



Union of Brunel Students - 2021/22

# IMPACT REPORT

**UNION**  
OF BRUNEL  
STUDENTS



# INTRODUCTION

The Union of Brunel Students is the representative body of our members, the students of Brunel University London.

We work to deliver a great student experience for our members; supporting our students to deliver sports clubs, and societies, have the time of their life at our events and venues, and to make sure that their voices are heard and that they can influence their university experience.

We fight, as a charity, for the rights of our 15,520 members, during a time when students are increasingly marginalised, and offer support and advice when they need it.

This year, the Union has focussed on 5 key organisational aims; improving accessibility, addressing the climate emergency, improving mental health, providing value for money and revitalising our academic and campus community.

This document highlights how we have made our students' lives better this year.

# ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility has been at the forefront of the work done by the Union over the last 12 months. We have worked with a range of stakeholders across campus and beyond to ensure that those on campus with accessibility requirements feel heard.

We have lobbied the university to provide **emergency contraceptives for free** at the on-campus pharmacy – removing cost as a barrier to ensure it is accessible to all students who need it.

Following a number of years of campaigning from the Union, the University have now agreed to provide **free sanitary products for those in need**. We have also set up a working group with the University in order to change culture on campus and help ensure period products are available to anyone who needs them in future.

The Union advice service was accessed by 782 students this year, with academic matters the area that most students required our support with. **10x as many postgraduate students accessed our service compared to 2020.**

Over the last 12 months, we have **elected 331 student course reps**, filling 89% of the posts and ensuring that our students' voices are heard at both course and departmental level.





We are proud to now have a **fully trained Sexual Violence Liason Officer (SVLO) working within the team.** Some students may not be comfortable about approaching a university service about sexual assault, and so we have committed to this role to help to create an open environment where students feel comfortable talking. We have also had **19 of our staff attend Active Bystander Training** this year, helping to create a safe, inclusive environment across our events, venues and activities.

The Union's hardship fund has remained available to help support students through difficult, unexpected periods where they require financial support. This year **we have awarded £10948 to 31 students** to support them with various costs to prevent them from dropping out.

In response to an increase in national drinks spikings in the UK in September and October we introduced preventative measures by **offering stop tops and cup covers for all drinks sold** in our venues. We also informed Pub Watch Uxbridge about the stop tops and they purchased 150,000 of them and distributed them to venues around Uxbridge, helping to make nights out for our students and the local community safer.

Union agency security have received **additional training on spiking** and women's safety to help make our venues a safer space for our students.

# CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Working towards a greener future is so important to us. We have worked hard across the organisation to ensure that we are doing all that we can to limit our contribution to global warming and climate change.

As part of these efforts we have established a staff working group with the intention of driving action within this area, and creating new ideas on how we can improve further going forwards. This year we have also built on our learnings from the pandemic and are working towards an average of **1 day a week being spent working from home**; reducing travel to work, and our commuting carbon emissions by 20%.



# MENTAL HEALTH

Following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, improving the mental health of our members has been at the forefront of our work. Our commitment to this is demonstrated by the **12 staff we had complete a Mental Health First Aid course last year**, topped up by an **additional 3 staff this year**, making sure we have mental health first aiders across our organisation.

We have successfully lobbied the university to add **Mental Health First Aid training and Disability Awareness training** to the training programmes for staff within CHMLS - helping staff to support students effectively whilst studying within the college.

We undertook a **campus wide sport survey** (536 student responses) and found that:

- Students who took part in 150 mins of sporting activity per week had higher levels of mental wellbeing than students who didn't
- Students who took part in 150 mins of sporting activity per week felt more worthwhile, happy, were less anxious, and had greater levels of life satisfaction than inactive students
- Students who took part in 150 mins of sporting activity per week were less likely to feel left out and isolated than inactive students

This highlights the importance of our support for the delivery of our Team Brunel sports clubs and active@brunel social sport programme, and continuation of our free sport membership initiative, ensuring that price is not a barrier.





“I did an active session last year for Ultimate Frisbee, which has led to me making it my main sport and I’ve fallen in love with the game.”

(Anonymous source from the sport survey)

# VALUE FOR MONEY

Providing a high quality, value for money university experience is paramount to the Union. With many of our students living away from home, and being financially independent for the first time, along with the cost of living increases, we know how important it is for us to provide them with support when they need it, and to do all that we can to ensure our members get great value from us.

Over the last year we have successfully lobbied the university to fix EU fees at home student rates until 2024 entry – meaning that until then EU students will pay the home fee amount of £9250 – **a saving of £22,725 for a 3 year undergraduate law degree.**

We have also raised the wages of our student staff to at least £10.00 per hour, meaning **we pay above the National Living Wage.** This ensures that our student staff are valued and that we are helping them to support themselves whilst they are studying at Brunel.







We offered all students who purchased Union Sport Membership for £40 in 2020-21 the opportunity to purchase their membership this year at half price, to reflect the reduced on campus activity that they received during the pandemic, and to encourage them to re-engage this year, **this resulted in a combined saving of just over £3000 for our students.**

We successfully lobbied the university to provide the **Adobe package** (cost of over £120 per student per year) for free to design school students, to ensure that they all had access to the essential software required to achieve on their course.

We also negotiated with the students halls of residence teams to secure **10 free laundry washes** for all students living on campus next year.

# CAMPUS COMMUNITY

Bouncing back from the pandemic in a positive, safe and controlled way has been a key focus over the last 12 months in order to bring life back to campus

We introduced a new club night this year called Juicy, ensuring that our students had somewhere to socialise on a Wednesday night following the closure of a venue in Uxbridge. The value of this is shown by the **10461 students that attended Juicy** over the course of the year, helping to bring people together and enhance the social opportunities on campus.

We hosted the British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) Cross Country, a national university sports event with 921 finishers. The event was a big success and helped showcase the sporting ability of Team Brunel on a larger scale





Society engagement has been higher than ever with **4053 members signed up** helping students to build communities, enhancing the university experience and reducing the likelihood of them dropping out. We delivered our **first societies ball for 7 years**, celebrating and rewarding the achievements of our communities.

Our Team Brunel sports teams delivered on the field – finishing 3rd in the medal table at BUCS Outdoor Athletics. **We won 10 medals at BUCS Indoors**, and our Men's 1st and 2nd, and Women's Rugby 1st Teams had undefeated league seasons. **4 of our student rugby players have been promoted to the Ealing Trailfinders 1st team** squad for next season.

Masters student **Izzy Brider** was shortlisted for the **BUCS Sportsperson of the year** award following her achievements representing Team Brunel and her performances on the international stage.

Our annual varsity fixture was back after a 2 year break due to the pandemic, the event was a sell out, and **we beat St. Mary's 24.5-5.5 equalling our biggest ever win!** Bring on 2022-2023!