



IMPACT REPORT 2025/26

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS AT MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY



ALL YOURS

THE UNION
MANCHESTER
METROPOLITAN
UNIVERSITY



Students are more diverse than ever before, with different ambitions, different challenges and different definitions of success.

HIGHER EDUCATION IS CHANGING

Students are balancing study alongside work, caring responsibilities, financial pressures and increasing uncertainty about the future. They are more diverse than ever before, with different ambitions, different challenges and different definitions of success.

Against this backdrop, The Union exists to ensure that every Manchester Met student has the opportunity to succeed.

Representing more than 40,000 students from a richly diverse community including commuters, mature learners, international students, apprentices, postgraduates and first-generation students, The Union sits at the intersection of student life and institutional decision-making. We provide opportunities for connection and community. We help students develop skills and confidence. We support those facing challenges. And we ensure that

student voices shape the culture, priorities and future direction of the University.

This year marked another significant step forward in our journey towards an ambitious goal. **By 2030, we want to have engaged every Manchester Met student in a meaningful way.**

More importantly, it was a year in which we **strengthened our ability to listen, influence and deliver.** Through a new strategic framework centred on two core programmes, Voice and Experiences, we sharpened our focus on the outcomes that matter most: belonging, confidence, representation, opportunity and student success.



A UNION BUILT AROUND STUDENT SUCCESS

At its heart, The Union believes that students succeed when they feel heard, connected and supported.

Everything we do is organised around two simple but powerful questions:

How do students shape their university experience?

And:

How do students experience university life beyond the classroom?

The answers form the foundation of our Voice and Experiences programmes. Together, these programmes bring thousands of students into decision-making processes, communities, activities, employment opportunities and support services every year.

This year we extended our reach even further, **engaging an estimated seven in ten Manchester Met students** through a combination of representation, activities, communities, services, employment and social spaces.



LISTENING
BETTER.
INFLUENCING
MORE.



STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF THE CONVERSATION

A modern Students' Union cannot simply collect feedback. It must turn insight into influence.

During 2025/26, The Union strengthened its ability to understand the realities of student life and ensure those experiences informed decision-making across the University and beyond. **More than 12,800 students engaged directly in Voice activities**, including research, representation, elections, advice and consultation activity. This represents almost one third of Manchester Met's student population and a three percentage point increase on the previous year.

One of the most significant developments was the launch of The Union Unfiltered, a new student insight community designed to create an ongoing conversation between students, The Union and the University. Rather than relying solely on traditional surveys, students are invited to participate in regular online discussions about the issues shaping their everyday experiences.

In its first year, almost 1,000 students joined the community, generating insight on topics ranging from financial hardship and mental health to housing, transport, assessment feedback, campus safety, sustainability, and

the opportunities and risks presented by artificial intelligence.

The real value of these conversations lies in the change they helped bring about.

Student feedback informed improvements to the University's new Success Fund, contributed to the development of campus safety initiatives, influenced strategic discussions around student wellbeing, and is helping shape future University guidance on AI in learning and teaching. Student perspectives were also fed directly into major developments including future support services, sustainability accreditation activity and regional transport advocacy.

As one participant described it:

"It's a platform where we, as students, can be completely honest about our university experience. Our opinions are valued and they're making a real difference."

**12,800 students
engaged directly
in Voice activities**



CASE STUDY:



IMPROVING FINANCIAL SUPPORT

When Manchester Met launched its new Success Fund, we used The Union Unfiltered to gather detailed feedback from students, including those who had navigated the application process.

Students called for clearer eligibility information, a simpler application journey, more supportive language and easier access to in-person advice. In response, the University developed a new online eligibility checker, shortened the application form, improved information about drop-in support and extended the application window.

The changes will make it easier for students to understand what support is available, navigate the process and apply when they need help most. They demonstrate how listening to students can remove practical barriers to accessing vital financial support.

FROM INSIGHT TO INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Listening only matters if people act on what they hear.

Union staff and elected Officers attended over 200 University meetings across the year, spending hundreds of hours representing student interests across committees, working groups and strategic forums. Together, they helped ensure student perspectives informed decisions at every level of the University.

At course level, **1,644 students volunteered to be course reps**, creating one of the largest representative networks in the institution. Together over **2,100 pieces of student feedback**, issues and recommendations were generated from **151 programmes**.

Across the University, course reps helped turn students' experiences into practical improvements. Their feedback led to more interactive teaching, greater use of real-world case studies and changes to pre-class workloads. It also prompted new approaches to transition and reassurance, including peer-led support between year groups and graduate testimonials offering advice at the start of modules.

We also **launched In the Loop**, a new magazine-style insight publication designed to **bring decision-makers closer to the lived experiences of students**.



Sara Kopacz, Wellbeing Officer

"Course reps understand the everyday realities of their courses and can spot issues early. Having been a course rep myself, I know how powerful it is when students and staff work together on practical solutions, and students see that speaking up leads to change."



George Charlton, President

"Students told us about the barriers wheelchair users face on campus. By bringing them together with University decision-makers, we identified practical changes and secured commitments backed by dedicated funding. There is more to do, but this shows what we can achieve when students and the University work together to remove barriers."

The publication has quickly become a valued source of evidence and reflection for academic and professional colleagues across the University.

"I'm a big fan of 'In The Loop'! It is so useful in gaining a direct insight into the things our students are thinking about, worried about or working towards at different points in the year. As Programme Leader for the PGCert Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, I regularly share the publication with our staff participants to help them improve their understanding of the student experience at Man Met at a time when they are reflecting on and developing their own teaching practice."

Craig Morley, Programme Leader,
PGCert Learning and Teaching in
Higher Education

One edition of In the Loop translated the key findings from our annual induction survey into three clear, actionable priorities for programme teams. These were the three things students told us would make the greatest difference to their induction

experience. Recognising the pressures on busy colleagues and the risk of information overload, we made the insight as accessible and easy to apply as possible. The insight subsequently informed the redesign of the University's central Welcome and Transitions resource hub for academic staff.

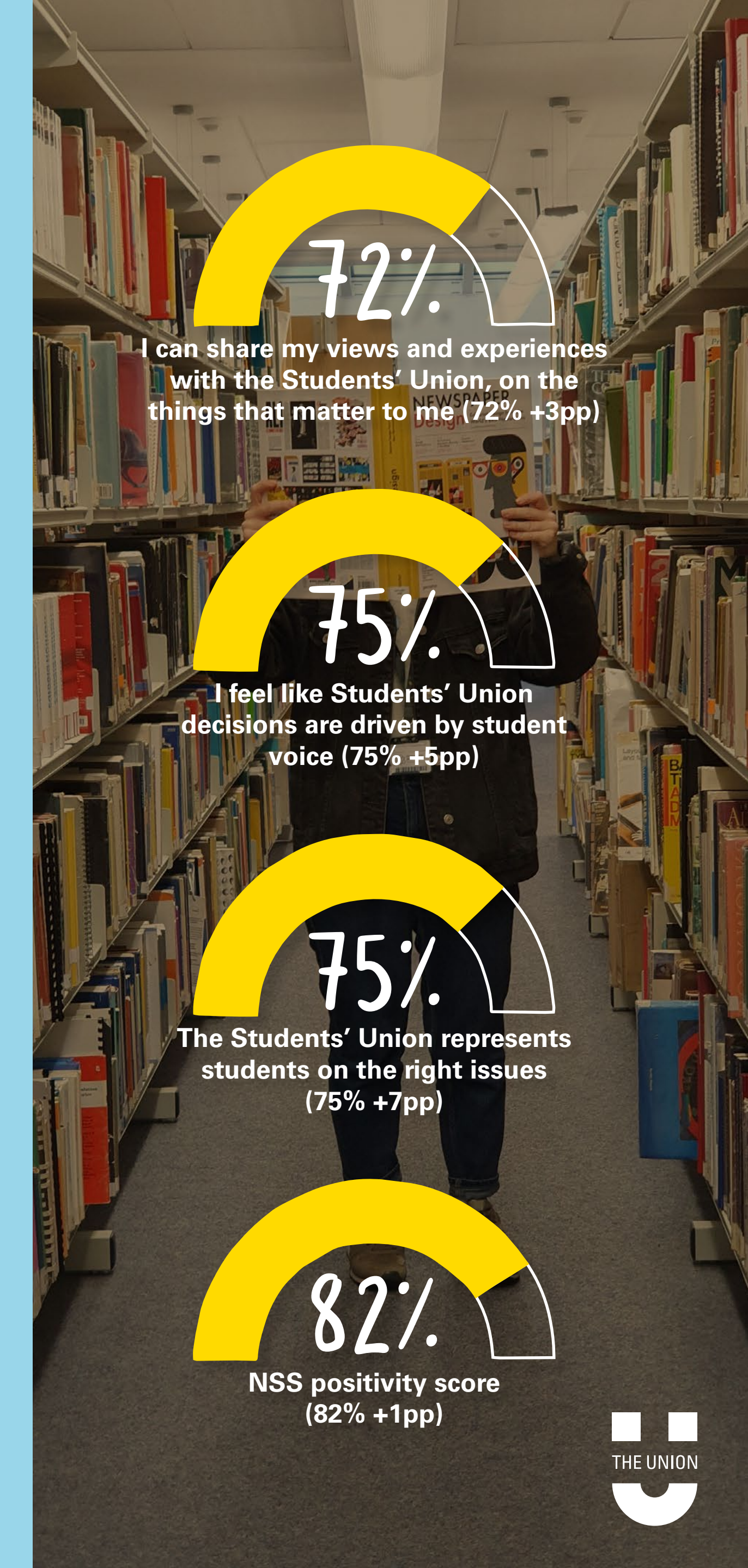
Students themselves also recognised this progress.

Key measures of representation and influence improved across the year.

Students reported greater confidence that they could share their views with The Union, better understanding of how they were being represented, and stronger agreement that Union priorities reflected the issues most important to them.

Meanwhile, we achieved another above-sector (+3pp) result in the National Student Survey measure, with **82% of students agreeing that the Students' Union represents their academic interests well.**

Together, these results point to growing trust that speaking up leads to visible action.



72%

I can share my views and experiences with the Students' Union, on the things that matter to me (72% +3pp)

75%

I feel like Students' Union decisions are driven by student voice (75% +5pp)

75%

The Students' Union represents students on the right issues (75% +7pp)

82%

NSS positivity score (82% +1pp)

WHEN SUPPORT MATTERS MOST

For many students, success depends on having access to expert advice at precisely the moment it is needed.

Throughout the year, The Union's Advice Centre continued to provide independent, professional and confidential support across a wide range of issues, from academic appeals and disciplinary procedures to finance, housing, wellbeing and welfare benefits.

During 2025/26, our advisers supported more than **1,500 students** and responded to almost **5,400 enquiries**. Their work helped secure over **£155,000 in additional financial gain** for students through successful appeals, hardship applications, benefit entitlements and compensation claims.



CASE STUDY:

FROM ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT TO RENEWED CONFIDENCE

A student approached the Advice Centre after being invited to an academic misconduct hearing. Having experienced health difficulties, they had used AI inappropriately in an assessment and feared they would be expelled from the University.

An adviser helped the student understand the disciplinary process, prepare their case and present the circumstances that had affected their decision-making. The adviser also accompanied them to the hearing, helping to ensure that the process was fair and that the student's mitigating circumstances were fully considered.

As a result, the student was able to continue their studies. Crucially, the



support also helped them reflect on what had happened, develop a clearer understanding of appropriate AI use and identify how they could approach future assessments differently. They were connected with counselling and study skills services, giving them additional support to strengthen their academic practice, manage future challenges and move forward with greater confidence.

The case demonstrates the wider value of independent advice. It can protect fairness and reduce anxiety at a critical moment, while helping students learn from difficult experiences and remain on course to achieve their goals.

A VOICE BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY

INFLUENCING THE CITY AND REGION

Students' lives do not stop at the campus boundary. The affordability and quality of housing, the reliability of public transport and access to appropriate health services all affect their ability to participate in university life and succeed in their studies.

Through the Greater Manchester Student Partnership, The Union works alongside four other Students' Unions to make Greater Manchester a better place for students to live, learn, work and build community. Together, the partnership represents students' interests in discussions with the Mayor of Greater Manchester, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, local councils, universities and regional service providers.

This year, the partnership helped secure an important step forward for student housing. Working with the Good Landlord Charter implementation unit, it co-wrote a dedicated accommodation framework for universities and purpose-built student accommodation providers seeking to join the Charter. The framework includes an affordability matrix, protections against building work taking place during examination periods, and measures to help students access travel discounts and other student-specific offers.

The partnership also continued to press for longer-term change across the region. This included contributing to a city-wide strategy for students who live and remain in Greater Manchester, working with Transport for Greater Manchester to advocate for integrated student tickets across trains, trams and buses, and seeking to expand the support available through the Greater Manchester Student Mental Health Service.

By combining the insight and influence of five Students' Unions, **the partnership can pursue change at a scale that no single institution could achieve alone.** The Union is helping to ensure that students' experiences inform regional decisions and shape a city that works better for learners now and in the future.

George Charlton, President

"Students study, live, work and access services across Greater Manchester. By bringing five Students' Unions together, we give students a stronger collective voice and can work with regional leaders on challenges no single university can solve alone."





CREATING PLACES, COMMUNITIES & CONNECTIONS

WHERE BELONGING HAPPENS

Student success is shaped by far more than academic outcomes. A sense of belonging, friendship and social connection can help students settle into university life, build confidence and thrive.

Throughout 2025/26, The Union created opportunities for students to connect in ways that worked for them. These ranged from large-scale Cool It events and live performances to quizzes, craft workshops and smaller activities designed to make meeting people feel easier.

Our venues offered equally varied ways to participate.

Boundary established itself as a vibrant campus bar and events space, hosting live music, sport, quizzes and more than 150 events.

The Salutation continued to provide a distinctive home

for creative communities through exhibitions, talks, performances and regular social events.

Meanwhile, the Coffee Shop offered an affordable and welcoming place for students to meet, study and spend time between classes.

Together with our workspaces, Living Room and Heat & Eat provision, these spaces supported social connection in both planned and informal ways.

More than 34,000 unique customers visited our food, drink and retail outlets during the year. Many of these students did not participate in other Union activities, demonstrating how important accessible, everyday spaces are to extending our reach and connecting with a diverse student body.

34,000+
unique customers
across food, drink
and retail outlets

399
student-facing
events, up 24%

12,000+
new students
welcomed

11,500
Freshers' Fair
attendees

7 IN 10
students reached across
The Union's activities,
services and spaces

The evidence suggests that these experiences make a meaningful difference. **Students who attended events or used our social venues reported significantly stronger feelings of connection** and a more positive impact on their social and wider university experience. By offering everything from lively events to quieter spaces for studying and conversation, **The Union is helping more students find their place at Manchester Met.**



Percentage point difference in agreement between students who attended events or used our social venues and those who didn't.

The Union has a positive impact on my social life

+30_{pp}

The Union has had a positive impact on my university experience

+30_{pp}

The Union helps me to connect with other students at Manchester Met

+23_{pp}



CREATING COMMUNITIES WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS

Creating opportunities for connection is only meaningful if students from all backgrounds feel welcome, represented and able to participate. Our inclusion work broadened engagement this year—raising awareness and creating more opportunities for students to feel seen, heard and valued.

Working alongside student groups, we delivered campaigns and events that celebrated diverse experiences and encouraged conversations about identity and belonging. **Nearly 2,000 students participated in our faith, identity and culture communities this year**, an increase of 22% versus last year.

Our Inclusion Ambassadors created welcoming spaces

for students, contributed to discussions about racism and inclusive practice, and extended the reach of this work through content that generated more than 57,000 views.

We also worked with the University to increase understanding of awarding gaps, unconscious bias and inclusive assessment through initiatives including Make the Pie Bigger and Mind the Gap.

The proportion of students who agreed that **The Union is welcoming and inclusive of all types of students rose by six percentage points to 87%.**

This progress reflects a wider commitment to ensuring more students feel welcome, represented and able to participate in university life.

Gracie Otley, Education Officer



"Belonging can start with being welcomed into a room and getting to know the people you learn with. When students feel connected and comfortable, they are more likely to contribute, ask for help and play an active part in their education."

Daijah Powell- Adams, Inclusion Ambassador



"Through this work, I've helped amplify student experiences by contributing to culturally relevant events, supporting awareness campaigns, and ensuring that student perspectives are reflected in planning discussions. Even small actions like connecting societies to the Inclusion team or sharing insight from conversations have already shaped how projects are delivered."

THE POWER OF STUDENT-LED COMMUNITIES

Societies are one of the most effective ways for students to build identity, confidence and community.

Membership continued to grow during 2025/26, with particularly strong increases in academic societies (+19%), reflecting our strategic commitment to building communities around learning as well as shared interests. Academic societies, international communities and media-based groups all saw significant growth.

Sport clubs offer another route to belonging and personal development. We support sport club committees to build strong, welcoming communities through social activities, fundraising and volunteering.

Imie Holland, Sport Officer, 2025/26 and 2026/27



"Introducing Welfare Secretaries has started more conversations about club culture and how we can make our clubs a space for all, how we can better train committee members, and how we can make our first years more confident in joining a sport."

The elected Sport Officer also ensures that clubs and their members have a voice in the decisions affecting their experience.

Student perceptions also improved. Three-quarters agreed that The Union offers a wide range of sports clubs and societies, up three percentage points, while **75% agreed that The Union makes it easy for students to get involved**, up five percentage points.

Behind every student group are committee members who volunteer their time to create opportunities and welcoming spaces for others. We support them through training, advice, networking and practical guidance, helping them lead their groups effectively, develop new activities and encourage wider participation.

Student leadership helps communities thrive.

"MMU Islamic Society has been one of the most active and welcoming communities on campus this year."

Student nomination for The Union Awards



CASE STUDY:



CREATING COMMUNITIES WHERE STUDENTS BELONG

Andrew Chang, Committee Member of the Year 2025/26

Across his time with CAOS and the Society of Apprentices, Andrew Chang has shown how committed student leadership can help communities thrive.

Andrew played a central role in revitalising the Society of Apprentices, dedicating time each week to planning activities, supporting fellow committee members and preparing a new committee to take the society forward. His contribution helped rebuild regular participation and created more opportunities for students to connect.

Just as important was the way Andrew made people feel. He took time to welcome new members, listen to their experiences and ensure they felt seen and valued. This encouraged students not only to remain involved, but also to take on committee positions and become more engaged with The Union.

Andrew's story demonstrates what student-led communities can achieve. With commitment, encouragement and the right support, one student can help many others find belonging, build confidence and become leaders themselves.

DEVELOPING SKILLS, CONFIDENCE AND FUTURES

The Union gives students opportunities to take part, lead and develop.

From elected representatives and society committees to course reps, volunteers and student staff, thousands of students took on roles that helped them build skills, confidence and experience during the year.

More than **120 students** were employed by The Union, including through placement opportunities. Together, they completed **26,283 hours** of paid work and earned **£350,940 in wages**, gaining valuable experience through flexible employment designed to fit around their studies.

For some students, this included opportunities to take on greater responsibility. At The Salutation, three student team leader roles were created, with structured training and experience across different aspects of hospitality management. Across our venues and services, student staff developed practical skills in areas such as teamwork, communication, customer service, problem-solving and leadership.

Students also developed through representation and community leadership. More than **1,600 course reps** and around **400 society committee members** gained experience of listening to others, organising activities, building relationships and influencing change.





Daijah Powell- Adams,
Inclusion Ambassador

"This role has quickly expanded my confidence and sense of purpose. I'm learning how to engage students meaningfully, how to identify subtle barriers that affect belonging, and how to translate lived experience into practical change. Becoming an Inclusion Ambassador has already shown me how powerful student spaces can be when representation is intentional and I'm committed to continuing this work throughout the year."



Students' feedback reflects the value of these opportunities. In our annual survey, more than two thirds said The Union had helped them develop at least one employability skill, an increase of four percentage points on the previous year. Confidence and networking were the skills cited most often. Among student staff surveyed, almost **73% said their work was helping them acquire skills and knowledge** that would benefit their future career, while **92% would recommend The Union as a good place to work.**

University evaluation data (EvEE) also indicates that **participation is associated with wider benefits.** Over the past four years, course reps and society members have consistently shown stronger outcomes in areas linked to **academic development.** The latest available analysis also found a positive association with **career thinking.**

By giving students opportunities to take responsibility, practise leadership and recognise the value of their experience, The Union helps them **develop skills and connections that can support them at university, in employment and beyond.**

Aliza Hussain, Societies
and Development Officer



"Societies, volunteering and student leadership help people build confidence, make connections and discover new strengths. I experienced that myself, and I want every student to have access to opportunities that support them during university and beyond."



BUILDING AN ORGANISATION FOR LASTING IMPACT

Evelyn Asante-Mensah, Chair of the Board of Trustees:

“The Union has a clear direction and strong foundations on which to build. The Board is confident that our focus on student outcomes, organisational resilience and effective partnerships will enable us to deliver lasting impact in the years ahead.”

Delivering lasting impact for students requires a strong, sustainable and well-run organisation.

During 2025/26, The Union introduced a new structure built around three directorates and two core programmes, Voice and Experiences. Supported by an organisational Theory of Impact, **the new structure has brought strategy and delivery closer together**, strengthened collaboration and created a clearer focus on student outcomes.

Strong governance and specialist partnerships continued to provide oversight, expertise and challenge. Alongside close collaboration with Manchester Met, our relationships with the National Union of Students, other Students' Unions and regional partners extended our reach and enabled us to pursue change beyond the University.

We strengthened our financial sustainability through careful cost management, increased University funding, new income streams and targeted investment in areas with the potential to increase participation and impact. This included events, academic communities, online engagement and improvements to our spaces.

Sustainability remained an important part of our partnership with Manchester Met. As a **founding participant in the 2014 pilot of Responsible Futures**, The Union has worked in partnership with the University to embed sustainability across student learning for over a decade. Our **successful reaccreditation in 2026** recognises this longstanding commitment and the continued strength of our joint approach.

Investment in our people and culture remained equally important. We improved recruitment and internal communication and worked with Inclusive Employers to

embed more inclusive practice across the organisation. Staff feedback showed positive movement in perceptions of leadership, communication and recognition, with **84% of colleagues saying they would recommend The Union as a good place to work.**

Together, these developments have strengthened The Union's ability to respond to changing student needs, contribute as an effective institutional and regional partner, and deliver long-term impact at scale.





LOOKING FORWARD

This was a year in which The Union reached more students, turned more of what they told us into action and built stronger foundations for the future.

We expanded the ways students could shape decisions, find belonging and connection, and access support through challenge and uncertainty. We also continued to develop an organisation capable of delivering lasting impact across a large, diverse and changing student community.

We made important progress towards our ambition to reach every Manchester Met student by 2030. This year, **The Union reached an estimated seven in ten students.** This reflects the breadth of ways students now connect with us, from representation, communities and events to advice, employment and social spaces.

As Manchester Met's student population continues to evolve, The Union must evolve with it. **Reaching every student will mean continuing to understand and remove barriers to engagement**, creating more inclusive opportunities and ensuring that all students can see themselves reflected in the communities, services and decisions that shape university life.

The direction is clear. **Student success happens when students are heard, empowered and connected.** We will continue working with students, the University and our wider partners to create the conditions in which every Manchester Met student can succeed.

