



STRATEGY 2018-2023 EXCEED | ACHIEVE | IMPACT



STRATEGIC PLAN INTRODUCTION

2018 MARKS THE BEGINNING OF OUR NEW FIVE YEAR STRATEGY.

We've identified the most important things we need to achieve going forward, and the levers and resources we have and will need to make these things happen. We have also assessed how the landscape we are working in might change over the course of the next strategy, and thought about how we can draw upon our core capabilities to push through change and deliver our goals.

The 2013-2018 strategy was about turning UWLSU around and building a workable relationship with UWL based on trust and a shared vision.

We focussed on putting in place mechanisms to strengthen governance and financial decision making, and being properly representative of students, by lifting engagement from 5% to 80%.

We achieved this by ensuring the student voice was present in key decisions impacting student learning; offering a social programme to students that met or exceeded the experience of their peers at other institutions; by helping students when they were in need or at risk of dropping out; and lifting the expectations and aspirations of our students.

THE 2018-2023 STRATEGY IS ABOUT BUILDING FROM THIS SOLID FOUNDATION, TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND ENSURE A TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCE FOR OUR MEMBERS

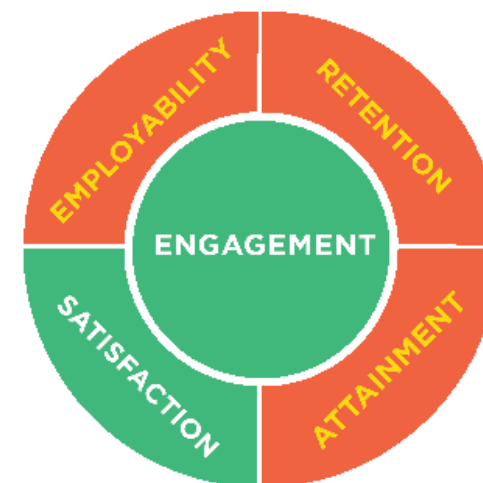


The 2018-2023 strategy is about building from this solid foundation, to sustain success and ensure a truly transformative student experience for our members. This strategy focusses on achieving ambitious outcomes in five key areas that our members and stakeholders have told us matters the most to them.

They are: **ENGAGEMENT;** **RETENTION;** **ATTAINMENT;** **SATISFACTION** and **EMPLOYABILITY.**

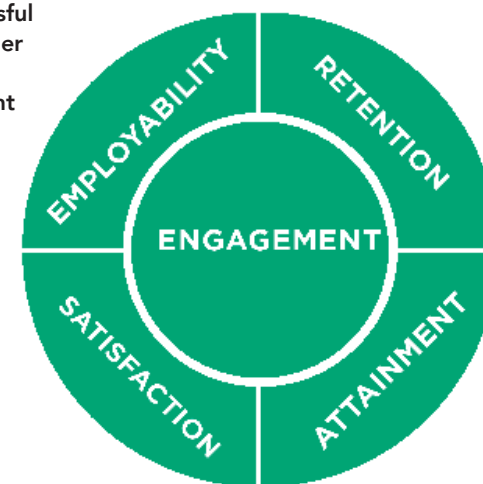
While this agenda shifts us beyond the scope of a traditional SU, it speaks to the priority of our members and our ambition to shift perceptions about what an SU is and what it can achieve.

To ensure we achieve our ambitions, we will report our progress to our Trustees quarterly and review our plan annually; seeking endorsement to progress to the next year of delivery; or recommending any changes required to correct or enhance our trajectory.



2018

In 2018 UWLSU achieved 80% student engagement and we were ranked in the top three institutions for student satisfaction in the UK. We now aim for the same successful outcomes in our other key focus-areas: retention, attainment and employability.



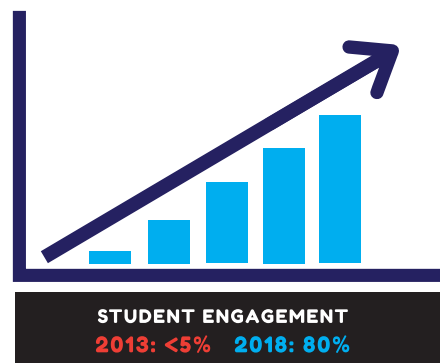
2023

OUR STORY

In 2013 both organisations set out an ambitious challenge: to demonstrate that a modern university, serving a student population with a range of needs that differ from those of the traditional idea of a student, could not only meet those specific needs, but also deliver an excellent education experience for them.

To make this happen, we sought to engage with as many students as possible. We listened to their concerns, supported them in their learning and enhanced their student experience.

Various external metrics over the last five years demonstrate that our hard work and commitment to excellence has paid off:



THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON STUDENTS' UNION (THE SU) AND THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON HAVE SHARED A REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS...

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> **The SU has moved from near the very bottom of the league tables for SU's, to the Top 3 in the UK.**

> **Awarded Student's Union of the Year.**

> **Engaged with 80% of the student community.**

> **Achieved top results for student satisfaction.**

At the same time:

> **The University has achieved TEF Silver status.**

> **Moved over 40 places in the University league tables.**

> **Achieved employment outcomes for students at 98%.**



THE SECTOR

Our results have been achieved in the context of a range of societal barriers and structural challenges in the higher education sector, including:

- > Limited evidence of the widening participation agenda being demonstrated by most of the UK's most prestigious universities, which are still predominantly made up of students from well supported backgrounds.
- > High costs of living, which limits participation in education for students from financially challenged backgrounds, who have to support family or work.
- > More BAME students entering higher education than ever before, but the continued presence of a substantial gap in completion between BAME and white students.
- > A university degree being viewed as essential for the modern workplace, resulting in higher levels of participation, but presenting significant challenges to deliver programmes for the capability levels of students entering through reduced entry or pathway options.
- > Employers placing higher value on graduates who attend prestigious institutions than those who attend modern ones.

>> We've reviewed the implementation of our last strategy and, in doing so, reflected on what worked well, what could be improved upon and what is going to help us achieve the next set of outcomes for our members. This process included consultation with students through school, course and student staff representatives, our entire staff team, Trustees, representatives from the sector and staff from UWL.





THE LANDSCAPE

THE LANDSCAPE IN WHICH WE, UWL AND OUR MEMBERS OPERATE IS EXPERIENCING A PERIOD OF UNPRECEDENTED CHANGE THAT COULD IMPACT ON OUR WORK, INCLUDING:

BREXIT

which could reduce the number of students from the European Union; impact on the volume and availability of scholarships and grants; and impact on income to UWL.

FEE REVIEW

which could change the way UWL receives its primary income and in turn impact our operating grant income. It could also impact negatively on students or increase their cost of living pressures and their ability to participate in our social or commercial trading activities.

OFFICE FOR STUDENTS

who could implement changes which impact the way students participate in higher education and change the role of SU's.

JOB MARKET CHANGES

as a result of changes to the economy that could result in different graduate capabilities, either enhancing or restricting the employment prospects of our members.

OUR VISION TO 2023

TO DELIVER A TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCE THAT RESULTS IN UWL GRADUATES BEING EQUIPPED WITH THE SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND RESILIENCE NECESSARY TO DETERMINE THEIR FUTURES AND FULFIL THEIR LIFE GOALS

OUR CHALLENGE

TO CEMENT OUR POSITION AS SECTOR LEADERS

Our challenge is to maintain our success in student satisfaction and engagement, deepen our partnership with UWL to contribute to the delivery of outcomes that benefit our members, and continue to change the perception of what a SU can achieve in a modern university.

To succeed, we will need to continue to be focussed on engagement and satisfaction, but to also undertake activity that improves the retention, attainment and ultimately the employability of our members.

We will need to continue to innovate and ground our work in the real needs of our students' experience, continuing to provide students with opportunities that reflect and celebrate the diverse nature of our student body.

OUR AIMS

ENGAGE

- To engage students in all aspects of university life
- To represent the diversity of our student body

ACHIEVE

- To enhance continuation and completion rates of students engaged in SU-led activity
- To enhance the attainment of students engaged in SU-led activity

SUCCEED

- To improve satisfaction to 85%+
- To improve the employability of UWL students

OUR VALUES

INCLUSIVE:

We create an environment which enables engagement and participation for all, and understand the positive impact that this will have on the diversity of our membership.

INFORMED:

We understand the positive impact a students' union can have and seek out evidence-based practices to make informed decisions.

COLLABORATIVE:

We know that our staff, members and partners are our strongest asset and work in partnership with students and stakeholders to achieve our goals.

COURAGEOUS:

We will continue to challenge the assumptions and redefine the perception of what a students' union can achieve in a modern university.

INTEGRITY:

We act in the best interests of our members, hold ourselves to account and utilise our resources effectively, efficiently and equitably.

DRIVEN:

We are sector leaders, are highly performing and are committed to best practice and continuous improvement.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Delivering a truly transformative student experience will require us to work differently, focussing on exceeding, achieving and impacting performance on five strategic objectives:

ENGAGEMENT
RETENTION
ATTAINMENT
SATISFACTION
EMPLOYABILITY

UWLSU acknowledge that the ability to achieve their strategic objectives is reliant on:

“A HIGH-PERFORMING, HIGHLY ENGAGED STAFF TEAM, ABLE TO ACHIEVE TARGETS, WHICH REPRESENTS AND VALUES DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES”

and

AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH, FINANCIAL STABILITY AND COMPLIANT PRACTICE.

A TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE...

Through the successful delivery of our last strategy, we've shown it's possible to have an excellent students' union in a modern university. As we embark on our next chapter of success, we are more motivated than ever to reach the goals outlined in this strategy and deliver a truly transformative educational experience.

Despite having a five-year strategy, our core funding is allocated on an annual basis from UWL and is therefore also vulnerable to change.

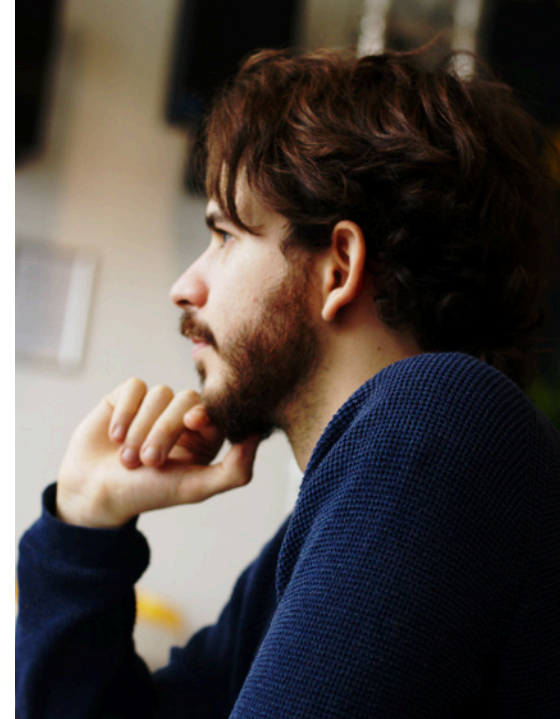
Taking into account the uncertainty of the landscape ahead, we have put in place a range of measures to help us weather the storm or capitalise on the opportunity we may face, including:

- Implementation of a project management framework that requires every piece of work to be put through a rigorous evaluation process that tests the rationale being proposed and the method of delivery to ensure maximum efficacy of our resources.
- Enhancing the partnership between UWL and the SU through formalising the participation of Sabbatical Officers and SU staff in a range of UWL decision making processes and committees.
- Maintaining an income-to-staff-cost ratio of 50% that ensures we can respond to changes in funding without needing to radically reduce staff.

- Forecasting growth in our commercial provision from Year 2 of this strategy via growth in café, bar and catering trading, to increase our income outside of our UWL funding.
- Increasing our financial reserves to reflect the scope of our provision and mitigate against trading risks.
- Stabilising an annual target surplus at £35,000 or more and a zero debt position.
- Developing a Workforce Plan in Year 1 of the strategy to provide greater clarity around succession planning and workforce development.



- Continuing to execute our comprehensive risk management framework.
- Shifting to a financial management model that includes the provision of services from an external accountant to peer review on processes on a regular basis, along with the continuation of external auditing.
- Maintaining outstanding levels of quality assurance through external accreditation processes including Food Safety Standards, the Advice Quality Standard, Best Bar None, NUS Green Impact and Investors in People.



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ENGAGEMENT

STUDENTS CAN ENGAGE IN ALL ASPECTS OF UNIVERSITY LIFE

Achieving 80% engagement across our student body is no longer the goal – it's the baseline from which we launch into the next five years. We've achieved 80% student engagement, but we now need to ensure we truly reach 80% of the diverse student groups that make up our student body.

Whether that be a students' ethnicity, gender, parental status, age, disability, mode of study or school of choice: 80% will mean 80%. We'll design and deliver activities and opportunities for engagement that allow all students to get the most out of their student experience, accessing everything that the university experience has to offer and activating the cultural capital of their peers.

Opportunities to engage are the front door to opportunities to build strong lasting relationships, and the agency and resilience needed to succeed in life at university and beyond. We will enable students to build vibrant and diverse communities in ways and places that work for them.

OUR FOCUS TO 2023

- We will continue to develop innovative opportunities for student engagement
- We will continue to take activities to the student, in spaces and places that work for them
- We will partner with UWL to amplify the Student Voice and shape course content
- We will strive to deliver activities that engage all students equally..



OUR MEASURES FOR SUCCESS

- E1** Exceed 80% student engagement in SU activity
- E2** Achieve representative student demographic group engagement
- E3** Impact - Students report that UWLSU helps students engage in all aspects of university life

UWL ACHIEVEMENT 2023 COMMITMENT LINK

A truly transformative educational experience:

- > Ensure the 'student voice' is always prioritised and remains one of the best in the country
- > Continue to work closely with the SU to ensure maximum engagement with all students



RETENTION

STUDENTS CAN OVERCOME CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVE THEIR QUALIFICATIONS

Our members come to UWL to achieve a degree that offers them greater choice and control over their future and career. Engagement in university life improves likelihood of retention and completion, but traditional opportunities to engage are not always accessible to our students.

Financial stress, competing priorities and conflicting responsibilities are real issues for many of our students and can impact their ability to study, or become barriers to successfully completing their degrees.

These factors affect students in different ways. We will ensure students can access the range of advice and services available to overcome these challenges and engage in activities that build the resilience needed to succeed in ways and places that work for them.

OUR FOCUS TO 2023

- We will develop, implement and target activities that have a demonstrable impact on improving retention.
- We will evidence the impact of engagement in extra-curricular activity and improved retention.
- We will work in partnership with UWL to increase engagement with UWL student support services and share our methodologies for measuring success.
- We will build the case for SU engagement in relation to retention and reducing inequality of life chances for our members.



OUR MEASURES FOR SUCCESS

R1 Exceed UWL retention rates for students engaged in SU-led extracurricular activity

R2 Achieve 60%+ engagement in SU-led extracurricular activity

R3 Impact – Students report that UWLSU helps students overcome challenges and achieve their qualifications

UWL ACHIEVEMENT 2023 COMMITMENT LINK

A truly transformative educational experience:

- > Enhance continuation and completion rates to 85% or above



ATTAINMENT

STUDENTS CAN SUCCEED IN THEIR STUDIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

A sense of achievement brings the confidence to envisage a future where students are able to become leaders and determine their future. The innate social injustice built into the HE system, as seen through the BME attainment gap, increases the risk of some UWL students not fully realising this potential and ongoing contribution to society.

Representative student demographic engagement and improved retention is not enough; students should have equal opportunities to receive a top degree award regardless of personal circumstance. UWL should provide an environment where students are truly able to succeed, and where the inequalities that are built into the system are erased.

We will empower students to redress this imbalance through influence, representation and opportunity to enhance standards in teaching quality, course organisation & management, and in support mechanisms across all schools.

OUR FOCUS TO 2023

- We will develop, implement and target activities that have a demonstrable impact on improving attainment.
- We will evidence the impact of engagement in extracurricular activity and improved attainment.
- We will ensure our engagement reaches students in ways that enable all students to realise their full potential and succeed in their studies.
- We will understand the challenges students face and design activities that work in partnership with the University to amplify the Student Voice and improve course content.



OUR MEASURES FOR SUCCESS

A1 Exceed UWL attainment rates for students engaged in SU-led extracurricular activity

A2 Achieve 80%+ UWL staff recognition that SU activity has a positive impact on student experience

A3 Impact – Students report that UWLSU helps students succeed in their studies and qualifications

UWL ACHIEVEMENT 2023 COMMITMENT LINK

A truly transformative educational experience:

- > Improve the attainment of BME students



SATISFACTION

STUDENTS ARE HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH THEIR OVERALL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

If students feel their voice is heard and that they have agency over their course and learning, they are more likely to succeed. At any university, teaching is at the centre of satisfaction. Poor teaching – or the perception of it – will lead to dissatisfied students, regardless of the quality of the rest of their student experience.

The role of the 'student voice' in actively shaping course content and influencing teaching remains a key motivator to ensuring student satisfaction. An enhanced student experience, offering engagement, agency, support, activity and the opportunity to build resilience is where the SU can move someone's experience from satisfactory to excellent.

We will ensure that our 'student voice' remains at the centre of everything we do, and strive to maintain our position as one of the top Students' Unions in the country for student satisfaction.

OUR FOCUS TO 2023

- We will strengthen our partnership with course teams, reaching all students and schools to deliver the same excellent standard of experience.
- We will ensure the student voice is at the core of the design and development of activities that enhance the educational experience.
- We will build evidenced based practices and evaluation methodologies into our programming and services to increase satisfaction and demonstrate our impact.
- We will seek out new ways of understanding what works for our students, speaking directly to the student body and continually improving our services and offer.



OUR MEASURES FOR SUCCESS

S1 Exceed 80% satisfaction annually (NSS Q26)

S2 Achieve 85% satisfaction (NSS Q26) by 2023.

S3 Impact - Students report that they are highly satisfied with their overall university experience

UWL ACHIEVEMENT 2023 COMMITMENT LINK

A truly transformative educational experience:

- > Improve overall satisfaction rates to 85%+ in all categories.

E

EMPLOYABILITY

STUDENTS CAN ENTER A WELL-PAYING JOB IN A FIELD OF THEIR CHOICE WITH A CAREER PATHWAY

Strong employment outcomes come from more than just high levels of achievement, and success in the workplace and in a career is about more than just a degree. Graduates trade on the perceived value of the university they studied at, and can face structural inequality within the employment market around race, gender, class, sexuality, mental health and disability.

A well-paying job, in a career of their choice, is the return a student should receive for their investment in both themselves and in UWL. In return, the UWL should receive the recognition and reputation deserved for its unique links to industry, vocational nature of its courses and commitment to creating a diverse, qualified and highly skilled workforce for the future.

UWL students should have the same opportunity to exceed in a career of their choice as a student leaving a top university. We will support our students to graduate into the job market with the networks, attributes and strengths needed to empower them with greater choice over their careers.

OUR FOCUS TO 2023

- We will build the skills and experiences necessary for students to maximise their opportunity to complete and gain employment in a field of their choice.
- We will develop the evidence base for engagement activities and provide resources and skills that will enhance the employability and resilience of our students.
- We will strive to provide opportunities for employment of students in the delivery of SU activity, and directly employ and recruit UWL graduates where we can.
- We will lead by example, ensure diversity and equality of opportunity are at the heart of our recruitment and staff and model this for the sector.



OUR MEASURES FOR SUCCESS

EM1 Exceed 80% graduate employment for Student Staff and Sabbs

EM2 Achieve a workforce that represents our student demographic

EM3 Impact – Students report that UWLSU helps students enter a well-paying job with a career pathway

UWL ACHIEVEMENT 2023 COMMITMENT LINK

Provide exceptional work-related career opportunities:

- > Improve graduate employability to 80%
- > Improve overall employability to 100%

UWLSU	OUR STRATEGIC KPIS & IMPACT MEASURES	UWL ACHIEVEMENT 2023 COMMITMENT LINK
ENGAGEMENT	Students can engage in all aspects of university life	A truly transformative educational experience
E	E1> Exceed 80% student engagement in SU activity E2> Achieve representative student demographic group engagement E3> Impact - Students report that UWLSU helps students engage in all aspects of university life	> Ensure the 'student voice' is always prioritised and remains one of the best in the country > Continue to work closely with the SU to ensure maximum engagement with all students
RETENTION	Students can overcome challenges and achieve their qualifications	A truly transformative educational experience
R	R1> Exceed UWL retention rates for students engaged in SU-led extra-curricular activity R2> Achieve 60%+ engagement in SU-led extracurricular activity R3> Impact – Students report that UWLSU helps students overcome challenges and achieve their qualifications	> Enhance continuation and completion rates to 85% or above
ATTAINMENT	Students can succeed in their studies and qualifications	A truly transformative educational experience
A	A1> Exceed UWL attainment rates for students engaged in SU-led extracurricular activity A2> Achieve 80%+ UWL staff recognition that SU activity has a positive impact on the student experience A3> Impact – Students report that UWLSU helps students succeed in their studies and qualifications	> Improve the attainment of BME students
SATISFACTION	Students are highly satisfied with their overall student experience	A truly transformative educational experience
S	S1> Exceed 80% satisfaction annually (NSS Q26) S2> Achieve 90% satisfaction (NSS Q26) by 2023 S3> Impact - Students report that they are highly satisfied with their overall university experience	> Improve overall satisfaction rates to 90%+ in all categories
EMPLOYABILITY	Students can enter a well-paying job with a career pathway	Provide exceptional work-related career opportunities
E	Em1> Exceed 80% graduate employment for Student Staff and Sabbs Em2> Achieve a workforce that represents our student demographic Em3> Impact – Students report that UWLSU helps students enter a well-paying job in a field of their choice with a career pathway	> Improve graduate employability to 80% > Improve overall employability to 100%

THE SECTOR



"THE SU HELPED TO MAKE MY COURSE MORE ENGAGING AND IT MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE TO MY GRADES TOO."

"THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I DIDN'T THINK I WOULD GET THROUGH MY COURSE DUE TO LIFE ISSUES BUT THE SU TEAM HELPED ME GET BACK ON TRACK AND FINISH."

"I GOT INVOLVED IN SU EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES WHILE I STUDIED AND MADE NEW FRIENDS AND LEARNT NEW SKILLS."

"I WAS A MEMBER OF THE GYM AND THE NETBALL TEAM WHILST I WAS STUDYING. GETTING FIT AND MEETING NEW PEOPLE REALLY HELPED ME TO STAY FOCUSED ON MY STUDIES"

"I NEVER DOUBTED THAT THE SU WAS ON MY SIDE AND THAT THE SABBATICAL OFFICERS WERE ALWAYS PUTTING STUDENTS' INTERESTS, FRONT AND CENTRE."

"WORKING IN THE SU GAVE ME REAL LIFE JOB SKILLS AND THE EXPERIENCE MADE ME MUCH MORE CONFIDENT APPLYING FOR GRADUATE JOBS."