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Annual Report 2020/21

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Foreword

The 2020/21 academic year has been a year of uncertainty under the difficult restraints of the coronavirus pandemic; however, it has also provided the Union with an opportunity to be innovative, ambitious and take a refreshed look at our delivery of activity to students.

In light of the on-going pandemic, the officer trustees, elected by the student body, set out four key themes to positively affect the student experience at Derby. These themes were **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Student Communities, Wellbeing** and **Student Voice**; this report will reflect on the significant contribution the whole Union has had in creating a vibrant and inclusive student community in which all students are proud to be a part of. This academic year will also see the completion of the current strategic framework in which this report will include an update against our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

In what has been an unprecedented year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the Union as I reflect on the positive impact we have made despite significant challenges. We also owe thanks to the University for their continued trust and support to enable us to keep delivering a high-quality student experience. We will reflect on this year and continue the hard work and progress that has been made to ensure that student voice and opportunities continue to improve and prosper for the student body at the University of Derby.

We hope you enjoy reading about our successes and achievements this year.

Corey Beck,
Union President 2020/21



Our Wins

Here is a selection of some of our main wins and notable achievements from the last year. Whilst a number of these were in direct response to student feedback, they have happened as a result of continued partnership with the University of Derby and their commitment to support students throughout the pandemic. We would like to acknowledge our thanks to the University for their ongoing responsiveness to the challenges presented by COVID-19 and their willingness to engage with students to understand their needs and concerns.



1

Safety Net

In late spring 2020, the Union Officer team worked alongside the University to introduce a no-detriment policy that sought to safeguard the outcomes of students affected by the initial disruption of the first COVID-19 lockdown. Following the success of this scheme the Union President and Vice President (Education) have continued to support efforts to put a safety net in place for students this year, who have been subject to further interruptions to their programme and studies. These policies are crucial to protect students from suffering disproportionately as a consequence of COVID-19 and the Union have campaigned to ensure the interests of students were fed into the development of this work from the very beginning.



2

Financial hardship funding

Over the last year, the Union has joined up with the National Union of Students to lobby for greater government support for HE and FE students affected by the pandemic. The **Students Deserve Better** campaign kickstarted a petition to government to provide additional grants and financial support to students who faced financial hardship. We supported this campaign by writing to our local Derbyshire MPs to raise awareness and seek redress for this financial hardship. With their support we received a response from the Universities Minister who outlined a package of funding and grants to be given directly to Universities to distribute to students. In total, **£1,119,062** was distributed to Derby students in financial hardship. Through the intervention of our Officer team, we were able to provide specific evidence to justify some of this funding being allocated to international students, part-time students and students with caring responsibilities in addition to those already in receipt of bursary support.



3

Increased library access

The logistical challenge of reopening the campus safely after the first lockdown was significant and we applaud the work undertaken by the University's Estates and Professional Services teams to ensure that students could confidently arrive back onto campus and that appropriate safety measures to ensure social distancing were in place. The library team mobilised an entirely new booking system to manage access to learning and PC spaces and ensured this was available as soon as students could return to site. Through regular meetings with the University, the Library leadership team regularly evaluated both the number of bookings and student feedback presented by the Union and made a swift decision to extend the number of spaces a student could access each week. This was carried out to ensure the maximum possible access to the library for each and every student.



4

Rent waivers for halls

Changing government guidance to stay at home and minimise travel has had a direct impact on University students who stay in term time accommodation, either through University provided halls or in privately managed accommodation. The Union welcomed the University's approach to offer a flexible start date to all students in Halls, ensuring that students only paid from the time they arrived into their room. The Officers also campaigned for students to receive a rent waiver during periods where they were unable to return to their rooms due to national restrictions. This request was met positively by the University who have been forthcoming in their response to provide rent relief to students affected by the pandemic who were living in University managed accommodation. We have also provided specific guidance to students in private accommodation to seek concessions from their landlords and have written to private halls providers to request similar financial relief.



5

Laptop loans

The first lockdown caused by COVID-19 revealed an inequity and disparity in the access students had to personal IT equipment and reliable internet access at home. Reports of students having to use their mobile phones to access learning materials and online lectures soon surfaced and the challenges of student parents who struggled to balance the need to share their laptop or PC with children who were homeschooling also emerged. In direct response to these issues, the University implemented a laptop loan scheme to provide direct access to the laptops previously stored for use in the library. These were issued to students in need of the technology to access their online teaching. Due to student feedback collected by the Union and ongoing demand from students directly to the University, they purchased an additional 100 laptops to loan out to students, and added WiFi dongles to the list of equipment also available. Over the course of the last year over 200 laptops were loaned out to students.



6

COVID-19 Support

In partnership with the Registry team at the University, we helped to set up and coordinate volunteers to run a telephone helpline for students who were facing periods of self-isolation or who needed additional support. Volunteers would be available to answer questions and signpost to other support services in the University and would carry out regular check ins to make sure isolating students knew what help was available. The hotline was one of many COVID specific interventions that the Union has supported over the last year and the following pages will show the extent of this work and activities which have taken place. From lockdown lootboxes delivered to the door of isolating students through to setting up an ambitious outdoor Freshers Village to deliver an in-person Freshers Fair experience and events, the Union has continued to support a vibrant student experience despite the changes taking place around us.



Wellbeing and Support

The Union Advice Team are available to provide a helping hand all year round and this year they team have challenged themselves to become more accessible than ever.

We have invested in a new **live web chat** function on the Union website, that allows students to ask direct questions and get quick and effective responses. 122 individual conversations were had with students via this new platform, 22% of queries were resolved within five minutes and ensured that students were able to get instant responses, rather than waiting for an appointment with a Union Advisor.

Our website was also home to our online **COVID Hub** full of useful information and resources for students to help them adjust to studying during lockdown and supporting their return to campus. Our Officers also produced a return to campus video to reassure students of the safety measures in place across university sites.

Over 518 students have been supported through the Advice Service case load this year, including academic issues, housing, relationships, and finance with **over 1,066 hours of case work** spent with students supporting them when they need it and all virtually! The support our advisors provide continues to be highly rated with feedback showing the fantastic and valuable help they provide to those in need:

97% of students rate their advice experience as good or excellent

96% of students would use the service again

96% of students would recommend the service to other students

98% of students found advisors to be welcoming and friendly

In response to COVID the Advice team have moved a large number of resources and information material online to ensure that students can access this support at any time of day. They've also helped

to deliver vital **mental health training** to our sports and society committee members to ensure they are equipped to identify and signpost their friends for additional support should they find themselves struggling with isolation or any other concerns.

The Union responded to the pandemic by working with the University to provide a **COVID helpline**, a phone line run by students, for students to keep in touch with those isolating. Over 30 student volunteers were recruited, trained, and supported to make calls to all students who declared themselves as self-isolating. Over 2,000 phone calls were made and **200 lockdown loot boxes** were delivered, providing a way for those isolating to connect with others and spend time away from the screens, by cooking, playing cards and taking part in different mindful activities.

Student feedback

"I was going through one of the worst stages and lowest points and with the support and advice of the advisor I was able to get through it all"

"They were very supportive and helped guide me through the EEC process that I was going through, could not have been happier and I am sure they would have helped further had I needed the support."

Did you know?

Emily, our Vice President (Welfare) developed a campaign to raise awareness of the **Report a Concern** function on UDO. This allows for students to raise any concern of harassment or abuse securely and confidentially and to receive the support they need.



Activities to encourage wellbeing



With the new lockdown rules, and the potential for our students to be self-isolating, it's more important than ever to look after your physical, and mental, wellbeing. We've collated some resources to help you keep fit and happy in the current situation.

Good hydration is essential for optimal health, digestion, fat loss and energy. Joe Wicks suggests investing in a good reusable metal water bottle which keeps your water fresh and cold - by carrying it with you at all times you're far more likely to drink regularly, and fill it up a few times a day.



A hydrated body is also more efficient at burning fat, so we should be aiming to drink between two to four litres a day. Hydration also helps with your digestion, so when you drink plenty of water you can feel less bloated and tired. 120 Day Kick start plan, Joe Wicks, The Body Coach!

— Emma Taylor, Support and Inclusion Manager

Exercise and staying active has become more important throughout lockdown, especially as organised indoor and outdoor sport has been taken away. Whether you're self-isolating or simply staying indoors, staying active is proven to have important physical and mental health benefits like reducing mental fatigue, improving sleep, releasing endorphins, and reducing stress.



There are several ways to stay active during the time you're in. If you're feeling stressed and want to relax, HIIT can help provide that quick burst of energy that you need to get about your daily activities, strength-based work can improve your mood, and even a quick walk or run has a number of benefits.

— Becky O'Neill, Student Activities Administrator



Dealing with Isolation...

As someone that has had to isolate due to COVID, I wanted to share my experience and advice around coping with the difficulties that it brings.

[View Article](#)



Alexa, set a sleep timer...

Adults need about seven to nine hours sleep a night, but getting expectations to line up with reality can often be hard. Read an article from Jo Lewis about the importance of (and tips on) sleeping.

[View Article](#)



Healthy Habits

Read a short article from @studenzenegale about the links between your physical and mental health. Even if you're not an exerciseaholic, you may find some tips or motivation that could help your mental wellbeing.

[View Article](#)



Flexibility routine

Join Tom Merrick in a 20 minute beginners flexibility and stretching routine, a great way to unwind and do some light exercise if yoga isn't your thing.

[View More](#)



5-minute workout

You don't need a gym to get the heart pumping, if you have an empty space at home, make it your gym with this workout for beginners.

[View More](#)



Chocolate cupcakes

Wind down and relax with a little baking with Cupcake Jemma - with the added bonus that you get cake at the end of it!



Online workouts

Check out several energising and intensity workouts, brought to you by Healthy Health (who run the University Sports Centre).

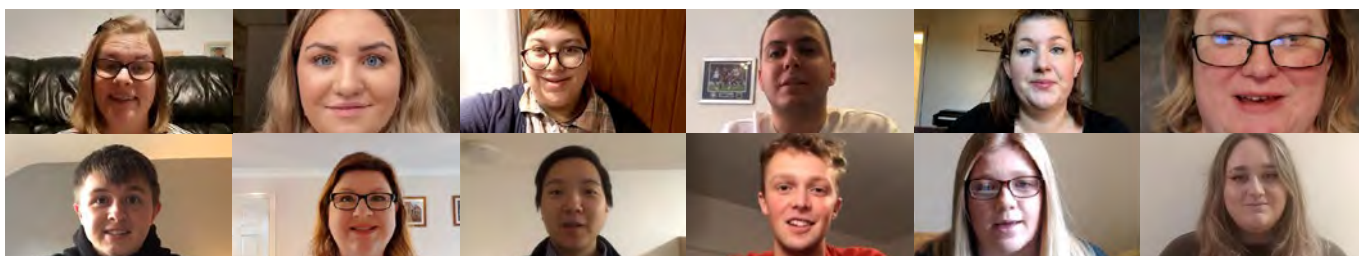
[View More](#)



Yoga with Adriene

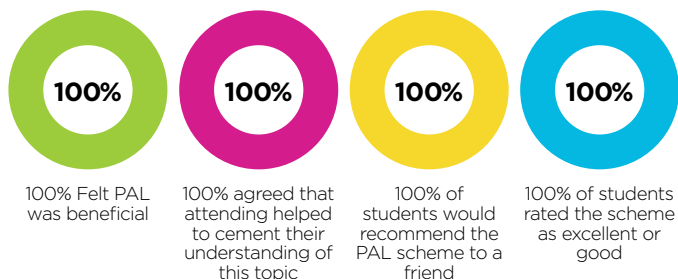
Want to get your feet into the world of yoga with your newfound spare time? Try "A playlist of yoga videos suitable for young people and created to support virtual learning" from Adriene.

[View More](#)



This year the Union launched a University-wide **Peer Assisted Learning** scheme, designed to provide student to student study support for new students arriving at University this year. We trained 31 PAL Leaders this year covering all disciplines that sought to be involved. Through the project 40% of new students have engaged in Teams sites which represents nearly 23% of all students, with plans in place for an opt-out scheme next year to increase engagement further.

A survey of PAL Sessions identified the following positive results from the programme



"It is great to have other students' perspectives and talk through things from a student viewpoint".

"Opportunity to learn from my peers and discuss worries".

"I always know the PAL Team are there and they make us feel valued".

"I felt able to speak using my microphone for the first time".

"Fantastic scheme, invaluable to new students"

"It gave me confidence to find out if I was doing things right".

"Clear guidance and delivered professionally".

"Reassuring to hear from someone who has been in our position. Good to meet someone new and learn some different tips to carry forward".

"Helped me to reflect on my practice more"

We are excited to expand on our PAL scheme for the next academic year and hope to ensure more students can access the support of a PAL leader in their studies.

What have we achieved this year?

68% of students are aware of the support services available through the Union

97% of students who utilised our Advice Service rated it as *good* or *excellent*.



Josh Williams
Vice President (Activities)

Corey Beck
Union President

Nina Čuprić
Vice President (Education)

Emily Lane
Vice President (Welf...

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Making sure the voices of all students is heard and acted upon has been one of the main aims of the Union this year. In addition, we've been careful to ensure that all students, regardless of where or how they study and any additional needs, can access the learning and teaching they need to succeed through this challenging year. We continued our work from last year to ensure that a **safety net** is in place for all students whose teaching has been affected by COVID-19 to make sure that no one is unfairly disadvantaged due to the pandemic.

We campaigned for the University to carry out an **Equality Impact Assessment** to review the accessibility of the Blended Learning Model and have campaigned for actions to be implemented that help to remove barriers to studying online. This includes additional accessibility software support and the access to laptops on loan for those who don't have IT equipment at home.

We have worked closely with our **EDI Council** to ensure that our Equality Part Time Officers received the training and support they need in their role. Following a realignment of duties, the support for Part Time Officers and Councillors has been transformed. The training package has been completely re-written to suit the digital environment. All 39 Part Time Officers have completed a series of online workshops that support them in their role and in developing their employability skills.

The EDI Council and our Vice President (Welfare) helped to oversee a varied programme of online activities for **LGBTQ+ History Month, Black History Month** and **Disability History Month**. We adapted our approach to celebrate and recognise liberation months through collaboration with other Unions to deliver a series of online webinars and discussion events. With the creative support of our Union Marketing team, we coordinated a series of **Mythbusting panels**, inviting contributions from student and staff representatives before filming and sharing these with our online audience.

Did you know?

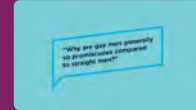
Cerys, our PTO for Disabilities campaigned for more accessible parking and awareness of disabilities around the University.





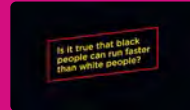
LGBTQ+ Mythbusting

▶ youtu.be/gidqFmiyd6g



Black History Mythbusting

▶ youtu.be/zxQRJK0t4o4



Disability Mythbusting

▶ youtu.be/USImzx4T1YY



Over 30 societies collaborated to showcase **International Womens' Day** who nominated inspirational women as role models for their activities with the results shared across our social media channels.

Finally, the Union have signed up to the **Not Every Disability is Visible** campaign to state our firm commitment as an employer, to support our staff who may have a hidden disability. We have pledged to make practical alterations to our workspace and review our approach to flexible working, to ensure an inclusive working environment for all of our team members.

Student Voice

Student voice is at the heart of everything we do and it has never been more important that we channel representative and effective student voice. We are led by students for students and we would like to take this opportunity to thank every single student. Whether they are a programme representative, a member of a sport or society, or voted in the elections, your voice matters and it is listened to.

In order to ensure student voice continues to be heard and channelled effectively, this year we have created and agreed a new institution-wide **Academic Representation Policy**. This will be most realised in making the time our student officers volunteer, the most effective and enabling them to share the views of the students they stand to represent across the Union and University.

Our AGM in April 2020 was moved online due to the pandemic; however, this allowed more students to engage from wherever they were in the world. We had over 100 students registered in attendance. Between them they cast 3,368 votes in two hours to make changes to our policies and governance structure which will take effect for the upcoming academic year.

We played a lead role in ensuring that the **virtual induction** was vibrant and student-led providing new and returning students with details of how the Union effectively represents their academic interests. Full and Part Time Officers filmed induction videos and these were viewed 13,429 times in the first few weeks.

Student forums are a great way to have your voice heard on things that are specifically related to your college at the University. We have run 18 student forums with over 200 attendees and this feedback has been vital in understanding what students are enjoying and what needs improvement in their academic endeavours.

We held our first online **Education Awards** with 121 viewers and several watch parties and also hosted our Representation conference online, with 100% of attendees agreeing they would attend a similar event again.

Did you know?

Nina, our Vice President (Education) has played a leading role in continuously engaging, supporting and responding to student feedback. The Vice President (Education) acts as a crucial conduit between the Officer Trustees and Student Officers and Nina has remained innovative in her approach.



Did you know?

As Union President, Corey has been at the forefront of University decision-making this year, ensuring that student voice and opinion has been considered at every turn. He has campaigned for the continuation of the safety net policy, rent rebates for students in halls and greater library access amongst many other notable interventions this year. He has also lobbied local MPs to make greater concessions for students affected by the pandemic, including further financial support to students in hardship.



In February we held the best attended and engaged **Student Summit** we have ever held - 152 attendees and hundreds of comments.

Throughout the year we have consistently gone out for the most dynamic and up-to-date student voice through our Instagram poll **'Thursday Thoughts'**. On average over 300 students respond and we have used these on a variety of topics; from how comfortable students feel about the safety measures on site to how they want to see the Virtual Learning Environment develop and change.

In our **elections** we achieved the highest candidate numbers for the past three years, with 70 students coming forward for a part-time or full-time position.

We have introduced six by-monthly 'Trend Reports' to categorise 1,000+ forms of student voice feedback. These have become a key standing agenda item across the Universities deliberative structure and have come integral to providing updates on student voice through an informed, data driven approach.

63% of students agree that the Union effectively represents students' academic interests

(National Student Survey 2020)

59% of students agree that their Programme Representative effectively represents their voice and needs

(UoD Survey 2021)



Building a vibrant student community

Our aim has always been to bring our students communities together and never has this been more important than during lockdown. The desire to feel part of a wider community, can be measured through the sales of hoodies - we sold 1,126 University of Derby hoodies this year, which if stitched together, would reach the height of six Eiffel Towers.

When lockdown first hit, we created a COVID support hub around our **Stay safe. Stay well. Stay connected.** campaign. We've collated a mix of information, inspiration and resources that has been regularly reviewed and updated to stay relevant to student needs.

In September 2020 the Commercial team assisted the University by delivering around **160 food parcels** to halls for arriving international students. The aim was to ensure that the students were never without essential supplies during their quarantine period.

Freshers was different this year, however this didn't stop us from welcoming thousands of our students into the **Freshers Village**. With the extra work it took to create the village, it highlights the importance of teamwork and the skill of our staff team to deliver events to the highest safety standards. This was highlighted further by the fact the Environmental Health even used our event as an example to other regions of how a safe and secure event should be delivered. The village will now be a major template in the planning process for future Freshers and Union led events.

Across the Freshers period (September - October) our social media accounts gained 528 followers despite no in-person promotion due to COVID. The number of followers gained in this period can be attributed to the Marketing teams new approach to a socially distanced freshers and collaboration with the University.



Over the five days that the Derby Arms was open during Freshers, the Commercial and student staff team delivered 503 food and drink orders, all whilst following the strict COVID guidelines (300 day, 203 night). The Commercial Team sold 201 pre-Freshers hoodie bundles, more pre-sales than ever sold before by 85 and sold 280 hoodies during Freshers fair.

Keddies began selling reusable masks to give students a sustainable option to wearing masks, and all of our giveaways were plastic free where possible! Instead of a refreshers stall with discounted hoodies this year we offered 20% off online hoodies for February to encourage sales safely. We partially kept our stores open throughout the lock-down in order to continue our support to students, mainly practical students that were still on site studying.

Our shop at Kedleston Road managed to open for over 1,100 hours for students during lockdown. And Blends was here to serve up a caffeine, cake or panini fix during core times. This is a significant reduction in comparison to a non-COVID year. But the priority was to provide safe opportunities and services to all students and to bring back our student staff at every possible opportunity.

And by treating yourself, you're supporting the student experience at Derby - 100% of Union profits are invested back into student opportunities. That means that for every meal deal purchased in Keddies, 26p goes back to transforming the student experience. And this year we have sold 5,037! That's over 380,000 grams of bread, the same weight as an Imperial Zebra!

59% feel part of a community at the University of Derby

81.76% of students agree that the Union activities have helped to create a sense of belonging

Did you know?

In November, Vice President (Activities) coordinated Hallsfest, a week of online events specifically set up for students to get involved with while in lockdown. 932 students engaged with great, safe activities such as a Virtual Quiz Night, Phantom livestream, cook-a-longs and Q&A sessions.

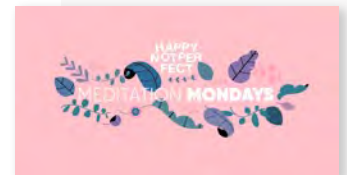
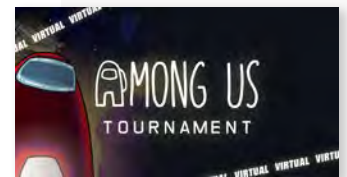




We also partnered with student experience agency, Native - to ensure that we maintained a diverse range of **virtual events** alongside Union hosted activity. From yoga classes, to interviews with Netflix crime detectives; 176 students enjoyed something a little bit different throughout February and March.

COVID didn't stop students getting involved! 1,813 students joined a **sports club or society** this academic year, with over 20 groups delivering weekly activity online. Ensuring that the student population were connected and part of a community when they needed it the most. As well as constant support from the Activities staff team, the Marketing department delivered informative sessions to a range of students groups to assist them with their promotion whilst everyone learned a different way of working. The sessions were designed to inform the students on the wide range of opportunities they have to take their promotional activity further, through optimising the Union's website, social media and staff expertise. Student Officers, PAL leaders, Clubs and Societies created a wide range of top tips and news articles to help students with issues around staying active, working from home, mental health and sustainability.

We also took part in a national **Census campaign** - ensuring that students were providing answers to the 2021 census question set to help organisations make decisions on planning and funding public services in their area, including transport, education and healthcare.



We love to celebrate student achievements and this year we committed to continuing with our **Union Award ceremonies**, all online and accessible to all. We pre-recorded two hosted ceremonies with our Officers, and invited guest presenters to share the evening's successes with us. Deans from every College contributed and social media was white hot with people sharing their congratulations and reactions to each award!



Activities Awards

Two Awards and 12 Honours

Livestreamed on Facebook and via Popworld's in-house screens



Education Awards

28 Awards

Livestreamed on Facebook and Union website



The end of term is usually the height of summer celebrations, and our fabulous new marquees and catering trailer, **Campus Kitchen** provided a fantastic outdoor space for programme teams to mingle and celebrate the end of year in a COVID secure way with appearances from partners Project D, Vintage Vera and Frosty Jacks! We arranged friendly sports fixtures and intermural tournaments – some in fancy dress too.

The Union remains keen to connect students with the local business community, and is now a proud Bondholders as part of the Marketing Derby network. We look forward to becoming active in local events to secure employment and volunteering opportunities for students, raising our profile amongst potential new partners and contributing to important discussions on city centre regeneration.



Phantom Paper have released an issue each month during term, helping to keep students up to date and connected with each other and Phantom Radio have continued to produce shows from home. Phantom Media have also produced video interviews with students for **Student Volunteering Week** and supported with our elections coverage.

RAG have continued to work with students to fundraise for various good causes. Our current RAG total for the year is **£11,426.06**.

We have been pleased to offer a wide range of **virtual sports activities** which has enabled our clubs to engage with their members during lockdown; Dance, Taekwon-Do, and Equine have held regular virtual opportunities and managed to bring their members together online.

Clubs have also done some great work for charity, Netball, Pole, Women's Hockey, Snowsports, Squash, Rugby Union, Dance, Cheerleading, Taekwon-Do, and Men's Football all held events to raise funds.

Men's Rugby arranged with local care homes to write some letters to reach out to elderly and vulnerable residents that may not have the opportunity to communicate with others at Christmas; youtu.be/jxHM3dFBYmI





We also held our first ever, outdoor **Activities Fair** as part of the Freshers Village, giving new students the opportunity to safely explore and meet with student groups as part of their induction.



Looking ahead

We hope you have enjoyed reading about some of the activities and events that the Union has delivered for students this year. It has been an incredibly challenging year for all involved and we are grateful for both the financial support given through the Furlough scheme and also from the University, which has enabled us to continue delivering all of these activities in the face of huge disruption to our trading services.

Over the last year the staff and Officers of the Union have had to adapt and respond to late changes in guidance, complex health and safety rules and challenges brought about from working reduced hours and we are extremely proud of all of our achievements this year. We could not have delivered anything without the commitment and effort of our amazing people who truly have the best interests of students driving them.

We expect that next year will require us to show similar resilience and will need risks to be taken to ensure that the student experience in 2021/22 is the very best it can be. Next year is the last year of our current Strategic Plan and we will be setting out to collect the views and needs of our students to rewrite and renew our commitments for the next five years to take us to 2027. In this changing landscape it feels timely to find out what the priorities for the Union should be in order to provide the best support for students.

For the remaining year of our plan, we plan to live our values and provide the most ambitious and vibrant offer yet! We will expand our Freshers Village in September to provide a more varied and exciting programme of events

to a greater number of people and reinstate our sports and society activity to be more visible and accessible than before. Students are at the heart of every change we make for the simple reason that we work to make University life amazing for all of our members. For the Union to bounce back stronger than ever we look forward to involving you in both the design and delivery of our services and we can't wait to welcome new and returning students back to Derby very soon!

Our goals for next year

- ▶ *Create a vibrant student community that you are proud to belong to*
- ▶ *Provide transformative learning experiences in active partnership with the University*
- ▶ *Develop your skills and confidence to take your next steps and remain ready to support you*
- ▶ *Create the change you want by championing your voice to the University*



The Officer Trustee Team 2020/21

