



St Mary's
University
Students'
Union



Strategy 2022-25

Welcome!



Our new strategy reinforces our focus on putting students at the heart of everything we do. Improved representation structures, a new advocacy service and new support networks will strengthen our ability to stand up for our students. We are lucky to have a unique and diverse student body at St Mary's and as a union, we will empower our students to contribute to this community. The next three years will be an exciting time for SMSU and we can't wait to work with you to achieve our vision where every student gets the best out of their time at St Mary's.

Caitlin Finn & George Chaplin
SMSU Sabbatical Officer Team 2022-23



SMSU is led by students and we are now proud to share our new strategy for 2022-2025. In 2021 we undertook a large piece of research with the student population to find out what students and key stakeholders wanted SMSU to focus on within our new strategy to guide us into the future. This strategy sets out our action plan to improve the student experience and will turn into a series of yearly operational plans to aid us in the next phase of our development.

James Turnbull
Chief Executive Officer



Our Research

In 2021, SMSU partnered with Social Engine to undertake research in order to define new strategic priorities. This research included a desk review, staff workshop, stakeholder interviews, an online survey of students, focus groups, further workshops and a final analysis session.

Stakeholder Interview Findings

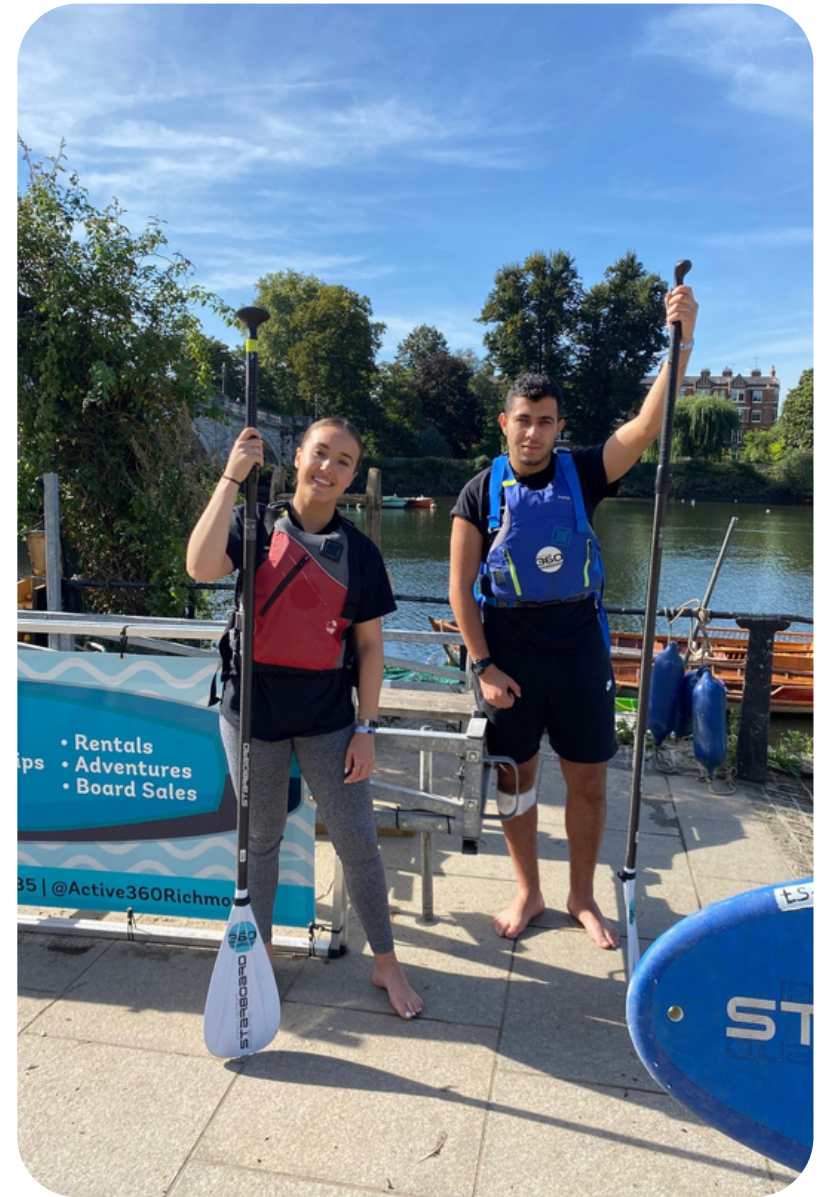
The interviews explored stakeholders' perceptions of what made the St Mary's experience distinct; their current views on the SU; their thoughts on what the SU should prioritise; and the opportunities they saw for alignment with the University.

Throughout all interviews, participants emphasised the sense of community at St Mary's and the need to work with the University for maximum engagement. Participants also believe the SU is in prime mediating position to engage and understand students, although did not always feel that the SU are currently playing on this advantage to maximum potential.

Survey Findings

There were 879 responses, meaning that 14.7% of students took part in the survey. Highlights from the data:

- Students were highly motivated in their career aspirations, but also were drawn to St Mary's University for its sense of community and the potential to make new friends.
- Students were generally positive about the Students' Union, describing it as "Friendly" and "Informative", however they were more neutral when asked whether the SU had helped them through the pandemic and whether it represented them.
- Student welfare was the main priority students picked for the Students' Union to focus on (22.8%). The SU also did not tend to be regarded as a source of support at present.
- Students were satisfied with their students' union (63%) and generally agreed that it made their university experience better (43%) and that they were interested in what it did (64%).





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 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.



priority one growing student representation

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

By 2025 we will...

Ensure that our elected representatives are in touch with, and informed of, the views of all our members

Provide accessible, transparent and quality feedback opportunities for all our members to engage with

Develop a strong and resilient academic representation structure

Work in partnership with University academics to resolve issues in a timely and effective manner



Measures for success

- 80% of undergraduate and postgraduate courses will have active and effective course reps at every level of study
- Achieve 25% turnout in our annual sabbatical officer elections
- 70% of students say that SMSU effectively represents students' academic interests in the NSS



priority two building our student communities

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

By 2025 we will...

Encourage all students to create their own communities to come together

Develop and celebrate student leaders so that they can boost their employability

Create engaging and high-quality opportunities all year round that meet the needs of our diverse student community and help them have new experiences

Support students to create course communities, enabling peer-support and driving co-curricular activity so that they can get the most out of their academic experience

Develop a volunteering and fundraising offer that enables students to give back to the local community



Measures for success

- 85% of students say that they feel part of a community of staff and students in the NSS
- 75% of courses have an active academic society
- Grow the number of liberation societies by 75%
- Double the number of leadership roles available at SMSU



priority three supporting student wellbeing

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

By 2025 we will...

Work closely with the University to ensure that students who are living on campus and in the community have access to out of hours support

Create an effective advocacy service where students can access professional, confidential and impartial advice on welfare issues.

We'll develop wellbeing and inclusion campaigning tools and mechanisms so that we can actively campaign for the rights of our students.

We'll forge connections with the NHS and other partners to ensure students have effective support services 24/7.

We'll create peer support networks so that students always have someone to turn to.



Measures for success

- When asked, 75% of students will say SMSU is a source of support.
- When asked, 80% of students will know where to go to access the right support.



priority four being a proactive partner of the University

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

By 2025 we will...

We'll grow our relationship with the University so that the role and value of SMSU is understood and championed by staff at all levels

We'll work closely and collaboratively with the University on key projects like employability, widening participation and sport

We'll provide the University with accurate student insight and be on the pulse of student opinion

We'll act as a critical friend, asking the difficult questions whilst working together to build a better student experience.



Measures for success

- An annual impact dashboard demonstrating the work of SMSU
- Effective and efficient student consultation processes that meet the needs of the University
- Provision of high-quality services that support the University's ambitions and improve retention



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