



# Our Strategic Plan

## 2025-2030

Forged in the city, forging the city.

# Our Values

## **We are Ambitious**

We believe we can become one of the best students' unions in the country, and we strive to be the best we can be to get there. We show pride in the Guild of Students, who we are, and what we do.

## **We are Inclusive**

We are a student-led community with diverse experiences where everyone plays their part as a team – staff, officers and students – together. We will champion engagement with the Guild from the full breadth of the UCB community and will be purposeful as we remove barriers to participation. When our views differ, we will find constructive ways to move forward together.

## **We are Dynamic**

We really believe in this brilliant community and the power it has, and we show that in all we do. We bring energy and creativity to the table, whether in representing students' needs or creating participation opportunities. We know that UCB, the education sector, and issues for our students will all change over time, and we will be ready to adapt accordingly.

## **We are Kind & Caring**

We show genuine care for each other and ourselves. We make time and space to support and hear one-another when it's needed. And, we will be brave in challenging one-another when we have the potential to aim higher. If we make mistakes along the way, we give ourselves the grace to grow and learn from it together.

## **We are Dependable**

We recognize the Guild's capacity to not only improve students' education, but to enrich their lives. We will be intentional in the promises that we make so that we know we will deliver them. It won't always be easy, but we commit to putting in the work for the sake of our community.

# Introduction

Since attaining independent charitable status in 2018, University College Birmingham Guild of Students has grown significantly in scale, as well as our ambition to enrich members lives and support UCB's own social mission. We face two key challenges as we look to the future: further raising the profile of the Guild, particularly within the College community, and; developing a resilient, appropriately-resourced operational model that all members can benefit from. This Strategy sets out our plan to face these challenges through a virtuous cycle of:

- offering our best value for members;
- engaging students to further develop our work, and, ultimately;
- equipping students with the tools they need to navigate change.

The Guild's greatest asset is our student body, because our diverse members bring lived experiences and skills unlike any other provider. This Strategy has been developed to offer students support during times of challenge, opportunities to grow as individuals, and the right chances to apply their experiences to help us realise our vision of a students' union for all at UCB.

## Building the Strategy

This document was developed and shaped by the Guild's Board of Trustees, including elected Officers, external Trustees, and senior Guild staff. It was approved in 2025, alongside other operational changes to help us realise the Strategy. Throughout its life, scorecard performance against our strategic aims will be publicly available, whilst the Executive Committee – in liaison with Guild staff – oversee progress against shorter annual plans.

This Strategy is based on research led by the Guild using various methods, including:

- Reviewing existing survey data and student feedback
- Focus groups with targeted segments of the UCB student body
- Reviews of sector best practice and emerging policy issues
- Consultation with senior UCB stakeholders



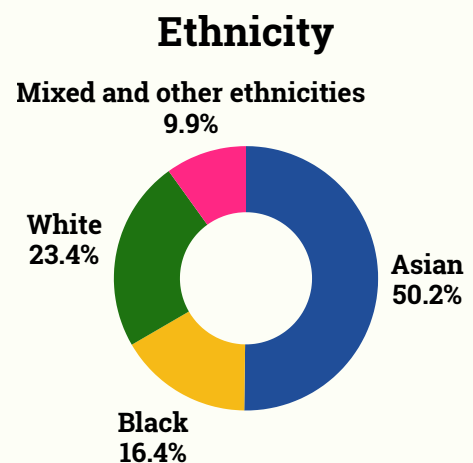
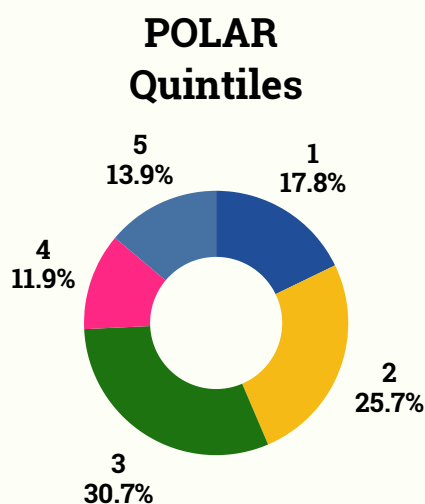
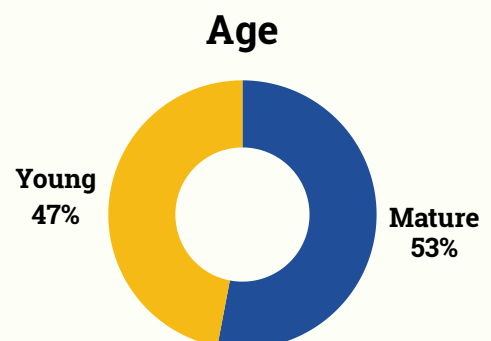
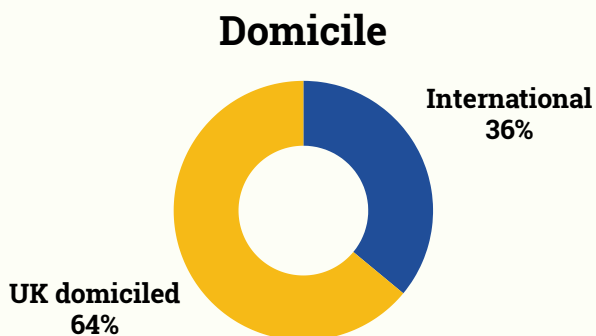
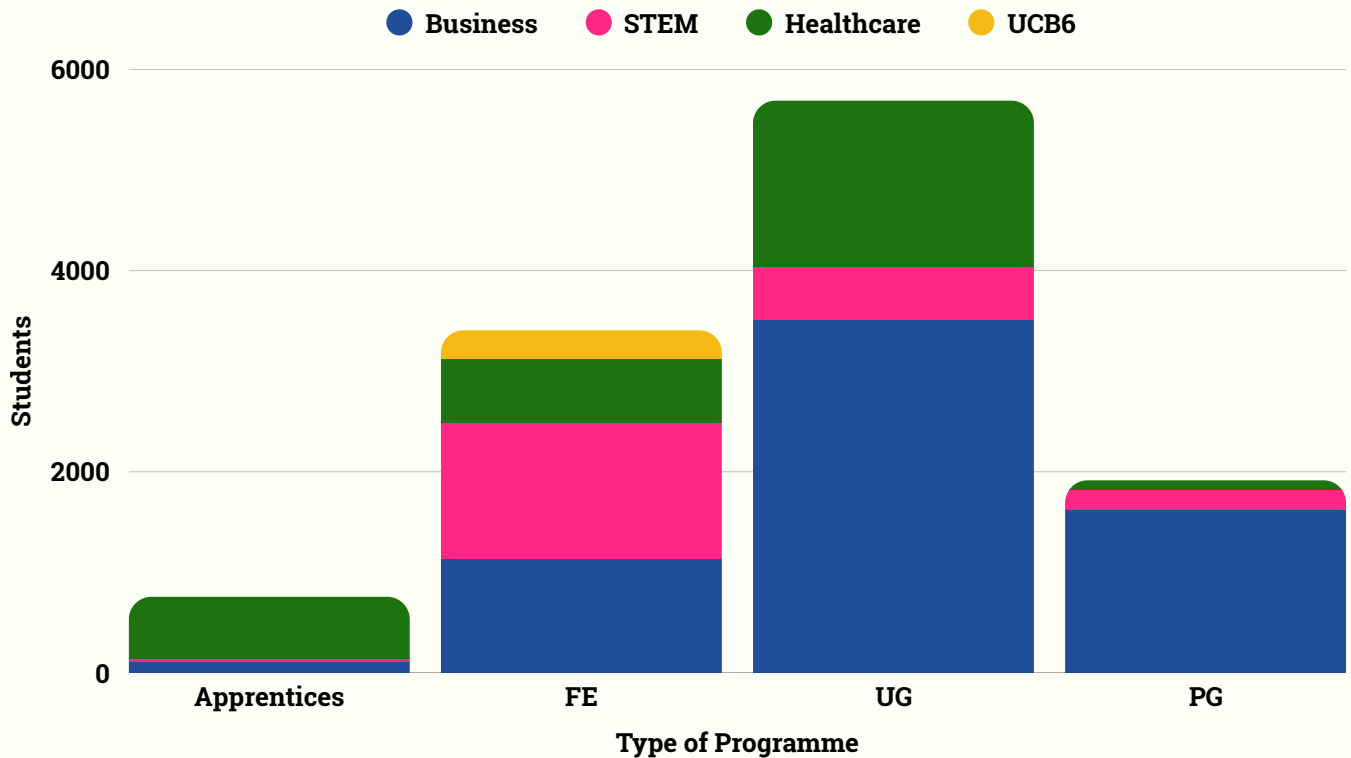


# Our Members





We take pride in the diversity of our student body at UCB, with over 10,700 members studying apprenticeships, college courses, and university degrees.



# Member Feedback



Since 2024, we have used our 'UCB Life' pulse survey to take the temperature of student opinion and evaluate our work, accompanied by targeted insight-gathering on key issues and national surveys like NSS or WhatUni.

## National Performance

76.9% of students are satisfied with the Guild's academic representation (NSS 2025). In the UK, this positions us roughly average, but below several other small SUs.

NSS data shows particular opportunities at UCB around:

- Communications
- Student Voice
- Learning and practical applications

## UCB-Specific Insight

UCB has been recognised over several years for its student support and postgraduate programmes in WhatUni. But, entering employment is an area of greater concern.

Our data shows that our students are also especially affected by:

- Cost of living
- Time poverty
- Limited family experience of navigating university
- Local cultural issues

## Pulse Data

From surveying students each term month, we know that December and May are times of lower satisfaction, which we will address as we plan future campaigns. Our survey also reveals several priorities for the Guild, including:

- Communicating officers' activities and successes effectively
- Ensuring that students have opportunities to meaningfully influence the Guild
- Offering broad activities, especially for less-satisfied UK & White students

Our data shows consistently lower satisfaction with the Guild from FE students and amongst students aged 30 or older. Overall satisfaction with UCB shares these trends, and so our Strategy particularly considers issues of inclusion and student influence.

# Our Strengths & Weaknesses

## Strengths

We are a dynamic and digitally-confident organisation that can move quickly. We are a close team of diverse individuals with broad skills and we can demonstrate strong engagement, especially for our level of funding.

The Guild is recognised by NUS as a Quality Students' Union. We have been 2<sup>nd</sup> in the region in NSS for multiple years, and played an important role in UCB's recognition in WhatUni.

## Opportunities

UCB offers diverse courses; we can be sector-leading in cross-level engagement and skills-building. Student involvement in events and campaigns—especially around sustainability and cost of living—continues to grow.

We can develop & diversify insight gathering, and collaborate regionally to strengthen student voice in UCB decisions. Expanding digital and commercial activity, including AI, supports student rights, reputation, and our inclusive, dynamic approach.

## Threats

Student-led accountability is low, while cost of living pressures and haste in decision-making risk undermining trust. If data isn't visibly used, it risks being dismissed. Shifting national policy and declining satisfaction also threaten stakeholder confidence.

Elections can result in officers who don't share Guild values, and our historic reputation can limit progress. Meanwhile, overlap with UCB services, limited space, and funding constraints challenge delivery.

## Weaknesses

Students have limited time to take up leadership, and engagement beyond our building (e.g. White UK students) is limited. We recognise a particular need to develop our FE approach and social activities.

Staffing and funding pressures affect dependability. We lack advisor staff, and our premises is at-capacity. Guild-generated income remains underdeveloped, limiting potential further investment in services and our ability to respond to student needs in a way we might like.

# **Our 5-Year Vision**



**We will be recognised as a model of an efficient and effective values-led SU that is driven collaboratively with the full diversity of our membership.**

Across this Strategy, our overarching theory of change is that by embedding access and inclusion across the Guild's services, the volume of students benefitting from engagement with the Guild will increase. Our objectives are, therefore:

- **To offer value to members so that we ensure services are sustainable, well-used, and impactful;**
- **To create an organisation that's driven by students so that the Guild's operational development is democratised and further opportunities are offered to students, and;**
- **To equip students with the tools for change so that they can build confidence or literacy in making change and can rise to future challenges.**

## **Our Engagement Model**

Throughout this Strategy period, the Guild will align its resources to three main forms of engagement:

- **Got your back** - supporting students' access and ability to participate fully in what UCB can offer
- **Find your people** - offering students' opportunities to meet one-another, try new things, and build supportive communities of peers
- **Shape your life** - fostering leadership and experience that adds value to students' education and life beyond

Different students have different needs. Some may begin engaging with the Guild's got your back services, move to find your people, and progress further to shape your life. Equally, if the Guild is successful in its mission, students who enter our engagement model through shape your life work should also stand to benefit from got your back initiatives if problems emerge. Through the life of this Strategy, we will create opportunities for students to enter and navigate our model in the ways that make sense for them.

# Our Strategy & Goals

VALUE FOR MEMBERS • DRIVEN  
BY STUDENTS • TOOLS FOR  
CHANGE • VALUE FOR MEMBERS  
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# Value for ~~Money~~ Members

**By aligning our work with members' needs and our current context, we will deliver sustainable, well-used, impactful, and evidence-based services.**

The Guild is smaller than many other Students' Unions in the West Midlands but has come far: we are a Quality Students' Union (accredited 2024) that is second in the West Midlands for NSS satisfaction (2023, 2024). On the way, we've purposefully set the conditions to make the best of our resources, and we will continue to refine our processes and approaches to offer the best value for our members at UCB alongside the pursuit of managed growth.

We are a 100%-membership organisation, and whilst we'll work closely with UCB to collaboratively develop the student experience, our membership structure is the Guild's key point of difference. Throughout the life of this Strategy, the active involvement of our members will ensure that our work continues to be truly student-centred and student-led. We will help students to understand their rights, and support them in seeking accountability.

## Physical Space

One of the key challenges for students is access to the right mix of space. We will work with UCB to develop a detailed vision for a Guild of Students premises, to provide students with another place to meet, work, participate in events, and access support.

**Our 2030 goal: working with UCB, the Guild of Students will operate new social and administrative spaces**

## Building the Union

Like many students' unions, we rely on our partner University for the majority funding, but in an uncertain time for the education sector, our growth will increasingly depend on our ability to generate further income from other sources. During the life of this Strategy, we will take a holistic approach that builds ethics and sustainability into our commercial model whilst seeking opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration with the wider SU sector.

**Our 2030 goal: 25% of annual gross income to be Guild-generated**

**2025: 12.6%**

## Advice and Student Rights

We commit to supporting students when something needs putting right. During our Strategy period, we will introduce an advice service to offer targeted casework support in areas such as complaints, appeals, and addressing allegations of misconduct. Our new service will also work across the student body to ensure that students know their rights and can tackle issues with confidence.

**Our 2030 goal: We will operate an accredited Advice service that supports 50% of students who enter complaints, appeals, or misconduct processes**

**2025: Proportional data not available**

## A Seamless Student Journey

So that students at UCB can truly meet their potential, we want to ensure that they can focus on the academic and vocational/skills based challenge of their studies. We will introduce new as well as improved ways to support students during their time here, focussing on their success at every stage in their journey.

**Our 2030 goal: Every member will be eligible for Guild-led transition, retention, success, and progression activities with minimum 25% engaging in each**

**2025: No data available**

## Driven By Students

**By engaging students in the Guild's growth and running, we will democratise the Guild's development and student oversight whilst offering more opportunities to members.**

Every year, thousands of students vote for elected Officers to represent their needs and create the changes they want to see. Officers set the Guild's annual plan and represent and advocate for members across UCB's structures, even on the Board of Governors, the Corporation. For elected Officers to be successful in this, and for the Guild to be effective, students must be central to shaping what we do.

As a leader in skills education, UCB's students are uniquely equipped to participate in the Guild's organisational development. As a Guild, we will offer more opportunities for students to put these skills into practice and apply their experiences to their own professional development.



## Student-Driven Decisions

From 2025, we will introduce an updated structure for student-driven decision-making within the Guild:

- The updated Executive Committee of all officers will regularly oversee the latest data and ensure that action is taking place to deliver our Annual Plan
- Student Assemblies will offer a forum for students to address key topics and recommend what the Guild should do to tackle them
- Student Council will take on a new membership and powers, with a focus on directing the Guild's political work and monitoring Officers' success

In conjunction, we will introduce new ways for students to influence our work and review our Officer structure to ensure that it continues to meet students' needs

**Our 2030 goal: 10% students per year actively contribute to influencing the Guild's priorities (excluding elections), 1/3 of students vote in Guild elections**

**2025: Priorities data not recorded;  
20.4% students vote in Guild  
elections**

## Student-Driven Services

To ensure that we offer the right services to students, we will offer more ways for students to create and deliver opportunities for support and growth. Students will co-create key aspects of our operational plan, with particular emphasis on FE and apprentice students.

**Our 2030 goal: Peer-led schemes and student-run activities/events engage 15% of students annually**

**2025: no data  
available**

## Student-Driven Workplace Opportunities

We know that accessing appropriate paid work is a challenge for students. Over the lifetime of this Strategy, we will offer more opportunities for students within our staffing structure, including high-responsibility positions such as finance.

**Our 2030 goal: we will grow the proportion of our payroll paid to officers or student staff to 40% whilst increasing overall salaries paid to £500,000.**

**2025: student/Officer salaries 30%  
of £283,793 total**

# Tools For Change

**By equipping students with the right skills and resources, we will build their confidence and literacy in navigating change, allowing them to rise to future challenges**

Since its foundation, the Guild has cemented its position as a principal source of insight on the issues that matter to students. With over 400 Course Reps in 2025, the diversity of our student leadership is a key strength for a students' union of our size.

As we look to the years ahead, we want to put this data to work so that student leaders are better equipped to create change, students have the tools to hold their elected Officers to account, and we evidence our data-led advocacy.

## National and Regional Challenges

During our Quality Students' Unions assessment, the National Union of Students praised the extent of our participation in national conversations. Our next step is to further engage students in shaping the city, region, and nation.

**Our 2030 goal: 20% students participate in external democracy as a result of participation in Guild initiatives between 2025–2030.**

**2025: No data**

## Developing our Data

Before compiling this strategy, we introduced our 'UCB Life' pulse survey to ensure we get feedback throughout the year in a way that's easy and student-centred. Across this Strategy period, we will further refine our data collection to ensure students can share their views easily, to record their feedback effectively, and to make this information accessible to student leaders.

**Our 2030 goal: a majority of students share their views with the Guild annually**

**2025: 14% recorded (data incomplete)**

# Leadership and Student Growth

Student leadership is core to offering an enriching student experience to all students at UCB. As we develop our services, we will champion access to these opportunities and improve the support that we provide to leaders, especially through improved sharing of our data.

## **Our 2030 goals:**

- **100% cohorts have a recognised Course Representative**  
2025: 36.9%
- **100 club or society leaders work with the Guild annually**  
2025: 40
- **FE sign-ups to student groups increases to match the proportion of FE members**  
2025: No data



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TOOLS FOR CHANGE