

# ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2022

---

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, have pleasure in presenting their report and the financial statements of Ulster University Students' Union (the Union) for the period ended 31 July 2022.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

#### **Objectives and activities**

The Union's objective is the advancement of the education of students at Ulster University for the public benefit by:

- promoting the interests and welfare of students at Ulster University during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students;
- being the recognised representative channel between students and Ulster University 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.

# ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2022

---

#### **Achievements and performance**

The 2021/22 academic year saw a transition back to campus following the previous year of home working and studying. This dual approach brought its own challenges, but the Students' Union continued to represent the student voice both internally and externally to ensure that members have had effective, accountable representation on issues that affect them.

The officer team led campaigns on the importance of mental health, sustainability and equality, diversity, and inclusion. Mental health took a primary role across the scope of campaigns where projects included providing a phoneline checking in with students and highlighting issues through the UOK? Campaign. This was delivered in conjunction with Advice NI, with 5,000 outbound calls made to members with a scripted conversation held to understand any wellbeing or mental health issues that may be prevalent across the student community. This understanding has been invaluable and pointed towards key 'triggers' where early intervention would be useful to support the student community. It is these early 'triggers' around elements such as finance or a life event where most impact can be made to support the student community across mental wellbeing needs.

In addition, we created a series of 'UUSU Meets...' videos which have taken four student relatable individuals in the public eye who have had to look after their own mental wellbeing. These are frank and honest assessment pieces of how mental health can impact anyone and how it has been managed or overcome. These are critical assets as they will outlive the current campaign work and can be used well into the future with new groups of students. To compliment further, a peer buddy scheme has been developed and was launched in February with good engagement and students signing up as Peer Buddy Volunteers and Peer Buddies. It is hoped that the scheme will continue to grow and act as another long-term intervention for positive mental health and wellbeing.

The sustainability campaign saw a partnership with the University rolling out the Net Zero challenge and Green week was an opportunity to engage with external stakeholders whilst ten societies held climate themed events. The Wellbeing Garden in Magee was created as a community allotment and allowed students the opportunity to grow organic produce. Offerings in both Coleraine and Belfast are planned, and funding has been secured for these.

The 2021/22 student officer elections saw the first full-time role dedicated to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion, in the shape of a VP for Equality and Belonging, and this position was taken up on 1 July 2022. This officer supports a variety of student communities and networks and is supported by specific student counsellors following a restructure of student council.

All this work was recognised by UUSU receiving the award for Large Officer Team of the Year from the Union of Students in Ireland.

The sports clubs saw a significant increase in participation with 1,600 members playing a variety of sports despite teaching being a combination of online and face-to-face. The academic representative structure had a successful year with 678 students being elected to represent their course and ensure that any issues were reported and dealt with as soon as practical. The advice bureau saw an increase in queries dealing with individual student problems with academic appeals and housing being the recurring concerns. 16 new societies were set up during the year and the long-established societies continued to attract new members and hold events across the campuses. To support and underpin the representative structures, UUSU also held its first ever Student Summit for active members, which brought them together to explore and plan positive interventions for members in the future.

Finally, 2022 saw the return of UUSU's student awards season, celebrating academic, sporting, and representative excellence across the membership. Around 600 attendees took part across the events with winners from across the membership representing the success and dedication to our mission.

Further information on the impact UUSU has made over the last 12 months can be found online as part of our Impact Report for 2022/23.

# ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2022

---

#### **Raising of funds**

The Union's main source of income is by way of block grant awarded by Ulster University. Other income is generated through sponsorship, advertising and ad hoc grants.

#### **Governance**

Governance of the organisation is of vital importance and is assessed on a regular basis through the review of the Strategic Plan, Risk Register and Financial Memorandum. The Students' Union Student Executive, consisting of seven full time elected Officers and relevant staff, meets every three weeks to discuss Students' Union policy and membership issues. The Senior Management Team meets every 2-3 weeks to review operational matters. The quarterly meetings of the Trustee Board include the review of management accounts, progress of the Strategic Operating Plan, and monitoring of the Risk Register.

#### **Financial review**

The Students' Union income for the current year was £2,426,350 (2021 - £2,359,815) and net income before exceptional pension movements was £388,965 (2021 - £692,439). After accounting for movements in the pension provision the net income for the period was £264,352 (2021 - £566,974).

The net deficit of the charity at 31 July 2022 was £3,036,929 (2021 - £3,301,281). The main reason for the deficit is the deficit funding commitment in relation to the Students' Union Superannuation Scheme, which amounted to £3,956,156 at 31 July 2022 (2021 - £4,085,040). At 31 July 2022, restricted funds were £336,222 (2021 - £537,175) and general unrestricted funds totalled £562,711 (2021 - £232,870).

Designated funds at 31 July 2022 of £20,294 (2021 - £13,714) relate to the balance of funds held in relation to the Unique shop and National Lottery Community Fund Wellbeing grant after income and expenditure during the year.

#### *Reserves Policy*

Reserves will be established to safeguard activity should funding not be available from the principal funding source. At 31 July 2022 the Union had free reserves of £551,206 (2021 - £206,899).

#### *Principal Funding Source*

The principal funder is Ulster University through the allocation of block grant funding to the Union.

#### **Risk Management**

The Trustees have overall responsibility for ensuring that the Union has in place an appropriate system of controls, financial and otherwise, to provide reasonable assurance that:

- the Union is operating efficiently and effectively;
- its assets are safeguarded against unauthorised use or disposition;
- proper records are maintained, and financial information used within the organisation or for publication is reliable;
- it complies with relevant laws and regulations; and
- that the systems of financial control are designed to provide reasonable, but not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The major risks, to which the Union is exposed, are set out in the Risk register and systems have been established to mitigate those risks.

# ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2022

---

#### **Future Plans**

The Union will continue to represent students both through academic issues and the provision of social opportunities to meet other students through engagement in sport and societies.

The academic year 2022/23 sees the move to the Belfast campus and the Union will continue to work with the University to ensure a smooth transition for staff and students. There will be an investment in resources in marketing and communications to ensure that students are aware of the work that the Students' Union does on their behalf and the opportunities available to them.

Funding was acquired in the 2021/22 year to roll out the Wellbeing Garden initiatives to the other campuses so space will be identified for the Coleraine and Belfast campuses to facilitate this project. Further funding is on the radar to offer additional investment into student focused services and opportunities.

As the cost-of-living crisis deepens, this will be a core campaign strand for UUSU and working with the University and other partners it is hoped that tangible interventions will be made to support students. We are currently working on such interventions but hope that these will include positive announcements such as rent freezes, reduction on travel costs, support with living costs, discounted food and free breakfast on campuses, a removal of hidden course costs, as well as much more.

We are also developing a Mental Health Action Plan, which has been drafted in conjunction with our members. It is anticipated that this will put in place a series of actions that UUSU can support or further, which will benefit students into the longer term.

UUSU will be creating a new strategy document to be launched at some point in the 2023/24 academic year. Consultation will be carried out with various stakeholders to ensure that strategic objectives are relevant to the current climate and are representative of the membership needs. There has been substantial change since the last strategic process was carried out in relation to how membership engage with further education through the use of digital technology and the emphasis placed on sustainability and how this is manifested through social change. Whilst the organisation would like to plan for the longer term, change is so fast moving any strategy that is developed will need to be adaptable to societal events.

# ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2022

---

#### **Structure, governance and management**

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital. It was incorporated on 15 June 2017 and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 15 June 2017. The members of the charity for the purposes of company law are the trustees and the liability of each member is limited to an amount not exceeding £1.

Prior to 1 September 2017 the activities of the Students' Union were carried out through an unincorporated entity and were governed by the Constitution of the unincorporated entity. On 1 September 2017 the assets and liabilities of the unincorporated entity were transferred to the charity and it commenced its activities on that date. The total amount transferred was net liabilities of £2,566,431.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the management and administration of the Union and may exercise all the powers of the Union. The application to become a registered charity was approved by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 12 April 2019. The charity number is NIC 107053.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Ms K Hewitt	(Resigned 8 September 2022)
Ms A Neill	
Mr A Ward	
Mr D Fowler	
Ms A Probets	
Ms G Boyle	
Mr R Harling	(Resigned 30 June 2022)
Mr O McCloskey	(Resigned 30 June 2022)
Ms R Allen	
Mr E Davies	(Appointed 19 July 2022)
Ms S Hilditch	(Appointed 27 October 2021)
Mr R Millar	(Appointed 19 July 2022)

The trustees are made up of the following persons:

- Four student officer trustees agreed by the Student Executive
- Two student trustees appointed by application and selection process
- Five external trustees appointed by application and selection process.

Student Officer trustees can serve a maximum of three years in single year terms, student trustees can serve a maximum of two terms, each term lasting two years and external trustees may serve a maximum of two terms; each term being a maximum of four years in duration.

The Chief Executive, Mr D Longstaff, carries out the day to day management of the Union. The trustees meet on a quarterly basis. There are other committees in place to manage specific areas of the organisation. Procedures have been put in place for the induction and training of trustees and the Union ensures trustees are aware of their responsibilities on Corporate Governance.

#### **Relationship with Related Parties**

The relationship between Ulster University and the Union is established in an Ordinance of the University's Governing Documents and the Union receives a block grant from the University, by agreement with the University on an annual basis. There is also non-monetary support which is intrinsic to the relationship between the University and the Union in relation to the provision of office space.

Although the Union continues to generate supplementary funding from various mutual trading activities, it is dependent on the University's financial support. There is no reason to believe that this or equivalent support from the University will not continue for the foreseeable future.

# ULSTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2022

---

### Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees, who are also the directors of Ulster University Students' Union for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company Law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

### Small companies exemption

In preparing this report, the directors have taken advantage of the small companies exemptions provided by section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

### Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



**Ms G Boyle**  
Chairperson of the Trustee Board

Dated: 24 November 2022