



Annual Review

2025–2026

Our Highlights

This year has been our biggest and best. 8 years since the Guild registered with the Charity Commission, we achieved:

- **3.2 times** last year's level of FE engagement
- Increases across **all** Guild pulse survey measures
- **Record-breaking** student interactions



When asked how well the Guild represents students' academic interests in the 2026 National Student Survey, we scored **85%**! That makes us a **top-10 students' union** amongst the universities recognised in Times Higher Education reporting.

It's a team effort, and in our new Strategy, we promise to be driven by students. This year, we worked together to organise our **first Grad Ball**, introduce the first **five societies open to under-18s**, and welcome over **2,800 students** across 3 Welcome Fests. Our 'Represent the Future' conference for the 2026 cohort of **556 Course Reps** launched a pilot of **new Lead Rep opportunities**, whilst we delivered direct support to students through new cost-of-living initiatives and **741 advice queries**. Plus, we began rolling out our sector-leading access and participation partnership with UCB, in which we commit to leading **15 interventions** to directly support student success.



In this report, we're proud to share the highlights from a brilliant year, and we want to thank everyone involved, including the officer team, staff, student leaders, our colleagues at UCB, and most of all our student community. It's been our pleasure to work with you all!

Dear UCB,

Your support helped us reach

0 9 5 2 6

10 637

2 1 7 4 8

students this year

Thank you!



Got Your Back

This year, the Guild introduced further ways of addressing barriers to student success at UCB through our campaigning and direct support.

We saved students

£12,720

in free transport

Cost of Living

We know that the cost of essentials, access to work, and time poverty are the three things having the greatest impact on our students. From the start of the year, the Officer team set out to address this.

In September, we secured free 4-week bus passes for **240** students, saving **£12,720** in total, as well as a community pantry and food care packs from the Guild that were extended with the introduction of a weekly discounted **food market** in the Spring. In February, we supported Dudley SU to host a **transport affordability Campaign Day** at Dudley Council Chambers, with MPs and local representatives attending to better understand the realities of students' fares.

This year, we also launched our new jobs board to show personalised part-time job adverts in Birmingham, and our companion Engagement Record page that validates students' engagement with individual development. Our jobs tools were used **1,519 times!**

UCB also launched its Cost of Living Allowance. We're grateful to have received feedback from **245 students** to shape COLA's development.

Item Funds

For the second time, we opened Gender Expression and Disability Item Funds, introduced previously by Liberation Representatives to help students manage a disability, general wellbeing, or their gender expression. Both funds were used in full for **46 supporting items** that were collected in plain packaging.

We invested

£600

to support disabled and gender non-conforming students

Academic Advice

In our 2030 Strategy, we committed to introducing a professional advisory service to help students understand their rights, seek help with complex processes, and support UCB develop its policies. We trained our staff to handle **741** points of contact from students and more than **90** supporting meetings. We continue to seek support to hire dedicated advice staff to increase our accessibility and impact.



Soham Chougale
Education Officer

Campaigning for Students

As the elected Education Officer, Soham led the team in engaging with Parliament and consultations on wide-ranging issues affecting us at UCB, including student fees & funding, and technical education.

- ✓ *Coordinated NUS' response to post-16 education consultation*
- ✓ *Responded to consultations on TEF, EHRC, and DSA*
- ✓ *Campaigned in Parliament on UK student loan terms*
- ✓ *Organised international student rights event in Coventry*
- ✓ *Lobbied against levies on student fees*

To engage students in creating the changes they want to see, our Local Election voter drive reached over **2,200** students with UCB's support, with **402** students registering to vote for the first time. Candidates from Ladywood, Aston and Newtown attended a live-broadcast hustings before the vote.

“ My first year as Education Officer has been a rollercoaster! We've done everything from dressing as sharks hitting the streets and meeting with Parliamentarians for fair finance. I'm proud of our work to represent students' academic interests whilst creating new positions at the Guild, like Lead Reps and FE Comms Placements. ”

Soham Chougale

July
new officers start
their term



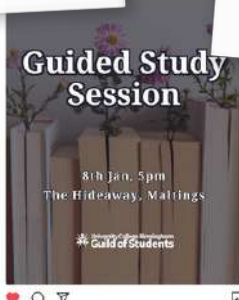
August
approval of new
strategy & values



September
biggest welcome events
ever: 1,454 FE & 950 HE
Welcome Fest guests



January
de-stress exam
wellbeing campaign
launches



February
officers campaign on
student loans & transport
cost; Guild's 8th birthday!



March
556 Reps invited to our
Conference - WONKHE.
NUS, and NEU all present



October

Maltings give it a go activities begin



November

officers campaign in Parliament & Coventry on international fees



December

by Christmas, we reached 8,058 students!



College Birmingham of Students

A Top 10 Students' Union.

April

after 1,825 voted in Guild elections, 402 also register locally



May

volunteers run new Thursday food markets; biggest Pride yet



June

32 student societies enter for Guild Awards; our first student-organised Grad Ball



Find Your People

Student-led clubs and societies have always been core to our work by helping students build supportive communities. We're proud this year to have worked in partnership with UCB to launch a new safeguarding framework allowing under-18 year old students from college and Sixth Form courses to fully participate, and to have supported our first **5 societies open to under-18s**:

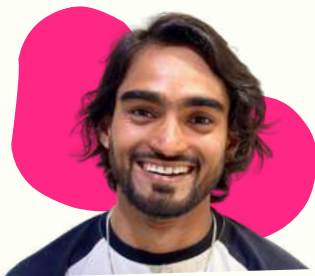
- UCB Bangla Society
- First Love
- Pole Fitness
- Climate Justice
- FE Islamic Society

Active Societies

17 → **32**
Oct 2025 **May 2026**

Engagement grew **2.4 times** since 24-25, with **611** registered club and society members.

Showcase Events



Saroj Kamtee

Societies and Activities Officer

Full-time Societies & Activities Officer Saroj committed this year to more student-led activity at the Maltings. He introduced tournaments for pool, volleyball, indoor cricket, and more. For students feeling crafty, Saroj and his team ran pumpkin carving, Christmas wreath-making, as well as pizza & board game nights and a hot chocolate station!

In our Student Awards, Saroj presented awards for the best society event - **Globetrotter's Travel Society trip to Amsterdam** - and the best collaborative event - the Hindu Culture and South Asian Societies' **Rama Navami Festival**. Congratulations to these societies and the other shortlisted groups:

- Nepalese Society for Nepali New Year
- Islamic Society for their Iftar
- Bangla Society for UTSHOP26
- Punjabi, South Asian, and Hindu Culture societies for their Diwali celebrations

Championing Inclusion

The brilliant diversity of our students makes our UCB community truly unique. This year, the Equalities & Wellbeing Officer Kunal pledged to celebrate culture and diversity through a range of programmes, which included: **Black History Month, Pride, faith-based events**, and more.

We're also thrilled that UCB is improving its facilities for prayer and reflection having consistently shared this important aspect of many students' lives.



Kunal Chavan

Equalities and Wellbeing
Officer

This year, we updated Officer roles to include **Equalities and Wellbeing**. As part of the team's work, additional activities were added to tackle exam stress and encourage students to develop their support networks. Our creative wellbeing programme took place on campus and at the Maltings, with opportunities to connect through friendship bracelets, scrapbooking, and other crafts.

A Big Introduction

Transitioning into and through college or university can be tough, so we ran our biggest range of welcome and homecoming activities yet for the September intake. By working with local venues and promoters, our freshers wristbands gave students access to **12 nights out**, and we invited all new students to join a mix of ticketed or open-access activities to get to know Birmingham. **1,454 FE students and 950 HE students** attended Autumn Welcome Fests, and we ran a new Funfair to give returning students a warm welcome back.

In the 4 weeks after Autumn
and Spring intakes:

91% Agree

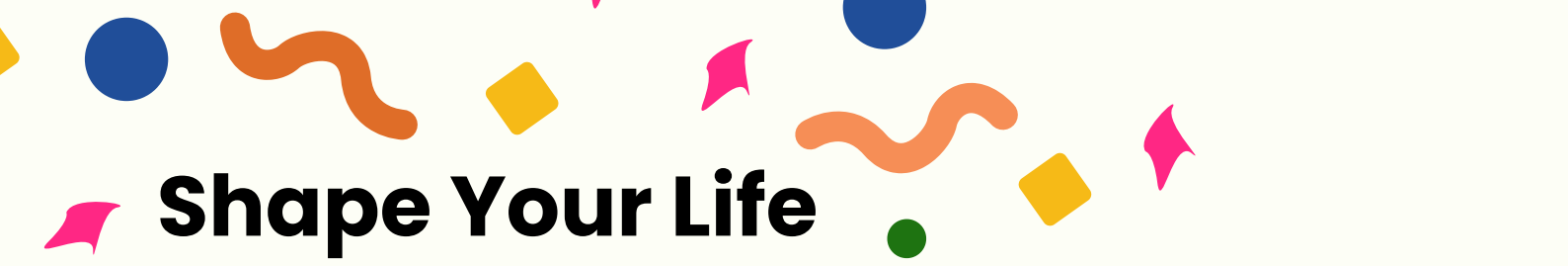
"I am satisfied with
opportunities to meet new
people"

1,390

Registrations for Guild events

2,051

Found their people
(excluding fairs)



Shape Your Life

As a Guild, we work to ensure that students can get lifelong and life-changing experiences from their education at UCB, where our members have a proud history of stepping into leadership. In March, Amira Campbell, President of the National Union of Students, visited us to share how **“Student leadership will change your life”**.

Course Reps and Lead Reps

556 students volunteered as Course Reps this year, a partnership with UCB in which we recruit, train, and support Reps. More than half our Course Reps are studying a college or Sixth Form programme, making this one of the most significant leadership opportunities we offer to FE students.

In our Strategy, we set out to have a Course Rep for everyone. This year, **10,522 students had at least one Rep** on their course.

At our Course Rep Conference, we launched Lead Reps, a paid pilot scheme for School-based reps to help us in developing student voice further at UCB. We'll roll out this opportunity across all FE and HE areas next year, whilst also developing new training for students supporting course validations.

Course Reps cover

83%

of the student body

Student Employability

Our new access and participation initiatives offer more ways to help students develop and articulate their employability. In 2025-26, our infrastructure recorded **3,426** Skills for Success registrations, and **224** students used our data to validate their Guild involvement. We also introduced two paid FE communications placement roles that will continue next year.

In our pulse survey, 84% of students agree: “Being involved in the Guild helps employability and development.”

Society Leadership

With more societies this year, we're delighted to have been working with **67** students elected by their peers to manage the development and running of a sports club or society. As part of their roles, these students will be actively developing communication and teamwork, plus hands-on knowledge of event planning and finance management. Next year, we're excited at the scale of opportunities to increase FE involvement in society leadership, and through working with academic departments to help students and societies to develop extra practical experience.

"I got to organise trips for myself and other fellow students that were essential to get real life industry experience and not be limited to lectures. The Guild has also been helpful throughout the year and was very supportive."
Bakery Society President

Elected Guild Officers

Elected Officers are central to our work as a Guild through political leadership that they provide part-time alongside their studies, or during a year out. This year, 3 full-time and 6 part-time roles were on offer in our elections; **42** students put themselves forward to compete for the roles, and 19 completed the mandatory training to be on the ballot. Through the process, candidates learn to run a campaign, engage face-to-face, and develop a political platform.



It's been a wonderful opportunity to work with the elected Officer team this record-breaking year, and the student body whom they serve.

To our next Officers and all our future members: we can't wait to get started working with you too!

