



# LOVE YOUR **STUDENT LIFE**

Chester Students' Union  
Strategic Plan  
**2021- 2026**



# LOVE YOUR STUDENT LIFE



## OUR FIVE YEAR PLAN

has come about as a result of **wide-ranging student feedback** and research. While there were many aspects of the organisation that students liked, there were challenges around our **visibility** at all sites and us **taking a more active role** in supporting **marginalised groups in having their voices heard**.

Our new Strategic Plan is a result of the research and feedback undertaken. **We have set out firm commitments with clear actions around increasing and improving our engagement with all students across the different University of Chester sites and ensuring we are focusing more on liberation, equality, diversity, and inclusion in our activity.** We have also committed to a more nuanced approach to engagement, recognising that **students' needs and priorities at different sites will differ**.

As a charity, **we exist for University of Chester students** and are focused on ensuring you **love your student life**. We are hugely grateful to our key funder and a key partner, the **University of Chester**, for its support for the organisation, which enables us to deliver our key services to students.

We hope you enjoy reading through our plan, and **should you have any feedback on the plan, please find us** at one of the CSU community hubs or by email at **CSU@Chester.ac.uk**.



# PURPOSE

Love your Student Life

# VISION

For University of Chester students to have an outstanding university experience with a Students' Union that is visible at each site and delivers outstanding support, representation and social opportunities

# STRATEGIC AIMS



1

Active part of students' lives, championing inclusivity with a visible and relevant presence both in person and digitally, co-creating with students dynamic communities.

2

Believe in students, giving every available opportunity to help them develop, amplify and facilitate the student voice and with us in their corner if times get tough.

3

Credible, high performing Students' Union that University of Chester students are proud to be a member of.

# OUR VALUES



## STUDENT LED

From elected officers, to society leads and wider student community, our Union is led by students, for students. Your voice is represented and amplified at all levels of CSU.

## ASPIRING

We will grow our services, presence and people. We develop students through representative roles and training, and provide opportunities that develop our staff skills and confidence.

## BRAVE

We respectfully challenge ourselves and each other to stand up for our student communities and act in their best interests. We strive for all students to feel a sense of belonging and know that CSU is a positive force for change, driven by the collective interests of students.

## EQUITABLE

At CSU we value, respect and celebrate difference, and will break down barriers for participation for all students. We will enhance the voice and opportunities for marginalised and disadvantaged groups, with a focus on liberation and justice.

# HOW WE OUR

**FEBRUARY 2021**



The initial draft of the plan is shared internally with CSU staff, Elected Officers and colleagues at the University for feedback - vital input that helped to shape and mold future drafts

**JANUARY 2021**

Taking data from our 2020 Membership Engagement Survey, engagement with services and other data points, senior management at CSU complete work on the first draft of the Strategic Plan



**MARCH 2021**

The CEO, in conjunction with Elected Officers, held a series of focus groups with students from different University sites to gather their input and ensure the Strategic Plan met their needs

# DEVISED PLAN

**APRIL 2021**

Amendments are incorporated as a result of student feedback; the text of the guide is finalised.

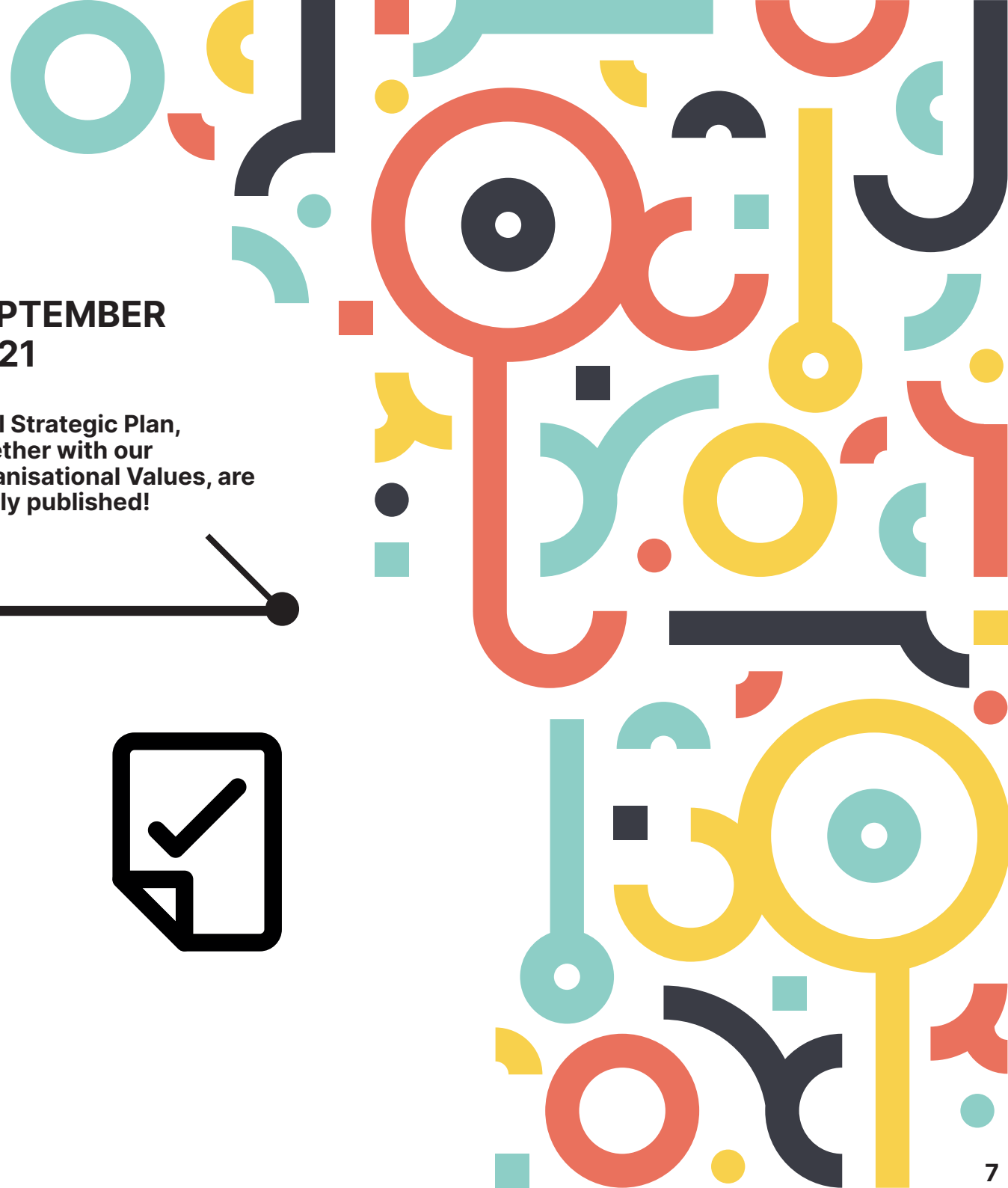
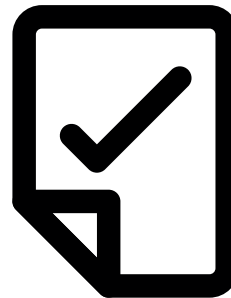
Initial design ideas are passed on to develop the final document

**SEPTEMBER 2021**

Final Strategic Plan, together with our Organisational Values, are finally published!

**SUMMER 2021**

CSU Elected Officers and Staff collaborate to devise our Organisational Values; these are folded in to the Strategic Plan. The plan's design is finalised.





# ACTIVE

We will be an active part of students' lives visible at each University of Chester centre and site. We will be inclusive in our approach and offer engaging activities that create a sense of belonging to individual student communities.



## Our Ambitions by 2026

1. Develop a physical presence at every University of Chester site providing first-line advice, support for student representatives and a wide range of fun, inclusive and developmental opportunities
2. We will explicitly challenge discriminatory practice in both behaviour and our resourcing for student activity that supports liberation, equality, inclusion and diversity of our members including the development of a funding pot for student innovation in this area of work
3. We will support students in being part of communities co-creating societies and communities relevant to them at their place of study

## How we will implement our ambitions

- Develop and measure activity through bespoke individual site and centre engagement plans that reflect the needs of students at that location
- Identify and develop partnerships with relevant trade unions and professional bodies who also represent University of Chester students in certain parts of their studies
- Review and invest in our explicitly anti-racist challenge group work, bringing in appropriate external expertise and ensuring we break down systemic barriers to inclusion for students and understand triggers around academic achievement and retention that are linked to being in a marginalised group
- Develop a funding pot for student-led activity that supports liberation, equality, diversity and inclusion (LEDI)
- Work with University partners to better understand the needs of international students and shape our provision accordingly
- Identify the barriers to participation and proactively mitigate them to make our activity more accessible for all
- Develop our engagement dashboard showing incremental growth in overall numbers, diversity of participation and positive impact of members being engaged
- Measure and establish an incremental benchmark for how we positively influence students sense of belonging to the University of Chester community and improve retention





## Key Success Measures by 2026

- 80% of students from demographics that are from marginalised groups will view the Union as being relevant to them
- 80% of students who receive funding from our LEDI funding pot will agree that it has supported them in an activity that challenges systemic oppression
- 80% of students at all locations where CSU has a semi-permanent physical presence will agree that the Union is visible and relevant to them
- 70% of students will agree that we run activities that make them feel part of the University of Chester community

## Outcome Required

- Students will engage with activities at their site from CSU that they both enjoy and leads to them making friends for life.
- Students will consider the Union to be visible and relevant to them at their site of study. Students will make the most of their time at University being both supported by CSU to navigate the opportunities and challenges of university life effectively.

# BELIEVE

We believe in University of Chester students and will back them throughout their studies. We will offer independent advice if times get tough, facilitate student leadership and voice ensuring effective representation and ensure that where you give up your time to volunteer at CSU you have the best possible experience from us.



## Our Ambitions by 2026

1. Offer independent advice online and at your location of study that helps you make informed decisions around housing, money and academic issues
2. Collaborate closely with our student volunteers and colleagues in the University to ensure that students make the most of the developmental opportunities available
3. Effectively support, recognise and reward students who volunteer with their Students' Union following and benchmarking against appropriate volunteering standards
4. Review our democratic channels ensuring they are agile, proactive and appropriately resourced for the student voice to be heard and acted upon across the University of Chester community

## How we will implement our ambitions

- Undertake a democracy review of all existing democratic channels reviewing and implementing a modernised, fit for purpose model of student voice
- Build our online advice chat function, increasing capacity and upgrading technology where appropriate
- Grow our work around wellbeing and value for money activity, making interventions where beneficial to students
- Develop our own student leaders summit with a range of developmental sessions and workshops that give representatives the tools to lead and linking in with the University 'Citizen Student' vision where appropriate
- Measure and track high-quality outcomes and impacts from the Student Experience Representatives system
- Develop our own graduate scheme for recent University of Chester graduates ensuring that we believe in recent University of Chester students particularly during a challenging graduate employment climate
- Ensure everyone who works and volunteers for CSU receives some form of mental health training and we work closely with the University on more broad student wellbeing
- Increase our election turnout ensuring we are within the top 10 Students' Union in the country for democratic participation by percentage turnout
- Benchmark our existing volunteering practices against the Investing in Volunteers standard





### **Key Success Measures by 2026**

- 70% of students who volunteer with us will agree we have given them valuable skills for life and that they have made a positive impact on students as a result of their role
- 75% of students will agree that CSU is influential in creating change that positively impacts their student experience
- 95% of students who have sought independent advice from us will agree that we are a trusted source of advice and support
- 85% of volunteers will agree that as a result of our training and support they can fulfil their role effectively

### **Outcomes Required**

- Students will know how to influence and lead their Union.
- Students will be able to seek valued advice and guidance from us when they need it.
- Students who volunteer with the Union will feel equipped to take on the role effectively and benefit from developing key life and employability skills. Our work in this area will add value to the vision of the University of Chester 'Citizen Student' approach.



# CREDIBLE

We will be a credible, high performing Students' Union that University of Chester students are proud to be a member of. We will achieve this through regular monitoring of our impact and engagement, member satisfaction, benchmarking ourselves against the sector and meeting best practice in requirements from those that we report to.



## Our Ambitions by 2026

1. We will be insight-driven, ensuring a strong evidence base for our work around the student experience. We will conduct regular pulse surveys of the student experience and an annual survey of students to monitor our performance and support us to demonstrate our impact.
2. We want to be a powerhouse for University of Chester students and will benchmark our practices against the Quality Students' Union (QSU) accreditation.
3. We will ensure we are sustainable in our practices and in our behaviour meeting the charity governance code in full
4. We will achieve 'Excellent' in Green Impact

## How we will implement our ambitions

- Develop our own insight unit maintaining a regular pulse on the student voice with research findings shared with elected officers and key stakeholders within the University
- Continually review our practices until we are ready to achieve the highest possible score of 'Excellent' in QSU across the majority of the indicators
- Self-assess against the Charity Governance Code ensuring that we show year on year improvement in meeting all the criteria with ultimately 100% of the Charity Governance Code requirements being met
- Undertake Green Impact achieving 'Excellent' ensuring our practices and models of engagement champion sustainability
- Achieve the QSU accreditation obtaining the highest possible score of 'Excellent' in the majority of components
- Build our insight and understanding of Postgraduate students at the University of Chester, ensuring we effectively resource representation and support structures to them
- As part of our development of a communications strategy establish our approach to internal communications ensuring we communicate both appropriately and effectively



## Key Success Measures by 2026

- 80% of stakeholders who receive our insight work will agree that the research is valuable in improving the student experience
- 90% of key stakeholders will understand how the Union is run, what the key priorities of the organisation are and believe we make a positive impact for students

## Outcome Required

Students will be proud to be a member of CSU

The University as a key partner and funder will have confidence in CSU and the positive impact it is having on University of Chester students

# ENABLERS

CSU has four key strategic enablers that will support us in meeting our mission.

## COMMUNICATIONS

- Develop our new communications strategy
- Collaborate closely with colleagues on amplifying key messages to students
- Continue to monitor and track digital engagement
- Link digital engagement to centre and site engagement plans ensuring communications are tailored to the different study locations

### WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS BY:

- 90% of students will agree that the Union provides trusted and valued information for them about their life at the University of Chester

## PEOPLE

- Staff at CSU will be proud to work for the organisation with incremental increases in our annual employee engagement survey
- Develop a People and Organisational Development strategy
- Provide online resources that help develop all colleagues
- Training for key expectations of managers and staff including effective one to ones and reviews

### WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS BY:

- Year on year incremental growth in CSU staff satisfaction of working for the organisation

## FINANCE

- Maintain our sound financial practices with an unqualified annual financial audit
- Ensure a strong performance in any audit conducted by the University of Chester
- Continue regular and timely reporting of monthly management accounts
- Ensure best value for money in activity

### WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS BY:

- Meeting the level of our reserves as set out in our reserves policy

## SPACES

- Identify and bed in space at each location that we will turn into CSU Community Hubs
- Ensure students at each study location help shape the hub to reflect the identity of students in that place of study
- Review and implement ways for students to engage with us at each hub through digital methods particularly when staff are not there
- Ensure spaces are staffed around the peak times students are on a specific centre

### WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS BY:

- 70% of students will agree that where CSU has a community hub at their site, that space is fit for purpose



# NUS Green Impact

## GOOD AWARD

*Delivered by Students Organising for Sustainability - UK*

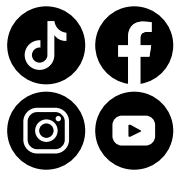


### WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:

**CSU'S ELECTED OFFICERS & STAFF FOR THEIR INVALUABLE INPUT, STUDENTS FOR THEIR TIME AND ASSISTANCE & THE UNIVERSITY, ITS GOVERNORS AND STAFF**



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progress on social media:**



**ChesterStudentsUnion**

**[www.ChesterSU.com](http://www.ChesterSU.com)**