

## **Strategic Operating Plan 2019-2022**

### **The context:**

RUSU is a student-led charity which exists to support students and enhance their University experience.

### **RUSU's Values:**

- We are accountable to our members
- We aim to provide inclusive services and facilities
- We are a dynamic forward thinking organisation
- We act with integrity.

### **RUSU's Charitable Status:**

RUSU's objects are the advancement of education of students at the University of Reading for the public benefit by:

- Promoting the interests and welfare of students at the University of Reading during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students;
- Being the recognised representative channel between students and the University of Reading and any other external bodies; and
- Providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its students.

### **RUSU's Legal Status**

RUSU is a students' union within the meaning of the Education Act 1994. RUSU is devoted to the educational interests and welfare of its student members.

RUSU will seek at all times to:

- ensure that the diversity of its student membership is recognised and that equal access is available to all student members of whatever origin or orientation;
- pursue its aims and objectives independent of any political or religious groups; and
- pursue equal opportunities by taking positive actions within the law to facilitate participation of groups discriminated against by society.

## RUSU's Student Leadership

RUSU is a student led organisation whose direction and focus is informed by the views of both the following elected and appointed representatives:

- Trustee Board
  - Diversity Officer, Welfare Officer, President, Education Officer & Activities Officer.
  - Elected Student Trustees
  - Appointed Student Trustees
  
- Part Time Officers
  - BAME, International, Women, Environment & Ethics, Mature, Disabled, PGT, PGR, LGBTQ+, Trans
  
- NUS Conference Delegates
  - Lead Conference Delegates (RUSU President, LGBTQ+ Officer, Women's Officer, Trans Officer)
  - Elected Conference Delegates
  
- Academic Representatives
  - School Reps
  - Course Reps
  - Periodic Review Panellists
  - New Programme Scrutiny Panellists
  
- Student Activity Groups
  - Sports Presidents
  - Society Presidents
  - Student Volunteers
  - JCR Committee Members
  - Student Media Committee Members
  
- Student Voice Members
  - All Student Meeting
  - Change It Policy & Campaigns Votes
  - Officer Scrutiny Sessions
  - Student Voice attendees
  - Referenda
  - Market Research & Focus Groups

## Assumptions / Challenges to be considered in the next 3 years:

- A reduction in the availability of student numbers (due to declining birth rate/Brexit impact) means the University is competing in a smaller pool to increase its student numbers in order to maintain its status quo. RUSU's role is to ensure that this does not have a negative impact on the student experience with the University or RUSU. Additionally, RUSU needs to consider how scalable our operation is and what requirements RUSU will need to operate in this environment.
- The impact of TEF/ Periodic Quality Processes will have resource implications for RUSU for the Academic Representation department and the student representatives.
- The impact of Government policy on Higher Education e.g. the future of the Augur Review report / Office for Students.
- The University and RUSU will continue to be impacted by student behaviour on and off campus. Students will want to continue to socialise off campus and in town centre venues but this is a reputational risk that needs to be managed.
- During the timeframe of the plan the future of the Malaysia campus and the resource implications on the University will be clarified.
- NUS will return to stability and will provide the support & guidance required.
- Students are becoming more discerning with the way they spend their money, RUSU needs to continue to ensure diversity in events and services and review & maintain/develop accessibility to our services.
- We need to review, change and adapt to the most appropriate ways of engaging & communicating with students considering the changes in technology or communication channels. Maintain awareness of changes in priorities for Gen Z students.
- Living costs for students and staff including accommodation will continue to rise and may be impacted by local factors e.g. Crossrail.
- Future of representation of students at Reading – RUSU needs to ensure that it continues to be recognised as the representative channel on campus for both UG & PG students.
- The NSS results and how we work to improve or influence the factors impacts on our relationship with key stakeholders and our members.

### Our Strategic Aims

- A Promoting the interests and welfare of students at the University of Reading during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students
- Supporting our Student Representatives and representing our students' interests
  - Improving the welfare of our students
  - Advising our students
- B Being the recognised representative channel between students and the University of Reading and any other external bodies
- Influencing University Strategy
  - Campaigning for policy change
  - Improving Community Relations and Relationships
- C Providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its students.
- Providing Extra-Curricular Activities
  - Supporting Personal Development and Volunteering Opportunities
  - Providing Social Space to encourage interaction
  - Providing forums for discussion and debate
- D Championing Inclusivity
- E Promoting Environmental Sustainability**

## Promoting the interests and welfare of students at the University of Reading during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students

A1) Supporting our Student Representatives and representing our students interests:

### To understand their role

- Understanding of what RUSU does
- Promote what RUSU can offer to student groups
- Clarity about the conduct required for the role of student representative
- Understanding about their role within the organisation

### To deliver their role

- Ongoing Support
- Promotion of wins
- Feedback method
- Progress trackers

### To ensure their roles remain relevant

- Raise awareness of the variety of roles.
- Develop a process for ensuring the remit is relevant to the needs of the diverse membership.
- Develop a process for reviewing the impact of the roles in both the University committee structure and RUSU student fora.

### To remain engaged

- Events that develop employability
- Feedback method and closing the feedback loop
- Develop a consistent reward and recognition process
- Work with the Uni to develop an externally recognised qualification
- Staff support
- Implement Student Representatives ideas

Key Measures of success:

- Handover processes between individual roles / committees
- Attendance at training and ongoing engagement with RUSU
- Tailored reward and recognition scheme
- Development of external qualification
- Improved survey feedback – NSS, internal surveys, market research.

### **Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, University, RUSU staff

### **Department Plan link:**

Representation, Student Activities, Support Services – Training, Marketing

Promoting the interests and welfare of Students at the University of Reading during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising Students.

A2) Improving the welfare of our students:

By raising awareness

- Continue to promote the existence of mental health issues within the student community
- Promotion of existing services within RUSU, University and locally as appropriate
- Deliver campaigns to develop policy to address welfare needs of members
- Raise awareness of general student well-being
- Review the impact of the University Welfare Officer role on RUSU & the elected officer role.
- Reporting system for concerns

Developing resources/partnership approach

- Develop RUSU's training for student representatives
- Develop training for RUSU staff team / student staff team to signpost for support.
- Lobby University to provide the appropriate resources for the current and future student population
- Develop links to external providers
- RUSU website
- Students as partners in their academic career

Developing what we can do:

- Review the impact of the University finances will have on the services offered to students.
- Planning / facilitating activities or provision during vacation / reading weeks.
- Co-ordinate joint student academic society collaboration

Key Measures of success:

- Positive feedback on student welfare provision.
- NSS response rate
- Student staff attendance at joint training sessions (Be a Mate)

**Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, University, RUSU staff, PTO's

**Department Plan link:**

Academic Representation, Advice Service, Campaigns, Student Activities, Marketing, Venue.

## Promoting the interests and welfare of Students at the University of Reading during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising Students.

### A3) Advising our students

#### The way we offer advice

- Investigate and implement (where appropriate) alternative provision of the Advice Service to include a review of working hours and technology options to provide remote access to advice.
- Review the website functionality to improve the Advice Service pages
- Consider and implement innovative ways of promoting popular and relevant advice topics.

#### Raise awareness

- Of the support provided and the Advice Service
- Trend tracking in Advice and FTO team to highlight issues via the University committee structure.
- Work to identify student demographics who would benefit from engaging with the Advice Service
- Undertake relevant promotional work to encourage engagement with the Advice Service

#### Working in partnership

- Maintain and develop relationships with key stakeholders within the University
- Promotion of RUSU Advice service by the University
- Continue to work to AQS standards
- Link to external specialist providers
- Review/promote/support Student Mediation Service

#### **Key Measures of success:**

- Maintain AQS accreditation.
- Successful external partnerships/agreements
- Positive Advice Service feedback

#### **Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, service users, University Support Services (Welfare team, Counselling and Wellbeing, Student Financial Support et al) University Governance department, external agencies.

#### **Department Plan link:**

Advice Service, Marketing, Support Services - Reception

Being the recognised representative channel between students and the University of Reading and any other external bodies

B1 Influencing University Strategy

Increasing knowledge

- Promotion of the breadth of RUSU services within the University community
- Develop/enhance working relationships with key staff and departments
- Review and support as appropriate University strategy

Fulfilling the requirements of our role

- Ensuring student representatives understand and are supported in their roles
- Change of focus to policy campaigning
- Recognise lobbying and committee work as an impactful way to create change
- Collaborative project working
- Ensuring the University strategy does not have a negative impact on the student experience

External Factors

- NSS
- Office for Students
- TEF
- Local community

**Key Measures of success:**

- NSS scores
- Policy change
- Positive news stories

**Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, University Executive Board, University careers department

**Department Plan link:**

Advice Service, Academic Representation, Little Learners, Marketing, Student Activities, Venue

## Being the recognised representative channel between Students and the University of Reading and any other external bodies

### B2) Campaigning for change

#### Defining Campaigns

- Organisational clarity of what is a campaign or an event
- Develop the process for the most effective support mechanism for campaign/events
- Policy/Behaviour/Promotional/Elections
- Quality over quantity
- Local/national
- Evidence based
- Review of effectiveness

#### Developing Campaigns

- Redress balance between policy & behaviour campaigns. Priority to be policy.
- Showcase of activities
- Longer term planning for behaviour campaigns
- Legacy of campaigns and handover process
- Officer manifestos
- Underlying message rather than image

#### Mandated Campaigns

- Change it! – ideas voted in for 2 years so need to ensure process that they are worked on for both years
- Change it! - good ideas drop out which are worth doing but can't be resubmitted for 12 months
- Change it! – research process

#### Working in Collaboration

- Lobbying opportunities
- Role of the staff team
- Handover process
- School/academic rep campaigns and the initiatives they receive funding for.
- Activity groups / JCR's
- Officer Manifestos

#### **Key Measures of success:**

- Improvement in voting, attendance & engagement figures with scrutiny processes
- Reporting mechanism for campaign progress
- Improved impact reporting
- RUSU seen as a campaigning body by members
- Student involvement data – ideas submitted via Changeit!

#### **Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, Student Groups, Part time officers, Student Reps, NUS, OfS

#### **Department Plan link:**

Academic Representation, Campaigns, Marketing, Support Services – Training, Student Activities, Venue



Being the recognised representative channel between Students and the University of Reading and any other external bodies

### B3) Improving Community Relations and Relationships

#### Volunteering

- Students & staff involvement in local schemes
- Encourage local community to become involved in RUSU schemes

#### Events

- Raise RUSU's profile within schools
- Use of RUSU Trading Ltd for external events
- Ensure events we put on do not contribute to the negative image of students.
- Encourage attendees at RUSU events to be responsible in the local community

#### Communications

- Method of celebrating success / raising awareness
- Local politicians / councillors

#### Collaboration

- Attendance at NAG meeting with the Uni
- Housing (Impact on local community in addition to move in/out weekends)
- Local organisations
- With University Press Office

#### **Key Measures of success:**

- Less local community complaints
- More community engagement
- Positive feedback at community meetings

#### **Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, Student Groups, Part time officers, Student Reps, RUSU Staff, University

#### **Department Plan link:**

Campaigns, Marketing, Support Services, Student Activities, Venue

Providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its students.

## C1) Providing Extra-Curricular Activities

### What RUSU Offers

- Range of activities for students
- Consistency of support provided to student groups
- Develop casual participation programme
- Cultural events programme and development of a collaborative approach

### Resources and Finance

- Fair funding model and awareness of opportunities
- RUSU staff support for events/activities
- Review sponsorship/local opportunities for collaboration

### Promotion of activities

- Comprehensive range of diverse and inclusive events for students
- Method of involving & informing students (newsletter or equivalent)
- Use of Activity Group meetings
- Promotion of 'Give it a go'

### Recognition of achievement

- Review option of externally accredited scheme for committee members
- Knights Accreditation Scheme / equivalent for students

### **Key Measures of success:**

- Increase in number of students involved
- Consistency in student attendance at Activity Group meetings

### **Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, Student Groups, RUSU Staff

### **Department Plan link:**

Representation, Marketing, Student Activities

Providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate, for the personal development of its students.

## C2) Supporting Personal Development and Volunteering Opportunities

### Development of services for students

- Improve communication with Student Reps
- Work with Careers on employability
- Develop employability skills programme for Academic Reps
- Develop a toolkit for volunteers to record skills
- Personal achievement programme

### Sharing best practice

- Staff development
- Making a difference event included in careers advice
- Utilising permanent staff members to help volunteers
- Networking – meeting other students

### Skills Development and employability

- Supporting student led projects
- Committee development training
- Representation and employability events
- Deliver skills development sessions for Academic Reps
- Digital training/marketing training for academic groups
- Team working skills/committee skills
- Support of representatives

### **Key Measures of success:**

- Increase in demand/attendance from students at skills sessions
- Increase in students involved at committee level
- Increase in student nominations for elected roles

### **Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, Student Groups, RUSU Staff

### **Department Plan link:**

Representation, Marketing, Student Activities

Providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its students.

C3) Providing Social Space to encourage interaction.

Engagement

- Method of ensuring the venues are fully utilised
- Wide range of events
- Engagement with University departments and the students within them
- Student feedback method
- Ensure venue is fit for multi-purpose

Promotion / awareness

- Use of media (digital screens/alternative options)
- Use of Diversity Initiatives budget to trial events
- Location of events (digital map as commercial areas at the back of the building)

**Key Measures of success:**

- Commercial success
- Positive student feedback

**Key Stakeholders:**

Marketing, Student Activities, Venue

**Department Plan link:**

Marketing, Student Activities, Venue

Providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate, for the personal development of its students.

#### C4) Providing forums for discussion and debate

##### Developing Channels

- Develop organisational brand for debates
- Promotion of debates (Officer led/Society led/collaborative events with the University through this brand)
- Develop technology so students can engage via online channels
- Use of Activity Group meetings

##### Engagement

- Use Student Voice to debate 'key' issues
- Invest in key speakers for debates
- Promote opportunities for students to sit on debate panels
- Develop links with local community organisations, other SU's & HEI to improve breadth of speakers.

##### Quality of Forums organisations

- Streamline Student Voice processes to maximise opportunity for debate
- Review reporting method for Student Voice and its impact on student engagement
- Review officer scrutiny process
- Progress trackers
- Develop consistent approach when introducing debates, clarify boundaries and deal with trigger warnings

#### **Key Measures of success:**

#### **Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, PTO'S.

#### **Department Plan link:**

Representation, Student Activities

## D) Championing Inclusivity

### Accessibility

- Review of accessibility provision of RUSU services and facilities
- Review of accessibility of students to RUSU venue and events
- Ensure campaigns and RUSU activities are inclusive of the student demographics
- Review the support mechanism for student volunteers

### Representation

- Support to student representatives campaigns & events
- Review how we measure impact & demographics (candidates/voters for PG/UG)
- Review the influence & impact of Part Time Officers
- Encourage the invitation of PTO's to relevant University committees to represent their student demographic at University level.
- Develop a working relationship between PTO's and Academic Reps to improve academic experience.
- Review options for specific Academic Rep roles based on demographics (e.g. BAME, Disabled students) to sit on SSLC

### Events

- Expand range (e.g. subtitled film showings/different films/ drag events/ panto/ silent disco/reggae/ 3 events per term aimed at providing a more diverse programme)
- Promotion / marketing of activities needs to reflect the diverse
- Link events between societies

### Education

- Develop processes to ensure events are accessible and publication of this to students prior to events
- Develop organisational understanding of what constitutes 'diverse' events, how they are supported and the financial resources
- Encourage student led diverse events led by societies

### Key Measures of success:

- Election candidate demographics

### **Key Stakeholders:**

Officer Trustees, RUSU staff, PTO's, student societies

### **Department Plan link:**

Advice Service, Campaigns & Representation, HR, Marketing, Student Activities, Venue

## E) Promoting Environmental Sustainability

### Raising Awareness

- Create Green Staff Ambassadors.
- Promote green lifestyle – e.g. monthly green top tip/green week roadshow to promote what students can do to consume more consciously.
- Embed environmental consciousness into training
- Promotion of what we have already achieved and plan to do

### Digital

- Review where information requests can be completed in electronic format.
- Review the requirement for print material and option for digital artwork
- Use of electronic programmes to their full potential

### Responsible Resourcing

- Review option for community resource sharing facility
- RUSU's supply chain (buying local / palm oil free/source of energy)

### Tracking of Energy Consumption

- Review the energy consumption of RUSU's electrical devices
- Review RUSU's carbon footprint
- Review RUSU suppliers carbon footprint
- Investigate the options for energy generation

### Waste

- Explore alternatives to disposable items
- Review RUSU and supplier giveaways
- Ensure recycling is optimised
- Zero waste stall

### Key Measures of success:

- Review the option to achieve of 'Green' award.
- Energy consumption targets achieved
- Increase in recycled waste

### Key Stakeholders:

Environment Committee members, Officer Trustees, University, RUSU staff, E&E PTO

### Department Plan link:

Advice Service, Representation, Student Activities, Marketing, Support Services, Venue