



Trustee Report

3/12/18





The trustees have pleasure in presenting their annual report and consolidated financial statement for the year ended 30 June 2018.

Aberystwyth University Students' Union (AUSU) is a students' union within the meaning of the Education Act 1994. AUSU is devoted to the educational interests and welfare of its members.

Structure, governance and management

The primary aim of AUSU is the advancement of education of students at Aberystwyth University for the public benefit.

The Aberystwyth University Students' Union, for the period ended 30 June 2018, was an unincorporated association with a wholly-owned trading subsidiary, Masnachu AUGS Trading Ltd, ("Company") and is governed by the Union's constitution dated 26th June 2012. The company's share-holding, which is held in trust for the Union, is registered to the President. The trading company is a registered company with Companies House. The Union applied for and continue to hold Charitable status since January 2013 under the name Aberystwyth University Students' Union (AUSU).

There is no requirement for the consolidated accounts under review in this report to be audited. However, it is the Union's choosing, for the benefit of its members, to have its accounts audited and to prepare annual consolidated financial statements which are in accordance with the Union's constitution. The Aberystwyth University Students' Union vision statement is "We believe Aber students should have an epic student journey. They should be happy, healthy and empowered, with lasting friendships and promising futures." Its mission statement is; "We want Aber students to love student life and be ready for anything."

a) Constitution

The Union's principal governing document is its Constitution, agreed by the members in a cross campus referendum and ratified by the University's Charter Committee, Senate and Council. Copies of the Constitution are available from www.abersu.co.uk

b) Trustees

The board for 2017/18 comprised of 12 members; 5 elected sabbatical officer Trustees, 2 elected student trustees and 5 selected external trustees. The term of office is one year for elected trustees and 4 years for external trustees.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the strategic direction, governance and sustainability of AUSU. Officers are required to take a sabbatical year away from their studies and are remunerated by the Union during this period. All other trustees are volunteers and are able to claim reasonable expenses to undertake their duties. Officer and Student Trustees are elected through a secret ballot by the members each year, normally serving for one year in office but can serve a second term if re-elected. External Trustees are appointed in accordance with the Union's constitution (clause 52-54).

Upon appointment all trustees receive a variety of information through their induction. Trustees are briefed on their legal obligations and other trustee responsibilities. The Officer Trustees are new to the Board every year or two years, so they undergo a more intensive training period. This training starts after they are elected, and before they start their term of office to ensure that they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and can perform their duties to the best of their abilities as soon as possible. They attend training sessions on the history of governance at AUSU, their legal responsibilities as trustees, briefing sessions





on key issues and decisions that have been made by the Board of Trustees and receive training on how to deal with potential conflicts of interest.

The Trustee Board meets a minimum of 4 times a year. All trustees are provided with copies of the Charity Commission's Guidance to Trustees and introduced to the activities of the Union during their handover or by the Board. Trustees are provided with training and have the option to attend refresher training on an annual basis.

AUSU operates on democratic principles, with Policy being acted upon by the five elected Sabbatical Officers. During the year, members can bring forward ideas for change, political stances or development to Union Council. These ideas are then voted on by the membership of Council which consists of:

- Full-time Officers
- Part-time Officers
- Academic and Institute Representatives
- Zone Representative (two per zone)
- UMCA Executive
- Sports Clubs and Society chairpersons, secretary and treasurers (or their equivalent).

c) Staffing

The Union employs permanent staff to ensure the effective management of its many activities and to implement the policy decisions of Trustees on behalf of the membership. There is a delegated authority, through the Chief Executive, for operational decision making and accountability within the departments of the Union, in accordance with its organisational structure.

The Students' Union currently employs 14 permanent members of staff.

Senior management team

- Patricia McGrath, Chief Executive Officer
- Eleri Roberts, Communications & Engagement Manager
- Catrin Hopkins, Finance Manager
- Gavin Allen, Student Opportunities Manager
- Martin Dodd, Student Support & Representation Manager

In addition to the sabbatical officer trustees' work, the Trustees delegate the day to day management of the charity to the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team.

d) Relationship with Related Parties

Under the Education Act 1994, Aberystwyth University has a statutory duty to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that AberSU operates in a fair and democratic manner and is held to proper account for its finances.

The Union continues to receive valuable support from Aberystwyth University ('the University') and the block grant in 2017/18 was at £700,000 (2015/16: £663,000). The University also provided an additional £50K to supplement British University College Sport (BUCS) activity. The Students' Union part-occupies a building owned by the University and the University also provides portering and payroll services. This support is intrinsic to the relationship between the University and the Union. Following the transfer of commercial services to the University in September 2016, the Students' Union is dependent on the University's financial support, however there is no reason to believe that this support will not continue for the foreseeable future. The University requires notification of any changes in the governance of the Union and regular reports on the Union's activities, management and financial situation. These are given to the University at various committees such as Finance





and Strategy Committee and Council. Sabbatical Officers and Union staff sit on various university committees.

e) Risk management

The Trustee Board and Senior Management Team have examined the major strategic, business and operational risks faced by the Union. The Board of Trustees reviews the major strategic risks faced by AUSU on an annual basis as a minimum. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks that the organisation faces.

Budgetary and internal control risks are minimized by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements regarding staff, volunteers and participants for all activities organised by the Union. These procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity. The Trustee Board is made aware of any changes in the risk register and acts accordingly.

During this year, we focused on improving financial understanding and control across the organisation as well as improving controls around data protection.

Objectives and activities

The principal objectives of the Union are to benefit its current and future members and staff by advancing their education. AUSU achieves this through:

- promoting the interests and welfare of students at Aberystwyth University during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising students;
- being the recognised representative channel between students and Aberystwyth University and any other external bodies; and
- providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of students.

Whilst pursuing our aims and objectives and providing various activities for members AUSU seeks at all times to:

- ensure that the diversity of its membership is recognised, and that equal access is available to all members of whatever origin or orientation;
- pursue its aims and objectives independent of any political party or religious group
- pursue equal opportunities by taking positive action within the law to facilitate participation of groups discriminated against by society.

Mission: We want Aber students to love student life and be ready for anything.

Vision: We believe Aber students should have an epic student journey. They should be happy, healthy and empowered, with lasting friendships and promising futures.

Values: Shaped by students – Aber students are in control, Friends – we want you around, Straightforward - we tell it like it is, All embracing - everyone matters, Welsh – obviously

Achievements and performance

A new strategy for 2017-2020 was developed throughout the 2016-17 year, and the SU operated on an interim set of strategic priorities based on the principles of that plan for 2017-18. In total 56% of students either voted in an election, were part of a Club or Society or were an Academic Rep.

AUSU provided a variety of services and activities for students including:

- **Advice Service:** We continue to provide a specialist service to our members in the areas of housing, money and academic issues. Despite a reduction of 1FTE staff member, the Advice Service supported 100 students directly through casework. Additionally the Service





focused on creating available online advice and guidance on key student issues and focussed on internal processes and procedures.

● **Student Opportunities:** A choice of 150 clubs and societies offered a diversity of opportunities for social and skills development. 3,295 students registered to join an AUSU club or society during the year (40% of the student population). We also supported student-led volunteering, helping over 600 students to lead their student groups. The Opportunities team is made up of three staff members, and provided support, advice and help with the safe running of activities especially around health and safety, recruitment, communication, delivery and finance including fundraising and development. This year an online platform for brokerage and recording volunteering hours and skills was developed.

● **Democracy and Representation:** We supported 300 Course and Institute Reps with new training and communication initiatives, and we kick started an in-depth partnership project to explore and develop future student representation initiatives at course and institute level.

2,832 students voted in our main elections, which was an increase from 28% in the previous year to 35% of the student population (one of the highest Students' Union election turnout percentages in the UK).

We continued to support students to campaigning for change in the organisation, the University and in the student and local community.

● **Facilities:** The majority of the Students' Union building would still benefit from refurbishment and redecoration. Works to improve accessibility for disabled students were carried out in July and August 2016 and the foyer received some minor redecoration. Further works to the front doors were planned to begin in July 2017 but were delayed due to University budget restrictions in year. AberSU relocated the Advice Service and the Student Opportunities teams to the front of the building to more high footfall and accessible areas.

● **Awards:** The Students' Union and SU staff were thrilled to receive the following awards and recognition:

- NUS People Award 2018
- NUS Democracy Award 2018
- NUS Wales Student Opportunities Award

● **Officer projects:** In 2017-18, the Officers worked on a range of priorities including:

- Reopening Pantycelyn by 2019
- Additional Course Costs
- Mental Health
- Sports Funding
- Women in Sport
- Building Refurbishment
- Reviewing Democracy

