



**With our students every step
of their student journey**

BEDS SU IMPACT REPORT 2021/2022



Solid Progress Made Against our 4-Year Strategy

A MESSAGE FROM LAURA AND QUADRI CO-PRESIDENTS – BEDS SU

Welcome to the Beds SU Impact Report for the academic year 2021/22. This was a year of firsts including our first full year of delivering our latest 4-year strategy (2021 – 2025). We are pleased to report solid progress against our objectives and through our commitment to ensuring our students understand the role we play, in every aspect of their student life.

As you read through the report you will see the great strides we have made and our progress is reflected in our student feedback with 74.29% of students who participated in our annual Beds SU Student survey (May 2022), agreeing we create a positive change to their student experience.

2021/22 was also our first full academic year since 2019 back on our campuses, conducting face-to-face meetings and social activities

with students. We reshaped several activities and events following student feedback (post pandemic) to ensure we continued to meet our students' needs and we are incredibly proud of the programme we delivered.

This report also acknowledges the challenges we have faced and notes ways in which we will address these in 2022/23.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our stakeholders, the University, our external partners and our amazing student staff and volunteers for your time, and support through this past year. We will continue to share our progress in the coming year.

Laura & Quadri

A CONSISTENTLY HIGH PERFORMING STUDENTS' UNION



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Silver

NUS Green Impact Students' Unions
GOOD AWARD
Delivered by Students Organising for Sustainability - UK



Student Voice

Giving our students choice in how they feedback and are heard

Commitments made in 2020/21 to deepen students understanding of the three methods to feedback, coupled with a return to campuses has had a significant and positive impact, on the way in which we have been able to gather and act on our students' feedback.

Our focus remained on offering students three simple methods to share their experiences with us:

TALK TO YOUR REP

FEEDBACK ONLINE

ATTEND A MEETING / SESSION IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Our survey highlighted that 79% of students understood the three methods, with awareness of the online method coming out top at 81.5%.

Although awareness was high, usage of these three methods was still relatively low, at around 35%, according to our annual student survey, which we look to address further in the year ahead.

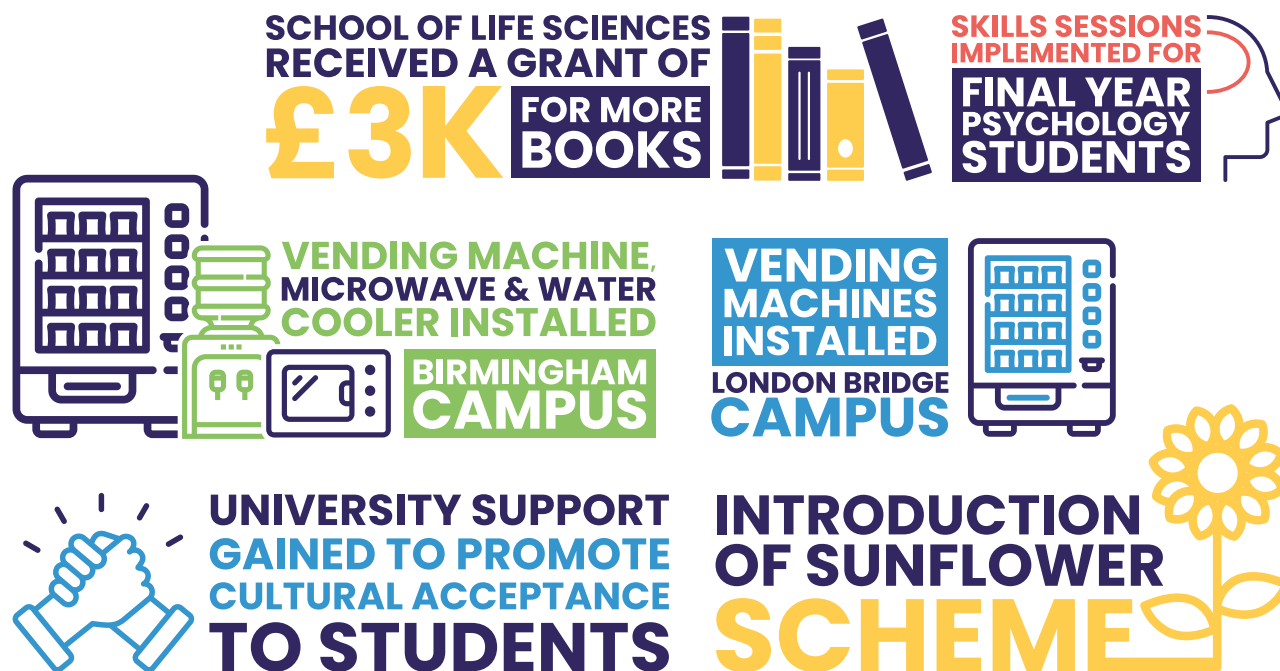
Talk to your Rep / In a Meeting

This year's return to campus enabled us to get out to all seven campuses, meeting students alongside course and campus reps and holding sessions for members of our three dedicated student networks (Disability, BAME, LGBTQ+).

These sessions offered students a dedicated space to share insight on their university experience from course, social and campus perspectives.

In total we held 56 Student Voice forums, 16 Campus forums and 6 Student Network speaking to students. These visits included 74 to campuses other than Luton and Bedford.

We acted swiftly on the feedback we gathered, resulting in several key changes:



Overall, the picture is positive, and appreciation of the SU was favourable, with note to the Aylesbury campus, where 80% of participants surveyed were satisfied with the SU. Luton and London Bridge followed with 72%. However, satisfaction in the SU is still low at Bedford with more work and support required here and for our Education and Sports Sciences students.



Student Representatives

Peer to Peer Support

In 2020–21 Beds SU successfully proposed changes to the way the University facilitates the Student Voice, in partnership with the University's Student Experience department. Subsequently, the University's 2022 NSS score for Student Voice was 10% higher than that of 2020.

491 students volunteered as a course representative in 2021–22, and 88% of students said they were aware that Beds SU provided opportunities for them to give feedback to the University.

Beds SU provides training, networking opportunities and ongoing advice and guidance to course representatives, as well as attends Faculty meetings to share information on student matters and the feedback gathered by student representatives.



All four of our faculties had Student Representatives with the following positions filled:

Education, English and Sport

100%
of positions filled

Health and Social Sciences

86%
of positions filled

Creative Arts, Technologies and Sciences

50%
of positions filled

University of Bedfordshire Business School

45%
of positions filled

Our annual survey also reflected a positive increase in student satisfaction with how we and our student representatives support them in their studies.

64.1%

agreed the SU represented them on their course

88%

of students said they were aware of opportunities to give feedback offered by Beds SU



Project Reach Out

Supporting the wellbeing of our students

Project Reach Out, is now in its second year and has continued to focus on supporting and training our student staff to play a critical role in gathering insight from their peers around their mental and physical wellbeing. In the year ending 2021/22, 298 conversations took place. The overarching feedback came from part-time students who expressed their concern regarding accessing support outside the hours of 9-5. As an SU we have committed to trialling early evening advice drop-in sessions for this group in the new academic year.

Elections

Beds SU promotes student participation in its elections from all students as well as actively seeking out engagement from harder-to-reach student communities to ensure our elections are representative of our diverse membership.

This year's elections saw a diverse set of candidates put themselves forward and students voted at all our main campuses and demographic groups across the membership, which is rare across the sector.

The SU communicated widely online and in email, gave 75 lecture shout-outs over an 8-day voting period and visited every campus across the election, ensuring students were informed of the nomination and voting process and highlighting the benefits of engaging as a voter and a candidate. These face-to-face sessions, coupled with a focused and as required campus targeted Communications campaign that saw 6,000 visitors to our website on the final election day, may have played a key role in the diversity of engagement achieved.

 **14**
CANDIDATES

 **3**
CAMPUSES
1 FROM BEDFORD
1 FROM LONDON

 **70%**
POSTGRADUATE

 **46%**
IDENTIFIED AS ASIAN

 **62%**
IDENTIFIED AS INTERNATIONAL

In Person Forums

56



**STUDENT
FORUMS**

16



**CAMPUS
FORUMS**

6



**STUDENT
NETWORK
FORUMS**

491



**STUDENTS
volunteered as
Course Reps**

37%



**OF STUDENTS
engaged in Student
Voice meetings**

16%



**NUMBER OF
REPS TRAINED**

Student Insight

How student feedback shaped our decision making

To ensure we are making meaningful progress against our targets and that we can adapt to the needs of our members, we conduct a student survey each May. This year's survey saw 1,058 students participate. The following pages offer a snapshot of some of the key data gathered that compliments the four pillars of our strategy, as reflected throughout this report.

The survey highlighted growth in student awareness across all aspects of Beds SU – Representing students, Advice, Events, Societies and Networks.





Student Community

Creating opportunities for students to come together through new or common interests

We are pleased to announce that as life back on campus resumed there was a renewed focus from students to explore and join existing societies, with an uplift of 254 student sign-ups to 830. This equated to 531 unique students (increase of 44% on previous year).

We welcomed our first society outside Luton and Bedford for part-time students on our Arthur Mellows campus. We supported the society to apply for grants to fund social lunches, quizzes, and activities to bring together cohorts across all year groups for Applied Education.

Case Study

Life Sciences Society

This year's Society of the year was awarded to the Life Sciences Society. Esther Eshett, President, alongside, Mya Ditta, who came onboard as Vice-President, together led the society out of lockdown, as student groups were able to meet up in-person again. Their hard work and dedication to 'make things happen' for their members is the reason behind the society's success! Below is an overview from Esther and Mya about their society.

The Life Sciences Society is aimed at all Life Sciences students offering each other support throughout their student journey, whilst exploring external activities to enhance their student experience. The societies activities ranged from general meetups to social pizza lunches.

A key achievement for us as a society this year was that we managed to recruit the highest number of members out of all the society groups (89, over double of our nearest rival society) and the highlight of our year was a trip to the London Science Museum to visit a cancer research exhibition, supported by both Beds SU and UoB staff, we had a great day and ended our year on a high!

Thank you for the opportunities, we have all grown and learnt so much throughout our time as society reps and are grateful to have had the support of such wonderful members, without which we would never have achieved Society of the Year, we owe this to them!

57



**TOTAL NUMBER
OF SOCIETIES**

36



**NUMBER OF
ACTIVE SOCIETIES**

10



**NUMBER OF
NEW SOCIETIES**

830



**NUMBER OF
STUDENT SIGN-UPS**
(531 unique students)

TOP
3



**MOST POPULAR
SOCIETIES**

Life Sciences
Musical Theatre Society
Beds Christian Union Society



Celebrating our students, supporting others

2022 enabled us to hold our first in person awards evening since 2019. It was a fantastic opportunity to bring our students and staff together whose passion for supporting others resulted in their staff and fellow students nominating them for one or more of our 10 awards.

The appreciation for the nominees going the extra mile was reflected in a 130% increase in nominations on the previous year, totalling 330. We welcomed nominations for 47 students, 61 staff members and two societies. Mindful that not all our nominees would be able to attend and that students may wish to watch the ceremony from home, we compliment the ceremony with a celebratory short film and published across our social channels.

We wanted to take this opportunity once again to thank all who were nominated for their selfless commitment to supporting the student community here at the University of Bedfordshire.



AWARDS

SOCIETY OF THE YEAR

Life Sciences

STUDENT STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR

MD Abdullah Al-Mamun

STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR

Heidi King

GO GREEN AWARD

Raj Cheema

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Antreas Kyprianou

STUDENT COMMUNITY REP OF THE YEAR

Marsha Dyce

ACADEMIC REPS OF THE YEAR

CREATIVE ARTS, TECHNOLOGIES & SCIENCE

Prashant Yogi

HEALTH & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Prince Chukwi

EDUCATION & SPORT SCIENCES

Ritika Sharma

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

BUSINESS SCHOOL

Savannah Dallas

Student Advice

Offering our students support whatever their needs

In last year's report we highlighted a commitment to delivering a fully blended support service for this year, following student feedback. We are pleased to confirm that we have achieved this. We have also implemented a new enquiries service. This has enabled us to bring together all Beds SU enquiries under one email address – help@bedssu.co.uk, streamlining the process for students. Over the course of the year, we received 4,208 enquiries and were able to meet our target of responding to 70% of enquiries within 2 working days of contact being made, with 80% of enquiries resolved within 3 working days.

Academic continued to be the most prominent area students required support, totalling 393, followed again by Finance, 33 and with an increase in Housing cases from 11 to 18. Cases overall dropped by 73 to 463.

Our Advisors alongside the wider Students' Union team also commenced the roll out of online, self-help articles including 'How to Complete an Academic Appeal' to 'How to Claim Money Back for Delayed Trains'. In this academic year we published 28 articles, with many more planned for the coming year.

	No. of Cases
Academic	393 84.88%
Finance	33 7.13%
Housing	18 3.89%
Safety	4 0.86%
Wellbeing	6 1.30%
Miscellaneous	9 1.94%
Total	463

Highlights

How our Support team proactively responded to student feedback



2,381

enquiries received



200

hours of drop-in sessions offered over the year



28

self-help articles published for students to access whenever they desire



89%

of participants in our annual survey were satisfied with support received



75%

of students surveyed would seek support from Beds SU – meeting our strategy target

Student Events

Delivering activities that celebrate and accommodate all our students

Ensuring we offer the best possible student experience, keep our prices as low as possible. Any revenue we generate goes back into supporting these aims and benefiting the student experience. We have continued to work hard to provide facilities and entertainment that caters to our diverse membership, paying close attention to student feedback and demands on services that, together, inform our commercial direction.

Thanks to the University providing us with a grant we were able to refurbish and re-open the Metro in Luton giving this space a more relaxed and homely feel.

The SU sought to bring life back to campuses post-pandemic and SU venues hosted 175 events over the year. Welcome Week 2021 hosted in-person events at Luton and Bedford as well as online activities, including club and cocktail nights to games, bingo, quiz and karaoke nights. We also ran more specialised events such as Afrobeat's and Desi Beats club nights, as well as, cultural celebrations including Diwali, Holi and Iftar activities.



We supported several society events, such as, Student Parent's Fun Days, an Around the World Cultural Fair and several societies Meet and Greet events. These changes appreciated by our student community with 61% of participants in our annual survey agreeing that social opportunities met their needs, an increase of 10% to 61.2% of students agreeing activities were relevant to them.



Providing work experience and employment for students

Our venues not only look to provide a space for activities and socialising, but they also offer employment opportunities to students. We successfully recruited and trained a whole new team of student staff for both The Metro Bar and The Hub and offered opportunities to two individuals in our marketing department. These opportunities offer work designed to flex around students' studies, that is comparatively well-paid and on campus. Employing student staff in our venues and in our marketing department enabled us to put £92.5k into students' pockets in salaries.

To enable us to keep our prices as low as possible for students we have worked very hard to reintroduce private hires, post pandemic, into our venues to generate income. Our private hires have been the success story of the year with the fall in some income streams and price increases, counteracted by increase in private hires income. We hosted 28 private events across the year, 22 in the Metro and 6 in The Hub. As well as giving student staff, the opportunity to earn extra income our hires also generated profit of over £17k which we used to support our commercial services to the students.

THE METRO
BAR & KITCHEN **thehub**

“I began working for the Metro in my first year and I'm very grateful for the opportunity. Not only am I able to learn new skills and work ethic, I get to be part of my university's community.

As an international student, I was concerned about fitting in when I first came to the UK, but my job at The Metro Bar really helped me socialising and getting to know all kinds of people. I also get to have a schedule that's flexible to my university timetable, that I wouldn't have working somewhere else.”

Nanci Fidalgo BA (Hons) Creative Writing, Year 2

175 **IN-PERSON**
EVENTS HELD
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR **61%** **STUDENTS SURVEYED**
AGREED SOCIAL
OPPORTUNITIES MET
THEIR NEEDS

61.2% **STUDENTS SURVEYED**
AGREED ACTIVITIES WERE
RELEVANT TO THEM

↑ INCREASE IN DAYTIME
& FAMILY EVENTS
SINCE WELCOME 2021

Financials

Working for students, not for profit

Reopening our commercial operations post pandemic was a time of mixed feelings. Excitement that we could return to offering our students the services and events they had enjoyed and welcomed prior to the Covid outbreak, yet unsettling as it was unknown territory. We were mindful that for some students, a return to socialising post pandemic might not be desired both from a fall out of the lockdowns but also increasing concerns around the cost of living.

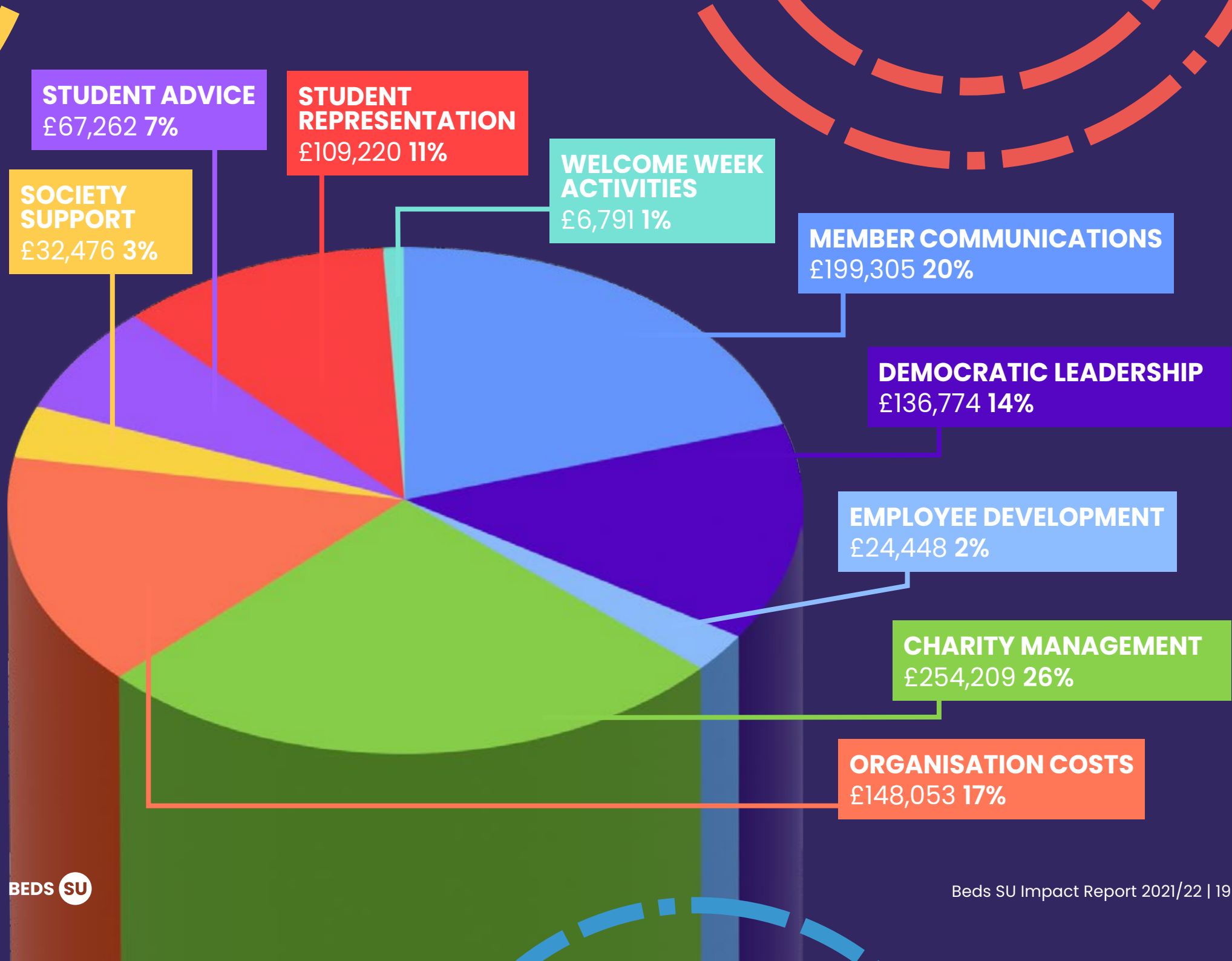
We based our budgeted sales on the last time we had a full year's trading 2018/19 but unfortunately saw a sales decrease of 29%. We can report we did manage to make a small surplus on our commercial operations, but it was £50k less than anticipated.

Despite this we finished the year with a small deficit of (£2.7k) without cutting our services to students. This was achieved by very tight cost controls across the organisation.

We supported the University employment of International students by undertaking payroll services, which enabled International students to earn nearly £70k.

Expenditure	2021/22, £
Member Communications	199,305
Democratic Leadership	136,774
Employee Development	24,448
Charity Management	254,209
Organisation Costs	148,053
Society Support	32,476
Student Advice	67,262
Student Representation	109,220
Welcome Week Activities	6,791
Total Expenditure	978,538





Year Ahead

With you... on your journey

**WITH
YOU...**

**TO CREATE
POSITIVE CHANGE**

**WITH
YOU...**

**IN YOUR
COURSE**

**WITH
YOU...**

**IN YOUR
STUDENT LIFE**

**WITH
YOU...**

**WHEN YOU
NEED SUPPORT**

2022/23

We are pleased that throughout this report we have been able to demonstrate the many ways in which we achieved objectives set against the four pillars and identified areas of focus for the year ahead. For 2022/23 we will build on our solid foundations and successes, while continuing to work alongside our students to ensure we remain relevant and supportive on the areas that matter most to them.

Supporting students navigate the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis and increasing their understanding of their student rights, will be central to our plans. This will be coupled with a commitment to deliver more support be it through activities, advice or working alongside Student Networks around mental health and wellbeing support, as requested by students. With a particular focus on students with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Other objectives for 2022/23 include the following:

Delivering a minimum of 10 discussion meetings, pan campus on topics such as career planning, student concerns and ambitions

Increasing Beds SU presence on all campuses, with a focus on those where perception of the Union is low

Reaching our target of 70% of students agreeing that Beds SU celebrates cultural diversity through awareness campaigns and social activities

Meeting or exceeding our 80% target of students agreeing Beds SU creates a positive change to their student experience



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