

# IMPACT REPORT 2019/20

---



your  
student  
union 

# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER



## overview

It's generally the case that each Sabbatical team faces its fair share of challenges alongside the exciting opportunities each year holds, however none of us could have foreseen the scale of what this year would throw at us.

Whilst aspects of what took place created challenges - floods ahead of Graduation, an unexpected By-Election for Union President in the Autumn, the re-development of the Atrium, sustained lecturer strikes and of course, the impact of COVID-19 - the Union continued to focus on delivering for students through our dedicated and committed Officer team, staff, volunteers, Clubs & Socs, Sports Teams and commercial team.

We hope you enjoy reading some of the highlights outlined over the following pages and that they give you a sense of some of the key work the Students' Union does for its members.

**Chloe, Amy, Josh & Gill**  
**Union Sabbatical team 2019/20**



# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER

Democratic elections remain central to our representative system. Our October By-Election was somewhat different than normal as we set about electing a new President, alongside NUS (National Union of Students) delegates. A good turnout saw Chloe Whyte elected as President.

During the year we saw tremendous turnout at the Union's Zone and General Meetings, passing policies decided by students aimed at improving the student experience. Examples include, a motion to Protect Trans Rights and Support GRA (Gender Recognition Act) Reform, a motion on initiations and a motion on supporting the declaration of a climate emergency, to name but a few.

Alongside this, Officers ran a variety of campaigns looking at housing, transport, Challenge Yersel', Autism Awareness and to support the development of the Union's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy via Wellbeing Week.

The 2020/21 Union Elections took place in March 2020 and 1562 students voted (a combined total of 17984) as 15 out of 16 positions were elected.



**democratic**

# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER



The Students' Union Representative structure remains an essential link between students and the University.

Working with organisations such as SPARQS (Student Participation Quality Scotland) we trained and supported over 700 module reps and 25 Faculty Officers. The Union is responsible for the running of the Faculty Officer programme and regular meetings allow us to have a direct say in learning and teaching development at the University.

The Union's RATE Awards, now in its 10th year and supported by the Stirling Fund, received almost 1000 nominations from students keen to recognise the incredible teaching and support available across the University. Whilst the awards had to move online due to the impact of COVID, the report developed each year continues to allow us to highlight good practice and encourage developments across the University as a result. Feedback from staff who receive both awards and notes of the nominations received is widely praised.

education

# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER

Providing professional 1:1 advocacy support for students remains a valuable and core aspect of the Union's work.

We have worked with, and advocated for, undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research students across all aspects of student life including: accommodation; finance; complaints; appeals; academic misconduct; disability; mental health; fitness to practice; practice placements; disciplinary proceedings; accessing external services and support.

Industrial action by some of the academic staff increased casework both for students who were unhappy about the loss of teaching and students who wanted to support the strike. International students were most likely to seek support to make a complaint to the University about the loss of service reflecting the higher fees that they pay and therefore the higher 'loss' in monetary value. Students who supported the strike wanted to know what their rights were in relation to their academic work and deadlines and potential for discipline and disciplinary action.



**advocacy**



# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER



**casework**

The service experienced higher than normal demand for support with Extenuating Circumstances as students were struggling to differentiate between COVID related circumstances that had already been adjusted for and where COVID circumstances that had negatively impacted their studies – including online exams – there was the additional burden for the student of evidencing that this had not already been adjusted for. Accommodation cases also increased as a direct result of COVID measures.

As the initial lockdown developed and more and more students wanted to return home and be released from their University Accommodation contract, it quickly became clear that a 'collective' approach was needed. Following negotiations involving the VP Communities and Union President, students were released from their contracts and arrangements negotiated for the retrieval of personal belongings.

At the same time, those who had no choice to remain beyond their contracts were permitted to do so and at no cost. There still remained a few individual cases that had additional factors and they continued to engage with 1:1 Advocacy.

# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER

The Union once again took part in the national Being Well, Doing Well survey with almost 900 responses. The key themes identified will continue to assist both ourselves and Student Support Services working in partnership to ensure appropriate support is in place across the institution. Supporting mental health provision is a key theme on-going.

The Students' Union is committed to ensuring that every student feels welcome and encouraged during their time as a student at Stirling. Providing opportunities, engagement and breaking down barriers to participation are key themes central to the Union's overall Strategic Plan. To enable us to do this, Officers, staff and with student input have been working to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into every aspect of our work.

Collaborative working remains a key aspect of the Union's work and this was highlighted by the wide work undertaken with a number of University departments and MacRobert Arts Centre in the development of Wellbeing Week in March 2020 to tie in with University Mental Health Day. With 5 key themes, (connect, give, get active, get present, learn new skills) a variety of student focussed activities were developed and well attended.



**equality,  
diversity,  
inclusion**



# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER



To support the Union's on-going work on the IsThisOk? Campaign, we held a number of By-stander training sessions with students during the year.

Led by student volunteers and supported by Officers, staff and colleagues in the University, Nightline (a non-judgemental, peer support service) launched during the year. Having such a resource supported by students has been a welcome development.

Following its launch in the previous year, we saw the development of the Inspirational Women Awards during Women's History month. We received an amazing number and quality of submissions and showcased the Award winners in the virtual ceremony held online in April 2020.

**recognition**



# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER

Clubs & Societies participation remain a key way in which students engage with their Union. During the year 79 clubs operated with a combined total of more than 1500 members. We also supported the development of 13 new clubs. Clubs continue to amaze with their creativity and dedication. Some examples of this include Aussie Action Week (which raised £2k+ for charity), Pride Week, the General Elections hustings and the development of the creative cottage for some of our creative societies. Our International Society continues to be one of the most active societies on campus, running many innovative events.

Our International Officer, Marie Stadtler organised a 'Brexit Info Café' in conjunction with the University who supplied associate lawyer of Thornton Law, Gurjit Pal to provide students and staff with the most up to date information on Brexit. This was very well-received as a successful joint approach of supporting colleagues and students alike. After the formal session there was a 'café' held in Underground with catering provided by the Union and paid for by the Pioneer Minister Fund. Plans were in place to build on the previous year's International Festival but unfortunately this was cancelled due to COVID-19.



community

# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER



We saw a great uptake from student volunteers for our STEER Peer Support programme. ‘Captains’ are current students (we had 25) who are trained to support and sign-post to incoming students (75 of them), who become their ‘Crew’. Many ‘Captains’ were once ‘Crew’ themselves. We worked with both the Alumni Relations and Careers teams, on developments such as the Stirling Network. Captains have also taken advantage of development opportunities such as accredited Scottish Mental Health First Aid training and NHS Stress Control courses. During the year, STEER was supported by the Vice-Chancellor’s Fund.

Having successfully been awarded our Investors in Volunteers (IiV) accreditation for 2019-22 we continue to evaluate and improve our volunteering processes to support the needs of our volunteers. We continue to work alongside the Careers team to promote the My Stirling Award which recognises the volunteering opportunities of our students. Our elected Co-Curricular Officer, Svea Horn co-organised the Careers & Employability ‘Next Step’ Fayre which had strong presence from many student volunteers and Clubs & Societies. This assisted students to promote and contextualise how their voluntary experiences are contributing to future Employability.

## volunteers

# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER

Championing the University's title as Sports University of the Year, the Sports Union remains at the heart of Union activity. Providing 45 unique sports and nearly 2000 members during the year, the Sports Union is not only the basis for both competitive and participatory activity, it helps support student engagement networks which are at the heart of what we do.

Collaboration is core of what we do. A key partnership is with Scottish Disability Sport, launching the year with providing Disability Inclusion Training being provided to 24 students, a programme which secured additional funding to be expanded into 2020-21. This is in addition to offering Scotland's Mental Health First Aid and Bystander Prevention Training to student volunteers.

The Sports Union recognises the importance of sport and physical activity in providing an inclusive and supportive aspect to the student experience. One illustration of this would be the new Social Club initiative, guiding students towards new sports beyond the Give it a Go weeks each semester. We further collaborated with the University of Stirling Sport to provide free Yoga and Fitness sessions to help promote member welfare.



**sports**



# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER



On the pitch, despite the challenges of a curtailed season, performance highlights include Men's Football 1st Team securing the BUCS Premier title, Swimming breaking 12 records and securing 36 medals at the BUCS Short Course Championships in November and multiple BUCS titles for Basketball, Golf, Netball, Tennis and Ultimate Frisbee.

The Sports Union is an active member of Scottish Student Sport contributing to various committees, sector-wide webinars and even hosting competitions. Within its auspices is the Healthy Body Healthy Mind award for which Stirling is the joint highest performing University.

Partnership with the Faculty of Health Sciences & Sport at the University has also seen postgraduate students contribute their expertise, with 28 MSc Psychology of Sport students across 13 Sports Union clubs.

**partnership**

# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER

The Students' Union continued to lead the way in taking action on sustainability by becoming the first carbon neutral Students' Union in the UK.

As an organisation, the Union is committed to responsible and sustainable development. In order to become carbon neutral, we analysed our carbon footprint from a number of sources, including energy and water use, sports teams and staff business travel, as well as waste management. The results showed our main activities released 138.58 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2018/19. We managed to offset these emissions through campus projects such as Fair Share which reuses or recycles 6 tonnes of donated household goods each year, and through purchasing gold standard carbon credits that support climate and social development projects in East and West Africa.

During Climate Change week we planted 120 trees, ran a successful water fountain campaign and brought in an additional £23k for cycling shelters on campus to support sustainable travel. As the Atrium re-development project accelerated, the Green & Blue Space is due to get a new home at the heart of the campus into 2020/21 and look forward to developing this moving forward.



**sustainable**

# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER



Providing a welcoming and safe place for students to gather, study, relax and party continue to be a key provision of what we offer in the Union. We continued to adapt to meet student demand through developments including a Grab N Go outlet, meal deals offers and a range of new cocktails based on student feedback. Our on-going work to provide for our members was acknowledged by nominations in the Best Bar None Awards for specialist entertainment venue and innovation in social responsibility.

Freshers 2019 allowed us to showcase the wide range of opportunities on offer from the Union to both new and returning students, supported by more than 30 F Team student volunteers. Daytime activities in the dedicated Lochside Marquee ranged from our freebie fayre to clubs day. In our building, we held a packed and varied programme of events. With sold out F Passes and a combined total of over 4,300 attends, students got to enjoy everything from a UV Party to Ceilidh to Vengaboys to a Paint Party!

**your union**

In spite of the disruption in the Atrium, our Student Union Shop continues to thrive. With constant new products to meet student demand and further developments on the online shop, the Shop remains a key part of the Union's services.

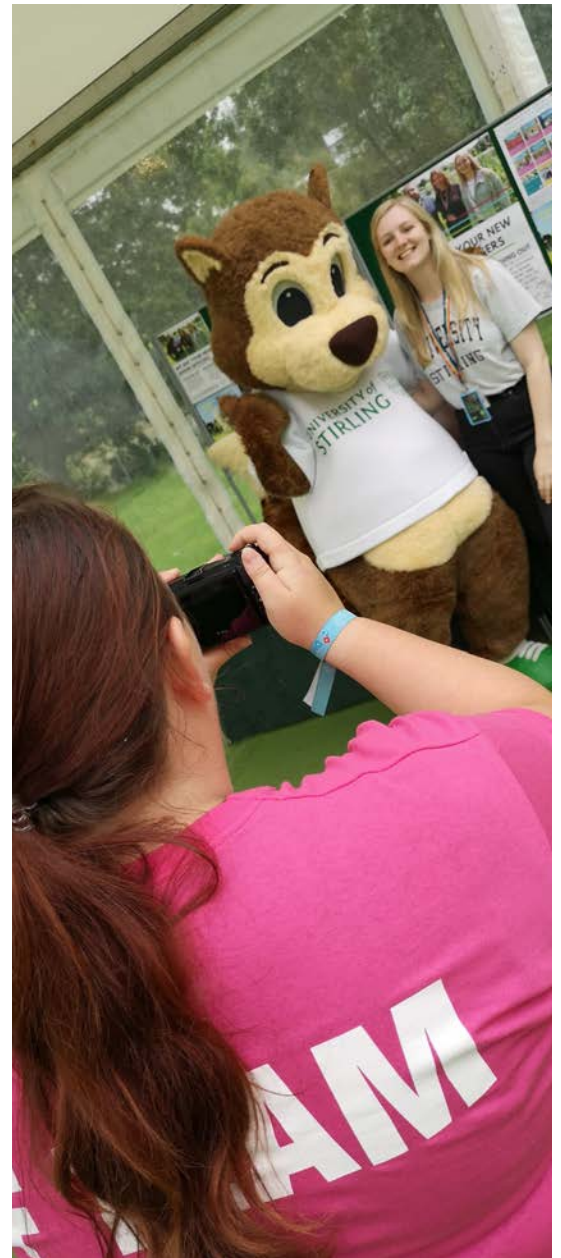


# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER

Whilst this year presented challenges ranging from floods in the summer to strikes in the spring, nothing has had such a profound impact on University life (and life in general) as the spread of COVID-19 from March 2020 and the consequences of no face-to-face teaching and the closure of Union facilities.

Key to our response was ensuring we remained a source of contact and support for students. Our advocacy provision ensured Officers and staff not only took on issues with accommodation, teaching and more (as demonstrated by our work with nursing Officers) but also seeking to communicate the rapidly changing local and national decisions being taken that affected them.

We adapted to deliver our annual Sports and Club Balls online as we did for the RATE Awards and Inspirational Women Awards. Our collaborative work was again to the fore as we played our part in the development of the #BeConnected programme hosting online sessions including quizzes, coffee and a chat sessions and more. Meetings were also held online and we worked with NUS to get feedback on the impact of COVID on students.



**impact of  
covid-19**

# MAKING STUDENTS' LIVES BETTER



@stirlingunion



@stirlingunion



/stirlingstudentsunion

[www.stirlingstudentsunion.com](http://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com)



**connect**

