

# Interim Strategic Plan 2020-2021

## Ensuring We Deliver Quality in a Covid-19 Conscious World

### 1. Context

Wrexham Glyndŵr Students' Union has been working to a strategy since 2017. This strategy came to an end in 2020. At the time in the year when building our next strategy would have been our main task, a global pandemic (and national lockdown) hit. This dramatically changed the environment we were working in and what our members needed from us overnight. It is for this reason that we have built an interim strategy to give us a clear direction for the academic year 2020/2021. A year that brings unprecedented challenges for our members and requires a targeted plan to combat the negative effects of the pandemic on the student experience.

We remain a partner of a widening participation institution, working with students with busy lives but with high ambitions. We have a high proportion of students aged over 25 and we cater to a majority Welsh domiciled student population.

We have a halls of residence on the Wrexham, Plas Coch campus which houses around 200 students each year. Another smaller halls of residence is based at the rural Northop Campus housing students who study there. We also work closely with Snowdon Halls which is a private halls of residence in Wrexham town centre. The vast majority of our students commute to campus as and when they need to.

The University has invested significant sums over the last two years into renovating the Plas Coch Campus as part of the Campus 2025 plan. Priority work has been completed on shared learning spaces such as The Gallery and The Study. As the landscape has shifted substantially over the last year the future trajectory of these development works may have to change.

Glyndŵr University works with 13 partner institutions to deliver courses worldwide and our international student numbers have grown since our first strategy was created. Online learning has proved popular even pre-pandemic, which means that as a Union we need to focus on adapting our modes of engagement to ensure we're reaching all members.

The most recent data set detailing our student makeup is available here:

<https://wgyou.glyndwr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/KeyInstitutionalDataSet-20th-Feb-2020.pdf>

## 2. Our Values

### WGSU's Core Values In all that we do we will be...

#### Dependable

We will be a reliable and dependable Students' Union in a world of constant change. We will be there to help you make connections, spark new passions and make sure we provide a safe environment (physically or digitally) for you to grow. We will also be there for you if things don't quite go to plan. We'll be there to get you back on track and encourage you to gain the most out of your university experience.

#### Challenging

We know how much your education means to you and we know your expectations are high. We promise to be a challenging partner to the university and we will work collaboratively to enhance your student experience. We promise to challenge the University, society, or ourselves if you are not receiving the answers you deserve on the issues that matter.

#### Innovative

We thrive on innovation. Now more than ever we understand the importance of reaching solutions creatively to face new challenges. Creative thought is our life-blood and we welcome creativity from our membership. We will act on new ideas with enthusiasm. We will not do things simply because that is the way they have always been done.

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We believe as a team that these values will steer us in the right direction in a year of constant change. It was important to us that we re-wrote these and committed to these underlying principles before moving onto any operational planning. These values are embedded into our work practises. They will be referenced in team meetings, are built into our staff appraisal processes and will even be featured on our email signatures this year.

### 3. Our Strategic Aims for 2020-2021

We are working towards three strategic aims this year. These have been shaped through feedback from our student survey, the student advisory group, elected representatives, the SU staff team and key University stakeholders.

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| <p><b>1. Enhancing Student Experience</b></p>   |
| <p>We will support students through their academic and social journeys whilst at WGU, through the good times and the challenging times. We provide opportunities for our members to host events and activity in our spaces (physical and digital) to deepen their sense of belonging. We tell our members what we are doing consistently and we leave space for student feedback along the way. Our commercial arms will perform well at engaging students, adding value to their experience and generating income which we can feed back into more student activity.</p> |
| <p><b>1. Advocating For Quality</b></p>   |
| <p>We will enhance the quality of the education students receive at Glyndwr, and we have mechanisms to ensure this happens. We advocate for students using the right channels at the right time to get the outcome our members deserve. We will also analyse our own internal processes and systems to deliver the highest quality service to our members. We will do our utmost to ensure students receive the experience they deserve whilst at Glyndwr, from the University and their Students' Union.</p>   |
| <p><b>2. Accelerating Personal Development</b></p>  |
| <p>We will aid student's personal development whilst at University and beyond. Academic achievement is essential but students expect more, and we are here to help them make their ambitions a reality. We will provide opportunities for students to learn new skills, develop new areas of interest and be able to articulate what they have learned at the end of it. We will be a significant part of enhancing student's employability and prospects after their time at Glyndwr ends.</p>   |

### 3. Our Strategic Themes In Action

The WGSU team have set 73 organisational objectives against the three strategic aims ensuring we cover 'business as usual' tasks as well as innovative projects and campaigns specific to this year.

Before those objectives were set we agreed on three key focus points for this year to help us shape our regular activity into objectives that will have real impact in the year of the pandemic.

#### Working Focusses:

| Digital Engagement → Tackling Isolation → Re-evaluating Processes   |   |   |
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| We are in a year where remote working is suddenly the norm. Students and staff alike are now more dependent on digital communication so it is essential that we can operate in this arena, and quickly. | With remote learning comes less opportunity to connect with others and build communities. Our students deserve an SU that will help them to tackle barriers to isolation, this year more than ever before | We need to make it easier for our members to access the SU resources and activities that they need this year. We are committed to streamlining and digitising all that we can to ensure that we are accessible and able to support our students |

These focusses are reflected in our operational planning this year, they are reminders of what we need to work on this year specifically. They have been set as a result of student feedback after the pandemic hit in March 2020, however we do believe that these will remain priorities in future years so this will also serve as important work to support our long-term goals.

#### 4. Priority Actions and Measures of Success

The below is not an exhaustive list of our organisational objectives, but highlights some key areas of focus and how we are going to know that we have made an impact.

| 1. <u>Enhancing Student Experience</u>   |  |
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| Priority Actions   | Success Measures   |
| ➤ Continue increasing student engagement in elections, involving more partners and marketing more widely than ever before        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least 8 candidates standing for sabbatical officer positions</li> <li>✓ At least a 10% voter turnout in sabbatical officer elections</li> </ul>  |
| ➤ Give students more opportunities to join or create clubs and societies with a specific focus on growing our academic societies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ At least 25 active societies (at least 5 will be academic)</li> <li>✓ Creation of a digital hub for society and sports team members to connect</li> <li>✓ More events than ever before are listed on our website</li> <li>✓ We will have allocated all funds from the Society Development Fund to student activity</li> </ul>   |
| ➤ Keep our building open as much as possible to be a safe and relaxed space on Campus  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Students use our Lazy Lion Bar and Lounge and are involved in shaping events and activities in the space.</li> <li>✓ Our shop and reception will remain open as much as possible as a first port of call for our members.</li> <li>✓ Our receptionists will be trained and up to date with the activities of the Union so they can relay that information to our members.</li> <li>✓ We will move our merchandise store online so students can still access it</li> </ul> |
| ➤ We will ensure that more students can access our independent Advice Service than ever before.                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensuring a regular social media presence from the Advice Team including live Q&amp;A sessions</li> </ul>  |

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| Especially in areas we have not reached before  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Offering more Microsoft Teams appointments than before at flexible times to suit our members</li> <li>✓ We will take our 'SU On The Road' (digital or physical) to promote the service and the wider SU offer to more students across campuses.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ We will continue to work collaboratively with the University on important projects such as the HEFCW funded Social Prescribing hub, Campus 2025 and activity that is specific to supporting students through the pandemic</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We will have a staff member on all key working groups for cross-organisational projects</li> <li>✓ We will secure all funding pots we bid for in partnership with the University</li> </ul>  |

| 2. <u>Advocating For Quality</u>   |  |
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| Priority Actions   | Success Measures   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Raising the profile of all our student representatives, from Sabbatical Officers to Faculty Reps</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We will build more Reps views (and opportunities for our members to connect with Reps) into our communication schedules</li> <li>✓ At least 70% of our students will know who their representatives are in our end of year survey</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Closing the feedback loop for our members, telling students what we have achieved on their behalf.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Our advocating wins are built into our annual communications plan and there are regular updates from our Officers on what we have achieved</li> <li>✓ We will recruit a Student Council Chair for the first time, ensuring that we have more resource to track our influence</li> </ul> |

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| ➤ Maintaining our presence at University meetings and ensuring the student voice is heard  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ All Union reports are delivered on time and include feedback from across the organisation</li> <li>✓ All committee meetings are attended by a Union representative (staff or pto) or feedback is given in advance and recorded in minutes</li> <li>✓ All hearings for students going through University procedures are attended by an SU representative</li> </ul> |
| ➤ We will launch a new university-wide feedback gathering system (monitored by Course Reps) which is digital and easy for all of our members to access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We will elect and train all required Course Representatives to use the system proficiently</li> <li>✓ We will increase the number of Course Reps at our partner institutions by at least 20%</li> <li>✓ We will deliver training on the new system to all required University staff members before launch in semester 2</li> </ul>                                 |
| ➤ In a difficult year for sports we will ensure our members receive value for their membership fees  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increased training times and access to facilities when they need them</li> <li>✓ More training courses to support their own and team development</li> </ul>  |
| ➤ We will continue to manage our finances prudently and transparently so we can continue delivering quality support for our members                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We will ensure that funding grants are spent on the right activity (and swiftly) to support our members through a challenging year</li> <li>✓ We will find new accountancy support this year who will add value, and give the right</li> </ul>   |

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|  | <p>information to our Board of Trustees to enable them to make the best decisions for our charity</p> <p>✓ We will end the year with a clean financial audit</p> |
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| 3. <u>Accelerating Personal Development</u>  |   |
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| Priority Actions:  | Success Measures:   |
| ➤ We will hold a Student Leaders Conference this year for the first time. This will bring together society leaders, sports team captains and part-time officers in one space to learn, share and work together | <p>✓ A conference (online or physical) taking place in Spring 2021</p> <p>✓ At least 75 students attend</p> <p>✓ We receive positive feedback from attendees that the event supported their development in role</p> |
| ➤ We will train our Course Representatives and give them opportunities for development   | <p>✓ We will see an increase of uptake of the award winning Advocacy Module by our Course Reps</p> <p>✓ 100% of our Course Reps will have attended training for their role</p>                                      |
| ➤ We will deliver our Students' Union Award evening (digital or physical) to celebrate the brilliant work of our staff and students  | <p>✓ We will receive at least 350 nominations</p> <p>✓ We will introduce new awards to recognise the particular work that has gone into this challenging year for staff and students</p>                            |
| ➤ We will offer more training than ever before to our sports and society leaders   | <p>✓ Each sports team (and societies with the need) will have a qualified first aider on membership.</p>  |

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|  | ✓ We will explore how we can support unpaid coaching staff to advance their skillset  |
| ➤ We will embed the practise of coaching our members to be able to articulate what skills and experience they have gained from their time with the SU. This involvement may include being an elected rep, a society or sports team leader, a student staff member, advocating for themselves with the help of our Advice Team and much more. | ✓ In our end of year survey at least 20% of our student members will believe that their involvement with the Students' Union has helped their employability |

#### 4. Next Steps

Our absolute priority as an SU this year is to be there for our members. We will advocate for them in the right spaces and at the right times to ensure their student experience is as protected as possible. We have built this strategy as an SU team to be clear to our members that we are working hard, and more innovatively than ever before to protect their interests. This will no doubt be a challenging year but we are adamant that we can still provide advocacy, support and development opportunities for our members.

We will begin developing our next strategy in Spring 2021 to take us to 2025 with a clear vision and purpose. This year in particular we are listening more intently than ever to our membership, and this feedback will form the heart of our next plan. Please get in touch with your SU if you have ideas for our future direction, we're listening.