

Paper for discussion: Draft of the new strategy for the University of St Andrews' Students' Association

The Sabbatical Team would like to bring forward the present paper so that the members of the Student Representative Council can review and provide their feedback on the draft of the new strategy for the Students' Association.

The Students' Association last strategic expired in 2020 and because of other matters arising, such as the pandemic, it was not updated until now.

A strategic plan defines the vision of an organization for its development and aims to set the priorities and projects for the period that it covers. The goals presented are mid to long term and their lifespan will be of three years.

A strategic plan is composed of strategic pillars, also called strategic priorities, which are the major themes that will be prioritized over the lifespan of the strategy. Strategic plans tend to have between 3 and 6 pillars. Our plan has five: Student Experience, Partnership, Sustainability, Postgraduate Engagement and Volunteer Development. Each strategic pillar has a vision, which sets the wider route for what we want to achieve. Between three and five goals are also featured on each pillar, these aim to bring specific projects that will allow us to achieve our vision. Finally, each goal brings forward a method, which outlines the action that we will take to ensure that the goal is achieved.

We are looking for student officers' feedback on our goals (full circle bullet points) and methods (empty circle bullet points). We want to know their opinion on whether these are the right ways in which we will be able to fulfill the vision for each of our pillars.

Student Experience

Pillar Definition: The Students' Association role is to be the hub of student experience by facilitating representation, events, and activities that contribute positively to student life and the community of St Andrews.

Vision: We will expand and diversify the provision of activities, services and events to enhance the student experience.

- We will diversify our commercial events and activities to appeal to a wider range of students and provide reliable funding for our student-led activities.
 - Developing a commercial strategy with a prior market study that allows us to evaluate the areas where expansion and improvement are required for our commercial services.
- We will develop a strong service that connects students with external volunteering opportunities within the local community.
 - Creating a department within our structures that looks after the projects done together with the community.
- We will increase awareness of student representation within the Association and the impact of our work on student experience.
 - Increasing our communication with students about the work of our departments, representatives, and subcommittees.
- We will increase our interactions with our Alumni, looking for their expertise, support, and fundraising where possible.
 - Reaching out more to our alumni with regular updates on our activities and presenting opportunities for alumni to engage with our community
- We will improve the promotion of our support services (such as Help Hub and Advocacy) and our ability to deliver them safely and efficiently.
 - Devising a strategy that reviews our support services, outlining the areas for improvement and setting publicity targets to ensure that the student population is aware of their existence and benefits.

Partnership

Pillar definition: Partnerships between the Association and external organizations involve working together to achieve common goals for the benefit of the student voice and experience.

Pillar vision: We will strengthen our current partnerships and develop new ones with the University, the local community, and other organizations across the UK to increase the range of services that we deliver for our students.

- We will be regarded as an attractive and sought-after partner by other Students' Associations, charities, and local businesses.
 - Ensuring we are operating at an outstanding level and are being recognized by external bodies.
- We will seek new partnership opportunities with student-experience-oriented groups and departments of the University.
 - Reaching out to more Student Unions who we are not already engaged with as part of our Northern Services partnership.
- We will ensure all our partnerships are sustainable and valuable.
 - Ensuring continuity of partnerships across different sabbatical cohorts by strengthening handovers.
- We will strengthen our partnership with the University.
 - Creating a long-term partnership agreement with the University that extends beyond sabbatical cohorts' terms and demonstrates a clear direction for our relationship.

Pillar description: For us, sustainability is not just about our environmental impact, but it also encompasses ensuring the longevity of the organisation through policies that look after our finances, workload and employability for our permanent staff, part-time staff, sabbatical officers and interns.

Pillar Vision: We will reduce our environmental footprint, secure our financial stability and improve our staff's working conditions so that they remain sustainable.

- We will ensure that our building and operations are as environmentally friendly as possible.
 - Reducing our carbon footprint and minimizing waste production.

- We will create a culture that advocates for environmental sustainability both in the Students' Association and the University.
 - Ensuring environmental sustainability is embedded within our operational processes and representational agenda.

- We will ensure that the Students' Association is a financially sustainable organization.
 - Striking a balance between commercial affordability and sustainability so that our expenditure does not exceed our income.

- We will ensure that the workload and expectations for our permanent staff, sabbatical officers, and interns becomes sustainable.
 - Assessing the feasibility of these groups' workloads and exploring a review of our permanent staff structures to address current pressures.

- We will be regarded as the best employer in town for students working part-time jobs.
 - Becoming a Real Wage Employer, providing adequate training for our part-time staff and continuing our flexibility with student zero-hour-staff members' availability during deadline season.

Pillar description: Over 10% of our student body is postgraduate students, who are either taught or research-based. It is imperative that we represent and respond to the needs of our postgraduates, focusing on them in equal measure to our undergraduates.

Pillar Vision: We will improve the engagement of postgraduate students by developing a whole representation system that meets the needs of this diverse community.

- We will integrate postgraduate positions within our current systems of representation to ensure that the postgraduate voice is heard from both taught and research students.
 - Producing a report that assesses the suitability of creating post-graduate-specific positions within our existing structures such as sub-committees and sabbatical team.
- We will adapt and/or create events and activities tailored to PG interests.
 - Improving our consultation methods to enquire what postgraduates want to see regarding our events and implementing actions that address these concerns in an effective manner.
- We will address PG students' support needs.
 - Obtaining feedback from post-graduates about their support needs and adapting our support services to address them.
- We will develop a stronger partnership with St Leonard's College to strengthen both the academic and extra-curricular experience of postgraduate students.
 - Signing a partnership agreement with St Leonard's College outlining the responsibilities and support mechanisms that we will build together for postgraduate students.

Pillar Description: Only a handful of Association staff are employees (permanent staff, sabbatical officers and interns), the Association is predominantly made up of student volunteers who execute everyday operations of representation, activities and events. Through these roles, the Students' Association provides a unique opportunity for our students to develop a diverse set of skills and expertise that improves their confidence and allows them to explore who they are, in a way that is critical to their future lives, not just their careers.

Pillar vision: We want to increase the value that volunteering positions provide in terms of both professional and personal development by improving training, increasing support from our permanent staff, and constantly striving to ensure that these positions develop new skills and experiences that will be of life-long value. Moreover, we will ensure that the work and contributions of our volunteers get properly recognised.

- We will improve the training of our volunteers so that it provides them with the necessary tools to perform their role.
 - Developing a general overlapping training programme for our volunteers and ensuring that it is delivered on a regular basis to a high standard.
- We will deliver a reward framework that recognises and motivates student volunteers.
 - Reviewing the rewards and awards system for our volunteers to find ways we can raise their value to motivate volunteers more.
- We will improve the support provided for our student volunteers by permanent staff and sabbatical officers.
 - Expanding the use of systems such as MSL to improve the staff's and sabbatical team's ability to monitor the tasks volunteers are carrying out, their engagement and the areas in which they might need greater support.
- We will increase the opportunities for professional development that we provide for our students.
 - Assigning a member of our staff to facilitate the engagement of volunteers with development opportunities through different channels such as external conferences and training programmes or CEED modules
- We will make our volunteering programmes more inclusive to encourage the involvement of students from all backgrounds
 - Identifying the barriers that prevent students from engaging with volunteering, especially students from underrepresented groups. Once identified, working to remove/ tackle these barriers.