



Executive Summary

The Student Union is now mid-way through its strategic plan and we have been hard at work delivering for our students. Our strategy has one simple idea at its core, to build a strong global student community together for our future. We have had a really successful year against our strategy and are pleased to demonstrate our contribution to the student experience at Heriot-Watt University.



We are in the enviable position of having the highest voter turnout in Scotland for the second year running. In the sector voter turnout is used as an indicator of the levels of student engagement, and this coupled with other indicators from our market research suggests that this has been one of our most successful years ever.

Our finances and governance continue to be strong and we are pleased to report we've recorded a surplus for the fifth year in a row and have met our target of holding six months cash reserves ahead of schedule.

Our society engagement has greatly improved, with thanks owed particularly to Polly Glynn and Sheona Dorrian for the success this year. We have 15 new societies, bringing our total to 70. The size of these societies run from several hundred students to the newer societies of only 15.

We have also furthered our volunteering significantly, with 1,000 more hours being logged this year than last year. The amount of awards handed out at the Volunteer Awards in March is testament to the work of the Student Union and the increased levels of student engagement.

This year the Thread was opened at the Scottish Borders Campus thanks to the University, which will provide a great new facility for students to use, both for academic and social purposes. The challenges of moving to a less central facility will be offset by the greater promotion and engagement of the space through Freshers Week and Inductions in the next academic year.

The Learning and Teachers Oscars has seen big increases this year with 200 nominations more than last year logged, with greatly improved quality of nominations. The Oscars will be held on the 3rd May.

However, despite a very successful year there are a number of challenges that University Court should be aware of.

We are noticing that with our much improved engagement that the strain is beginning to tell on our facilities. Our building was first opened in 1991 and it has had a few refurbishments over the years but is now no longer fit for modern student life. The university has allocated £2M in

2017/18 for a student union building solution but it is important to note that the building can no longer sustain the volume of students or provide the types of facilities being sought. We will continue to do our best to meet demand but recognise that we are significantly hindered due to the current building. The Trustee Board has placed the student union building as one of the greatest risks to the organisation in terms of its ability to deliver our strategy.

Additionally, support for student representation at our international campuses, Dubai in particular, has been very challenging this year. Again we wish to express our concern over the lack of support and the risk that the student representatives and university are exposed to, due to the lack of transparency or robust systems in place.

In our report we will provide more detail of the huge amount of work we continue to do for students. Our activities make an indispensable contribution to the student experience for all our students in the UK no matter their interests or needs. We represent all students and our challenge is to continue to listen to and engage a very diverse student population so that we can increase our contribution to the Heriot-Watt community. There are clear benefits to the university in supporting a strong and engaged student community and so we urge the Court to consider the report carefully.

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Our Strategic Plan

We are two years into our strategic plan and are pleased to report we are making progress against our key performance indicators. For example, a key measure for the student union is to have 75% of our students aware that they are members of the student union. Having started from a low base of 56% we are pleased to report that we have already achieved our KPI with a 78% current awareness level. Additionally, our target of 65% of postgraduate students feeling the student union is relevant to their experience, we currently achieve 75% of PGT and 66% of PGR student's ratings.

We have set four key strategic themes and have structured our report to reflect our work under each theme.

To achieve our goals we will:



- Empower** students to shape what we do.
- Inspire** students to become great graduates.
- Enhance** student experiences and activities.
- Develop** our global community.



Empower

students to shape what we do.

Improve students' understanding of what we do

Communications Internship

The Student Union employed a HW student to work as a Communications Intern over the summer of 2016. The main focus was to rewrite the majority of content on our website, to ensure it is all up to date, relevant and written in our true style. We still regularly see around 4,000 page views per week, in particular around societies and events.

Freshers Week

The Student Union also redeveloped our annual pre-Freshers Week communications plan to include daily blog posts about coming to University and our Communications Intern being dedicated to monitoring and responding to social media enquiries. Our Freshers Week Facebook reach rose from around 11,000 in 2015 to 71,000 in 2016.



Mannequin Challenge

Back in November, we were the first Student Union in Scotland to participate in a world- wide social media trend called 'The Mannequin Challenge'. It involves people uploading videos of them as though they've been frozen in time or completely still like a mannequin. The video reached 29,860 people and had over 700 reactions, comments and shares.

The video can be seen at www.youtube.com/HWUnion.



The Big Ask

In November, the Student Union launched our 2nd annual student satisfaction survey, this year branded as "The Big Ask". A large marketing and communications push was undertaken and increased the response rate from 567 respondents to 1,125. The survey showed a good representation across all groups demonstrating we are able to reach the majority of students. Overall the responses have improved, most notably seeing the number of students not aware they are member of the Student Union has been halved since the last survey.

Christmas Video

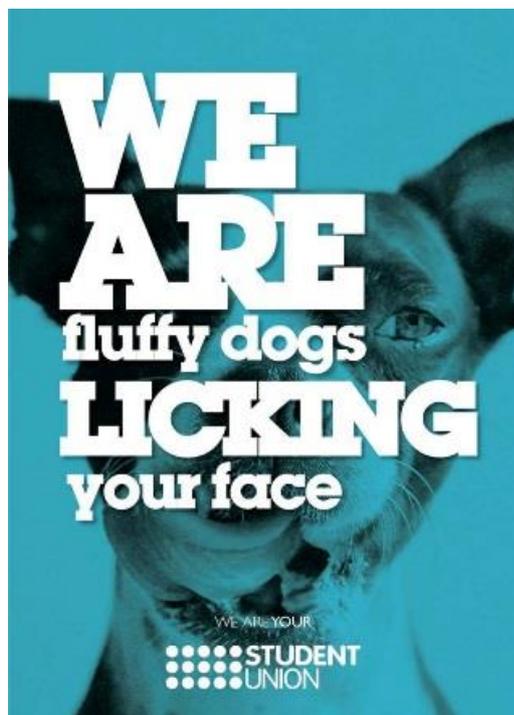
Based on this feedback we decided to create a Student Union Christmas video. The aim of the video was to promote all the services our Union has to offer while introducing the staff who mainly work behind the scenes in Union. The video also showcased a range of services, activities such as the Advice Hub creating

exam stress packs, the Student Bar and Student Shop, kitchen staff to the finance department and also the various societies here on campus. This video reached 23,400 people with over 447 reactions, comments & shares.



The video can be seen at www.youtube.com/HWUnion.

“We Are” Campaign



Before the student election season started in mid-February, the Student Union planned a three week campaign to raise students' awareness of us. This tackled three main questions:

- What we are
- Who we are
- What we've done

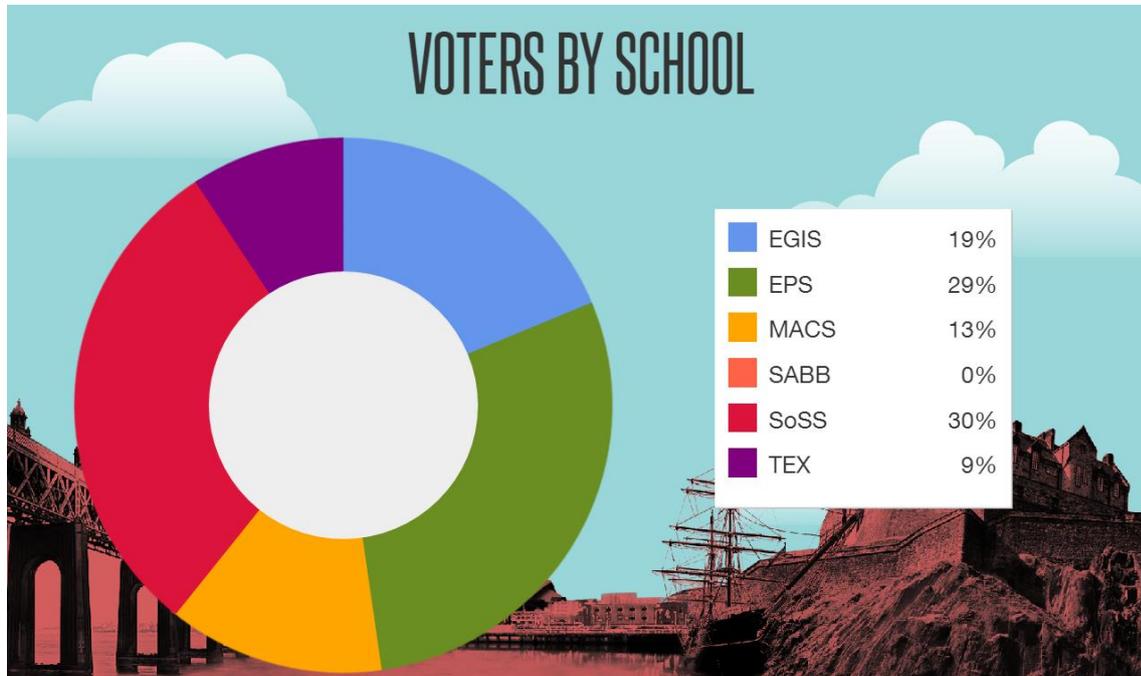
The “We Are” campaign highlighted key aspects of our work on the campus, using identifiable language and phrases that would generate interest and intrigue, such as “We are fluffy dogs licking your face” representing the Therapets events our Advice Hub organises to help reduce student stress around exam time.

We demonstrated the bigger activities we have worked on over the last few years through a picture campaign, mimicking the popular Snapchat style. This highlighted the work conducted on projects such as the Study Space campaign and how the Student Union was influential in improvements being adopted across the campus.

Finally all Student Officers provided a report of the work they have conducted whilst in their roles. Officers used different mediums to provide their reports, from blog posts to videos. These were all displayed across all Student Union communications channels.

The entire campaign was backed up with a dedicated, interactive section on the Student Union website that guided students through what we are to them, what aspects of University life they identify with so we can demonstrate how we have influenced it and finally providing a tailored recommendation for suitable Officer positions they might be interested in when nominations opened at the end of the campaign.

Student Elections



Our Strategic Plan has an ambitious target of achieving 30% voter turnout by 2019. Last year we worked tirelessly on a new marketing and communications campaign and increased our turnout from 12% to 20.5%.

The 2017 Elections saw a continued effort to encourage voters and a small increase of turnout to 22%, maintaining our status as the Student Union in Scotland with the highest voter turnout this year. A short survey was asked of students who chose not to vote to find out their reasoning, which we will use to shape our activities next year.

As the University has ties to Irvine Welsh and with *Trainspotting 2* premiering around about the same time as our elections, we decided to promote the Big Student Elections in a different fashion. Our aim was to promote the range of positions that students



could stand for. The video started with the Sabbatical Officers recreating the famous running scene down Princes Street from *Trainspotting* and making their way back to campus with a

nominations form. The form then gets passed down to the voluntary Executive Members to the Officers and then finally to an anonymous student who decides to run in the elections. The voiceover speech was edited from the film to fit the purpose.

“Choose Life. Choose Student Life...

“Choose making a difference. Choose your future. Choose YOU. Choose running in the Student Elections”.

The Student Union led on the Big Student Elections project, linking 10 partner institution’s election activities to raise general awareness across the sector. Plans for next year include employing a dedicated staff member to focus on growing the project and seeking nationwide sponsorship.

Communications Consultant

During Semester 1, the Student Union appointed a communications consultant to conduct an audit of our current communications processes. The project involved several Skype meetings to gather background information, telephone interviews with various staff and Officers and a half-day workshop with key staff.

The final report was positive identifying we have a strong strategy, and provided some areas on which we can continue to develop. Resulting from this, we will be undertaking a branding exercise in the year ahead, looking not just at our visual identity but also the various touchpoints with which a student comes in to contact with us.

Empower students to influence change

This year has been one of our most successful years of engagement with students in decision making. This year we have worked to ensure students are informing and directing the student union as their representatives. We have sought to ensure students have been consulted thoroughly in as many aspects of the student experience as possible. We have utilised our School Officers and also our Executive Officers and Officers as student focus groups and as the eyes, ears, and voices of the student body.

We have sought to be more open, transparent, and accountable to students. We have done this though attending as many student events as we can in order to be as visible and supportive as possible of our students. We have reintroduced the Ask Me Anything sessions on a weekly rotational basis, both on our Edinburgh campus and also at SBC campus.

This year the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) entered its next stage of implementation. Although focused on English universities, Scottish Universities could also take part. The National Union of Students (NUS) is against the linking of tuition fees to the score that institutions would get, which is the in form of a Gold, Silver, or Bronze award. There is also no tangible quality metrics used in TEF, as it uses satisfaction scores etc. instead. NUS Scotland is also against TEF but is less vocal in its opposition. We choose to support the university in its submission to TEF, which has not won us any friends in the sector for this stance. However, we felt it was in the

best interests of our students in the long run, in the hope it would in some way stymie the decreasing student numbers. We also did not call for a boycott of the National Student Survey (NSS) as we know the institution uses the data for valuable purposes, such as focusing on key issues, feedback for example, in disciplines.

We have introduced a Combined Studies Officer as the first step towards ensuring representation of these students that are often caught between schools. We plan to use what we have gleaned from working with the Combined Studies Officer this year to implement further changes, such as Combined Studies student representatives in each school, and ensuring these students are on key committees relevant to them, ensuring fair and equal representation for these students.

We had a highly successful Annual General Meeting, for which we were quorate for the first time in years. Students brought forward a number of motions which are already in action and will also be taken up by next year's officer team. There was excellent debates had on the needs of students and what the Student Union needs to be acting on.

A key example for this year of students being empowered to influence change has been the return of student prices in catering. Students were, rightly, outraged about the removal of student prices in university catering outlets. Catering on campus universities for students' consumption is VAT exempt, so there was no real reasoning given to support the removal. This was highlighted to the Hospitality Manager, who did not inform the rest of senior management, but nothing was done. This led to us forming a petition, which was signed by over 1,400 students over a few short weeks. This gained national attention in the University Paper. The students felt empowered by this, and have expressed to us renewed confidence in the representation system.

School Officers and Class Representatives



On a weekly basis we brought key topics and issues to the School Officers to discuss the many strands of the student experiences, such as disparities between Schools in policy on the late submission of coursework, to the discussions on the new Discovery and Innovation Centre. We also asked them to conduct research and fact-finding with their students and

report back to us on key issues, so as to allow the Student Union to take them forward to the university. We also support the changes they wish to bring to the School-level, through supporting their work with their Class Representatives on local issues as they arise.

The Class Representatives structure will also see the major new benefit of a joint project with the university to move Class Representative training online (see below). This will ensure we can train more class representatives than ever before and will also spread the awareness of how the

representation structure works for the university. This will go further by also strengthening the Postgraduate Taught student representation in the university, through facilitating and enabling their engagement.

Executive Officers and Officers

As the key decision makers of the student union, we have sought to enhance and empower our officers and to also make them more accountable to the student body. We have sought to do this through engagement through social media to communicate the work of our officers to the wider student populations. This has been furthered by optimising the weekly newsletter to all students by highlighting the various initiatives of the officers of the student union, such as Wellbeing Week and Global Day.



Our part time officers have been very hands on this year in trying to affect change around the campus. Aashna, our Equality and Diversity Executive officer met with Tim Burns (who leads on Tier 4 Visas) to discuss issues with international student's visas. Craig Gillen, our Welfare Executive, was involved in meetings over the summer with Student Support & Accommodation and the Sports Union to help organise a campus wide approach to Mental Health Awareness week. All 5 liberation officers had a meeting with Sharan Virdee (University Equality & Diversity Partner) to make suggestions and input into the University's Equality Outcomes 2017-21. The Womens officer also carried out a questionnaire of students and proposed a motion at the unions Annual General meeting from the information around poor street lighting on campus.

Strengthen the Union's engagement with students



Every week the Student Union sends out an email to all students from the President. In previous years this has seen a big decrease in readership so we sought to change this. We shortened the information in the emails and sought to highlight what would attract a student's eye to read on. We also sought to make the email more humorous, so students could enjoy the emails rather than just be bombarded with text.

This change has been very effective, with our students commenting they have appreciated the change in tone and our readership has improved to reflect this. This has allowed us to engage with students better with the events and activities of the

Student Union and this has been reflected in the market research we carried out. This was further compounded for our societies, who received a weekly from Polly Glynn on society news, further bettering our relationship with these already engaged students.

During the summer, the Student Union creates a Facebook group for every Halls of Residence so students can meet and greet others before even coming to University. The pages are administrated and monitored by staff and used throughout the entire academic year. Students mainly use the group to post queries or questions whereas staff advertise and promote union events and activities. This year we decided to create a 'Christmas on Campus' group for students who were staying on campus during the Christmas break. We posted updated timetables for buses and events schedule from the Student Union and the Chaplaincy but also for the Edinburgh Christmas Market in town. The group was really well received with over 200 students joining and many using the group to organise excursions and get-togethers within the halls community.

Our weekly Ask Me Anything events on the Bridge Link, an area of major footfall in the university, have been brought back to increase the visibility and transparency of the Student Union. We would offer information about the Student Union, what was going on, and how they might get involved in the student community. Often students would come for a chat and to also bring up any issues they had. The regular weekly time meant students knew when and where to find us and could easily engage with us as they went to classes rather than walking all the way out to the student union. We plan to continue with this going forward and will continue to develop this method to make it even more accessible to students.

We have strengthened the union's engagement with student politics this year. We took 9 students to London along with Napier, QMU and Edinburgh students to take part in a national demonstration against the Government to stand against the marketisation of the education sector. In our October elections Students ran to be sent to the NUS (National Union of Students) National and Scotland conferences to shape NUS policy and priorities for the next academic year and we filled all the spaces. To ensure those attending were representing Heriot Watt Students views we held open meetings before conferences where students could drop in, read manifestos, watch campaign videos and give us their views. Some of our liberation officers and students attended the specific conferences – we send LGBT+ students to both National and Scotland LGBT+ conferences as well as the first ever NUS Trans Student conference. Our BAME (Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities) Officer and Womens officer also attended their respective conferences.





Inspire

students to become great graduates.

Prepare students for their future

Transition Students

Staff and student representatives of the Student Union met with widening access and additional support needs students the week before Freshers Week in order to familiarise and introduce them to the campus. Students were given campus tours, film night in Zeros and a trip away bowling. The Student Union clearly made an impact as one of the students who visited us that week is now our newly elected Disabled Students Officer.

Skill Based Workshops

Just after Freshers Week, a survey was conducted to find out what events and activities students wanted for the rest of the academic year. The top 4 answers mainly consisted of general events such as pub quizzes and themed music nights however it was surprising to see that many students wanted skill based workshops. Due to a demographic shift, it made sense that most students are interested in gaining and developing their transferable skills.

Confidence Class

This was held in Refreshers Week and aimed to steer students away from the typical 'new year, new me' trend and aid them to be positive and ready for 2017. The presentation delivered a talk on why people feel the 'January blues', how to start making changes to their lifestyle and opinions about body image and how the media changes students' perceptions of it.

Mind Games

We invited Drew McAdam (Scotland's foremost mentalist) to deliver a seminar at our Student Union to demonstrate how things considered impossible, are actually possible – if you apply the correct techniques. The workshop was designed to improve students' memory for exam revision in under one hour. It was very well attended with the venue reaching capacity and students requested if Drew could come back and deliver 1-2-1 sessions or create a workshop designed around certain degree subjects.

The Interview: Why should we hire you?

The Student Union collaborated with the Universities Career Service to provide and challenge students on several typical interview questions. The Careers Advisor broke them down step by step and explained how each answer was meeting the employer's needs. Every student who signed up for this session attended and the majority of students said they felt confident about preparing their answers for any upcoming interviews.



There was also an opportunity at the end to discuss what the Career Service has to offer students while allowing them to book a follow up one to one session with an Adviser to discuss any future career plans.



Basic Emergency First Aid Training

We wanted to provide workshops that had a balance between academic and social skills. Emergency First Aid training is only offered to staff here at Heriot Watt so we contacted Christina, a healthcare nurse from the centre, to arrange a basic taster session for students. This workshop was designed to give students the skills and confidence to respond to a range of accidents and first aid emergencies such as

dealing with an emergency, unresponsiveness and choking.

There were 3 one hour sessions, which were all fully booked, from 10.15am until 1.15pm in order to fit around students' timetables. After each session students were given a certificate and the opportunity to ask questions or find out more information about taking their training further.

The Interview: Assessment Centre Edition

The majority of students who attended the previous interview workshop asked if we could hold a session that focussed more on the final assessment day itself. This workshop discussed the breakdown of a typical assessment day and gave students hints and tips on what to expect and how to behave. This session was booked and organised within a week along with the Careers Service.

As you can see from the photos, our workshop sessions were full. We have no suitable place to cater for greater student numbers, which is a shame as we expect the demand to increase greatly as we build the programme further next year.

Enable students to shape their academic experience

This year we faced difficulties in the initial recruitment period, which is usually around April/May to allow for a June start date, in line with the other officer positions. As this was not in place for June we had to recruit in September which slowed up the representation structure. Once in place we had gained one of the most effective and engaged School Officer Teams in recent years. In their training we ask each School Officer to examine in detail the NSS results for their department and then comment on the results. These comments are then brought to the Directors of Learning and Teaching to help inform their action plans for their Schools NSS results.

From this we sought to make the weekly Monday evening sessions as useful as possible. We would pick a topic to discuss each week where we debate how each School dealt with an issue, or how best to change policy across the university to better the student experience. This was on

top of discussions about issues at university level that they raised. For example, over the past academic year some of the topics discussed were, in no particular order:

- The Discovery and Innovation Centre and what the priorities should be and what the design brief should be for the building. This would help the Student President inform the committees for the building and ensure that there was alignment with the needs of students.
- Official School Officer email addresses which would provide a set email address so that any student on a discipline knew exactly where to email to with their issues, rather than using the student email address of a School Officer.
- The work and policy on Personal Tutors was facilitated by the full cooperation and information gathering by the School Officers, with discussions across the university on what Personal Tutors need to do to ensure there is pastoral care for students, how this might impact retention, and how best to ensure that the needs of students were met.
- School Officers raised the issue of inconsistency in the Late Submission of Coursework Policy across Schools, and even within Schools, which stimulated a lot of debate on how this operates and how best to go forward. This informed change within the university, by the first step towards consistency within schools and a planned follow-up for next year on improving the consistency across the university.
- The plans for the Library Refurbishment were also discussed, with a presentation from the Library, and the students helped inform the student body about the developments, and comments were very positive about the plans.
- The plans for the Student Portal were brought to the School Officers by the Student Administration and Revitalisation Project (SARP) team. The students discussed what needs to be brought to the Portal and what the Mobile Application would look like.
- Mitigating circumstances and how each school dealt with these was also raised and discussed. Work is now ongoing to ensure better consistency in practices.

We also have a Postgraduate Research Representative (PGR Rep) for each school, which convenes monthly. The last academic year saw the conclusion of the PGR Student Life Cycle working Group, which examined the issues across the university. A number of proposals were brought forward for this and is being steadily worked through by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Board but issues resolution has been difficult as there is no committee of ownership for dealing with these issues, which include unequal pay conditions, the impact of James Watt scholarships and the requirement of 100 hours of teaching that does not reflect the hours involved in this, and the lack of clear policy on deadlines and extensions. The new Deputy Principal is very keen we ensure our PGR students are supported by the University. However, the Senate Effectiveness Review and the work required has meant that progress is slow.

Key Development: Class Rep Training

The Union in partnership with the University successfully bid to UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) to develop an online Class Rep training module hosted on Vision.

Class Reps studying on the Edinburgh and Galashiels campuses have been able to access a two hour face to face training session run by the Student Union. The training materials have been emailed to the Dubai and Malaysia campus, but we are unsure of the delivery, or the take up of this training.

The project to create online Class Rep training allows students no matter where they are studying to participate and engage with the same training, meaning that Class Reps globally will be trained to the same standard. In addition, this training will be adapted to allow Class Reps at ALPs to take part, furthering their representative voice.

The training has been written, and takes the format of fun short videos to watch, and Prezi presentations to work through; before completing short multiple choice tests.

The training is currently being tested by School Officers and Class Reps on the UK, Dubai and Malaysia campuses, with a view to it being rolled out to all Class Reps across from September 2017.



Learning and Teaching Oscars

This year will be the 8th year of the Annual Learning and Teaching Oscars. This Student-Led Teaching Award scheme was one of the first in Scotland, and has now been emulated in Universities throughout the UK and beyond.

Students submit nominations for staff under a variety of categories, and then a group of School Officers shortlist these nominations down to 24 shortlisted candidates.

Over the years, the format of collecting nominations has changed, initially all nominations were submitted via paper forms, and now over 80% of nominations are submitted electronically. This shift has seen a slight reduction in the number of nominations received; however, the quality of the submissions has increased and we receive far fewer nominations without an explanation for the nomination.

Year	Number of Nominations	Average word count per nomination	% of blank nominations
2010	740	Not available	Not available
2011	858	15.28	19.9
2012	1370	18.36	24.8
2013	1129	19.53	22
2014	1014	22.14	14
2015	724	25.05	27.6
2016	501	20.07	20.7

2017	736	32.95	5.29
Total	7072		

This year's shortlist is below:



Provide advocacy and student support

Advice Hub

Since October 2016 the Advice Hub has been staffed by two full time Student Advisors, working closely with the elected Vice-President Wellbeing.

A growing number of students seek academic support, advice and advocacy. Our Student Advisors can support students to understand and navigate University processes including Academic Appeals, Disciplinarys, Mitigating Circumstances, Complaints and Temporary Suspension of Studies.

There is also a growing need for personal and health-related support and advice including mental health issues, stress and insomnia, consumer and accommodation issues.

Our Student Advisors help and support students using a person centred support approach to help them find the most appropriate solution to the challenges and issues they are facing. The Advice Hub is a peaceful, private and informal space, with screened areas for confidential chats and is open on weekdays throughout the year. Our Student Advisors will respond swiftly to requests for help, often the same day but always within 48 working hours. Students can receive support through a variety of channels including face-to-face, via email and over the telephone.

Our Advice Hub continues to meet a growing student need, from undergraduate through to postgraduate, serving as a point of reference and referral, offering direct help or signposting students to other university services or external organisations.

Our Advice Hub also operates the NHS C:Card service, offering free condoms. This year we issued approximately 8,268 condoms.

Type	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Academic	94	176	93	96	192	72
Academic Appeal	73	103	246	215	267	309
Accommodation	51	44	37	33	13	40
University Accommodation	19	31	10	21	20	16
Consumer Issues	10	2	9	8	12	12
Disciplinary	17	20	31	55	98	78
Financial/Funding	172	174	102	112	93	101
Hardship Loan	135	226	94	44	38	39
Harassment	4	0	26	12	12	22
Health	60	47	64	61	102	92
International	92	191	17	7	21	19
Legal	9	14	16	16	21	6
Personal	23	21	17	7	9	47
Council Tax	37	21	9	5	8	17
Career/Jobs	53	34	26	14	19	28
Signposting	564	493	615	545	415	658
Other	150	98	115	47	23	66
University Complaints	n/a	5	19	31	64	170
Total	1564	1700	1546	1329	1427	1792

Support Packs

Support packs form a large part of the Advice Hub outreach programme. They provide information and signposting for students who may be reluctant to ask for help in person. The packs serve as a way for us to broadcast, promote and explain our service and the help we can offer. They include helpful information, snacks, drink sachets and fun items to raise awareness. This year since September 2016, we have distributed 2,100 packs, and are very grateful to our student volunteers for all the time they contribute in coming to the advice hub to help us make these packs up.

- Well Being Packs - Focussing on how to relax.
- Advent and Exam Packs - "Tis the season not to stress..." focusing on strategies for revision in semester 1 and looking ahead to Christmas.

- Election Packs - Encouraging students to engage in the Student Union Elections
- Exam Packs - Focusing on strategies for coping with stress and semester 2 exams.

Campaigns and other activities

Alongside our campaigns we continue to work in conjunction with the Centre for Sport & Exercise and the University's Equality and Diversity team to support Healthy Body, Healthy Mind.

The Advice Hub has delivered four, 2 hour Therapets sessions in partnership with Canine Concern Scotland Trust. These 2 hour sessions are broken into 20 minute time slots, with 30 students able to attend each time slot, enabling 150 students to benefit from one 2 hour session. 600 students have benefitted from Therapets this year.

Meet and Greet events have continued to be popular, with over 1000 students and staff having attended one this year. There are always smiles when we explain the tea, coffee and biscuits are free! The aim is to continue to provide this service next year as there is great appreciation from both students and staff attending the event. The cost per head for these events is only £0.19, a small amount compared to the engagement and awareness raising these events provide. We are now also using compostable paper cups to maintain our green footprint.

Enquiries

We have information displays outside the Advice Hub to provide access to an array of information about university and external services without the need for students to come into the Advice Hub itself.

In 2016-17 there was a total of 1,792 enquiries, which is 365 more enquiries in the Advice Hub than last year, and an increase of over 20%. As well as the increasing student need for support, this reflects the efforts we have made in more targeted information packs and external leaflet displays, which this year had a large health and academic focus. We would also flag up the noticeable increase of 166% in the number of complaints submitted by students to the university.

This year we have seen an increase from students beyond what the university currently funds us for. We have worked out roughly how long the Advice Hub had to spend for each enquiry in order to support the students. Enquiries beyond our funding (Dubai, Malaysia, ALP, and IDL students) have taken up 100 hours in total of Advice Hub since October. This equates to around 7% of Advice Hub hours of the last six months, and is rising.

THERAPETS

Thursday 14th May
11.30am-1.30pm

Drop In!

Zero's

in the Student Union

**No Booking
Required**

for **students
and staff**



Working in partnership with the university

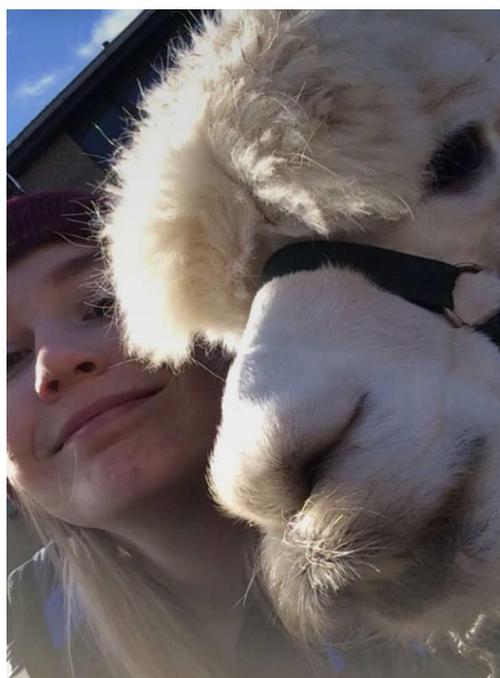


The overall student experience is important in ensuring a positive student learning and social environment, to make the best of their time at University. As such, Advice Hub advisors continue to support the work of the University Wider Access Working Group, and the Care Experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum (CEECEF) by contributing to meetings and promoting awareness. We support the University Summer School by delivering sessions and supporting summer school activities. We work closely with University Support Services, in particular Disability, Counselling and the Thinking of Leaving Team. We appreciate the support and social activities provided to students by the Chaplaincy and regularly refer students there. School Offices and Academic Registry staff are valuable sources of information and guidance in helping us to resolve difficulties for students.

Vice-President Wellbeing

The Vice President Wellbeing has led projects this year around mental health with a lot of help from the Welfare executive officer. In semester 1 mental health awareness week brought 'an elephant in the room' campaign to campus where volunteers dressed up in an elephant costume and attended lectures and walked around canteens. This represented the fact that mental health is something everyone is aware of but no one is talking about – it's the elephant in the room. We also ran an 'I need Mental Health Awareness because...' campaign where students could share their thoughts about the importance of mental health. All of the liberation officers produced a leaflet about how mental health can negatively affect their liberation groups in particular. In semester 2 we ran 'Wellbeing Week' which supports healthy body healthy mind initiatives. This is where we had 'Pet-a-Paca' – 7 alpacas visited the campus for 3 hours and around 500 students came down to the union to meet, pet and walk them. Both of these weeks also had a mixture of meditation, yoga, mindfulness, Therapets, self-defence and craft activities for students to partake in. The Drama society and Psychology society both ran some of the events.

Over the summer the Vice President Wellbeing also wrote consent talks with help from other unions, the university and Police Scotland. The Student Induction and Transition Office helped co-ordinate timetabling so the talks were given during fresher's week



inductions. They covered topics such as common misconceptions, legal definitions, how to ask for consent, sexual coercion, drunk/unsafe/regretful sex, university culture, bystander intervention and app safety (photo sharing and dating apps).

Universities UK ran a taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students (www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/changing-the-culture-final-report.aspx). The paper outlines recommendations of areas universities can improve to prevent and support students dealing with sexual harassment. One recommendation is around the use of inductions and consent issues. It's such a change in culture for students mixed with the sudden freedom of being away from home means that talking to students about consent during their first few weeks is vital. Before the Vice President leaves she is recording the talks into a video format which can be used in inductions for the next few years until a permanent solution is found or funded.

The liberation groups also provide support to students in minority groups on campus. The groups provide a sense of belonging, confidence and a collective voice.



Enhance

student experiences and activities.

Linking student volunteering and employability

The Watt Volunteers scheme has been popular once again with over 50 students consistently logging their volunteering time into our system. This acknowledgement of the time and energy our students put into extra-curricular activities emphasises just how valuable our students are when it comes to the smooth-running of the Union.

This year 59 volunteers consistently logged their hours in for the whole academic year. A total of 3392 hours have been logged in with us so far. This averages out to about 58 hours per volunteer.

We have calculated that if volunteers were paid £7.05 per hour (the standard hourly rate for our students) for their time and effort in actively contributing to their community it would amount to £24, 125.10 a year.

However, we are aware that many of the volunteers such as the Fresher Helpers didn't log in their hours and that there are students who actively volunteer outside of the Union who don't know about the new system we have in place.

For the first time this year, we have widened our scheme to include hours amassed by students volunteering their time with external organisations too. We are also hoping to extend the scheme so that all hours a student accumulates across their degree are kept on record. This means students can reach higher targets than ever before. In addition, volunteering targets achieved will finally be recognised at graduations. This is something we have been aiming for since the Watt Volunteers Scheme began and are very pleased with this outcome.

Likewise, our volunteers' achievements are celebrated at our annual Volunteer Awards. This year, we received a huge number of nominations to commend our individual volunteers and group efforts. Particular awards which reinforce the importance of volunteering and the wealth of experience gained include: Society of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, Leadership Award, and Outstanding Contribution.





The skills our students gain through volunteering are invaluable and will no doubt prove useful as these students graduate and look towards their future. For example, being a Freshers Helper exemplifies teamwork, excellent communication skills and leadership. A position as Treasurer in a society shows great organisation, clear budgeting skills and high levels of responsibility. The society training we developed this year helped identify the key skills required in certain roles and

hopefully aided volunteers to make the most out of their time with societies.

As a reward for spending 50 hours volunteering (Bronze Award), students automatically receive an appointment with the campus Careers Service to transfer these skills to practical applications and make use of these experiences in interviews and on CVs.

Build a vibrant student community through activities

Societies

The societies affiliated with the Student Union this year have surpassed all expectations in terms of success and engagement. We have maintained 70 societies, 15 of which are newly affiliated since September. Alongside the societies already in existence, several are currently in development and hope to have full society status before this semester ends.

In order to increase engagement with societies, we have put into place two successful schemes. The first of which is 'Society Slam'. Similar to the popular 'Battle of the Halls' in structure, 'Society Slam' is a competition which pits groups against one another in order to win a prize (£500 to spend on something of the society's choosing) at the end of the academic year. Each complete task earns the society points, with more difficult tasks such as collaborations with other societies and raising money for charity earning a higher amount of points. The introduction of the scheme has really improved engagement with the Union, particularly with larger societies such as Medieval, Pole Dancing, and Drama. Taiwanese Society, a new group for this year, also participated, showing that size doesn't always matter. Next year, we aim to increase engagement with both smaller and newer societies as well as introduce a winner per semester so that societies which affiliate part way through the year still have a chance to get involved.

The second scheme is the introduction of 'Society Cards' in our catering outlets at the Union. Every time a student spends a full £1 on food or soft drinks, they can redeem a stamp. Full cards containing 10 stamps earn the student's society 50p towards an event to be held in the Union in the following semester. In the trial month alone, we received over 50 cards from various societies. Although the cards have only been available since January, they have proved very popular with students. We predict they will remain being used enthusiastically with hope that the scheme may be extended to the Sports Union too.

Our efforts were not aimed solely at Undergraduate students either. In October, we held our first Postgraduate Freshers Week, which proved to be a hit. The activities featured were considerably more low-key than the regular Freshers Week, but well-pitched. The success continued at several well-attended events held across the year, including a Christmas potluck dinner and film session, Jazz Night in Refreshers Week, and a Burns Night ceilidh.

In terms of individual society achievements, there have been many:



Probably the most engaged group with the Union this year, the Medieval Society have hosted several events open to the public, collaborated with other societies, fundraised and more. The society has actively sought opportunities to involve and help the wider community with their cross-country re-enactments and contributions to the Home-

Start West Lothian Festive Food Drive. They have been consistent with their enthusiasm and participation, involving themselves in anything and everything. This is emphasised by their winning of this year's Society Slam competition. Medieval Society are an absolute credit to the Union and through their hard work, have managed to gain much respect for their involvement and can-do attitude.

Pole Dancing Society has proven very popular this year. With more members than ever, and a great diversity in those members, the group put on several training sessions a week to meet the growing demand. In addition, they have introduced a new flexibility class into their timetable,

attended aerial sessions with other pole groups, held many social events and even performed alongside the Drama Society in their spring production. Coming runner-up in Society Slam and their Society President winning the Leadership Award at this year's Volunteer Awards certainly completes a very successful year for this Society.

This year has also seen the creation of the Credit Union Society, a new take on ethical finance that has worked successfully in the United States of America but has not gone beyond those borders. The intention of the society is to support the First Scottish University Credit Union (based on the Edinburgh campus) in offering loans and other financial products to students by students. This will provide skills and experience to students and also support the work of the Credit Union in bringing cheap loans to the student body. It is hoped this will offer a 'soft option' for students in need before they have to go to the 'hard option' of the Hardship Fund when they are in financial need. This project will hopefully provide very positive exposure for the University and also raise the public profile of ethical finance alternatives.

Other commendable society events include the 32nd Annual Beer Festival, run expertly by our Brewing Society, Drama Society's bi-annual productions as well as the First Aid Africa Ceilidh.



As previously mentioned, we have had at least 15 new societies affiliate with the Union this year. Particular attention should be paid to the Enterprise Society; the winners of this year's Best

New Society Award. This is an innovative, enthusiastic and highly organised society who in their first year have put on several professional and well-attended events. Their behaviour suggests that the society has been much longer established than it is and that these students are already extremely experienced in what they do. They can only get better from here. Likewise, the Techno Society is becoming a firm favourite amongst students. Not only does the group fill a gap in the market for variety in music societies at the Union, they have gained a good reputation across Edinburgh. This has culminated in a partnership with a venue in town for their first in a series of exciting events featuring talented DJs from the society.

We've also had great involvement from our Cultural and Faith Societies. Muslim Society, winner of Best Society two years in a row, have excelled themselves again this year. Alongside forging a fantastic sense of community within the group, they ran Discover Islam week in early February. This turned out to be an inclusive and thoughtful week of events for all students and staff which was very well-received. Arab Society also ran their second annual Arabian Village event, which was a wonderful exploration of the different cultures and countries found in the Middle East. Back in Semester 1, the Taiwanese Society were joint hosts of the Eat Taiwan day-long festival in the centre of Edinburgh. It too was very successful and is hoping to become an

annual event. Many of our cultural societies, including Brazilian Society who affiliated in March 2017, were also key participators in Global Day, which this year had to expand into a larger venue to accommodate the event's popularity.



On the whole, our levels of society engagement improve year on year. The more students involved in societies, the greater community we can build around the Union. However, the space we offer in our building is at full capacity and we can no longer enable students to do everything they want to because of it. This lack of resources has already made several groups outsource their meetings to venues across Edinburgh which has an effect financially too.

Charities

Yet again, a great amount of effort has gone into our charities campaigning. The Union's chosen charities this year were Student Minds, a mental health charity for students, and CoppaFeel, a breast cancer awareness charity for young people. Both areas affect so many of our students' lives, so we thought it was just to help support these causes.

Our Charities Week, held in January, was another success. This year's theme was 'Face your fears' whereby officers and sabbaticals pushed themselves to their limits by going well out of their comfort zones. Activities included: going on a first driving lesson, going without makeup for a week, eating very spicy food and facing animal phobias. All of these activities were brand new to Charities Week, making each challenge an exciting event. It also saw the Student Union team up with the Sports Union on several occasions including holding a tombola, participating in a charity netball tournament and jointly hosting a very successful fashion show. In order to improve fundraising over Charities Week next year, we are considering moving the campaign to a different time of year. In terms of disposable income for students, January probably isn't the best month for students to donate money willingly.

As previously mentioned, however, fundraising from societies has been plentiful. The Medieval Society have ran several charity events including 'Whack-a-Knight' which has raised over £100. Drama Society held a 'Man vs Food' competition as well as donating at least £50 of profit from their spring production towards a disabled theatre charity; the Lung Ha Theatre Company, local to Edinburgh. The Brewing Society's 32nd Annual Beer Festival raised £8,000 for Health in Mind and has been nominated for NUS UK's Society Event of the Year Award 2017!

Halls

This year we have had an incredibly enthusiastic, focussed and proactive Halls Officer to help build a community within the Halls of Residence on campus. After the new Halls were opened in September and the difficulties students faced as a result, the role of Halls Officer has since developed into a more representative role.

With help from the Sabbatical team, each Hall was visited to gain feedback about their accommodation and the Union itself. Several of these issues have since been taken forward and actioned, including a student who had reported a broken oven months previously which still hadn't been fixed.

On a similar note, this feedback helped to form the basis of a 70-page report concerning the issues students had faced since the newest Halls opened in September. The report detailed both issues which occurred during initial move-in, as well as those which remain unaddressed. Our preferred outcome to the report is that the students are fairly compensated for their troubles. The Halls Officer worked tirelessly to encourage students to contribute and spent many hours door-knocking in the residences to ensure everyone was aware of the project and had chance to input their own issues. This in itself helped forge a community due to these students realising others were facing similar issues and could therefore join together for maximum impact.

The Battle of the Halls competition got off to a great start during Freshers Week. Many students from the Halls participated and fought against each other to take the lead. However, after running a second event during Freshers Week and subsequent Battle of the Halls bouts, participation dwindled.

Consequently, we have decided it may be best to run Battle of the Halls solely during Freshers Week, not a year-long competition. Its initial aim was to encourage students to bond with each other and that's what the competition does best. This would also help combat minimal participation from students for the rest of the year.

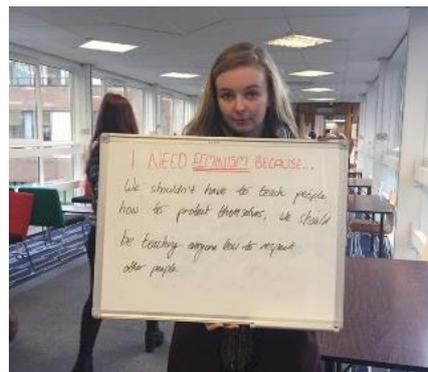
As both a thank you and a congratulations to the students in halls this year, we will be holding a Halls Summer Party before the semester ends.



Equality and Diversity

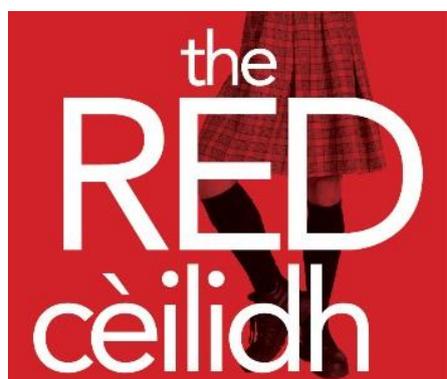
LGBT+ Students Group

Our biggest group this year in terms of membership and engagement was LGBT+. Ellie was our LGBT+ officer and she formed a committee to better organise campaigns and events. They have focused on the social inclusion of member this year providing a range of events from movie nights, bowling, tea and chats and the Red Ceilidh – a charity event where the proceeds go towards Waverley Care (Scotland's HIV and Hepatitis C) and LGBT+ Youth Scotland. They have also worked with the union to keep pushing for gender neutral bathrooms on campus – the disabled toilets have been re-labelled 'for everyone' but there are still no 'normal' toilets that are gender neutral. They have also worked with the university to try and make processes easier for Trans* (an inclusive term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth) students to enrol and get their preferred names on student cards and diplomas.



Womens Group

Our womens officer, Alice, has done tremendous work this year in leading the group. There have been two awareness raising campaigns: 'Feminism isn't a dirty word' and 'amazing immigrant women' which were displayed on the bride link as part of Diversity week, Wellbeing week and International womens Day. There were 'meet your womens officer' opportunities, self-defence classes, and they raised money for charity through bake sales and clothing drives. Alice submitted a motion at the Unions Annual General meeting to support improved street lighting on campus driven by their survey which asked students how safe they feel on campus. Students reported they feel less safe outdoors at night and many said that the far away car park is extremely dark. The motion passed and the University have now confirmed more street lighting will be worked on over the summer.



Disabled Students Group

Our Disabled student's officer, Jordan, worked with the University Disability service and attended an early induction event for incoming first years who had disclosed that they have autism. They completed a survey for disabled students to gather views on the parking available on the Edinburgh Campus – something which is now being improved over the summer. It's harder to determine if the parking available in Galashiels is efficient as they share the

campus with the college.

Our incoming Disabled Officer uses a mobility scooter and has been very vocal and helped the university find and solve issues around campus – such as access to buildings and when

automatic doors are broken or just do not exist. This feedback has been part of the push to get the campus assessed by an external company to determine its accessibility. He has also had issues regarding timetabling leaving him with not enough time to get from class to class when the corridors are very busy.

This student also passed a motion at the annual general meeting which passed and so next year the union will be mandated to work with the university to get a quiet room on campus where disabled students can go between classes to recharge and mentally prepare for their next class. Other universities have this and it's beneficial to students with visible disabilities and even more so invisible difficulties – especially students who struggle with heightened sensory sensitivity and autism.

Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) Students Group

This group has not had as much engagement from students this year which could be based on a number of factors: BAME students would rather identify as International over BAME if they are international and some students see the term as political and automatically think of a social or support group when informed of it. This did not stop our BAME officer, Nnyaladzi, doing some really amazing work this year. October is the UK's Black History month and there were a range of events from 'meet your BAME officer' stalls giving out free tea, coffee and biscuits in return for a chat, a movie night and also a bridge link display called 'Reclaim Black Stories' which tells the story of Black students from around the country – it was organised by NUS Scotland's Black Students officer.

Nnyaladzi also contributed to the University's Equality Outcomes 2017-21 by ensuring it includes diversifying student intake and staff intake as an aim. If there was more engagement we would have liked to adopt a campaign that has been done in other unions which asks 'Why is my curriculum white'? We have amazing BAME students and lecturers but the majority of reading lists, articles, examples and case studies are not diverse. This is disenfranchising for BAME students who don't see the point in striving for academic careers as they don't see others hard work being equally rewarded. Lecturers and course co-ordinators should make a conscious effort to diversify their curriculum.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

BAME Tea & Chat, Thursday 8th October 5:30pm – 7:30pm, Liberty
Come and join our lovely team for afternoon tea and coffee discussion on what the group is about and how it could benefit your time here at Heriot Watt. A chance to meet the BAME officer and other students.

Mental Health Awareness stall, Wednesday 12th October, 11am-4pm, Bridge Link
We will be having a stall about mental health issues and how to get help. We will also have a quiz about mental health issues. If you are interested in joining our committee, please contact the BAME officer.

Edinburgh Dance Hall Carnival, Friday 21st October, 10pm-3am, Studio 24
For a night of dancing, singing and more, you can have the best time of your life. The night of the year! Book tickets now!

Film Night, Friday 26th October 6pm-11pm, Committee Room 1
Come and watch a film about the Black community. We will have a quiz about the film. If you are interested in joining our committee, please contact the BAME officer.

Bridge Link Display: October 17-21
An informative display in partnership with NUS Black Students campaign.



International Students Group

Our officer, Prahniika, was elected in October. She's a student from the Dubai Campus and she established a committee of friends and those who ran against her in the election. She has done two events this year with the priority of helping international students get situated and settled in Edinburgh. A walking tour of the city ending in the Meadows to watch the fireworks on bonfire night in semester 1 and an international food crawl in semester 2 where students went to a new restaurant for each course – Malaysian, Korean BBQ and then Italian for dessert. We thought it was a nice change from a pub crawl. There were plans to run a Photography campaign called 'Edinburgh: a cultural mixing pot' where international students

would be photographed around the city in their traditional clothing representing the mixing of cultures. Unfortunately Prahniika is a final year student and in the end it was too much to organise but it's a nice idea to hopefully carry forward to next year.

Global day celebrated our international students and let them share their cultures and cuisine with each other and home students – Aashna our Equality and Diversity executive officer organised this event. Based on last year's attendance we knew we could not house global day in the union again as space was a huge issue. We held the event in Oriam which was great although we had to pay which means our fund for next year's Global Day isn't as healthy as it could have been.



Diversity week

All of our officers worked together along with the Vice President Wellbeing and the Equality and Diversity executive officer on 'Diversity week' in January. There was a stall on the bridge link where students could make a free bracelet but the beads they used were part of a 'Check your privilege' exercise. There were 'Impairment challenges' where students could experience what it felt like to have a stutter, need to lip read and be colour-blind. There was a silent disco to raise awareness for noise sensitivity and deafness, an intersectional movie night ran by BAME and LGBT+ groups and the 'Feminism isn't a dirty word' campaign.

Gender Stereotype Campaign

The Vice President Wellbeing and her Equality and diversity executive worked with the sports union to produce a series of YouTube videos that look at men and women in academia and sport who are breaking gender stereotypes which proves that these stereotypes are outdated and redundant. We covered women in STEM subjects, men in fashion, men in gymnastics, women in boxing and women in positions of power. To view the videos follow the link:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yt2qJTW6suE&list=PLZVcgjyz-5AqMtnrMu6-7zXAdvByfKvon

Prevent

The Student Union, like many student unions, is still very much against the Prevent agenda which is part of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. It makes both students and university staff very uncomfortable and places a sense of suspicion on the learner-teacher relationship.

This year the act was actually in place which made it harder to be strictly 'non-compliant.' We had to be realistic in how best we would support a student who faces prevent related accusations. The duty does not affect the union as we are a separate organisation but since we are in a university building on university property the rules around the External Speaker Policy does affect us. We sought legal advice and decided the best result for the students was to negotiate the terms of this for the union and help shape a policy which keep as much control as possible over the union and who visits us.

This policy is pushing students who already feel separated from the 'general student population' further out of the student movement. Students are scared to take part in student politics in case they are seen as 'at risk' and they find it very hard to trust or confide in university staff.

Have you ever felt anxious or reserved in class? Have you ever felt a desire for political or moral change? Have you ever disagreed with UK foreign policy? Have you ever questioned western media reporting? According to Prevent if a student answers YES to any of these questions then they may be liable to court-sanction accusations of radicalisation. Every student I know would answer Yes to those questions but now some students – based on race or religion are feeling like if they express any of these views then they could be accused. This division of people is more likely to be a negative driving force closer to radicalisation than any of the questions listed.

We are still working with the national movement 'Students not Suspects' which is putting pressure on the government. We think both the union and the university should be aware that this piece of legislation is very damaging, dangerous, and discriminatory and it isn't even affective. The union acknowledge that the university must comply by law but we feel that to reassure students that they don't agree morally and they don't think their students could be terrorists then they should publically state that they think the policy is ineffective and wrong. We have a duty to respect and nurture our students and not treat them with suspicion.



Develop
our global community.

Prioritise social opportunities for students

Freshers Week

Our annual Freshers Week programme continued its success from last year selling over 4,000 tickets and featured various events and activities from services on campus such as the Chaplaincy, Oriam, Student Support, and Accommodation Service.

Day events included meet and greet sessions with the Advice Hub, society and sports fairs and outdoor excursions, such as city tours or walks



up the Pentland Hills. At night, various themed nightclub events were held in Zeros along with the ever popular Ceilidh and Freshers Pub Quiz. From Postgraduate wine and nibbles to international welcome meals, regardless of age or taste in events, there was something for every student to get involved in. Throughout the whole week Committee Room 1 in the Student Union was transformed into 'The Chill-Out Zone' in order to provide a quiet, relaxing space for students who wanted a break from the busy week.

We have around 2,000 new students each year, with a majority of these students living on campus. We can only hold 1,000 students in our building, even with having the whole building dedicated to an event. This means a 1,000 students miss out each time on our night events. This is an opportunity and experience lost to half our new students. We have students lining up around the building to get tickets for our night events and we have to turn those students past our limit away. We feel this is a disgrace, as it is a massively negative impact on the new students' experience.

Our building was not built to deal with these new student numbers. We want to give a truly excellent and memorable Freshers Week to each and every student but we frankly cannot give this with the facilities we have.



One of our most popular events, the Freshers Fair, where our societies showcase themselves to attract new students, completely packs the building to the point where, for the last few years, there is an overspill outside to ensure that as many societies can have a space as possible. We believe that as our engagement and society numbers increase the lack of capacity in our building will be further compounded by the lack of space available in the building. Without the space for our students we will find it difficult to truly meet the needs of our students as our charitable purpose states, particularly if the university's plan for greater student numbers is met.

Weekly events schedule



A survey was released just after Freshers Week not only to receive feedback but to also get a sense of what events and activities students would like to see for the rest of the academic year. Top 3 choices were: Pub Quiz, Cocktail and Mocktail Classes, and themed music nights in Geordies.

During Freshers week and Refreshers Week, students could book a time slot and learn how to prepare a variety of cocktails, from a Singapore Sling all the way to a refreshing Paradise. Non- alcoholic options were also available. Occasionally on Wednesday nights, sports teams from Oriam had the choice of cheap deals on burgers and drinks after matches. We also hosted Oriams first 'Warm Up Wednesday' of the year. In the future, we hope to expand and extend our society kick back card to the sports teams.

A Pub Quiz was introduced and took place every Thursday night. It was £1 per person to play and the winning team got to take home the winning pot. Each Thursday there was a winning pot of £40-50, with many students coming back each week. The event was well received as the

Biology and Physics Society asked to 'takeover' certain weeks in order to raise money for their chosen charities.

We did a trial run of 'Live Fridays,' an event that took place in Geordies where student acts would be chosen to perform every Friday from 6-9pm. Acts ranged from singers, guitar players and the Heriot Watt Jazz Band. Feedback from this event was very positive reporting that Geordies had a more 'in town' bar atmosphere.

Hot Dub Time Machine

Just after a very busy Freshers Week, we decided to continue the momentum and invite Hot Dub Machine back to the Student Union. He first performed here in September 2013 and since then has sold-out shows all over the globe along with headline main stage slots at some of the biggest festivals.

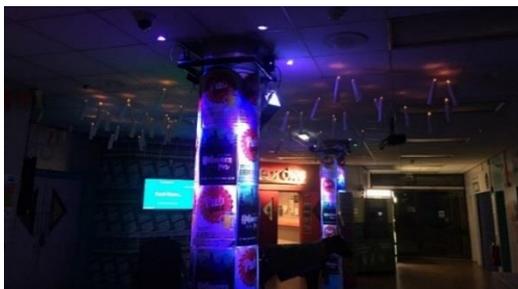


To build a buzz we decided to do a 10 ticket and t-shirt giveaway for the event which proved to be quite popular when used a few years back. This year we did a treasure hunt theme where we would either hide the tickets somewhere on campus for students to find or give out challenges to complete in order to win. For example, one pair of tickets were hidden at the 'Heriot Watt University' main entrance sign by the roundabout where another pair had to be found in a giant ball pit in under 15 seconds.

The event was a huge success as always and the Student Union generated £5,885 in ticket, bar and catering sales. Even the kids in the local schools were talking about this event!

As you can see, our club space was packed with students, if only we could fit in more students!

Harry Potter Halloween Party



Apart from Christmas, this is one of our favourite times of the year. Each year the Student Union puts on a late night event for students on campus considering town venues are further away and much dearer.

This year we decided to do a theme that would fit and relate to a wide variety of students on campus, so what better than a Harry Potter themed event?

A lot of effort went into making this event. Before entering the Student Union, a sign warned students of the 'Whomping Willow' tree outside the building. At the Reception, students were then greeted with the sorting hat which placed them in one of the four Hogwarts houses. That coloured band offered that student a discount on one of the drinks suited to that house. Aragog and a trail of spiders made their way down the corridor to lead students to the floating candles, free invisibility cloaks and candy stall. Each venue was transformed into a different location in the Harry Potter books/films such as the 'Forbidden Forest' (Libertys Café), 'The Grand Hall' (Zeros) and 'The Leaky Cauldron' (Geordies Bar).



The Leaky Cauldron was looked down upon by the Dementors in the ceiling and the windows were flooded with Hogwarts acceptance letters. The DJ and dancefloor were located in the Grand Hall which was decorated with drapes to represent the 4 houses while a game of Quidditch Pong could be played in the Forbidden Forest. Students could also get photos with a 'Have you seen this Wizard?' frame and for those who wanted a bit of a challenge a 'Horcrux Hunt' was on offer, a themed treasure hunt to find all the hidden objects hidden throughout the Student Union building.

All decorations and ideas were brought together and made possible by the Student Union Executive and other volunteers with a budget of £300. The event itself made brought in an income of £2,958 across bar and catering.

Beer Festival

The Brewing Society hosts a variety of events include home brewing tutorials, organised pub crawls and fortnightly tastings on campus allow students to explore the ever-expanding world of beer, meet new people, make new friends and have a great time.

This year marked the 32nd Annual Beer and Cider Festival at the Student Union. There were over 80 beers on cask and keg from breweries such as Alchemy, Fallen, Tempest, and over 50 breweries showcased along with Waulkmill Cider.



The entry fee was £10 which included a festival glass for customers to keep plus 4 beer/cider tokens. Each token was worth either a half or a third of a pint depending on the price bracket. This year all the proceeds the society made went directly to their chosen charity, Health in

Mind. This charity is locally based and aims promoting the positive mental health and wellbeing in Scotland.

The event was a huge success once again, raising a total of over £8000 for Health in Mind.

Creating an international student community

The Student Union firmly believes that student representation in Dubai has incredible potential and that the model, if properly supported, will be transferable to Malaysia as well. However at this point the system is vulnerable with inadequate transparency, governance and support. With the help of just a little funding, much more could be achieved.

This year the UK Student President was invited to go to our Dubai and Malaysia campuses on the Deputy Principal for Learning and Teaching's budget. However this could not go forward due to financial considerations. We recognise that restrictions on funding played a major part in this decision however we believe that this has been to the detriment of our efforts to bring about a 'One Heriot-Watt' mentality. We believe that in future an allocation to support the joint work of the Presidents should come from a more suitable source than the Learning and Teaching budget, should the university wish to support such work.

In light of this, the President of the Student Union took a personal decision to support the Dubai Student President, due to the support issues highlighted below. The Court should be aware that if the President role-holder chose not to support the Dubai President then there would be a significant, detrimental impact on the Dubai campus and the role-holder there.

We have done the best we can, and this year has seen some positive development for our international student community. The Student Presidents in Dubai and Scotland have worked closely this year in fostering the Heriot-Watt University student community. It has been less easy for the Malaysia campus as the Student President is not a sabbatical role this year but has been a full time student, which has made it difficult to co-ordinate. This will be a full time role from the next academic year, which is welcomed by the Student Union.

For the last two years we have invited the Dubai Student President to join our annual bespoke Officer training. With the withdrawal of support this has not happened for the current Dubai President. Although training the President is useful to a degree, we feel that we should be training their full team, to allow for effective student representation. This will be the same position for the Malaysia President unless the university commits to significant change in how it manages the Dubai and Malaysia representation.

We have always tried to work with the university on this and we can only offer our full help and support, should the university find itself willing to engage with us on proper terms. The recommendations from our 2014 report on Student Representation have not been listened to and it is only through the work of the Constitutional Review Group, particularly for Senate, that any change has been allowed to happen. This was raised last year in our last Court Report and it took a piece of legislation to make the university produce a change.

Dubai support

Support for the Dubai Council and President have been appalling this year. There has been no support staff member for nearly the whole term of the President which has had a significant detrimental effect on the representation in Dubai. We have seen no reason for delay in the appointment of a staff member, nor reason for the length of time it has taken.

The President has been supporting the Dubai President on an informal basis, as it is the right thing to do. This increased in need once the support staff member left the Dubai team and was not replaced. Support required included offering advice on the recent debacle of their elections for Dubai President, which included unsecured voting and staff endorsement of candidates. We believe the situation has been very challenging for the role holder and we urge the university to ensure it is more proactive to ensure that such a situation does not arise again. The Student Union is more than willing to help with this, if the university is willing.

Malaysia

It is welcome news that from next year the Student President for Malaysia position will be a full-time sabbatical role and will hopefully allow for ensuring further engagement and closer ties with the Student Council in Dubai and the Student Union in Scotland. The President has provided support to the Malaysia President this year on a more ad hoc basis due to the current voluntary nature for the position.

Independent Distance Learner and Approved Learning Partner students

Independent Distance Learner and Approved Learning Partner students will see the benefit of the class representative training being moved online. Other work has been ongoing to fact find whether these students could be further represented, with the possibility of reserved places on Senate for these student groups. Current support and infrastructure for this means that this is not currently feasible but will be a long-term goal for the Student Union.

Creating a UK student community

Scottish Borders



One of our biggest on- going issues at SBC has been student space and community as we have struggled to bring students together without a designated social area on campus. Past and present students have manifested their wish for a new student social space for a number of years.

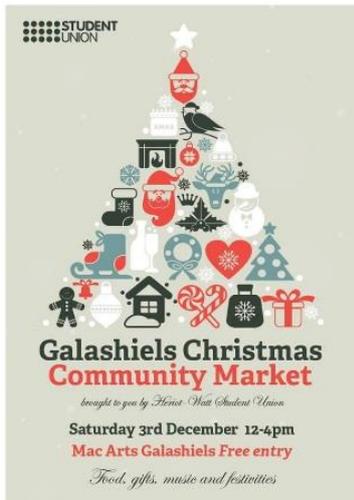
Finally, in November 2016, after years of fighting hard for our students and their rights for an exclusive HW social space, we were delighted to open the new Student Union social space 'The Thread', which is located in the Jean Muir Student Village. The opening of this space has allowed our students to have an area in which they will be able to relax, to interact with each other, to meet new people, to organise events, and most importantly to get away from their study work for a few hours. It features a brand new 6inch free-play pool table along with comfortable sofas, smart TV and board games. The space is completed by a coffee vending machine and an outdoor terrace area with a stunning view of the campus. This kind of space is something that was clearly missing on this campus for a long time. Since the Thread has opened, it has become something fundamental for our students as it brings a viable tool to the table, right between studies and social interaction.



The Student Union office has also now been located up at halls too, alongside our new bookable studio spaces.

Due to the move/location of our office, new social space and studio rooms we have faced challenges this year in lower student engagement. We have been working hard in addressing these issues and have been putting all our efforts into advertising/promoting our services this year by poster campaigns, events, signage, a regular presence on campus, and also delivering Student Union presentation during lectures to all HW classes. In doing this we have noticed a real impact with lots more students coming and using our services and we hope that additional concentration on this matter will continue to improve student engagement.

Last year as you may remember we concentrated a lot of our efforts into supporting a student led group in organising a community fireworks display for the locals of Galashiels, in aid of charity. After the massive success of the first year, and the great response it got from the local public and students, the Student Union made the decision to organise and host the Gala Fawkes event for a further year. The event took place on Saturday the 5th of November at Galashiels Rugby Club and was another roaring success, with over 4,500 local residents/students attending and raising over £3000 for a local children's charity and £800 for the Student Union.



We also hosted our Christmas Community market again this year. Due to the grim weather last year we decided it was best to take the event indoors this time, and we hosted it in the Mac Art Centre, Galashiels, on the 3rd of December 2016. The event was also very successful and was a great way in raising awareness of our creative HW Students and the Student Union in the local town.

Addressing welfare issues, we have hosted several campaigns over the year with everything from homesickness to depression to accommodation tips. We have also been working closely with Angela Milton, Heriot- Watt Student Advisor, in offering the students 'Time out for tea sessions' which give the students opportunities to meet other people, chat, and also get some advice. We have also continued working with Therapets this year in arranging a number of drop in dog room session, and also recently introduced a fun 'Pat-a-Paca day' session (alpaca trekking), which was part of our Wellbeing Month and was massively welcomed by all.

Orkney

Student experience in Orkney continues to be challenging due to the size of the student body and the practicalities of travel to the campus. In August 2016 our President visited the campus informally to meet with students and it was clear that more is needed to support the wellbeing of our students at this campus. It is not practical for the student union to maintain a presence on this campus, however if the university were to place more of a priority on students in Orkney we believe that by working together, we can find practical solutions to the issues currently prevalent on this campus.



Enabling Strategies

Facilities

Our facilities strategy outlines a sustainable programme of investment where we can improve the space and service we provide for our students.

The Student Union has identified a number of projects over the coming years that it will invest in. In 2017 we have approved investment of £16,000 in a new commercial management information system and an upgrade to our till and EPOS systems. We are also investing £96,000 in refurbishing our student shop.

As mentioned throughout this report, the Student Union building is a serious concern for the Trustee Board. Students consistently feedback that the building is unappealing and not fit for purpose. While we are extremely grateful for the University investment in the building, we have to be realistic about the limitations that the building has. Structurally it is not possible to alter the building to provide different sorts of spaces which limits their use to certain activities. There remains ongoing concern that the facilities do not meet current licensing requirements and the building remains at risk of having its occupancy levels halved as a result. The amount of money available for the refurbishment is not likely to be able to address these issues.

Commercial

This year has continued to build on the strengths of the products supplied across retail, catering, events and bar services designed to enhance the student experience and set challenging targets for the future. The year has seen considerable uncertainty in rising cost prices of products resulting in us looking to diversifying the product ranges to secure over the counter prices as highly competitive for our customers.

We have been working hard on the offer itself in the bar area with new ranges of spirits, beers and ciders including the addition of Coast to Coast a now recognised main stream product developed by an ex-Heriot-Watt University student. This has already inspired others and we are looking to host a guest ale from our current students promoting their work as part of their course.



September saw the Pizza shop re-open in the Student Union which has proved popular and we are now looking at expanding the menu choices as well as the opening times in response to demand. Equally the main menus across both the bar and catering have changed to reflect a more health conscious agenda while still retaining some of the old favourites. To also support our move we have also included the calories for each dish

on the menu to help customers make informed choices. We are also providing authentic daily specials featuring tastes from around the world inspired by some student recipes as well as expanding our special ranges of vegan, gluten free and lactose intolerant foods.

The retail space in our shop has seen a busy year with sales up by around 5 % although equally considerable pressure on margins due to the increases felt across retail purchasing partly fuelled by Brexit uncertainties.

We have been reviewing the stock range, including clothing, broadening our offer while reducing the duplication of some products to maximise the effectiveness of the space we have. We received news that we are the biggest seller of the Ginsters Meal Deal across the university network and indeed across all retail outlets across the UK!



We have also received recognition of the best kept self-service Costa Coffee machine which is inspiring more sales of this popular brand –well done to the team.

Communication

We have detailed in the main report all our activities supporting our communication strategy. This strategy remains an organisational priority for the foreseeable future.

Finance

Our finance strategy aims to ensure the Union is a financially secure and well governed.

As is well known, the Student Union experienced financial difficulties a number of years ago and implemented a recovery plan in 2011. We are pleased to say that the Student Union has met its target of holding six month cash reserves for the charity ahead of schedule. As a result the Trustee Board approved a new reserves policy in November 2016 to set stringent conditions that will allow the Union to release funds for the purpose of investment. These conditions have been approved by our auditors and must have a return on investment acceptable to the Board.

The Student Union recorded a surplus of £579,600 in the financial year 2015/16. This figure is high due to the transfer of assets and liabilities from our previously unincorporated charity to our new charity limited by guarantee. The underlying surplus generated was £51,432. The Student Union has now recorded a surplus every year since 2011. Our 2015/16 audit report showed there were no issues to report and no adjustments were required to be made. A copy of our audited accounts has been given to the University and is available online at www.hwunion.com/reference/finances



Diarmuid Cowan
President



Aashna Bakshi
Executive Member
(Equality & Diversity)



Sheona Dorrian
Vice-President (Community)



Craig Gillen
Executive Member
(Welfare)



Eloise McNeaney
Vice-President (Wellbeing)



Carl Thompson
Executive Member
(Activities & Events)



Corto Pimenta
Vice-President (SBC)



Emily Conning
Executive Member
(SBC)



Natalie Hay
Executive Member (Academic)



Hugo Baxter
Halls Officer



Thomas Garnett
Executive Member
(Activities & Events)



Olivia Bryant-Shaw
Charities Officer



Alice Kerr
Women's Officer



Ellie Dick
LGBT+ Officer



Zee Nyeku
Black Asian and Minority
Ethnic Officer



Jordan Graham
Disabled Students Officer



Prahnika Borkar
International Officer



Gail Edwards
Chief Executive Officer



Jamie Nutter
Head of Corporate
Services & Deputy CEO



Denise McCaig
Student Engagement Manager



Gillian Fortune
Executive Assistant



Polly Glynn
Activities Co-Ordinator



Arran McKinlay
Design and Marketing
Co-ordinator



Angela Milton
Student Advisor



Rachel Jackson
Administrator, SBC



Ailie Robertson
Student Advisor



Andrew Thornton
Marketing &
Communications Assistant



Jilly Morris
Student Advisor



Fiona Hall
Finance Manager



Sandra Keay
Finance Administrator



Wynn Narrie
Finance Administrator (Retail)



Iain Herbert
Commercial Manager



Pramilah Zeimpekis
Retail Manager



May Higgins
Kitchen Manager



Chris Skene
Bar & Events Manager