



SURREY  
STUDENTS'  
UNION

DENTS'  
ON



# Annual Report

2023-24

*Your Surrey Life.*

# Introduction

## Welcome to the Union's Annual Report for the Academic Year 2023-24



Jo Yau  
Union President

This report provides a summary of the Union's activities this year. It's been a year where the Union has faced key challenges; improved student engagement in democracy; launched a new strategic plan for the next three years; and successfully delivered on another great year of student life. It's been a privilege to lead the Union this year and for me it marks the culmination of five years of my involvement in the student movement, and two years of taking on a leadership role in the Union.

I am proud of what we've been able to achieve as a Sabbatical team despite facing the difficult circumstances of the departure of the VP Community early on in the year. At the beginning of the year we published our Union priorities for this year: Cost of Living; Participation and Engagement; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; and Education. We have worked together to ensure that students have continued to have as many opportunities as possible to come together as a community; working together to enhance the amount of free or low-cost event options on offer; and to help meet the challenges of the cost of living.

In our Voice Zone, we were pleased to see an uplift in student engagement with democracy, through our main elections; autumn by-election; and our *Speak Week* project. It's clear that our members are keener than ever to have a voice in our decision-making processes. Our Support Zone has been ever-present on campus, hosting a myriad of events aimed at reducing student stress and increasing wellbeing. Our Community Zone thrived as they launched a new Friday night for our students to enjoy; a Community Hub - open three times a week; and a fantastic *Sustainability Week* to educate and engage our students. Our Activity Zone has tirelessly encouraged students to get involved in extra-curricular activities, including hosting a successful *Employable Me Week*, and working in partnership with Royal Holloway Union to create another fantastic *Varsity* competition.

This year was our second full year of normal, unrestricted activities since the pandemic, and we continue to face the longer-term impact of changing student socialising habits and trends, along with the continued pressures on the cost of living that students face nationally. Parallel to this, we have faced the challenge of the University responding to the financial difficulties faced by UK higher education. As a Students' Union, we have worked hard to scrutinise the University's decision-making processes in the best interests of our members, which included passing a *Financial Resilience Policy*. This has been discussed at length with members of the Executive Board, showing the commitment they share for the student experience and academic quality of teaching.







**Sabb Team (l-r) :** Liam White (VP Support), Jo Yau (President), Amy Obi (VP Activity) and Kiara Kataike (VP Voice).

We can no longer assume that the way students choose to spend their free time will normalise, and this year we have acknowledged that the Students' Union will need to change and adapt to meet student expectations. Having said this, I feel confident that this year's team are leaving the Union in the best position to deliver the best possible student experience to our members next year, and I feel particularly proud of our new strategy and commitment to change in the best interests of students.

My time as President has been so memorable, and I have everyone to thank for the amazing achievements made – including my team of elected and volunteer officers, our wider Trustee Board, the staff team who have supported me every step of the way, and the University colleagues who have made a real impact on my professional and personal development.

I leave the Students' Union with many laughs and fond experiences to look back on, it truly has been a once in a lifetime opportunity to have. I look forward to seeing the next steps in the Union's journey under the leadership of Liam White as the next Union President.

Thank you for all your support,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jo Yau'.

**Jo Yau**  
**Union President**  
2023-24

# Central Zone

## Representation Priorities

In October, the Union Officers worked together as a team to create our *Representation Priorities* for presentation at the University Students' Union Committee, our highest-level strategic committee with the University. We were keen to incorporate the previous year's strong focus on the cost-of-living crisis, ensuring that this remained a strong thread in the document. We also included key themes including student engagement and participation, celebrating diversity, and focussing on assessment and feedback in terms of academic quality. This work proved extremely useful as the year went on, as we faced the challenge of responding to the University's *Financial Resilience Plan*.

## University Financial Resilience

In March 2024, the University announced that, like many other UK Universities, it would need to take action in the face of financial challenges in order to remain sustainable for years to come. The *Financial Resilience Plan* involved a programme of enhanced voluntary severance being opened across the majority of University academic and professional services departments, with the aim to make savings of £10 million.

In response to this, the Union invited students to feedback on their concerns about these cuts affecting their student experience and outcomes. The Union's officers worked together to combine student feedback with an analysis of the possible impact of the University's *Financial Resilience Plan* by focussing on the representation priorities that were agreed in the autumn. The Union produced a policy on the *Financial Resilience Plan* which was passed by Union Forum and presented to the University's Executive Board members. The

University responded positively to the Union's policy including holding open discussions regarding the possible impact on our postgraduate research community.

## Union Strategy 2024-27

We began the year knowing that a key focus would be producing a new Union Strategic Plan. We launched a broad student consultation exercise as part of our autumn *Speak Week* campaign, asking students what they would change about their experience of the Union, and their perceptions of our organisational values. Participation in this exercise was strong and provided us with robust data from our members which we used to produce our new strategic themes, alongside a wide range of data gathered through our *Student Life Pulse* survey, and through a consultation with Union officers and staff. Our new strategy was official passed by our Board of Trustees in April 2024, and we are now setting year one objectives to begin the three year plan.



[View our new Strategic Plan online](#)

[See our progress on the strategy at surreyunion.org/strategy](https://surreyunion.org/strategy)





## National Student Survey (NSS)

We are so proud to be your Students' Union, as we continue in our vision to make sure you have the best Surrey life.'

[You can view the full NSS results here](#)

On Wednesday 10 July, the annual National Student Survey results were announced and we found out we had moved to 5th best students' union in the UK. In response we released the following statement:



**NSS Results:**  
Achieving a top 5 position in the NSS rankings shows that we continue to be one of the best Students' Union's in the country

*'We are thrilled to announce we have risen to 5th best Students' Union in the National Student Survey (NSS) results 2024. This is a fantastic achievement, and we want to thank everyone who took part for their feedback.*

*The NSS is completed by final years at universities across the country and is the biggest survey of its kind. Our position is based on the results of Question 25, which asks whether students are satisfied with their Union's representation of their academic interests.*

*Achieving a top 5 position in the NSS rankings shows that we continue to be one of the best Students' Union's in the country, responding to your needs, representing your interests and supporting you to have a fantastic student experience.*

## Access and Participation Plan Student Submission

This year, the University has submitted a renewed Access and Participation Plan (APP) to the Office for Students which explains how it will address the risks to equality of opportunity faced by Surrey students. The Union had the opportunity to contribute our own independent submission which served to provide comment on the University's APP and explain whether we felt it was ambitious and credible.

Our final submission was sent to the Office for Students at the end of May and highlights the importance of the partnership between the University and the Union to address access and participation.

## Rent Reform Bill

We wrote to our Guildford MP, Angela Richardson about the *Rent Reform Bill*, covering the current housing situation and the impact it has on students. We urged that the *Rent Reform Bill* included measures to address rent control prices, implementing safety regulations and supervisions for longer-term leases that suited the academic calendar.



*"As the Rent Reform Bill is being deliberated, it is essential that the unique circumstances of student renters are considered."*

**Jo Yau**  
Union President

## University Regulations

There has been concern in the sector for some time to the potential risks posed by students who have been expelled by another educational institutions, progressing or transferring to a university without that institution being aware of the previous expulsion and potential risk that brings.

The Union understands the importance of safety on our campus and we have worked with OSCAR (Office of Student Complaints, Appeals and Regulations) to require all students to declare any previous expulsions (if any), when joining the University so that the University can undertake risk assessments, appropriate mitigation and/or refusal, if deemed necessary to ensure the safety of students.

To further this prevention across the UK, we will be speaking to our Southern Union Network

of Students' Unions to ensure that they can follow in our footsteps to ensure justice in all university regulations and the commitment we all share to the safety of our students.

## BAME Wall of Fame

The BAME Wall of Fame is an important and inclusive project dedicated to celebrating and honouring the outstanding achievements of past BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) Surrey students during their time at university in accordance to the *Race Equality Charter*.

This initiative aims to shine a spotlight on the remarkable contributions and accomplishments of these individuals, fostering a sense of pride and inspiration within BAME communities at Surrey. It includes guidelines on who the decision panel is, the purpose, aims and the overall physical display. This project will now be carried forward in the *Access and Participation Task Group* to come to fruition next year.

## Graduation Pronunciations

Graduation marks the end of each individual students' journey here at Surrey - their academic achievement; extra curriculum experience; and most importantly the memories that they have created here.

We have implemented a way for students to submit voice recordings of their names to ensure correct pronunciation during the ceremony, as we know many students in the past have had their name, their identity, and overall experience ruined by mispronunciations.

These voice recordings will alleviate some pressures from the orator and most importantly make a huge impact for many students as we understand how important and significant hearing your name read out correctly is.

## Student Life Pulse 2023-24

At the time of writing, we have results from *Pulse 1* and *2* available. Our *Pulse 1* period (October to December 2023) saw a decrease in student satisfaction across the key *Pulse* opportunities which were identified by our research provider, Alterline, as having the most impact on overall student satisfaction with the Union, taking this to 47%, which was consistent with the final *Pulse* period of the previous academic year, but a decrease of 7% on the same period last year. Results were discussed in detail and we agreed to renew our focus on the visibility of our role and support services.

Our *Pulse 2* period (January – March 2024) saw strong improvements in the key opportunities, with satisfaction increasing across the board, resulting in satisfaction improving to 50%. Compared to the same period last year, we saw each key *Pulse* opportunity increasing by at least 6%. It was great to see the positive change between *Pulse* periods and we hope to see this trend continuing in *Pulse 3*.

## Complaints Log 2023-24

Students are directed to our website to submit complaints through our specific complaints page which contains our complaints procedure and online form. All complaints submitted using our complaints form are sent directly to the Union's Senior Management Team, who direct complaints to the relevant managers for investigation. Complaints submitted using the form are also stored in the Union's email system.

This year to date, we have received two complaints in relation to Rubix. One in relation to Rubix security which was followed up accordingly by relevant staff, and one complaint regarding a financial transaction which was resolved at the early resolution stage by our finance team. We have also received two complaints regarding student sports clubs, one of which remains ongoing at the time of writing, and another regarding kit which has been resolved.



**Our Vision:**  
Making sure our  
students have the  
best Surrey life







## Course Reps

Throughout the year we had bi-weekly engagement with our almost 500 *Course Reps* through our *Course Rep* newsletter which included celebrating our *Course Reps* of the Month as nominated by our *Head Reps* each month. We also held *Course Rep* socials in the Union in December and May and had between 50 and 80 Reps in attendance. During our second *Course Rep* social we gave out our annual *Course Rep Awards* to 25 of our Reps. This event formed part of our commitment this year to improve interactions and engagement with Reps. Next year we will be making improvements to the *Course Rep* scheme by increasing in-person Rep engagement, and conducting a review into the strengths and areas for development in our approach to academic representation.

## Head Reps

This year we had 18 *Head Reps* providing support to the *Course Reps* in each School. We had regular contact with the *Head Reps* through our newsletters and semesterly meetings. In these meetings, the Kiara Kataike, VP Voice, met with the *Head Reps* to gather feedback and insight into the types of issues each School was facing. The *Head Reps* also assisted and helped to plan the running of two *Course Rep* socials. The *Head Reps* helped plan and host a Rep-themed quiz and with the coordination

of the event on the evening itself. Next year we hope to have more in-person meetings and socials with the *Head Reps*. We will also focus on improving the training the *Head Reps* receive and filling any historic school gaps.

## Student Voice Forum

We continued to run our *Student Voice Forum* events this year with all events taking place online. We saw over 150 students attend in November, 120 in February, and saw our highest attendance since the pandemic in May with over 75 students joining the forum. We were again joined by a panel of senior University management throughout the year, including the Vice-Chancellor at our Forum in May to commemorate our *Course Rep* award winners. Topics discussed over the year at our Forums included: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion; Cost of Living; and the University's *Financial Resilience Plan*.

## Union Forum

This year, the Voice Zone supported the Union Chair in conducting three *Union Forum* meetings, where all students are invited to discuss important issues with the elected Union officer team. The officer team called an emergency *Union Forum* in semester one to discuss the Union's stance on industrial action at Surrey, and held two further meetings over the remainder of the year.





In semester two, the officer team discussed financial resilience and passed a policy detailing the stance and actions to be taken by the Union in supporting the interests of students during the University's *Financial Resilience Plan*.

Development plans for *Union Forum* in 24-25 will include improvements to our approach to Union policy and the improvement of officer and student engagement with Union Forum to maximise the influence of the Officer team.

## Surrey Decides

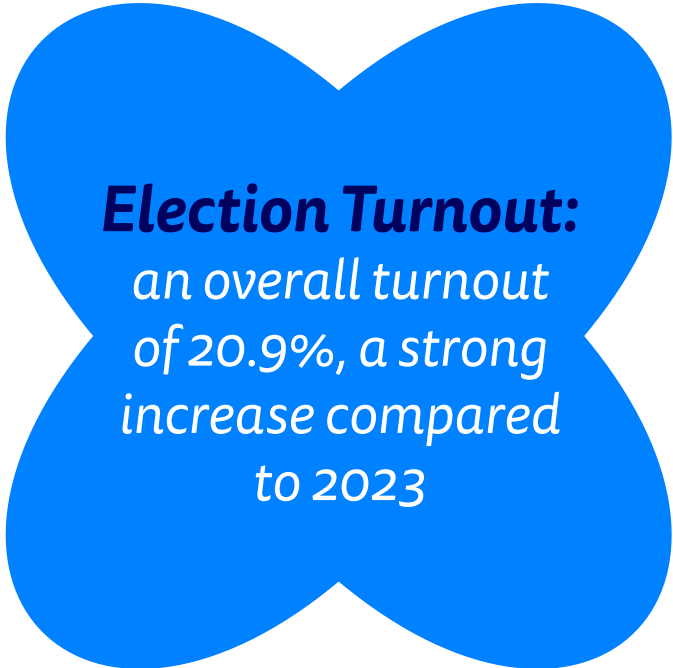
Due to three vacancies in the officer team at the beginning of the academic year, we ran a bye-election in October under our umbrella election brand *Surrey Decides*. The bye-election ran on a streamlined version of the main election timetable, with one week for nominations, and one week for campaigning including a short voting period, and an online Question Time event chaired by an experienced student chair. We received 12 nominations for the three positions available. Each position was contested and all candidates took part in the online Question Time event. 890 students cast at least one vote during the bye-election, casting a combined 1493 votes across both contests.

The nomination process for our main officer elections, began at the start of semester two. This year, we received 97 nominations across our available officer positions, marking an increase of 22 from last year and the highest candidate numbers since 2019. Nominations were particularly strong for Voice and Support Zone Committee, and all Sabb roles were contested. This year, the VP Voice and Union President lead the optional officer training, running a crafters session at the end of the training and providing food for candidates.

In-person Question Time events were again hosted across the Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday night at Rubix, chaired by both new and returning student chairs. Pundits Corner was hosted by the Union President,

and provided commentary in conversation with University and community colleagues. Electronic voting opened after the conclusion of the final debate, promoted across all Union channels.

We significantly improved our presence on campus during voting, hosting voting stalls across campus and encouraging voting through promotion of our prize draw. Turnout in the most contested election contest was 2,567, with 3,502 unique voters casting 23,392 votes cast across all contests. We reached an overall turnout of 20.9%, a strong increase compared to 2023.



**Election Turnout:**  
an overall turnout  
of 20.9%, a strong  
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## AGMS and EGMS

This year, the Voice Zone facilitated 47 Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs) for dormant and new societies and clubs, and to replace resigned signatories. During Annual General Meeting (AGM) season in semester two, 145 valid AGMs took place, 137 of which were self-officiated by outgoing signatories, an increase from 75 self-officiated AGMs in 22-23. The priority for next year is to fully re-design the AGM and EGM election system to improve the process for Union staff and officers, and for group committees.

## Speak Week

In 23-24 we ran two *Speak Week* campaigns, providing students opportunities to provide feedback about their experiences at the University. In November, run in parallel with our strategy student consultation, we gathered 1,596 pieces of feedback from students and held focus groups with 28 students across different levels of study, from first-year undergraduates to PGRs.

In May, we gathered 406 pieces of feedback and had 23 attendees across each faculty in our focus groups. The key priorities for students relating to their experiences with the University are the affordability and accessibility of campus facilities, and improvements to the academic experience at Surrey. Priorities for changes to Union-provided services focused on nightlife; events and venues; and support for clubs and societies. Common themes across feedback for both institutions include: wellbeing support and communication, and support to address the impact of the cost of living crisis.

## Union Strategy Student Consultation

Alongside *Speak Week* in November, the Voice Zone led the Union's student consultation to inform the development of the Union's new strategic plan which launched this year, setting the strategic direction of the Union from 2024 – 2027. Key student groups including *Zone Committees*, the *Equality Network*, *Course Reps*, and *Student Voice Forum* attendees were consulted directly, with all students able to contribute via the insight gathered during *Speak Week*; by answering targeted questions via our social media channels; and at our *Speak Week* outreach stalls. The feedback shared during the consultation helped ensure that the key themes identified from our existing student insight were aligned with the current priorities of our student members.

## Student Equality Network

The *Student Equality Network* is a group of students who are passionate about promoting equality at Surrey, and who help ensure the Union is well-informed about the experiences of the different groups who make up our diverse student community. This year, the *Network* has held monthly meetings where volunteers shared their views and offered feedback which help shape how the Union supports students through their time at university. The *Network* has helped the Voice Zone during *Speak Week* by sharing their feedback to our core questions and consulted on the new Union strategy. As a result of the *Network* meetings, the training for *Course Reps* is currently being reviewed to include more EDI-focused training. Next year we hope to have more consultation with the *Network* and equip them to run their own events and campaigns.

## Disability and Accessibility at Surrey Student Group

The *Disability and Accessibility Group's* purpose is to act as an opportunity for students to discuss issues of accessibility with the Union and with University staff including staff from the Chief Students' Officer's directorate and the University Estates team. The group began meeting in November 2023 and has been an opportunity for students to raise a variety of issues faced by students such as access to campus buildings, disabled toilets, and the accessibility of lecture-capture software. One notable change made by the group is the introduction of a new programme that transcribes lectures for students. Students have also raised a number of accessibility issues on campus which have been dealt with by the Estates team.



*'The key themes identified from our existing student insight, were aligned with the current priorities of our student members.'*



## Financial Resilience

During Semester 2, the University announced measures to reduce spending and improve income generation to account for the financial challenges being faced by Higher Education institutions nationally and to address the difficult financial position of the University. The Voice Zone helped inform the Union's response to these measures – known as the *Financial Resilience Plan* - by gathering student feedback about the changes and organising the passing of a *Financial Resilience* policy at an emergency *Union Forum*. This comprehensive policy set out the actions that the Union would take, to prioritise the protection of the student experience and the representation of student interests in conversation with the University about the implementation of their plan.

## University Projects and Committees

The VP Voice has also made a number of contributions to the student experience through their membership on a number of University committees and as a member of several project working groups. Through *University Education Committee*, Kiara, as VP Voice, has advocated in support of joint Union and OSCAR papers concerning a suite of amendments to the *Student Regulations and Procedures* for the 2024-25 academic year including appeals, complaints and misconduct. Although many of these changes were minor amendments, they ensure that the University consistently remains to be a safe and fair place. Through Senate – The VP Voice has contributed their views on the introduction of the new *Surrey Online Learning* programmes, ensuring that University and Union documents/codes of practice are fit for students completing fully remote learning. The VP Voice has also contributed to more specific projects, including as part of the Union's consultation on the restructuring of the Chief Students' Officer directorate to ensure that all foreseeable student concerns have been addressed in the early stages, ensuring a smooth transition for the new academic year.

As part of her attendance at Stagecoach Buses quarterly meetings, Kiara has also addressed student concerns regarding the reliability of the service and escalated issues students were having with the night bus service, particularly for students living at Hazel Farm.

## Zone Officers

Our Part-Time Zone Officers have also been working hard to represent students this year.

- o **Luana** and **Roshni** helped to organise and promote an *International Students' Day* celebration event in the MySurrey Hive, encouraging students to celebrate their backgrounds and to connect with the international student community at Surrey.
- o **Roshni** has also been working on a project to review the personal tutor scheme, which will continue into next academic year in line with the CSO restructure.
- o **Luana** has worked hard to represent the interests of international students, including partnering with Roshni, and attending the University's *Seamless Student Journey* workshop to highlight student needs. She also set up a new *Module Fair*, sourcing student feedback about their modules within her School to improve module selection for future students.
- o **Archie** did a fantastic job of highlighting key student issues to the local MP and Lib Dem candidate when they visited Surrey, including asking tough questions about prioritising student accommodation in Guildford and increasing student funding in the South East.
- o **Chelsea** has been connecting with other students to discuss ideas for a real-time student support network for students on placement, especially abroad.
- o **Molly** has stepped up this year to attend the FEPS Faculty Education Committee, ensuring that the Union has representation in this meeting and that the student voice is heard at Faculty level.







## Engagement

This year saw great growth for the Activity Zone, with over 9,063 students involved in a form of physical activity and many more engaged in extracurricular ambitions through our societies. This dedication is represented by the 9,541 memberships bought through the Union as well as the hundreds of thousands of volunteering hours committed by our Clubs' committees.

## Team Surrey

Team Surrey has had a great year, jumping an impressive eight spaces on the BUCS leader table from 33 last year to 31. Within this overall improvement, we have also had some key club successes...

## BUCS Successes

- o The Squash M1 team had a very successful year, having been promoted to the Premier Division next season, putting them in the top 8 University teams across the country
- o Polo took part in the SUPA winter nationals this spring, with their novice combined team placing 1st and the M2 team placing 3rd.
- o Fencing came home with 6 medals following their wins at the BUCS Individual Competition in February.
- o Equestrian's B team competed at the BUCS Trophy League Nationals this summer. The team placed 2nd in dressage and 3rd in show jumping, securing an overall 2nd place finish.
- o Cheerleading teams Levels 1 and 3 had another successful year. Level 1 were awarded 3rd at the Future Cheer University Nationals, 1st at the ICC University Nationals and 1st at Legacy Cheer Alpha and Omega.

## Conference Final Winners

- o Surrey Mens 1 Badminton
- o Surrey Men's 2 Rugby
- o Surrey Women's 1 Football
- o Surrey Men's 1 Volleyball
- o Surrey Men's 4 Football
- o Surrey Mixed Golf

## Finished First in their League

Badminton M1: SE Tier 2A	Football M4: SE Tier 5A
Badminton M2: SE Tier 3A	Hockey W1: SE Tier 1
Basketball M1: SE Tier 1A	Hockey M2: SE Tier 4A
Basketball M2: SE Tier 3	Lacrosse W1: SE Tier 1
Cricket M1: SE Tier 1	Rugby W1: SE Tier 1
Cricket M2: SE Tier 2A	Rugby M2: SE Tier 4A
Football M1: SE Tier 1A	Squash M1: SE Tier 1
Football W1: SE Tier 2A	Squash W1: SE Tier 1
Football W2: SE Tier 4A	Volleyball M1: SE Tier 2A

**Team Surrey**  
has had a great  
year, jumping an  
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BUCS leaderboard  
from 33 to 31







**'Team Surrey took on Royal Holloway ...and won for our 12th consecutive year in a row.'**



## International Success

In January two students from Men's Rugby started for Englands U20 squad in a Six Nations warm-up match against Bath Academy. Lucas Schmid started at number eight and scoring with Ben Waghorne at outside centre. Both students are currently enrolled on our Business Management course and represent the university in BUCS for the men's 1XV.

On the international stage, Jemima Hince competed in South Africa as a member of the GB U25 rifle team in March. She competed in the South African National Championships (1st for the Women's category), the U25 Individual World Championships (3rd place), the U25 Team World Championships (1st) and the Long Range World Championships (49th in the world and 3rd in U25).

## DisABILITY Week

*DisABILITY Week* gave students an amazing opportunity to try out disability friendly sports for the After a successful launch in 2022, *DisABILITY Week* gave students another chance this year to try out disability friendly sports at Surrey Sports Park. A key highlight was the Wheelchair Tennis event with high attendance and inspiration for the future of the sport within Team Surrey. at Surrey Sports Park, with the team collaborating with Team Surrey by getting involved and promoting activities such as Boccia, Sitting Volleyball and a very successful turnout for Wheelchair Tennis!

## Forever Surrey Fund

This year, Team Surrey including members from SSP, the Students' Union and VP Activity were part of a Panel with the University Advancement team to decide on funding to support the various clubs and societies on our programme. After some inspiring and exciting submissions, the University kindly funded 11 Clubs and 3 Societies with a total of £52,687 awarded. This ongoing support helps to ensure the long term vision of our student activities.

## Varsity

Varsity returned to Royal Holloway this year, with hundreds of students heading to Egham to compete and support their fellow students. The journey over was worth it though, as Team Surrey won for our 12th consecutive trophy. The event also was followed up with our busiest Rubix event of the year, as all the clubs celebrated their win!

## Gradsport

*Gradsport* returned again this summer to Surrey Sports Park for its 10th year as current students competed against alumni as old friends returned and fierce rivalries were rekindled out on the field. A great success with over 1000 students competing playing 42 fixtures across 26 different sports, team Alumni took the honours this year.



## Female Takeover

*Female Takeover* saw Surrey Sports Park closed to the public for Saturday evening as over 100 women came along to enjoy some inclusive fitness sessions and gym access, without the pressure and stress of the everyday gym experience. From self-defence classes to learning to Powerlift the event has shown to be a success three years running.

## WBC Training

Two *Wellbeing Champion* sessions were run across the year with every Club and Society committing at least one member to be fully trained by our Support Zone team on a variety of skills including - active listening, boundaries and bystander intervention training.

## Union Ball and Colours Ball

*Union Ball* and *Colours Ball* capped off a phenomenal year of success for both the Union and *Team Surrey* with over 500 students present over the two days and numerous awards given out to round off a highly positive year for all those involved in extra curricular activity here at Surrey.

## Employability Week

To continue our support to enhance student employability, the Activity Zone ran several events alongside the University Careers Team in April. These events included free professional headshots, LinkedIn checks and Speed Interviewing. Students also came to our Entrepreneurial and Financial Literacy Workshops, setting them up with their career and future!

## Colour Run

Alongside *Team Surrey* and the *Surrey Moves* campaign, the Activity Zone were involved in two successful Colour Runs which saw over 500 students running through the fields of Surrey Sports Park, whilst covered in paint!

## Team Surrey and Societies Conference

We collaborated with the Sports Park on the *Team Surrey Conference*, helping Club signatories engage with us and network and develop bonds with their fellow peers. The Activity Zone then ran *Societies Conference*, which saw committees engage with essential sessions to improve their skills in running their Societies.

## Manifesto Highlights

### Diversity

1. Increased student participation in sport from marginalised groups – Led on *Female Takeover*, continued *DisABILITY Week* and started the *Diverse Sport Collective*
2. As the Regional Southeast Student Chair at BUCS, the VP Activity championed issues relating to EDI.

### Personal Development:

1. Hosting *Building an Entrepreneur 2024*
2. Setting up a *GGA Entrepreneurship Mini-Market* for students to buy and sell
3. Running an *Employability Week* which included a Professional Headshot session, LinkedIn Checks, a Financial Literacy Workshop and more.

### Participation:

1. Ensuring financial accessibility – added another £4,000 to the Activity Fund
2. Introduced the *Locker Room Talk* and better signposted students to OSCAR which was reassuring.
3. Started an *Activities Day* which brought Activity to our main campus on Stag Hill. This was well attended and students appreciated this. This was a day of fun and games which took out the competitive element which might cause people to shy away from BUCS Sports.





## Regulations and Academic Advice

Our Advice team have supported significant numbers of students through advice and housing, 3,127 cases total, a 10% increase on last academic year. Alongside the high number of extenuating circumstances (535) and appeals cases (688), we have seen a significant increase in the number of students being accused of academic misconduct (866), through the use of AI generated material. This was an anticipated increase and the advice team have worked hard with the University staff teams to ensure that regulations and processes remain fair and transparent to students. The University have agreed to a holistic review of the Academic Misconduct regulations next academic year based on discussions and pressure from our caseworkers.

The Advice team continue to support our Sabbatical Officers with representative consultations on the University regulations and proposing changes to benefit students. This year we have supported changes to the Disciplinary regulations and processes for admission to ensure our campus remains safe.

## University Restructuring and Representation

The Sabbatical Officer team were consulted throughout the University restructuring process, so that student input was considered throughout academic changes and the redesign of services such as Disability and Neurodiversity and the Centre for Wellbeing. These changes provided opportunity for a streamlining of how students contact and interact with support services, as well as staffing structures that are more representative of student needs.

In terms of academic restructures, the VP Support sat on both the Faculty Education Committees for FASS and FHMS, ensuring that student feedback and module changes were addressed. Part of this consultation included the restructured school system in FASS, and supporting the implementation of interdisciplinary modules

## Don't Worry Surrey

The Support Zone has brought exam support to students through events and advice on each teaching campus, as well as for distance learners. Academic Advice was more accessible than ever; we trialled *Advice Drop-Ins* at Manor Park Social as well as early evening *Virtual Quick-Queries*, to support students busy with 9:00-17:00 courses. These were accompanied by new and extremely popular, physical media: table talkers spread throughout study spaces, and A3 exam revision planners.

Many events were also hosted, to support students' wellbeing. *Dog Therapy*, *Crafternoons*, and board game nights gave an outlet for stress, alongside supporting students on a budget through the provision of 2,200 free breakfast bars and 400 free hot drinks. This year, these campaigns were supported by Team Surrey, with sports pop-ups on Stag Hill as well as a *SurreyMoves* challenge over the exam period.

## Consent Course

Previous Sabbatical Officers worked alongside the University to implement the mandatory *Consent Matters* and *Zero Tolerance to Hate* courses. These courses are accessible to every student, and enforced through reminder emails - however completion rates remain low, with 3,211 completions of *Consent Matters* and 4,532 completions of *Zero Tolerance to Hate*. Last year, the VP Support collaborated with



the University and a sexual violence charity, LimeCulture, to develop a more fit-for-purpose, Surrey-specific consent course. This year, the VP Support successfully trialled and delivered this course to over 200 students, through Wellbeing Champion training and student volunteers. Their feedback was largely positive, and their comments were used to tailor language and content to be more accessible and engaging.

With the existing Epigeum consent course ending its contract before the 24-25 academic year, the next steps are to implement the new course fully onto SurreyLearn. Elements of the course require updating due to University restructures, which will be a continuing project shared by the incoming VP Support and President. The advantage of an in-house consent course is that adaptations are simple to make, to be ready for the coming year.

## Wellbeing Weeks

This year, we organised two *Wellbeing Weeks* consisting of 16 free events and eight training opportunities. The first week was dedicated to improving student wellbeing through free events, including outreach to GSA and Manor Park to target students who otherwise feel disconnected from the Union.

The second week was focussed on empowering students to support each other, through opportunities such as Active Listening and *Look After Your Mate* training. The Centre for Psychology supported this campaign by providing two sessions of Mental Health Awareness training, offering shorter in-person and a longer virtual sessions, with each being tailored to different levels of mental health awareness.

Each *Wellbeing Week* also had a *Wellfair*, providing an easy opportunity for students to become familiar with Union, University, and local support services.

## Housing Advice and Housing Awareness Weeks

The team saw an increase in the number of students seeking support for Housing Advice this year, totalling 252. This was due to a shortage of Halls accommodation for first year students on A Level Results day. The advice team, together with Hoods Residential and the VP Support, ran an online webinar to help explain the situation to prospective students, highlight their options and signpost to support.

### **Wellbeing Weeks:**

*This year, we organised two Wellbeing Weeks consisting of 16 free events and 8 training opportunities.*

In August and September, we supported over half of all housing cases. Additionally, the advice team have supported students who were residing at Ash Grove, who were displaced from their accommodation due to incomplete building works. The Union worked to ensure that displaced students were not disrupted in their first months of study.

Feedback from previous years indicated that students were forming housing groups late in the year, making it difficult for student to secure a house. This year, *Housing Awareness Week* ran in early December in collaboration with the Central and Community Zones. We hosted a Housing Fair, bringing local agencies and housing support into Rubix for students to access. A housing webinar was presented by *Hoods Residential*, and house-mate matching events were well-attended at both Hari's Bar and Manor Park Social.



## Wobble Week

Many students find the start of the academic year, especially Freshers' Week, challenging due to time constraints. To provide more opportunities for students to socialise and engage with the Union, the Support Zone offered free daytime events after Freshers' Week, these included: walks around the lake; an animal farm on campus; and *Speed-Mating* events to combat student loneliness. Each of these events were at full-capacity, showing the need for financially accessible social events in those first few weeks of University.

## OSCAR Panels

All Sabbatical Officers sit on a range of panels for the Office of Student Complaints, Appeals, and Regulations (OSCAR). This year, the VP Support served as a panellist on 28 cases including disciplinary, support to study, and academic process review appeal panels.

## Union Disciplinary Outcomes

Previous VP Supports were successfully able to lobby the University into publishing the outcomes of OSCAR disciplinary procedures, to aid transparency. To bring similar transparency to the Union's own disciplinary procedures, outcomes are now published on our website and are available to view here.

## Student Meetings and Advocacy

Over the last year, the VP Support has personally met with 37 students to discuss issues individually affecting them. These meetings provided personalised accounts that could be used to apply pressure for change, such as during the accommodation shortages or when faculties were not providing appropriate academic support.

## Period Poverty Campaign

As part of the *Cost of Living Manifesto*, previous Sabbatical Officers committed to the continuation of a campaign to bring free sanitary product to the Union, and University social spaces. This year, the VP Support successfully collaborated with the largest schools across FASS and FHMS to implement the campaign into academic buildings.

Following this success, the campaign was formalised and adopted wholesale by the University. This meant that, rather than orders being facilitated by the Students' Union, faculty administrators and University facilities fund and provide the free sanitary products. As a result, the campaign has been integrated into over 20 faculty buildings, catering areas, and service areas such as the Library and Hives.

With the administrative load of handling University orders freed up, we have been able to provide more sanitary products in Union spaces. This includes Rubix, the Union reception, and a new dispenser at Manor Park Social.

## Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance

This year, we hosted three *Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance* (SHAG) days. These empowering events serve two functions: to champion safe (and enjoyable) sex, and to share information about sexual health whilst providing free STI testing kits. Following along from previous years' feedback, the sex toy giveaways were adapted to have a greater offering for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Connections with the local NHS Sexual Health services supported the provision of over 600 sexual health testing kits to students during these events. This year also hosted several Sexual Health popups from local charities and NHS groups, bringing awareness and testing to students.





***'Our Advice team have supported...  
3,127 cases total, a 10% increase on  
last academic year..'***





## Library and the Family Room

The VP Support has been consulted alongside the VP Voice about changes to the Library's service provision, including access to academic materials and opening hours. The Sabbatical Officer team were also consulted on the newly-developing *Family Room*, offering an enriching space for student parents to bring their children during the day. This space includes learning resources and games, and is a significant support for student parents during their time at Surrey.

## Nightline

This year's *Nightline* committee have successfully trained over 30 new student Listener volunteers across three training cycles, with some assistance from the VP Support. This increase in volunteer count allowed for the most consistent opening schedule since the pandemic, which is reflected in *Nightline's* increasing number of contacts each night.

This year also saw the printing of the *Nightline* number and website on student cards, making the student-support more accessible. Demand and volunteer-availability was high enough to successfully trial the lines remaining open on Saturday nights, further increasing the provision of support. An opportunity for further service growth comes from the new space secured for a *Nightline* office from the 2024-25 academic year, accomplished thanks to the support of the Chief Operating Officer and Estates team.

## Welfare Watch

Thanks to support from volunteer groups through clubs and societies, *Welfare Watch* was able to open and support the busiest nights of Rubix to look after our student community. Difficulties with recruiting volunteers and training supervisors, however, limited *Welfare Watch's* ability to open for parts of this year. The recruitment of a new student committee, as well as oversight from a Student Support Coordinator, will set up *Welfare Watch* for greater success in the future.

## Student Minds

The *Student Minds* team have continued their support through *Positive Minds* and the *Eating Difficulties Support Group*. Unfortunately, despite the high demand from students for peer support groups, uptake in these groups was quite low, with some sessions being cancelled due to low or zero attendance. A new student committee have been recruited, to promote engagement with next year's cycles. Volunteers from *Student Minds* were also able to support Support Zone campaigns, including *University Mental Health Awareness Day* and by facilitating two of the *Dog Therapy* sessions run through *Wellbeing Weeks* and *Don't Worry Surrey*.



## Wellbeing Champions

This year had 140 students complete the training and register to become *Wellbeing Champions*, which is a decrease compared to last year. Despite the decreased number, this year's cohort has been highly engaged, having consistently raised welfare concerns about members of their Club or Society, as well as seeking guidance on how to better open up conversations about mental health. The training has been refined to be more specific and concise compared to previous years, with positive feedback being shared by returning volunteers. Through *Active Bystander*, *Active Listening*, *Mental Health Disclosures*, and more - our *Wellbeing Champions* have been equipped to support their community.



## Partnerships with Local Charities

The Support Zone works closely with local charities, to bring more support to campus. This year, the *Samaritans* provided year-round support through weekly stalls at the MySurrey Hive and Veterinary School, extending the Union's support provision to Manor Park students. This successful expansion has led to the exploration of pop-ups at GSA, in the 2024-25 academic year.

The *Samaritans* also worked with the Support Zone to provide talks to Clubs and Societies, teaching Active Listening and How to Support Peers in Crisis. The VP Support also featured in a *Samaritans* newsletter to celebrate the partnership, which has resulted in other Universities and Students' Unions across the country connecting with their local *Samaritans* branches. Other partnerships include the NHS Sexual Health team, who provided the 600 free STI test kits accessed by students this year. Connections were also made with local LGBTQIA+ charities, including Pride In Surrey ahead of Guildford Pride in September 2024.

## Manifesto Highlights

Despite the challenging backdrop of the University's restructuring as a result of financial challenges, our VP Support has been able to achieve or make progress on each of their manifesto objectives.

### Affordable Living:

- o The *Guarantor Scheme*, which was historically not fit-for-purpose, was substituted for an external guarantor provider, *Housing Hand*. This has been accessed much more readily by students compared to the University's previous scheme, though this is a temporary measure whilst a fit-for-purpose, internal guarantor scheme can be developed.
- o Financial support through bursaries and the Hardship Fund has been protected, in spite of the difficult economic climate.

### Inclusivity and Accessibility:

- o The Sabbatical Officer team were heavily consulted during the restructuring of the University's professional services, allowing more provision for support through the Disability and Neurodiversity Team.
- o The implementation of *OneSurrey*, collecting disparate departments and contacts into one centralised hub, has been a huge step towards support becoming easier to reach out to and access.
- o The highly active Student Disability and Accessibility Group has served as a forum for discussion between students and staff, resulting in continued improvements to the campus' accessibility.

### Empowering Students

- o Improvements have been made to the LimeCulture Consent Course to keep it up-to-date, and work has been started to implement it onto SurreyLearn for the 2024-25 academic year.
- o The VP Support has worked directly with student communities through being student-facing, enabling for advocacy work such as supporting many Nigerian students who otherwise faced the loss of their registration at Surrey for economic reasons.
- o *Wellbeing Weeks* and student trainings have equipped students with knowledge about Surrey's support services, empowering them to support others as well as themselves.



## Zone Officers

The Support Zone's Part-Time Officers have been vital in providing perspective to the VP Support and Advice team, commenting on a range of issues from Union campaigns to the University restructures.

- o **Isobel Adamyk** has engaged strongly in the Disability and Accessibility forums, providing important perspective and representing students' needs. Isobel's input has been shared with the team developing *AccessAble*, to bring the supporting information up-to-date.
- o **Akeya Herbert** reliably gave input on issues during the weekly Support Zone meetings, and heavily contributed to *Wellbeing Week* to provide support packages to students. She also support Mental Health Awareness Day, as well as a charitable event organised by the Law Society.
- o **Zoe Powell** worked closely with one of the Support Coordinators to review and design better support for alcohol and drug awareness. This project included expertise from the Centre for Wellbeing, and provided resources for Student Minds to implement as part of future support groups. She also worked alongside the Activity Zone to tackle hazing in student Clubs, with many Clubs and Societies making pledges to be haze-free.



# Community Zone

## Freshers' Week

### Moving in

We delivered another successful *Moving-in Weekend* that was supported by volunteers across Stag Hill and Manor Park. We made sure that we gave our new students a warm welcome, as well as providing any help they needed. There were many hand-made signs, funny dances, and lots of glitter from our Angels. We held our annual Angels' Party in Hari's Bar for our volunteers with awards presented to recognise their outstanding efforts in welcoming students to Surrey and to show our appreciation for them.

### Freshers' Fair

In the Marquee we had over 150+ Sports Clubs and Societies in attendance, as well as numerous local businesses, sponsors, charities. The Union stand which we redesigned to make more welcoming and prominent, gave out 1500+ reusable water bottles; pop sockets; tote bags; fans; and trolley coins for free. We had strong attendance and engagement from our students all day, with a quiet hour at the start for our students who prefer a less overwhelming and busy experience. We repeated the entire event for *February Freshers* (Renaming it from Re-Freshers Fair as there are a lot of new arrivals and it is their first fair/Freshers' Week).

### Rubix

We opened Rubix for eight consecutive days over Freshers' Week and hosted popular headline artists such as Mist, Vibe Chemistry, Vikkstar and Yung Filly, as well as providing fun experiences such as *Rockaoke* and *Bingo Lingo*.

## Cultural Events

### One World Week

*One World Week* ran in February and is our annual celebration of culture. At Surrey, we have a diverse community which encompasses many nationalities. The week began with *One World Exhibition* where our Societies showcase their country, and we celebrate Surrey's diverse cultures through food, cultural wear and education. The week ended with *One World Gala* which had 14 societies participate by showcasing a range of traditional dance to students, staff and the local community in University Hall.

## Cost of Living Manifesto

### Community Hub

The *Community Hub* opened in November and stands at the heart of the Students' Union response to students' cost of living crisis. It opened three times a week during term time and provided everything from clothing to Pick and Mix. We were also able to stock unused food items from the University's catering team that could be collected by students twice a week, reducing food waste. Staff and students were encouraged to continue to donate any high-quality unwanted items to our collection trollies, and many bags of donations were received.

We are now working to improve the *Community Hub* with a specific formal wear section for students to have access for interviews/jobs. In the future we hope to launch *Dress for Success*, working with WPO, Employability, Careers and the Money Advice Team, to set up an interview outfit loan scheme to provide students with smart outfits they can feel confident in at job interviews.



**'We opened Rubix for eight consecutive days over Freshers' Week and hosted popular headline artists such as Mist, Vibe Chemistry, Vikkstar and Yung Filly...'**



We also hope to introduce a food co-operative in the next academic year, where students can buy dry food, grains and pulses for cost price, by the gram, with their reusable containers.

## Sustainability Week

In April we collaborated with the University Sustainability Team to host an annual *Sustainability Week* dedicated to raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices. A full week of events saw volunteers get to work on the Community Garden and beehive inspections took place at the new hives on Stag Hill Campus. The University's Grounds Team also shared how they're supporting biodiversity onsite. There was a sold-out Plant Pot Painting Workshop with Craft Soc, book swapping in the Community Hub, clothes swapping at the Thursday Market, a trip to the Wildlife Trust and a screening of *Finite*.

## Spaces

### Rubix

Rubix has experienced its most difficult year to date. *Citrus* has retained a consistent number of attendees, but unfortunately the number of clubgoers on Fridays began to fall, following *Freshers Week*. In response we launched an urban night, *Flirt! Xtra*, followed by a commercial night, *Future*. As student numbers have fallen, we have started to diversify the use of Rubix. For example, we have held a *Raver Tots* event, we have rented Rubix to Italia Conti, GSA and ACM for a *Creative Arts Mixer*. We are trying to tap into the 30+ age range by holding a reunion event *The Big Surrey Night Out*, and we are looking to hold a *Buck and Bull*, Country and Western night, going forward. We will continue to look further a field to make sure we are utilising our nightclub to the fullest.

### Manor Park Social

Manor Park Social (MPS) has continued to be a popular space used by students to hang out, study and dine out. The Thursday Quiz Night has become a firm favourite with a lot of our customers.

### The Lake Bar

The Lake Bar returned for the summer term and weather depending has been open seven afternoons/evenings per week. It hosted a weekly quiz night and an open mic night. Sales increased by 105% on last year which include 100% increase in net profit.

### The Basement

We made some improvements to The Basement to transform it into a better party venue for student clubs and societies to use. We installed new coloured, mappable, LED lights above the dance floor and coloured dome lights in the seating / bar area.

## RAG

The chosen RAG Charities this year were The Royal Surrey County Hospital Charity and Refuge UK. Students ran a *Movember* fundraiser and we once again hosted the Kelly's 10K Run on campus.

## Community Engagement

### Free Fest

*Free Fest* brought the Surrey community together as over 2,000 people (including families and visitors from Guildford), along with University staff and students, attended Stag Hill Campus. The annual arts and music festival, hosted in conjunction with University, proved popular, as the community came together by The Lake to enjoy two days of music, entertainment and food. With the weather set fair, festival goers were treated to an array of live music from local bands and student acts on Saturday and back-to-back movies in the outdoor cinema on Sunday. All activities were free and in addition included yoga sessions and a kids' play zone with bouncy castles.

### Pancake Race

Steve the Stag made his annual appearance at the Guildford Pancake Races on the High Street. He didn't win but he had a lovely time meeting and greeting his young fans.



**'...we had over 150+ Sports Clubs and Societies in attendance, as well as numerous local businesses, sponsors, charities'**





## Union and Colours Ball

Our annual balls were held on 3 and 4 May at G Live. We awarded numerous Societies, Clubs, students and staff for all their hard work and dedication. Our second Volunteering Awards to recognise and celebrate our students' outstanding volunteering achievements were included at the Union Ball. These were two inspiring events to end the year, that celebrated the success of our amazing Surrey community.

## Strictly Come Surrey

We collaborated with the Ballroom and Latin Dance Club (BLDC) to bring back this fun dance competition again. It featured seven couples, with professionals from BLDC and five members of University staff, and two students as our "celebrities". It was a spectacular event held in the Ivy Arts Centre with a live audience and live-streamed online.

## Varsity

In collaboration with the Activity Zone we took over 500 students to Royal Holloway for Varsity. We won for the 13th consecutive year and finished with an after-party at Citrus in Rubix. Students wore Varsity T-shirts their Surrey spirit.

## Volunteering

### Opportunities

We increased our Sustainable Volunteering opportunities to include: more litter picks around campus and in the local area; wildlife conservation; tree planting; building nature reserves; and volunteering in our *Community Hub*.

### Community Garden

Situated by the *Roundhouse* on Stag Hill campus, the garden is a collaborative project between the Union, Chaplaincy and other staff and student volunteers. It was initially created in 2014 but was neglected during the

pandemic, before a team of volunteers started to restore it over the last year. On Wednesday afternoons, guided by University Chaplain, Sarah Ralling, students tend to the plants, sow new ones and pull up the weeds. Beehives have also been installed and volunteer sessions have been held for students interested in becoming beekeepers!



**Strictly Come Surrey**  
was a spectacular  
event held in the Ivy  
Arts Centre with a live  
audience and live-  
streamed online





**SURREY  
STUDENTS'  
UNION**

Union House, Stag Hill, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XH  
[surreyunion.org](http://surreyunion.org)