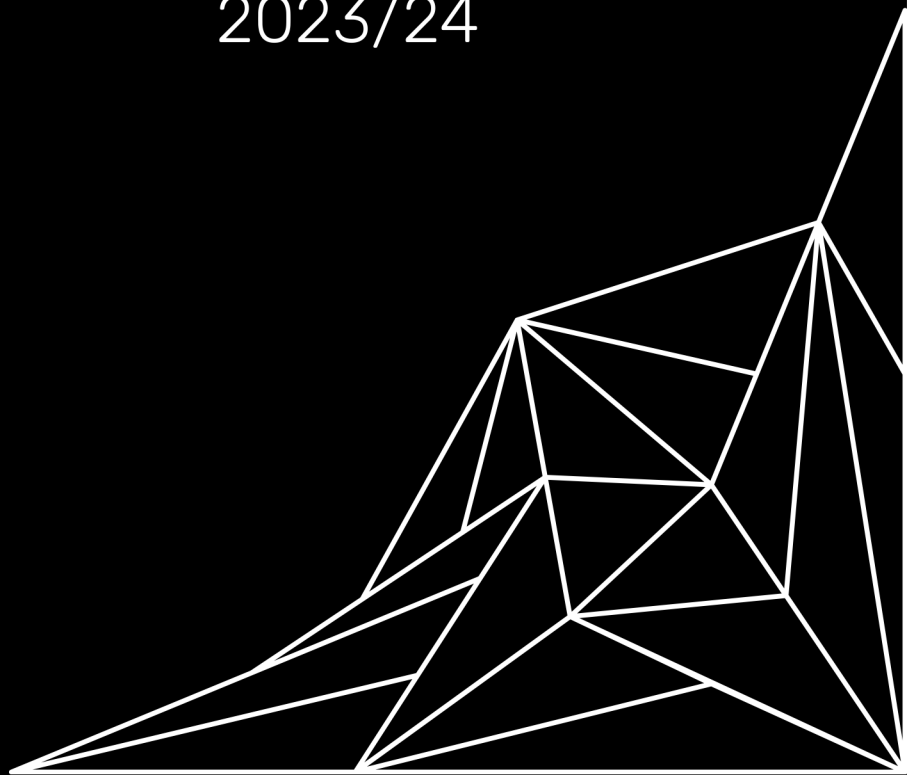




St Mary's
University
Students'
Union

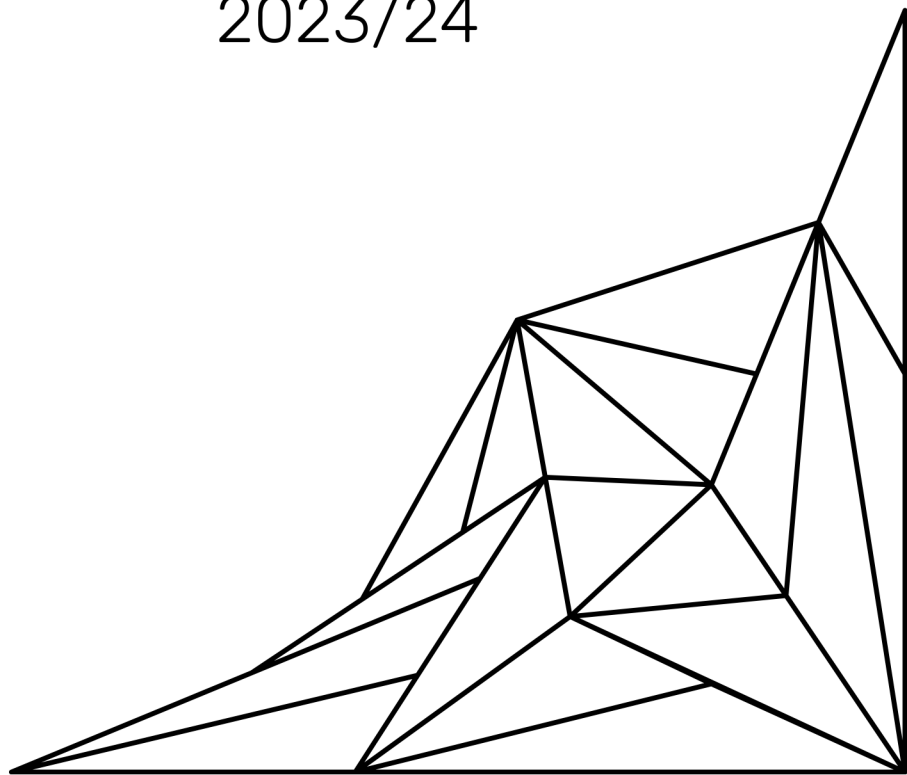
Annual Review

2023/24



Annual Review

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foreword

2023-24 has been an incredible year for St Mary's Students' Union.

This year, we've seen out the second year of our strategy, achieving so much along the way, strengthened our staff team, and developed our feedback mechanisms to ensure we always have our finger on the pulse of student opinion.

As we enter into the final year of our strategy, I would like to thank everyone who has supported us in our development over the last two years, and I look forward to sharing our successes with you today and in the year to come.

James Turnbull
Chief Executive Officer

our values

inclusive

We'll go above and beyond for our diverse membership, rallying to enhance the voices of under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

empowering

We'll be led by our members and enable them to reach their full potential.

informed

We'll have our finger on the pulse of student opinion and use robust and innovative approaches to tackle the issues our students are facing.

collaborative

We'll work closely with our members and stakeholders to build a strong community at St Mary's.

our vision

A university experience where every student gets the best out of their time at St Mary's and beyond.

our mission

SMSU will be at the heart of a growing inclusive, empowering and supportive community at St Mary's.

our priorities

Growing student representation

so that we are on the pulse of student opinion, enabling students to shape their experience whilst realising their full potential

Building our student communities

so that every student can make meaningful connections throughout their university experience

Supporting student wellbeing

so that all students have access to the right support whenever they need it

Being a proactive partner of the University

ensuring that the student experience is always put first by being a critical friend of the University



student life president

I can't believe my second year as SLP is coming to an end. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as a President and am so proud of everything we have accomplished, individually and as a team.

Highlights include attending WonkHE's Secret Life of Students, working with estates to design the new SU Bar, and collaborating with staff from all university areas to improve the student experience.

This year, I prioritised fundraising, wellbeing, inclusion, and the visibility of SMSU and other support services.

None of what we do as presidents could be accomplished without the amazing staff team at SMSU, so I would like to say a massive thank you to James, Sarah, Maryam, Jordan, Matt, Hayden and Jack for everything they do behind the scenes.

Finally, I have the immense pleasure of handing over to David James, who I am sure will be a fabulous Student Life President. Good luck David!

education president

Thank you for taking the time to read our annual review.

It's been another busy year for SMSU.

We've expanded to strengthen student voice, welcoming 4 new vice-presidents and 7 subject chairs. We've also recruited and trained a record number of course reps.

We stepped up to support our students with unprecedented financial pressures, launching our "SU pantry", a new cost-of-living hub and administering a new transport hardship fund. We've also grown our Advice Service, providing independent and professional advice and support when students need it most.

Serving the students of St Mary's for the last two years has been a huge honour. I wish Shelley and David the very best of luck as they enter their roles next year.



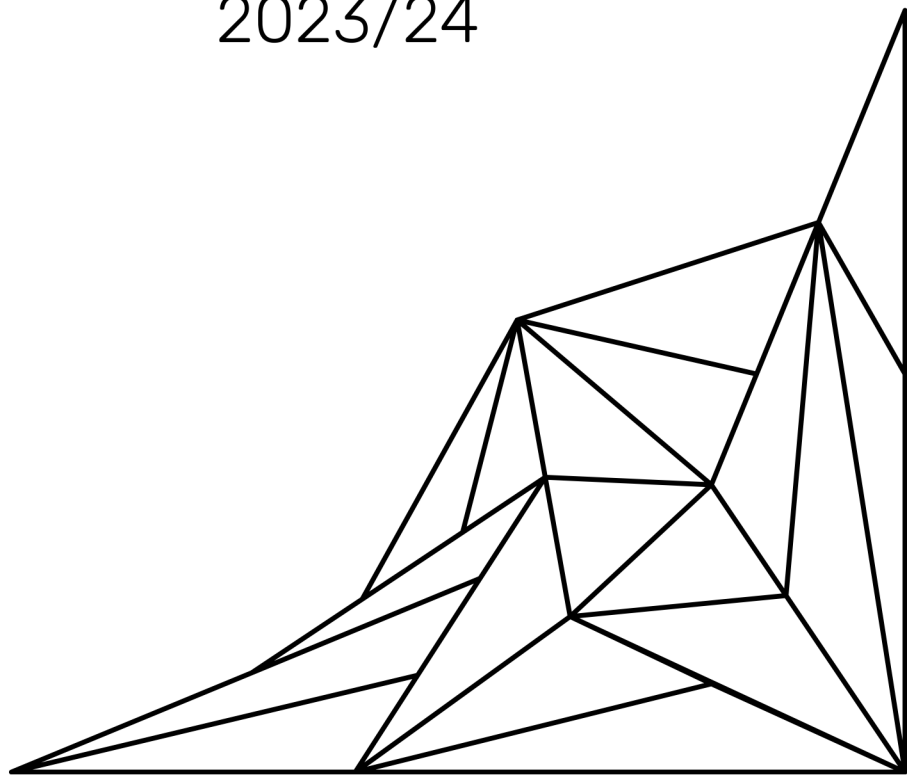
our year in numbers

	2022/23	2023/24
Money raised for charity	£10,174	£23,095
New societies affiliated	10	22
Number of society memberships	414	524
% of courses with an academic society	26%	53%
% of course reps trained	27%	78%
Number of petitions	18	29
Number of signatures on petitions	477	1078
Number of survey responses	863	916
Number of elections nominations	16	14
Turnout in our SU Elections	23%	25.5%
Number of advice cases	84	133
Number of items donated to the SU Pantry	-	1729
Number of items taken from the SU Pantry	-	1581



our year

2023/24



summer

NSS success

We were delighted to receive the news that in the 2023 NSS we achieved 2nd in London.

Introduced our EDI representation model

As part of our feedback mechanism restructure, we introduced seven EDI Chairs for Disability, Faith & Culture, Mature Students, Race Equity, LGBTQ+, Women, and Intersectionality. We successfully recruited seven fabulous students for these roles who have gathered feedback and made change for their respective groups.

Grew our team

We welcomed Hayden to the SMSU team to enable us to continue to grow and support students in leading their own EDI campaigns, initiatives and to continue to effectively harness student voice.

Reshaped our Subject Chairs

We built on the successes of our Subject Chairs from 2022/23 and introduced three more roles to mirror the academic structures, allowing course reps to be supported by a Subject Chair in each School.

Launched SU Buddies

To support our retention ambitions, we introduced a peer-support network, Buddies, where incoming (and some returning) students are matched with returning students.



Cost of Living Report

We launched our first ever student cost of living report. Our findings revealed the sheer scale of the financial pressures our students are facing.

Online Lecture Capture

We published the results of our online lecture capture survey. 265 students responded to the survey. We used their responses to write a policy proposal for the university.

New Trustee Board

Over the Summer we recruited two external trustees – Roger Clark and Laura Quinn and two student trustees – Locke Bell and Kaitlin Youens – Brown. These trustees will work with the sabbatical officers to ensure that the charity is acting in the best interests of its members. Roger Clark will also serve as the Deputy Chair of the Board



It's Ok to Knock

We launched our new 'It's Ok to Knock' campaign, encouraging students to visit personal tutors and academics during office hours by making it less daunting. 20% of SMU academic staff now use them!

Plasma Donations

Over the summer, we collaborated with Student Services and the NHS in a project to encourage students to donate plasma, as one of the two London donation centres is in Twickenham!





september

Welcome Fest

This year, Welcome Fest saw 21 events across two weeks, with 200 wristbands sold which included entry to all events, and over 3,000 attendances across the two weeks.

We also ran Give it a Go Week for the first time, designed to encourage students to take part in clubs, societies and networks, creating opportunities for connection which would see them through their degrees.

Induction Talks

We welcomed new students to SMSU through a series of induction talks; introducing our services and ways students can get involved.

PGCE BBQ

To welcome our PGCE Primary & Secondary students before the main induction period, we hosted a BBQ on campus after their induction sessions and had over 120 attendees.



SU Pantry

We launched our new SU Pantry to ensure no student goes without food or toiletries. Over the academic year, more than 1700 items were donated to the pantry and it received £350 in monetary donations.

Student Life Council

Our first Student Life Council of the year quickly became an Extraordinary Student Life Council after receiving 232 Signatures on a petition within 1 week. The petition was for lowering the cost of sports club memberships. 61 students attended and we held a preferendum, to hear students' preferences of how membership costs could be changed.

Freshers Fayre

Freshers Fayre returned for another year with over 2000 attendances, 24 commercial stalls, 20 society stalls, 23 sports club stalls and 11 University department stalls. Similar to last year, we ran a quiet half-hour before the main event to allow students with access needs to visit at a quieter time.

Introduced Charity Challenges

We introduced three charity challenges, Peaks of the Balkans, National Three Peaks & Charity Skydive that students could take on to have a once in a lifetime experience whilst raising money for charity. 12 students have signed up, and so far they've raised over £2,200 for charity.



october

World Mental Health Day

For World Mental Health Day, we posted a video on our social media signposting students to services they can access for support. We also hosted our Brew @ 2, offering free hot drinks as well as a safe space for students to have an informal conversation about their own mental health.

Transport Hardship Fund

Following the increase in parking charges on campus and the Cost of Living, we worked with the University to introduce a Transport Hardship Fund to support students with commuting costs. We were able to support 60 students throughout the academic year.

Wobble Week

The team collaborated with WP to create a series of events for students who may have been having a hard time transitioning to university. This week was focused on helping students to understand that it's okay to have wobbles.

Course Reps

We inducted 300 course reps from across the Schools and increased the percentage of trained reps from 27% to 77%, providing consistency of how reps gather and give feedback.

Gender Expression Fund

We launched a fund to support students who wish to express themselves in the gender that best fits their gender identity. Students can be awarded up to £50 to support with these costs, examples include binders and gender-affirming clothing.

Black History Month Exhibition

The theme for Black History Month this year was 'Saluting Our Sisters'- honouring the achievements of Black women. We invited students and staff to get their photo taken with a picture of a black woman they find inspirational, and these pictures were displayed in E & F corridor throughout BHM.



november

Vigil for Peace

In light of current conflict, our EDI Chair for Faith and Culture, Ahmed El Hana, ran a vigil for peace across the world for students and staff from all communities to come together in peace and solidarity, irrespective of faith or background.

Members Meeting

We held our annual members meeting where students voted to approve our affiliations and reviewed our accounts.

Movember

We supported our students to run a campaign to support men's mental health. The team raised over £3,500 for Movember and a wide range of sports clubs got involved.



Simmie Safety

We ran this campaign again to survey students on how the changes have impacted students from last year and what the university can still do going forward to create a safer environment for students, both on campus and in the surrounding community.

Presidents visit Parliament

Caitlin and George attended the APPG for students in parliament. They met with MPs to discuss student part-time work and the impact of the cost-of-living on students.





december

RAG Week

We ran this again in line with Caitlin's manifesto point to continue fundraising for charity, we held events such as Family Fortunes, Big Brother and societies ran events including quizzes, keepie-uppies challenges and lots more! In total, RAG Week raised £3990.50 for various charities.

BSL Society

In December, BSL Society invited a nurse to one of their weekly sessions to teach members useful BSL Medical terms which all the students found really beneficial.

Songs of Hope Charity Concert

Creative Writing Society ran this event where a mix of students performed their own music, including those who have already released albums, and a few performed poetry at intervals. The society was also joined by Dame Vanessa Redgrave, who offered to do a poetry reading! The concert also raised £692 for Macmillan.





january

Blue Monday

We ran a range of activities on our socials to mark Blue Monday – dubbed the saddest day of the year. Emily, our Vice-President Wellbeing also ran a Brew Monday, signposting students to support services and offering free hot drinks.

Refreshers

Across Refreshers we hosted our packed, last Karaoke in the SU Bar, The Champion of Champion's Quiz and postgrad social. This week also saw our final sports club social in the SU events space, a commuter social, UV dodgeball & a wine and cheese night to round off the week.

SU Bar Consultation

We launched a survey to all students about the SU Bar and asked them what they would like to see in the new space, including range of drinks, usage of spaces, and more. 224 student responded. We also visited other SU's and their spaces to ensure we were aware of best practice in the sector with regard to commerical outlets.

MP Visit

Caitlin and George Met with local MP, Munira Wilson, to discuss the student maintenance support and the impact of the cost-of-living on students.



february

Elections hit record turnout

For the second year running, we achieved a record-breaking turnout in our elections. 25.5% of the student body voted for their student leadership team for 24/25. 14 students nominated themselves across 7 roles.

“Don’t duck out of Democracy” was part of our election strategy, handing out numbered ducks to student voters, with the winning lucky duck earning one student a Journee holiday worth £500.



Election results

Shekinah Brown
& Eiman Fatima
NUS Delegates

Corinne Anstey
Wellbeing Vice-President

Christopher Bryde
Postgraduate Vice-President

Taylor Lee
Inclusion Vice-President

Ace Prasad
International Vice-President

Shelley Blake-Carey
Education President

David James
Student Life President

Freedom of Speech Consultation

Consultation with the OFS as well as the NUS around the newly launching freedom of speech policy set to launch in late 2024.

Student Volunteering Week

To mark SVW, we ran a volunteering fayre, and another clean of Radnor Gardens in collaboration with some of our societies.

LGBTQ+ History Month

We held a flag raising ceremony in the student square to celebrate the start of LGBTQ+ history month in partnership with the LGBTQ+ staff network. We also held a fundraiser for LGBTQ+ charities.

Pizza & Consent

We held this workshop for students to learn and talk about consent through making pizza and having frank conversations around what consent means and what it means to consent.





march

Varsity

We headed to Brunel for our away West London Varsity which saw St Mary's take home the trophy for the second year in a row. Over 500 students attended and spectated or competed in 33 fixtures. It was also the first time that a wheelchair rugby league match took place at a University Varsity!



Sports Dinner

Sports Dinner recognised the achievements of sports clubs and individuals across the 2023/24 season at Kempton Park Racecourse. The event sold out with 300 attendees. 461 nominations were received and 13 students were awarded 'Full Blues', the most prestigious award, recognising outstanding contribution to sport at St Mary's.

Fundraised £20,000!

In March we achieved our 2024/25 target of £20,000 raised for charity. Thank you so much to all of the students who have run fabulous fundraisers this year and to everyone who has donated!

Secret Life of Students

The team attended the WonkHE 'Secret Life of Students' conference to gain further insights into students' lives and the struggles that may not be visible. There was some useful information that was shared around students not only being affected by the cost-of-living crisis but also resulting in a volume of time-based choices and compromises.

Ramadan Unity Fast

Our Faith & Culture EDI Chair, Ahmed El Hana, led our annual Ramadan Unity Fast which brought together the St Marys community in celebration as they broke fast together. 85 students attended.

Girls Night In

In response to student feedback, on 6th March, we hosted a Girls Night In for 'girls, gals and non-binary pals' at St Mary's in response to growing gender based violence on nights out nationally. We provided soft drinks and snacks while showing a movie in the DV Lounge. 55 students attended.

Spring Graduation

Caitlin and George gave speeches at the ceremonies, which were positively received by both students and staff. It was great to see so many St Mary's alumni on campus in receipt of honorary BEd certificates.



SSR Discount Achieved

After a petition passed at Union Council, we worked with the accommodation team to build in an increase of Student Senior Resident discount. This increase will begin in 24/25 and has gone up from £900 to £1300.

Launched new merchandise created by Simmies!

We asked students what designs and items they would like to see as part of our merchandise offer. We then worked with SU Media Crew member, Mary Mannering, to create new designs in time for Spring Graduation. We received positive feedback on the new range from both students, staff and alumni graduating with honorary degrees.

Simmie Girls Can

We collaborated with our sport reps and Sport St Mary's to promote female participation in sport. We recorded and posted videos showing how to use gym equipment, and promoted the various activities sports clubs ran during the week.





SAINTS Magazine Launch

Our Creative Writing Society worked on this magazine over the last year and featured students from all areas of St Mary's. It is a fabulous publication, showcasing the successes of so many students, and we look forward to future editions of SAINTS magazine!

National Student Money Week

We posted a range of Money Saving tips on our social media. We highlighted the financial support that is on offer from SMSU, the University, and externally, during what is an especially difficult time for students.

Random Acts of Kindness

After a hugely successful campaign last year, we ran RAK again, introducing a new element for staff. Students could complete an anonymous 'Compliment Card' for either a fellow student or staff member. The students mentioned in the compliment card then receive an email asking them to collect the card from the SU office. Staff members mentioned received a visit from an SU President who presented them with a mug and their compliment card. In total, 50 staff received cards and mugs, and 91 students received a card.

april

Catholic Cup

For the first time since 2018, the Catholic Cup game took place against Notre Dame University. The game was very well attended but unfortunately, Notre Dame took the trophy this year.

APP Focus Groups

We led student focus groups to support the APP, inviting Course Reps, Subject Chairs and EDI Chairs to gain student perspective of barriers to success and under-utilised/missing facilities at St Mary's and possible solutions.

Big Student Survey

We launched our annual Big Student Survey to gather student views on SMSU, sport, learning resources and the wider student experience. This data will then inform the work that we do the following year, and ensures we are keeping our finger on the pulse of student opinion.



may

SU Awards

We hosted our second annual SU Awards where we recognised the successes of our student leaders, societies and campaigns and initiatives. It was a lovely evening where over 80 students came together to recognise one another's efforts.



LGBTQ+ Student Experience Report

Following a survey which we led in conjunction with the LGBTQ+ Staff Network (which received 141 responses), we created a report around the experience of LGBTQ+ students on campus with the view to help improve the experience of students and improve and build upon inclusion at St Marys.



Boat Party

Our first crossover event with Southbank University will see 175 students from each university take a boat trip on the Thames to celebrate the end of the academic year.

Alcohol IBA Project

Hayden and Caitlin are working with the team from SOS UK on a consultation around drinking awareness and how this knowledge can help impact and mitigate some of the risks to students around alcohol and alcohol consumption, in an effort to reduce potential harm to students. Caitlin also launched a petition to move the University to a harm reduction approach to drugs and alcohol and this petition passed at Union Council.



SOS UK: Drugs & Alcohol Conference

For the second year running, some of the team attended the SOS UK drug and alcohol conference, to learn and share knowledge with other universities around best practice, the implementation of a harm reduction policy, and support for students to reduce the impact of drugs and alcohol.

Appointed a new Student Advisor

For the first time ever, we have successfully recruited a Student Advisor to run our advice service in-house! The advice service offers professional, confidential and independent advice to students on a range of issues including academic or student misconducts, withdrawals, academic appeals, housing, wellbeing, and finance.

our edi chairs

Maria Trodd
Ahmed El-Hana
Angel-Clare Grant
Saarah Mia
Dev Tambade
Mo Alotaibi

our su crew

Tayla Nisbet
Will Tyrrell
Khia Plunkett
Jolanta Kirchner
Mia Batchelor
Cameron Cooper

our media crew

Mary Mannering
Will Hardister
Alice Cimino

our subject chairs

Alice Derrick
Shekinah Brown
Keem Dussroth
Ryan Orchard
Lwena Almeida
Roisin Gasken
Aeryn Newman

our trustees

Roger Clark
Laura Quinn
Locke Bell
Kaitlin Youens-Brown



James Turnbull
**Chief Executive
Officer**



Sarah Redman
**Membership Services
Manager**



Jack Harrison
Events Coordinator



Maryam Ahmad
**Marketing & Income
Coordinator**



Jordan Baker
**Academic Representation
& Democracy Coordinator**



Matt Doyle
**Student Opportunities
Coordinator**



Hayden Tyler
**Campaigns & Insights
Coordinator**

our team 23/24

thank you

We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to everyone who we've worked with this year, we couldn't have done it without you!

To our new lifetime members, Claire McDonnell, Stephanie Dobbin, Sarah Redman, Maryam Ahmad, Matt Doyle and Adam Longcroft, thank you for your continued support to the organisation, and welcome to the membership.



stmaryssu.co.uk



