



Heriot-Watt University Student Union

# STRATEGIC PLAN



2015-2019

‘To build a ***strong***  
***global student***  
***community*** together,  
for ***your future***’

At Heriot-Watt University Student Union we have one simple idea at our core. **'To build a strong global student community together for your future.'**

To achieve this we have some founding principles and we live by them in everything we do.

- **Supportive** – we help one another
- **Collective** – democracy is our foundation
- **Empowering** – we help people make their own decisions and lead change
- **Respectful** – we value and respect everyone
- **Fun** – we enjoy what we do and help others to do the same

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To achieve our goals we will:



***Empower*** students to shape what we do.



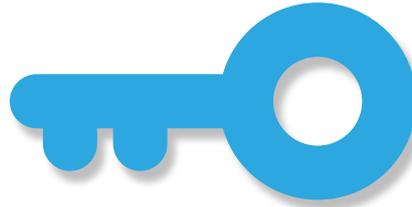
***Inspire*** students to become great graduates.



**Enhance** student experiences  
and activities.



**Develop** our global community.



# **Empower** students to shape what we do.

We want to make sure the Student Union is understood to be more than just a building, that it's perceived as an active and connected community. We will tell students more about what we do and empower our members to influence change at the Union and University.

## **What will we do?**

### **Improve students' understanding of what we do**

Communication will be our priority. We will give clear information tailored for different student audiences about what we do and why we are important.

### **Empower students to influence change**

Simplify the ways a student can bring forward an idea for change and to ensure that this important process is properly resourced.

Make sure to tell students what we have done so that they can see the difference they can make through representation.

Identify student groups that usually don't get involved in student elections and target these groups so we can improve diversity in candidacy and turnout, making the Union more relevant to everyone.

### **Strengthen the Union engagement with students**

Talk to students more and get them more involved by participating in activities such as campaigns or simply by making it easier for students to give their opinion on an issue. We will identify the issues of most concern and will run at least one campaign each year to advocate the necessary changes.

Provide tailored information for students through their whole journey, from application to graduation and beyond so as to ensure a lifelong link to the University and the Union.

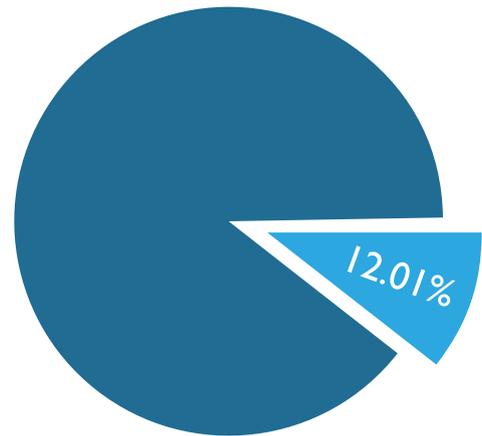
# Why we are doing this?



62% of students are satisfied with the Student Union



28% of students are apathetic towards the Student Union



Election Turnout in 2015 was 12.01%

39% of apathetic and 17% of dissatisfied students state a *lack of opportunity* to influence change as their reason for being **unhappy**.

# How will we know we've succeeded?

75%

of students will be aware they are members of the Student Union.

85%

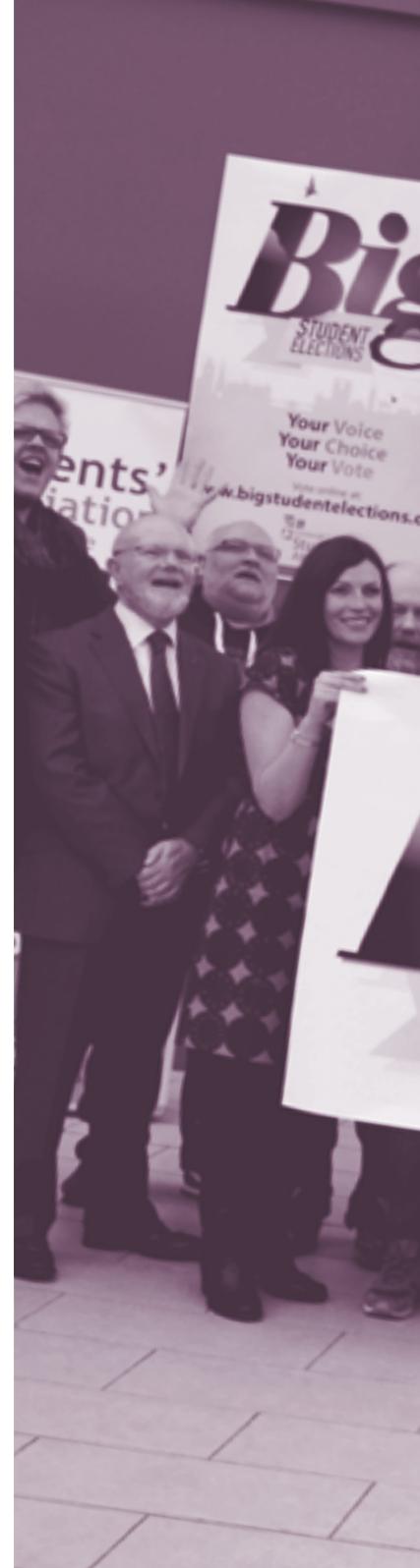
of students will be satisfied with the Student Union

80%

of students will be aware of that Class Reps and School Officers are part of the Union and understand they provide them with a voice at university

30%

of students will vote in our main elections



# Big

STUDENT ELECTIONS

STUDENT UNION  
THE STUDENTS' UNION  
QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY  
EDINBURGH

NSA  
Napier Students' Association

Edinburgh College  
Students' Association

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# **Inspire** students to become great graduates

The vast majority of our current and future students want to know they will have great employment prospects and strong links with industry when they leave university. In an increasingly competitive graduate market, we will help our students to demonstrate why Heriot-Watt Graduates are so special.

## **What will we do?**

### **Prepare students for their future**

Work with the University and employers to create opportunities for students to develop relevant personal skills and professional experience.

Find new and creative ways to help students to turn their ideas into reality. Whether this is helping with crowd-funding or finding employer sponsorship for students to finance the creation of new and exciting projects.

### **Enable students to shape their academic**

### **experience**

Make sure that our input into the University Learning and Teaching Strategy is effective and representative of the global Heriot-Watt student community.

Ensure our Class Reps and School Officers continue to be effective by making sure they get the best training and support to communicate with students and academic staff. We will actively seek out areas of improvement across the University and run campaigns to ensure the relevant issues are addressed at the right level.

### **Provide advocacy and student support**

Make sure students are aware and have access to the highest quality independent representation through our Advice Hub.

Provide dedicated advice and support to students on academic matters.

# Why we are doing this?

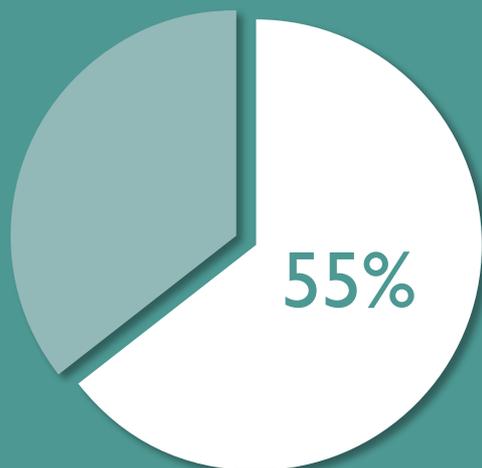
The top three drivers for future students coming to university relate to employability

**GAINING A DEGREE**

**LEARNING A LOT**

**HAVING A JOB THEY LOVE**

Learning skills and undertaking experiences that prepares them for life after University is the second most important issue for students with **39%** of students saying it would have a positive impact on their student experience

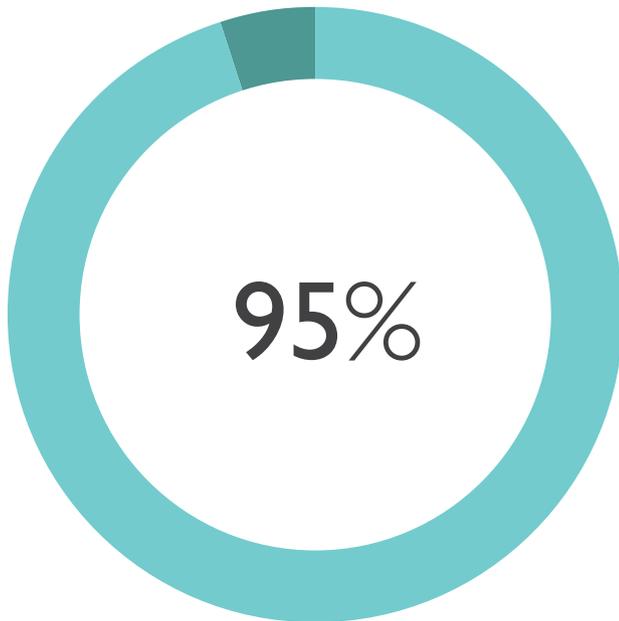


**55%** of students worry about achieving academic success

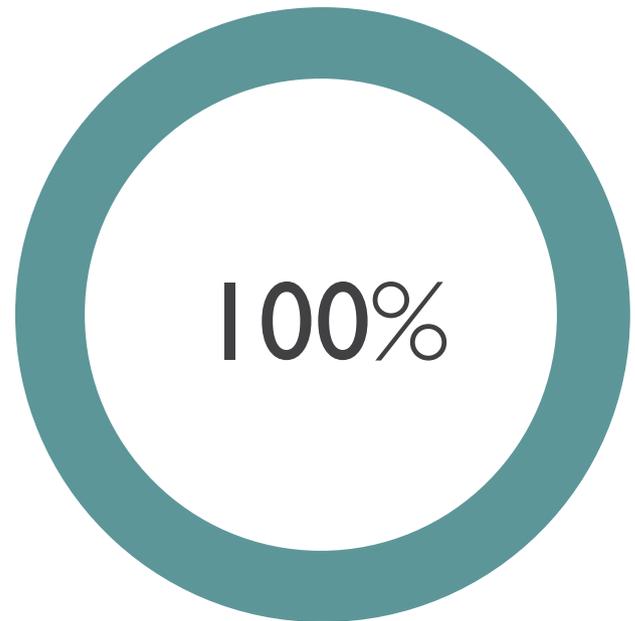
Future students say that their top expectation from a Student Union is advice and support

Only half of students recognise the Advice Hub as an independent Student Union service.

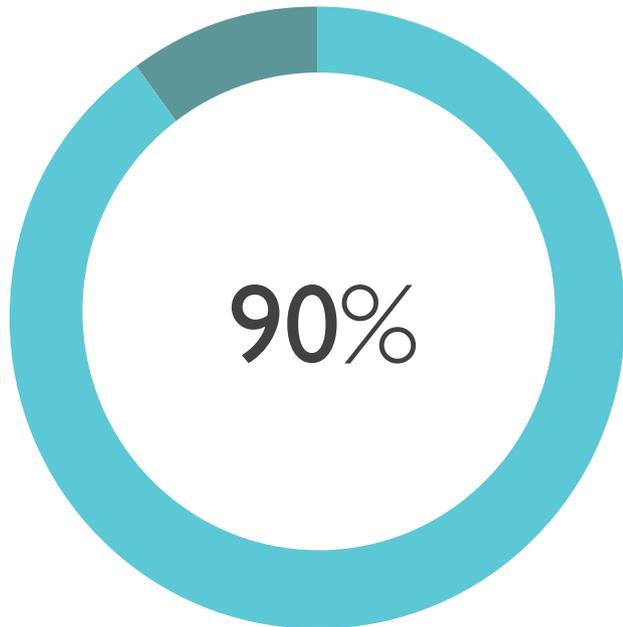
# **How** will we know we've succeeded?



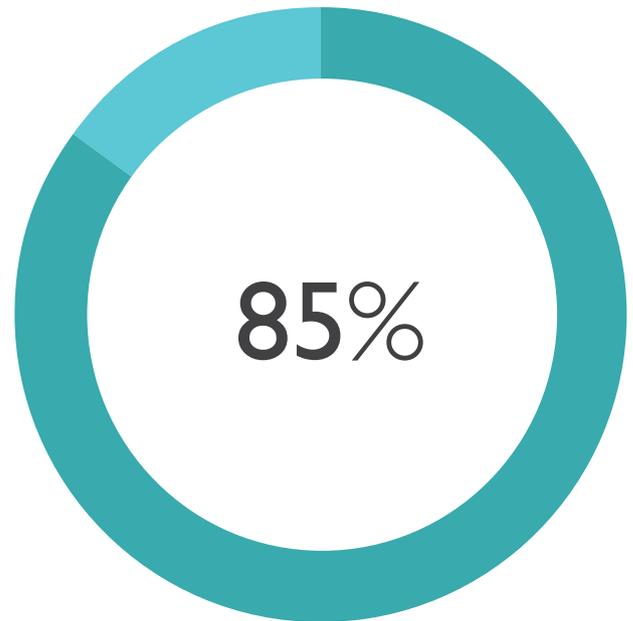
**95%** of Heriot-Watt University Class Reps worldwide receive Student Union or equivalent standard of training.



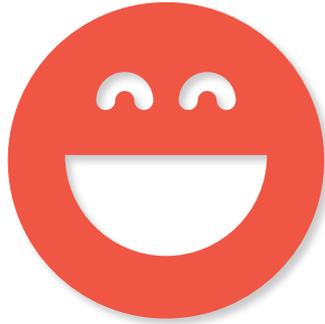
**100%** of Heriot-Watt University School Officers worldwide receive Student Union or equivalent standard of training.



**90%** of students who have raised an issue say their course representative has provided them with effective representation.



**85%** of students at the Edinburgh Campus will know that the Advice Hub is a Union run support service and how to access it



## **Enhance** student experiences and activities

**Students who participate in activities through the Union are more likely to enjoy their overall student experience.**

### **What will we do?**

#### **Linking student volunteering and employability**

Establish a volunteer resource hub so students can find opportunities to gain important skills. Work with the University and employers to provide volunteering that links with course and career choice.

Work with employers and the University to make sure skills developed through volunteering and student activities are recorded on the University Transcript in a way that is meaningful for employers.

#### **Build a vibrant student community through activities**

Make sure our student societies have the best possible support so that they can continue to grow and thrive. Provide suitable spaces within our buildings for societies to organise and run activities with ease, and with the correct facilities for their needs.

Develop our Halls Rep system and the non-residential Fiona Watson Hall to build social interactions between students.

#### **Create a community around academic interests**

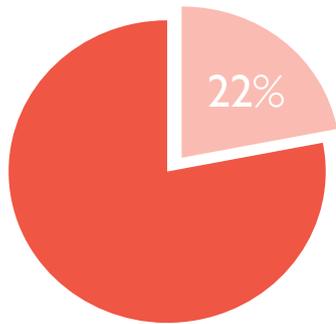
Support our Postgraduate Research and Taught communities through more dedicated events and information.

Create more opportunity for students to socialise with one another at an academic level so that students can build networks that can support them during their course and after they graduate.

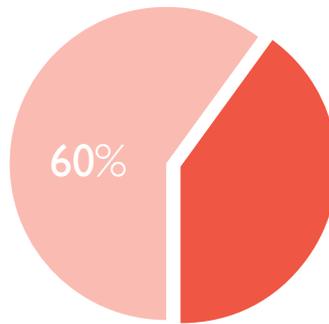
Enhance learning and development by establishing a peer mentoring scheme to draw on the experience and knowledge of Postgraduate and mature students or Alumni with new or current Undergraduate students.

# Why we are doing this?

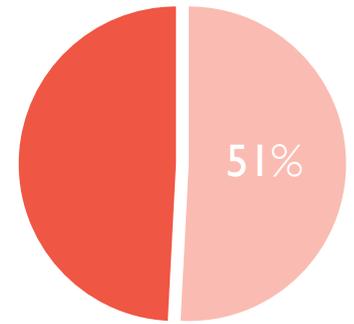
Percentage of students across current level of engagement who want to be more engaged



Heavily Engaged



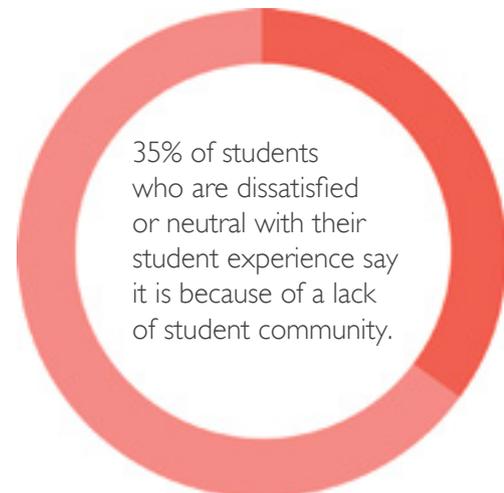
Moderately Engaged



Not Engaged

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most  
**POSTGRADUATES**  
feel the Union is not  
**RELEVANT**  
to them



# How will we know we've succeeded?

Volunteer placements **GROW**  
year on year to a level of **100**  
**placements** in 2019.

A university-wide scheme is in place to record student volunteering and **200 student volunteers** participate in the scheme.

University Transcripts include student volunteering achievements that are articulated in a way employer's value.

Each School has an

**80**

Student societies affiliated to the Student Union.

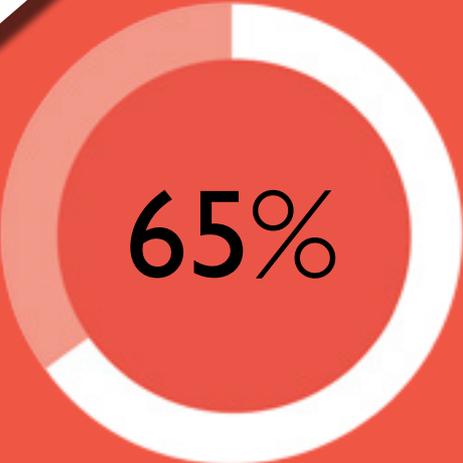
# EVERY STUDENT

is welcomed on their arrival at university by a Union representative and is invited to and engages with a Union activity, to welcome them into our community.

appropriate Academic Society structure

**Fiona  
Watson**  
**Hall participation  
grows year on  
year.**

A peer  
mentoring  
scheme is  
in place



**65%**

**65%** of Postgraduates  
feel the Student Union  
**is** relevant to them.



# **Develop** our global student community

Our students come from all over the world to study at one of our campuses, including our international ones. Student experience is an important part of our global student community no matter where you study or where you come from.

## **What will we do?**

### **Prioritise social opportunities for students**

Run day and evening social events to meet the social needs of our diverse range of students such as undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Expand our programme of social events through pop up and outdoor events with students 'co-producing' events and actively leading our programme.

Make sure the food, drink and entertainment services on our campuses meet the expectations of students. We will operate our own services to achieve a high level of positive impact, and lobby the University to do the same.

### **Creating an international student community**

Work with the University to transfer the management of student representation in Dubai and Malaysia to the UK Student Union.

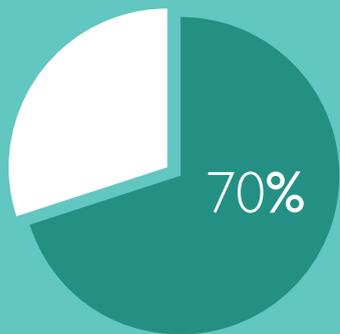
Work with the University to find ways to make it easier for students to move between our UK and International campuses. Help the University to encourage more student mobility between our campuses.

### **Creating a UK student community**

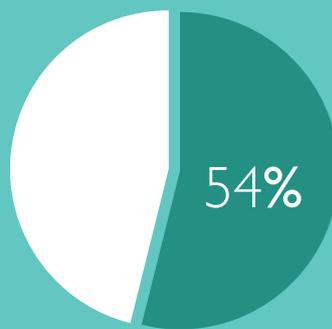
Improve the experience for students studying at Scottish Borders Campus by focusing on academic experience and social provision.

Work with the University to improve the student experience at West London College and Orkney.

# Why we are doing this?



70% of future students say it is important to be involved in the student community.



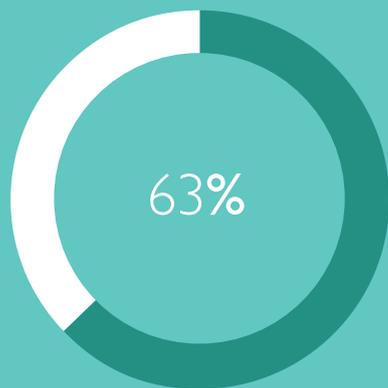
Over half of students (**54%**) who are lightly or not engaged with the Union want to be more engaged.

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Of the **top 10 issues** students would like to be improved at the University, **commercial services** was seen as the highest (**52%**) and entertainment and events is second (**45%**).

**Better value food and drink** is the most important issue for students with almost half (**46%**) saying it would have a **positive** impact on their student experience.

**39%** of students who are **dissatisfied with the Student Union** and **48%** of all students say they are **satisfied with our commercial services**.



SBC NSS overall satisfaction in 2014 was **63.5%**, the **Heriot-Watt overall** satisfaction was **81.9%**

The **Student Union NSS** score in 2014 was **63%**, the **UK average** was **67%**

**How** will we know we've succeeded?

90%

of students are proud to be part of the *Heriot-Watt community*.

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THE DUBAI AND MALAYSIA  
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE  
STRUCTURES ARE MERGED  
WITH THE UK STUDENT UNION

80%

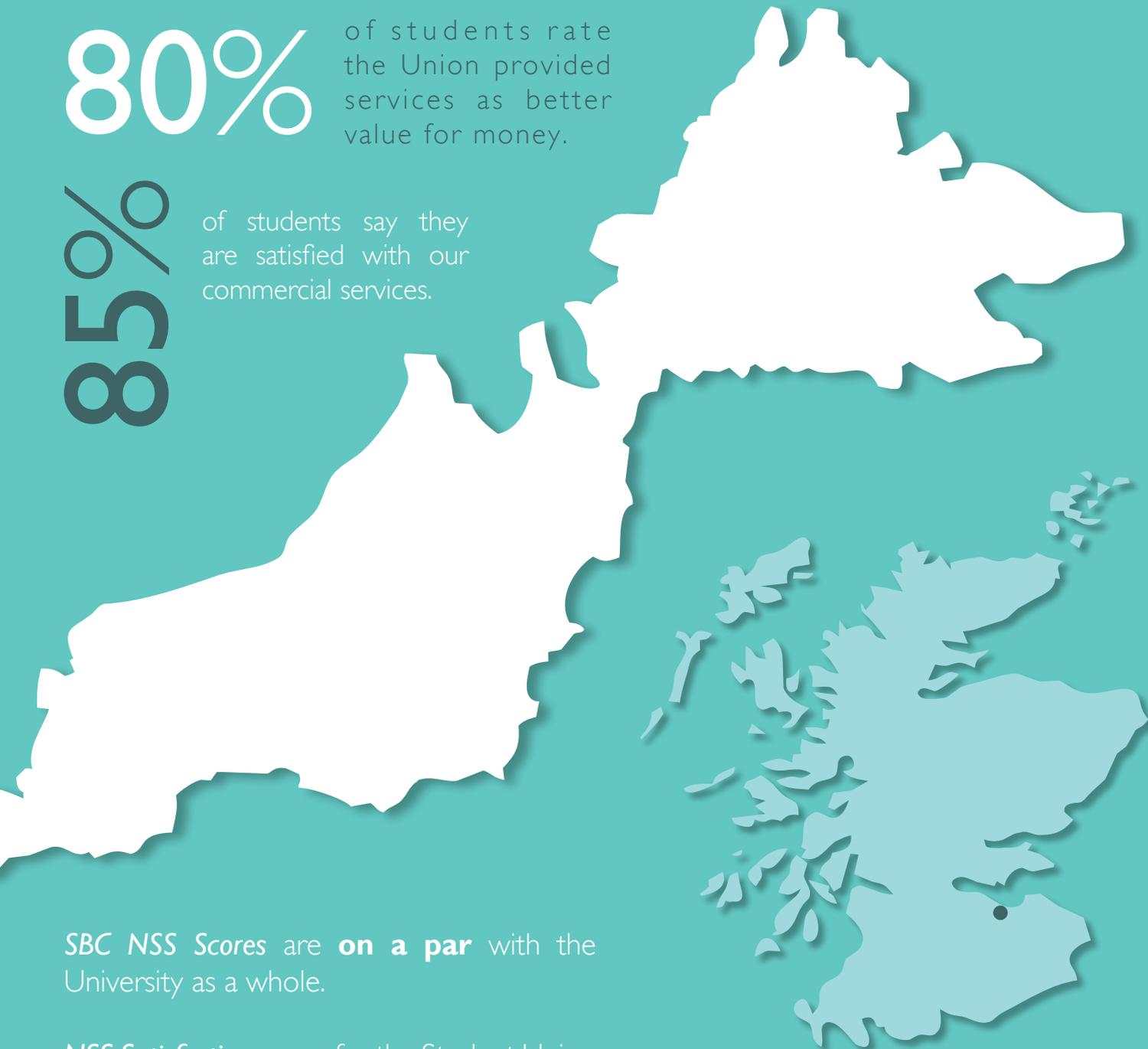
of students rate the Union provided services as better value for money.

85%

of students say they are satisfied with our commercial services.

*SBC NSS Scores* are **on a par** with the University as a whole.

*NSS Satisfaction scores* for the Student Union are **higher than** the national average.



# Enabling Strategies

To equip the Union for our future we will have a number of enabling strategies.

## Facilities

In this strategy we will:

- Develop a sustainable programme of investment where we can to improve the space and services we provide for our students
- Consult with students on where best to spend our funds
- Work with the University to ensure that the Student Union building is modern, welcoming and fit for purpose
- Lobby the University for significant investment in the Union building, either existing or new to provide

## Commercial

In this strategy we will:

- Promote our USP of ethically sourced and for people not profit values
- Recognise the diverse nature of our student community and use this to guide our commercial activities
- Develop our catering and coffee shop provision to support the changing needs of our students
- Enhance our retail offering to meet the needs of our students in Edinburgh
- Develop our cross-campus links to provide on-line purchasing of certain student items like clothing and books
- Implement a pop-up programme of shops with both student led and external providers
- Develop our social spaces so that it plays a part of a broader social programme rather than alcohol being the main feature of that space
- Research new opportunities to increase our services to students and enhance our financial contribution to our key student services.

## **Communication**

In this strategy we will:

- Outline our main communication priorities for the next 4 years
- Develop our brand and style guidelines to maintain consistency throughout the Organisation
- Outline our annual communication “Tactics” which help focus our communications
- Develop Departmental Tactics to help engage students in all our services
- Make the best use of the communication channels available to us, and be on the look out for new methods of engaging students
- Formalise our use of Social Media

## **Finance**

In this strategy we will:

- Ensure the Union is a financially secure and well governed organisation
- Work towards building adequate cash reserves
- Strive for new opportunities to diversify our income streams
- Ensure we do not run commercial operations that put the Union financial health in jeopardy





