



STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2023/24

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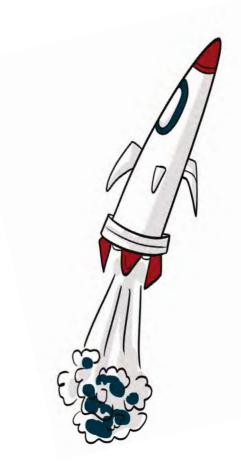
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OUR MISSION & FUNCTION

To be an **effective mechanism** of **Student Voice**, to **enhance student experience**, **empower student activity** and to ensure that students are **afforded the best possible educational & welfare services** at Marjon.



OUR VISION & VALUES

To build an **independent, secure** and **strong student union** that is **sustainable and effective**. To ensure **every Marjon student feels they have a voice** through Marjon Student Union and a **support structure** that ...

- is Approachable, Accessible, Visible & Welcoming
- is Representative, Inclusive & Supportive
- is Democratic, Transparent & Accountable
- Values each and every individual student and builds strong communities





"MSU prides itself on its engagement with students and representing the student voice to the University."

Introduction

Our strategic plan will ensure that the SU is working towards a clear student mandate and gives the sabbatical officers a clear vision on what the students expect from them as their representatives.

This strategic plan has left no stone unturned and has taken over a year of research and discussion to complete. We believe that this is one of the most comprehensive bits of research into student life at Marjon that has been undertaken by either the SU or the university and we are hugely thankful to Dr Sanjee Perera-Child who led the research and guided us throughout the process of this strategic plan.

This is the Unions first significant strategic plan and this will give a clear structure to how it should be operating for the next three years. Not only will it benefit all of our students, but it will also be of a huge benefit to the sabbatical officers who will have a clear vision they need to follow and certain goals and targets they will need to strive to achieve.

MSU prides itself on its engagement with students and representing the student voice to the University. Despite being one of the smallest unions in the country, both in size and resources, MSU manages to maintain a high level of student satisfaction. and this was shown in the recent NSS score where MSU scored above the national and regional average, putting it in the top half of the league table. If this was a result we were able to achieve before we had a clear strategic plan and student mandate, then it can only go from strength to strength with the implementation of this strategy.

> Elias McGill MSU President 2016-18

Foreword From The Chair

Dr. Sanjee Perera-Child

Chair of Turn Around Board & Acting Chair of the MSU Trustee Board On behalf of the Marjon Student Union Board of Trustees

The last three years have been a time of significant upheaval for Marjon Student Union as we began a new journey, rediscovering the Mission & Values that Marjon students aspired for us, and redefining our strategic direction and operational apparatus. In 2015/16, the then sabbatical team recognised a need for organisational clarity and operational focus. This led them to consult and initiate a diagnostic process with the 'National Union of Students' (NUS) and as a part of this process in early 2016, a 'Turn Around Board' (TAB) was installed to carry out the ten recommendations outlined by NUS. The development of a student mandated Mission, Vision & Values and a coherent Strategic Plan was a part of these recommendations. Having accepted the invitation to chair this 'Turn Around Board' and oversee this transformative journey, I am thrilled to be able to finally present this inaugural Strategic Plan to you.

How we developed this strategic plan...

I am incredibly proud of the rigour of methodology we committed to this three tier process, so that this vision was not swayed by the whims or agendas of one sabbatical, administrative or governance team. I believe the real strength in this strategic plan comes from the heart of its student mandate which has captured the voice of Marjon students of this era. To achieve this goal, a substantial amount of time. effort and resources were utilised in an effort. (a) to develop an understanding of the significant primary needs of Marjon students which are directly linked to student satisfaction, retention, progression and attainment, (b) to capture a broader model of student voice which might enrich and empower the organisation to succeed and better understand how to cater to student needs, and,

(c) to better understand how to

facilitate collaborative community building, to develop student aptitude and leadership, and enhance student experience.

The research was conducted in two phases; the first qualitative pilot phase was completed in December 2016. This engaged students in about an hour's interview, from a spectrum of degree pathways, spanning across the finer nuances of demographic profiles to ensure that the views of our entire body politic was captured. Based on the recurring themes and issues, the quantitative research phase was designed and launched by Easter 2017, and the findings from both studies created the necessary basis for the first draft of this strategic plan. The refining process also consulted multiple stakeholders and was enriched by the experienced voices of core staff. sabbatical officers & executive council, collaborative institutional staff, former sabbatical officers and of course the institution's senior management. But the significant core of the strategic direction is true to the body politic, and we are justly proud of this clear and coherent student. mandate. We believe this vision captures the character of our student body and accurately responds to its unique requirements.

Strategic commitment and operational change...

As the custodians of this organisational vision, the initiative for operational transformation,



transparency and accountability rests with the triad infrastructure of sabbatical officers & executive council, core staff apparatus and the MSU trustee board. They are committed to ensuring this strategic plan is now transposed across the organisation, encompassing all its operations in coherent change. As a document developed in consultation with all stakeholders, beneficiaries and representatives involved, we Shope that the commitment to its operational efficacy, transparency and reflexivity will be supported and held to account by all, in equal measure. Furthermore, we hope the Trustees Reports in the coming years will bear forth the developmental progress of this vision in measurable benchmarks. and the collaborative voice and clarity of this endeavour, will bear fruit in its impact.

STRATEGIC ENABLERS

The success and long term sustainability of Marjon Student Union is supported by six key strategic enablers which supports and actions our strategic objectives. Therefore it is essential we begin by acknowledging these founding resources in people, insight, governance, infrastructure and partnerships with stakeholder organisations.

People - who we are

Developing successful and inspired sabbaticals, employees, student representatives and volunteers is fundamental to achieving our vision.

We aim to ensure that our staff, volunteers & other contributing stakeholders...

are confident that our organisation is an excellent employer, and have a strong sense of ownership and organisational identity in MSU.



feel supported, equipped and recognised in their work towards achieving our strategic objectives.

are outstanding at leading and managing transformative projects and inspire a sense of fun and wellbeing in their sphere of impact.



SUCCESSFUL INSPIRED SABBATICALS EMPLOYEES STUDENTS REPRESENTATIVES VOLUNTEERS

Insight - what we know

To understand the aspirations and motivations of our members, and create an organisation which meets the needs of our students, we will embed research into our culture. We will become competent in developing and collaborating data and feedback into insight and action, to ensure democratic strategy that reflect the finer nuances of our student body. We will also record experiential knowledge to reflect MSU's organisational memory to maintain and benefit from the organisation's long and stable history and its successful strategic survival.

Governance how we are run

For Marjon Student Union to succeed and be sustainable, we must develop coherent and competent governance and maintain transparent and accountable management

Infrastructure what we work with

As a small student union it is important that we acknowledge the challenges we face in resources and infrastructure and ensure that we are consistent and clear about what we need to function and how we source these various physical, human and process infrastructure that is necessary to enable our delivery.



EMBED RESEARCH INTO OUR CULTURE



COHERENT & COMPETENT

> ENSURE THAT WE ARE CONSISTENT AND CLEAR

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Partnerships who we work with

The University; our strategic symbiosis with the university and our common aims and shared processes are a key part of our strategic delivery. We aim to be a critical ally and hold the university to account in the interest of student welfare and in representing student voice. We also aim to maintain our close relationship with the university, collaborating whenever possible in shared goals and managing a mutually beneficial coherence and clear expectations in our strategic delivery. We acknowledge that our survival and success is necessarily tied to our parent organisation and support its strategic objectives and operational processes for mutual benefit.

Other stakeholders; we also hope to maintain strong relationships with the National Union of students, peer student unions and other unions and organisations for mutual benefit and in shared strategic vision.

STRATEGIC Vision

MSU WORKS TOWARDS VARIFYING

Recognition - awards and accreditation

It is vital that MSU works towards varying levels of accreditation which will help boost its reputation. MSU will endeavour to work towards the Quality Students' Union (QSU) accreditation, as well as other relevant awards i.e. NUS Green Impact.

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"We aim to be a critical ally and hold the university to account in the interest of student welfare and in representing student voice."

STUDENT REPRESENTATION

To represent, engage and support students in academic, social, personal and recreational activities. To empower

students so that they feel like they are making a difference and ensure that they are heard. To enhance student experience and to deliver recreational and social events that caters to student needs and requirements.

How we will deliver representation, empowerment & engagement.



EMPOWER

STUDENT

The Student Union Executive is a

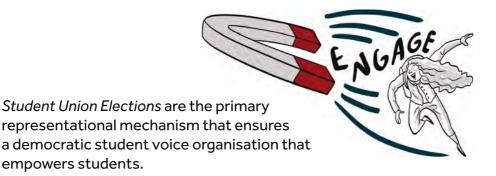
constitutional, representative body that reflects Marjon's diverse student body, its populist activities and specialist interest groups in a democratic, transparent and accountable format.

Our students said...

That they would like to see more transparency, visibility, accountability and productivity from *the Student Union Executive*.

We respond by committing to...

Communicate SU Exec portfolios, accessibility and delivery better. To empower, train and support *the Student Union Executive* to better perform their duties, with clear and measurable performance outcomes.



Our students said...

That they would like to see better diversity and a wider variety of candidates running for elections. They also said that they would like better transparency, accessibility and support in the electoral process.

We respond by committing to...

Communicate electoral process better through multiple mediums. Publicise shadowing processes for those considering candidacy. Run workshops that demythologise sabbatical and executive portfolios. Run long term succession planning and election preparation.

The Student Engagement Committee (SEC) is a collaborative student engagement forum pioneered by the student union to provide yet another medium for students to voice their comments, queries and concerns to the university.

Our students said...

They were satisfied with SEC, but sometimes saw it as an alternative to the Student Union.

We respond by committing to...

Signposting the collaborative nature of SEC and ensuring it continues to be an accessible and empowering student engagement and voice mechanism of the student union.

How we will deliver 'support'

The Student Union has an open door policy for ¹ student queries and the sabbaticals and staff is contactable through a variety of mediums. The



academic & welfare support and advocacy intervention that the students union performs, is a key service that sabbaticals and volunteers deliver in its daily operation.

Our students said...

An overwhelming majority of students said that MSU was approachable, accessible and supportive and confident that if they required support they would receive it.

We respond by committing to...

Committing to maintaining the high standard of approachability and accessibility currently in practice.

Rethink lay out and location of the office, and initiating methods of making the office less intimidating and approachable to students who are less familiar with sabbaticals and the office.

The Student Union also runs specialist engagement & support events such as '*listening posts*', '*MSU on tour*', '*sabbatical walkabouts*' and other forums to ensure we listen to our students and understand their needs and views.

Our students said...

That the *'listening posts', 'MSU on tour'* and *'sabbatical walk-abouts'* were the key stone of MSU accessibility and approachability.

We respond by committing to...

Committing to continue good practice affirmed by the student body in its current form or in a revised format.

Giving students the opportunity to voice their own opinions about the student experience directly to the Vice-Chancellor through SU organised informal discussions.

How we will deliver 'enhanced student experience'

We acknowledge that the core elements of student experience is delivered by the university and our keystone role is to mediate student voice and feedback on student experience issues by being a critical ally to the university and supporting high standards of delivery in student experience. Therefore holding the university to account when they fail to deliver excellent standards of student experience is a core responsibility that we will consider a key obligation. To this end we will represent the students on various boards and committees.

Our students said...

That they would like us to take a more assertive stand on student voice matters and represent the finer nuances of student opinions to senior management.

We respond by committing to...

Represent student voice in the above mentioned bodies, and to continue to keep listening to our students and explore more sophisticated ways of delivering this.

We acknowledge that our students' learning and teaching experience is a core element of student experience and the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided by the faculty makes a keystone impact on their lives. Therefore acknowledging, valuing, encouraging and setting high benchmarks and expectations in learning and teaching practice is one of our core responsibilities which is operationalized by the 'Student Led Teaching Awards' among other measures.

We respond by committing to...

Continuing to maintain strong relationships with the faculty and their representative unions, collaborating when possible on shared goals and values.

Fresher's entertainment events in *Freshers week* and thereafter sets the tone and the benchmark of student social life quality in their delivery of entertainment and recreational events to student life.

Our students said...

That *Freshers week entertainment events* and the evening events that the student union ran were of an exceptional quality. Some students said that these events only catered to on campus, mainstream traditional students.

We respond by committing to...

Committing to maintain current standards of entertainment and recreational events. Committing to initiating an entertainment task force that will initiate inclusive and diverse events which caters to all facets of student life and appeal.

Committing to ensuring that MSU frequently organises a variety of regular social events/activities throughout the year



Other prominent Calendar entertainment events; namely Christmas ball, Refreshers, Varsity, May ball, Leavers dinner & Graduation after party

Our students said...

The calendar events that the student union ran were of an exceptional quality.

However some students, notably mature students found the scheduling and culture of some calendar events less conducive.

We respond by committing to...

Committing to maintain current standards of current calendar events. Engaging mature students and mature student officer in finding appropriate solutions. Continuing to establish successful ticket sales to 'Marquee' events

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Varsity & *RAG week* are significant calendar events in Marjon student life, and is an opportunity for community cohesion.

Our students said...

That *Varsity* was central to community building and *RAG week* was a key stone of community consciousness.

That winning varsity was important to Marjon community spirit.

That a wider spectrum of charities should be considered for RAG week.

We respond by committing to...

Maintaining and improving on community building aspects of *Varsity*, so that it includes all spheres of Marjon students.

Putting together a task force that will discuss and find ways of resourcing required competitive standards to give a better competitive edge in winning *Varsity* next year.



STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

To build a community of students who are inspired and committed to make a positive impact on the university, the local community and the wider landscape. To provide student centred services that will contribute to employability, developing skills and knowledge bases, to prepare students for life after Marjon,

IS PIRE

How we will deliver 'students who are inspired'

The Student Union aims to work in collaboration with the university to invite inspiring spokespersons who will speak about finding passion and purpose driven professions in various career pathways.

We respond by committing to...

Finding creative new ways of inspiring our students and exposing them to eclectic new opportunities, subject and professional experts and visionaries that will contribute to their aspirations and life goals. Collaborating with alumni to enhance the employability opportunities for students.

The Student Union aims to run 'campaigns to inspire' students in various spheres including but not limited to; environmental conservation & green living, Social consciousness & justice campaigns, wellbeing campaigns in creative and recreational spaces.

Our students said...

That they would like to see a wider variety of campaigns, pressure groups and recreational activities at Marjon.

We respond by committing to...

Continuing to encourage and support students in setting up and initiating campaigns, events and activities.

Marjon Sports Federation (MSF) is a partnership between the University and the Student Union that facilitates and oversees sports clubs and teams, both socially and competitively in BUCS. The MSF executive board has four student places on and therefore has significant student involvement.

We respond by committing to...

Ensuring that all sports clubs needs are catered for. MSU will ensure that the MSF is accountable for all decisions made and that the MSF exec board has a constant student presence. The MSF exec board will be a regular meeting and not one that is used on an ad hoc basis.

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MSU encourages and supports students to create, and join, clubs and societies, both sporting and non sporting.

We respond by committing to...

Providing more resources and office hours to the development of clubs and societies. The Entertainment officer role will take ownership as part of their remit for the role, which will give a designated contact point for all clubs and socs.

BUILD

COMMUNITY

TA

students

How we will deliver 'students who will make a positive impact'

MSU encourages and supports students to run campaigns they are passionate about and initiate recreational activities, within and beyond the university.

Our students said...

That they would like to see a wider variety of competitive sports teams, interest groups and clubs & societies at Marjon.

We respond by committing to...

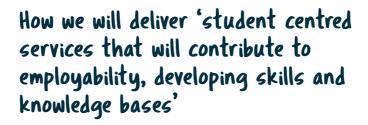
Continuing to encourage and support students in setting up competitive sports teams, clubs & socs and lead campaigns, events and activities.

The 'Inspiring student Awards' is a measure to recognise, value and encourage students who make a positive impact on their environment run collaboratively with the university.



We respond by committing to...

Continue to collaborate with the university in recognising outstanding student contributions to the university and wider landscape.



The Student Union runs and collaborates on various events which make available to students, access and contact with organisations, employers and other opportunities that will enhance employability, skill and knowledge bases (e.g. E fest, Employment, volunteering and skill related Freshers/ refreshers stalls)

We respond by committing to...

Running and collaborating on employability events e.g. Efest and working with the university employability coordinator.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

To ensure that the diversity of Marjon student union membership is recognised and reflected in its commitments, resource distribution, prioritisation and the finer nuances of representation. We commit to providing opportunity and equal access to all members of our body politic of all origins and orientations. We commit to pursuing our aims and objectives independent of any political party or religious group and to pursue equal opportunities by taking positive action within the law to facilitate participation of groups discriminated against by society.

How we will deliver 'diversity in representation'

The Student Union Executive diversity port-folio is an attempt to engage vulnerable communities and discriminated demographics, origins and orientations such as BAME, LGBTQI, international, mature & female students.

We respond by committing to...

The Student Union Executive will consult the membership and reconsider under represented and minority representative portfolios and review how the diversity portfolio represents under privileged and vulnerable communities, origins and orientations and how it facilitates participation of groups discriminated against by society.



"We commit to providing opportunity and equal access to all members of our body politic of all origins and orientations."

How we will deliver opportunity and equal access

The Student Union constitution commits the organisation and all its employees and volunteers to ensure that all objectives delivered by the SU follow non prejudicial equal access principles. The SU executive diversity port-



folio is tasked with monitoring this and ensuring that the organisation's commitment to opportunity and equal access is beyond repute.

We respond by committing to...

Supporting and equipping our women's officer to run *'women in leadership'* workshops, and gender equality campaigns and activities.

Supporting and equipping our mature students' officer to run continuing education workshops other activities.

Supporting and equipping our diversity officer and various pressure groups, and clubs & socs that represent privilege challenged demographics, to run justice & equality campaigns and activities.

How we will deliver positive action to facilitate participation of groups discriminated against by society.

The Student Union collaborates on and initiates justice & equality campaigns that tackle intolerance, oppression, bullying



and commit to positive action to facilitate participation of groups discriminated against by society.

We respond by committing to...

Run an internal introspective scrutiny workshop on student union operational infrastructure & ethos led by the sabbatical team and the SU exec to identify and counter any form of prejudice. Spearhead an '*Equality & Diversity*' working group in collaboration with the university diversity officer that will explore creative ways to ensure equal opportunity and access.

Support diversity officer, women's officer and mature students officer in creating awareness campaigns, clubs and socs and other activities that will scaffold and engage vulnerable and privilege challenged demographics.

FINANCE

Strive to be financially solvent, sustainable, transparent, accountable, and develop a clear financial strategy that is in symbiosis with the university's finance & resource strategy. To develop a clear reserves policy, to be legally compliant with charity commissions requirements on operational reserve. To



reconsider and renegotiate all areas of expenditure given the current climate of financial insecurity and explore fiscal opportunities. And to develop a vigilant risk assessment & risk management apparatus.

How we will deliver financially solvent & sustainable

The student union's fiscal record speaks of the successful management of the tight balance between the demands of operationalizing a HE student union, complete in all its typical core services provided by all student unions in the country, on a very modest block grant which is in keeping with the size of



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the university. To ensure continued solvency and sustainability it is necessary to have a clear finance & resource strategy which is actioned throughout the operational apparatus.

Our students said...

That sustainability and long term survival of Marjon and the Students Union was important to them.

We respond by committing to...

Ensure that the successive sabbatical teams, core staff and the governance valence have a clear understanding of the limited budget we operate on and the limitations this imposes on operational applications transformational projects.

Ensure that the successive sabbatical teams, core staff and the governance valence have a clear understanding of the University financial strategy and how the logistics of the symbiotic relationship can be fine-tuned to develop shared resources, mutual support and collaborative delivery.

Ensure that the trustee board is equipped with external trustees who have necessary expertise to support us in navigating challenging fiscal conditions and a climate of austerity.

When such expertise is unavailable to us, we will request assistance from the university to support our income generation and financial grant and bid application ventures in the form of an advisor.

How we will deliver transparent & accountable

The student union submits quarterly financial reports to the VC and the University F&R subcommittee, and is audited annually and an independent financial report is produced. MSUs quarterly financial statements will be submitted to the Trustee Board for their approval.

Our students said...

That Student Union resource distribution and financial management should be more transparent and accountable.

We respond by committing to...

Present *the Student Union Executive* a summary accounts briefing every quarter so that they have a coherent understanding of the operationalized strategic functions of the union.

A student friendly, visually accessible annual financial summary and operational audit will be available online for students as a part of the president's report.

How we will deliver a clear reserves policy

Develop a clear reserves policy, legally compliant with charity commission's requirements and endeavour to ensure we contribute appropriately and proportionally to our reserves when possible.



Our students said...

That sustainability and long term survival of Marjon and the Students Union was important to them.



We respond by committing to...

Always consider long term viability when planning annual budgets and making financial reserves a key priority in our fiscal projections.

How we will deliver reconsidered and renegotiated areas of expenditure.

The F & R subcommittee in conjunction with the GM will conduct an annual finance and resource allocation overview and consider justifications for resource allocation in line with our strategic objectives and submit a summary report to the trustee board.

Our students said...

That sustainability and long term survival of Marjon and the Students Union was important to them.

We respond by committing to...

Ensure that our resource allocation reflects the student mandated strategic objectives.

How we will explore fiscal opportunities

The F & R subcommittee in conjunction with the GM will conduct an annual finance and resource opportunity assessment, and where ever possible apply for grants and bids within and outside the institution for reserved or unreserved directives.

Our students said...

That they would like to see a strong, vigorous and well-resourced student union.

We respond by committing to...

Ensure that we actively explore finance & resource opportunities that can fortify the student union resources and funding.

How we will deliver a vigilant risk assessment & risk management apparatus

Conduct a finance & resource risk assessment and report and develop a risk management plan to the governing executive and if appropriate the trustee board.

Our students said...

That sustainability and long term survival of Marjon and the Students Union was important to them.

We respond by committing to...

Ensure that the finance & resource sub-committee has a clear brief with a vigilant risk assessment & risk management apparatus.



"actively explore finance & resource opportunities that can fortify the student union resources and funding."

GOVERNANCE

To develop the infrastructure, governance and resources of the student union to be fit for purpose to fulfil the changing needs of the student body and in symbiosis with the institutions strategy to best fulfil our mission. In compliance with 1994 Education Act and charity commissions regulations.

How we will develop infrastructure, resources & governance fit for purpose

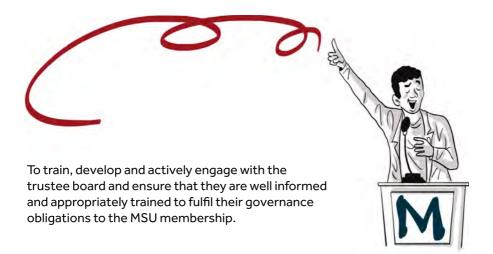
The collaborative *Turn Around Board (TAB)* process put in place that has developed research insight to the student voice and from it developed this strategic plan was a primary initiative to develop and update infrastructure, resources and governance. MSU will also seek out and appoint appropriate personnel who will form the MSU trustee board.

Our students said...

That they would like to see a strong, vigorous and well-resourced student union that is transparent, accountable and effective.

We respond by committing to...

To invest time and effort in successively seeking out well qualified and competent trustees who understand the machinations of higher education and student life, and are committed to meeting Marjon students welfare and interests.



Marjon Student Union has a long track record of resilient survival in austerity climates and under hostile conditions, where small student unions frequently collapse under trying circumstances. Therefore it is important to acknowledge the resilience of the core infrastructure and retain the logistical processes which contribute to this resilience.

Our students said...

That they were satisfied with the basic sabbatical and staffing model and core physical model of the students union.

We respond by committing to...

To retain the functional and resilient logistics that has long secured student satisfaction, organisational continuity & survival.

Run a change management exercise where core task will be given an opportunity to voice any concerns or flag risk in developmental changes brought about by the new strategic plan and transformational change.

Ensure that the successive sabbatical teams, core staff and the governance valence have a an understanding of HE landscape and the conditions the impact Marjon in parallel to the University strategic objectives, infrastructure, human resource ecology, and how this continuously evolving landscape impacts our organisational welfare, competence, survival and delivery.

Our students said...

That sustainability and long term survival of Marjon and the Students Union was important to them.

We respond by committing to...

Ensure our governance, sabbatical, management and executive processes and personnel are informed, up-to-date and vigilant on this evolving landscape and how it impacts our organisational welfare, competence, survival and delivery.

We commit to engaging in appropriate conferences, training events meetings and other opportunities to hone our organisational competence and learning knowledge culture which will benefit our students and enhance our strategic delivery.

How we will stay informed on the changing needs of our student body

We will embed research into our culture and maintain a continued data body on student demographics, student welfare needs and the finer nuances of student voice issues.

Our students said...

That they would like to see student voice feed into governance, resource distribution and decision making processes.

We respond by committing to...

Actively engaging in giving students opportunities to feedback on all events, and major student union decisions and processes.

Actively engaging in and considering student satisfaction feedback on infrastructure, governance, resource distribution and decision making processes when developing operational processes.





- **C** 01752 636771
- 🔰 @MarjonSU
- f @marjonstudentunion
- Find the SU sabbatical office at the opposite end of the student hub

MARJON STUDENT UNION

Marjon, Derriford Road, Plymouth, PL6 8BH

SU General Manager Mick Davies mdavies@marjon.ac.uk