one of the Students' Union's key strengths, with students taking the lead, running their own activities, learning new skills and benefitting others. We want to offer more collaboration opportunities between student groups – using these as avenues to incentivise and increase engagement in other Union activities, democracy, and leadership opportunities. We also want to introduce a referral scheme through the Union's Support Zone, aiming to help students who are feeling isolated join a new activity or group, working directly with our clubs and societies to make this happen.

Measure: Increase to the Pulse measure for the SU's role in belonging to the University community, currently 56%.

University Priority:

Set out a clear action plan for improving the commuter student experience, including consideration of the commuter experience in designing spaces within the Union building.

The experience and priorities of commuting students can differ significantly from those of students living on or near campus. Reduced time on campus, travel time to and from events, and limited opportunities to participate in evening activities can all create barriers to fully engaging with university life.

As the number of commuter students continues to grow, the University needs to look beyond individual initiatives and take a broader view of the commuter student experience. This should include practical measures such as an efficient academic timetable, greater availability of daytime events and activities, and better consideration of the challenges involved in commuting to University. The University's new Commuter Lounge, scheduled to launch in January, is a positive and welcome step towards providing dedicated support and recognition for commuting students. However, a physical space alone cannot address the

wider barriers that commuter students face. We therefore want to see the University set out a clear programme of action to make being a commuter student at Surrey a more attractive prospect, with the Commuter Lounge forming one part of a wider approach. This should include clear measures of success (including how the usage and impact of the new lounge will be monitored), alongside other actions to address the wider academic, social and practical experience of commuting students.

Measure: Narrow the satisfaction gap for 'social experience' and 'having activities to be involved with' in Pulse for students with 'other living arrangements' or 'living elsewhere not with students'.

Partnership Priority:

Facilitate the development of academic communities to create a sense of belonging within departments.

For many students, a sense of belonging at Surrey begins within their academic communities – feeling known by academic staff, connected to their fellow learners, and having their feedback heard and acted upon. Departmental societies play a huge part in making this happen. We want to work collaboratively to develop our academic communities through existing departmental societies and through creating these in Schools where student satisfaction has scope to improve. Through collaboration between students, society and committee members, Course Reps, Head Reps, and University staff, we aim to foster a sense of belonging, where students feel valued and connected.

Measure: Improvement to Pulse measure for 'I feel part of a community of staff and students' - currently at 69%.

Preparing Students for Life After Surrey

This theme discusses the need for students to feel well equipped for life after graduation, in an increasingly challenging and complicated world.

Union Priority

Develop a centralised approach to communicating transferable skills developed through engagement with Students' Union volunteering, leadership, and skill-boosting opportunities.

The Union offers students a wide range of development opportunities that can boost their employability and help contribute towards their future career goals. These opportunities are managed across individual teams, but each voluntary scheme or leadership position open to students through their Students' Union offers a range of similar transferable skills. We want to work across Zones to develop a shared approach to equip student volunteers, leaders, and part-time staff to identify and communicate the skills they have developed through these opportunities to future employers. As a result, we will be more direct with students about the employability benefits of their involvement with the Students' Union, and use this approach to attract more students to engage in development opportunities across the Union. We also aim to utilise our Destination Success programme to direct workshop attendees to future leadership opportunities, and to offer further skills development for existing student leaders and volunteers.

Measure: Increase in Pulse score on 'the SU is making me more employable' currently at 28%.

University Priority:

Seek to re-establish the strong association with the university and placement opportunities in industry.

In an increasingly challenging employment environment for graduates, the pressure is growing on universities to find ways to develop and prepare students for life after university. The University's placement provision means that students can spend their third year of study in industry. However, uptake of placement years has fallen recently, with only 26% of students going out into the workplace for a year. The Students' Union believes that the University should commit to increasing the proportion of students undertaking an industrial

placement as part of their degree. To achieve this, the University should work with departments and employers to expand the number and range of placement opportunities available, ensure that students receive clear information and support when applying for placements, and identify and address barriers that prevent students from taking them up. Progress towards this target should be monitored annually and reported publicly, so that students can see how the University is performing. This emphasise what has previously been one of Surrey's unique selling points, and would give Surrey students a powerful edge going into the graduate marketplace.

Measure: Graduate outcomes statistics improvement currently 81% moving to 85%.

Partnership Priority:

Improve collaborative communication of employability-boosting opportunities.

Employability opportunities are high on the list of current priorities for students. We also know that there is a graduate outcomes gap between certain demographics of students. The Union's Destination Success training scheme, funded by the University's Access and Participation fund, is an example of us working in partnership to help students achieve their goals on graduation, and aims to support the reduction of that graduate gap, by reaching students from the target demographics to become Student Trainers and to attend skills sessions. We want to expand our partnership with the University and continue to grow the Destination Success scheme, working together on a strategic approach to promoting the scheme to students from specific target groups, and getting University colleagues more involved in the project and its long-term development.

Measure: Improvement in Pulse measure for 'my involvement in SU activities are preparing me for my future career' current score 36%.