ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION
"A STUDENT COMMUNITY WITH INFLUENCE"
STRATEGIC PLAN 2014

RENEWED FOCUS AND ENERGY

This strategic plan captures and communicates our key organisational objectives over the next few years. It has been informed by consultation with staff, members, external stakeholders and partners over a period of several months. This strategic plan seeks to simplify, clarify and consolidate our thinking to provide us with clear direction and focus.

Strategy is about change. This plan sets out clearly how AUSA will change in the next few years. As that change occurs, strategic plans will turn into operational plans and become the new 'norm'. Unless explicitly stated, it may be assumed that existing operations should continue unless

i. One or more strategic objectives override and require a direct change to operational plans

ii. Existing operations are deemed to be detrimental or counter-productive to achieving AUSA's stated vision

iii. Resources need to be redirected away from operations in order to support strategic change in which case some elements of existing operations may need to be sacrificed

THE LIFECYCLE OF THIS PLAN

It is anticipated that this strategic plan will be reviewed annually as part of the transition process between elected officer teams.

Changes each year should aim to be focussed and incremental, taking into account changes in the operating environment and membership, and the completion of any elements of the strategic plan since the last revision.

Some long-term strategic objectives are likely to last through many revisions while short-term objectives may be achieved quickly, and replaced with new ones. Each revision should carefully manage the balance of long and short-term objectives to ensure that AUSA has stability, but also to allow new officers to influence the plan and its direction.

All revisions should clearly aim to move AUSA closer to its stated long-term Vision which itself should hardly change from one decade to the next, though the means of reaching the vision may need to adapt to changing circumstances.

OUR VISION

Short form: A Student Community with Influence

Long form:

Our vision is for AUSA to represent and support an inclusive and vibrant student community in which members have the opportunity to expand their horizons, reach their full potential, and change the world around them. A student community with influence.

OUR MISSION

Our core purpose is to build, sustain and support a student community with real influence. We achieve this by listening to our members, understanding them and shaping ourselves to meet their needs.

We work continuously to become a more accessible and representative democracy reflecting our members' ownership of us and our desire to be shaped by them. We help bring members together through events, clubs, societies and sport, providing opportunities for development and social interaction that are central to many students' university experience. We lobby and represent on behalf of our members to achieve positive change at the University, in the city and the wider world. We campaign on issues that benefit our members and reflect their concerns. We support and advise our members in times of need. We provide food, drink and other commercial services that raise funds for our work and reflect our members' values. We provide opportunities to engage with the local community and the wider world through volunteering and other extra-curricular activity.

OUR STYLE

These style attributes lie at the heart of our identity. They separate us from our environment and make us distinctive. They are an expression of who we are, and how we like to do things.

Passionate   We will harness the passion of our staff and members, and engage in all our activities with focussed enthusiasm and energy.

Dynamic   We will be a fast moving, progressive and nimble organization, proactively meeting our members' needs.

Empowering   Our work will inspire and empower our members to influence their own university experience and their lives beyond.

OUR VALUES

These are the foundations on which our organisation will grow and develop. They are our guiding principles and everyday working focus.

Friendly   We will create an inclusive, friendly environment and build a strong university community where all students can find their place to develop and participate.

Supportive   We will foster a culture of mutual support and encouragement, both in our work with members and within our staff and officer teams.

Fun   We will demonstrate how we value our important role in our members' social and recreational lives, and we will support initiatives that help make AUSA and the University a more fun place to work and study.

Representative   We will strive to understand and place the long-term interests of all our members at the heart of our decision-making and we will actively seek to represent those interests robustly and at every opportunity.

Trust   We will work to build trust in all of our relationships by promoting clear, positive, consistent and accurate communications. We will reward trust placed in us by demonstrating respect and a desire to work together towards our shared vision.

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

These are the primary strategic themes we have identified and decided to focus on over the next few years. They do not represent everything we do, nor are they necessarily the most important things that we currently do; they represent the best opportunity for us to make significant progress towards our shared vision for AUSA and our members now.

Academic Representation

- Students will see changes made more regularly and more quickly as a result of bringing issues forward
- There will be increased visibility and transparency in the progress and outcomes of academic representation work
- Students will feel they have a genuine, demonstrable route to achieving change
- AUSA will be seen by students as taking a postive lead in academic improvements at the University

Social Hub

- AUSA will become an inclusive and welcoming social hub for students on campus
- Students will have influence and a sense of 'ownership' over the physical space at AUSA
- There will be increased knowledge and understanding of how spend in our services benefits all members
- There will be no commercial or social pre-requisites to accessing our core social space

Communication

- There will be an increased awareness of AUSA and its purpose amongst members
- AUSA will be appreciated as having value and meaning outside its physical presence
- All stakeholders will readily identify AUSA's core values through the tone and style of our communications
- AUSA will be recognised and credited for its work
- All communication and engagement with AUSA in whatever form will be recognised and acknowledged fully

Organisational Strength (Enabling Theme)

| Tools | Processes | Skills | People | Culture | Governance |

ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION

Students want to see AUSA working to create new, more effective ways of influencing change at the university. These opportunities are a key driver of satisfaction with the University Experience and with the Association itself. The academic experience is central to most students' motivations for being at university and focusing on this area is the best way of demonstrating relevance to all students.

	Objective	Why is this important?	What are our SMART goals?
Objective	Students will see changes made more regularly and more quickly as a result of bringing issues forward to the Uni	Students want to see improvements made based on their feedback more quickly so that they may be able to benefit themselves, not just the students who follow them.	
	There will be increased visibility and transparency in the progress and outcomes of academic representation work by AUSA	Students need to see and feel that their issues are being taken seriously and that they have not been forgotten. Sharing and publicising outcomes will increase awareness and encourage more engagement.	
	Students will feel they have a genuine, demonstrable route to achieving change	There is currently limited awareness and some scepticism of routes to achieving change. Members need to feel they have realistic routes to influencing the university even if they never intend to get directly involved in doing so.	
	AUSA will be seen by students as taking a postive lead in academic improvements at the University	Members clearly want AUSA to take a lead on driving change at the University. Where change is achieved it's important to promote AUSA's influence in order to engage more members and increase influence even more.	

Main enablers

Governance: Uni SLAs or student charter in place	**Processes**: Connecting rep work with communications	**Culture**: Demonstrate excitement & appetite for change ourselves	**Processes**: Connecting rep work with communications
People: Long-term stability / pressure in uni relationships	**Culture**: Demonstrate visibility and transparency ourselves	**Processes**: Connecting rep work with communications	**People**: Pro-active dedicated comms team with focus on clear ROI, not trends and fads
Processes: Monitoring and oversight of SLAs	**Processes**: More frequent Uni meetings to progress issues		**People**: Meet increased demand (plan for success)
Tools: Identify broad issues as well as specific cases	**Tools**: Pro grade case tracking tools to support visibility		

SOCIAL HUB

Students want a social hub on campus where they can rest, work and socialise. This is also critical to fostering a deeper sense of community that is part of AUSA's vision. The space must reflect members' values and allow them a strong sense of 'ownership'. Commercial services are part of the requirement for the space but are not the primary purpose. All members should feel welcome without needing to spend money.

Objective	AUSA will become an inclusive and welcoming social hub for students on campus	Students will have influence and a sense of 'ownership' over the physical space at AUSA	There will be increased knowledge and understanding of how spend in our services benefits all members	There will be no commercial or social pre-requisites to accessing our core social space
Why is this important?	Members want and need space on campus to meet and relax in their own way; this is core to our role in building community	We must clearly differentiate our offer from Uni spaces and benefit from the excitement and variation that will come from a sense of student 'ownership'	We need to use physical footfall to improve awareness or our unique funding model and the communal benefits of commercial spend with us	Commercial services are not the primary driver for social space and should focus on being accessible (pricing) and unobtrusive while maintaining viability
What are our SMART goals?				

Main enablers

Governance: Strong AUSA involvement in space design	**Culture**: Embed student membership / ownership concept and benefits	**Governance**: Need to understand and articulate flow of money	**Skills**: Commercial service design/selection/mgmt
People: Meet increased demand (plan for success)			**Governance**: Minimise commercial risk to AUSA
Culture: Project brand values in all interactions			**Culture**: Embed student membership / ownership concept and benefits

COMMUNICATION

Communication has a huge and direct role to play in achiving AUSA's vision of a Student Community with Influence. As well as underpinning key strategic goals in other themes, there are a number of significant strategic issues which have a direct communications solution. Without a clear communications strategy, AUSAs ability to build community and leverage its influence year-on-year would be very limited.

Objective	There will be an increased awareness of AUSA and its purpose amongst members	AUSA will be appreciated as having value and meaning outside its physical presence	All stakeholders will readily identify AUSA's core values through the tone and style of our communications	AUSA will be recognised and credited for its work	All communication and engagement with AUSA in whatever form will be recognised and acknowledged fully
Why is this important?	This is a basic goal; without awareness and a basic understanding of AUSA we cannot be effective.	This is important to remain relevant to a diverse student body in the long-term; being a member should have meaning.	We need to project a clearer, more consistent identity and purpose if we are to be taken seriously as an influential and unified community.	To be influential we must enhance our credibility through our actions but also through deliberate reputation building with all stakehholder groups.	AUSA can only position itslef at the heart of a 'community' if it atively listens and values each and every effort made to engage with it.
What are our SMART goals?					
Main enablers	**People**: Pro-active dedicated comms team with focus on clear ROI, not trends and fads **Tools**: Professional comms tools and technologies **Governance**: Ownership of crm data	**Culture**: Project brand values in all interactions **Culture**: Embed student membership / ownership concept and benefits **Skills**: Comms design and implementation for sustainable max reach	**Culture**: Project brand values in all interactions **Processes**: Ensuring consistency of comms **Skills**: Comms creativity within consistent brand guidelines	**Culture**: Understanding of importance of *saying* as well as *doing* **People**: Pro-active dedicated comms team with focus on clear ROI, not trends and fads	**Culture**: Understanding of importance of *saying* as well as *doing* **People**: Pro-active dedicated comms team with focus on clear ROI, not trends and fads **Culture**: Project brand values in all interactions

ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH

TOOLS

Objective	Help identify broad issues as well as specific cases, e.g. pre-emptive surveying, course feedback monitoring etc	Professional grade case tracking tools to support visibility and updated for students	Professional comms tools and technologies
Why is this important?	Students may only bring 'big' issue but broad issues can be quick wins with equal impact	Tools may help reduce staff burden as demand increases; otherwise risk poor comms	A requirement for any comms team to be effective. This strategic phase should focus on core channels
What are our SMART goals?	....	. ...	....

SKILLS

Objective	Commercial service design / selection / management	Comms creativity within consistent brand guidelines	Comms design and implementation for sustainable maximum reach
Why is this important?	Making the right decisions is critical to launch of new services and long-term success	Creativity with discipline and conformity to guidelines is a mark of professionalism and necessary to build brand perception	Emails are cheap but goodwill is a finite resource. Designing sustainable comms for max. reach is critical to AUSA's outreach
What are our SMART goals?	....	....	....

PROCESSES

Objective	Connecting representation work at all levels with communications	Ensuring consistency of communications	Monitoring and oversight of SLAs	More frequent university meetings to progress issues
Why is this important?	Effective processes will ensure better transparency and visibility to students, encouraging more engagement	Consistency is a fundamental aspect of quality and trust. Processes are needed to ensure that comms is managed properly	Where commitments are made to students by the Uni or AUSA, there should be processes and triggers to corrective action when needed	The current slow cycle of meetings at university level is unsuited to meeting the timeline for change that students want to see
What are our SMART goals?	....	. ...	....	....

PEOPLE

Objective	Meet increased demand (plan for success)	Long-term stability / pressure in uni relationships	Pro-active dedicated comms team with focus on clear ROI, not trends and fads
Why is this important?	Resource planning should ensure quality delivery as engagement increases	Successive officers should be able to rely on ASUA staff knowledge and relationships with Uni to help them be effective quickly	Comms will be critical to the success of this strategy and dedicated resource is necessary to ensure it is not de-prioritised in favour of more 'doing'
What are our SMART goals?	By...	By...	By...

ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH

CULTURE

Objective	Demonstrate excitement & appetite for change ourselves	Demonstrate visibility and transparency ourselves	Embed student membership / ownership concept and benefits	Project brand values in all interactions	Understanding of importance of saying as well as doing	New covenant between officers and staff	Appreciation of the importance of 'management' to long-term success
Why is this important?	We must demonstrate the attributes we want the Uni to exhibit and show students that we understand the needs through our own behaviour	We must demonstrate the attributes we want the Uni to exhibit and show students that we understand the needs through our own behaviour	Membership is a powerful concept that needs to be better exploited but will bring pressure on staff so understanding of the benefits is important	For AUSA to build a stronger identity with students it must 'live' its brand values through every decision and every internal and external interaction	It's important for everyone to understand that good comms can multiply the positive impact of individual cases and results	The effectiveness of both staff (long-term) and officers (short-term) are undermined by a lack of clarity or appreciation of their different roles	The organisation needs to develop a management culture to identify opportunities, manage risk and lock in the long-term benefits of its work
What are our SMART goals?	….	. …	….	….	. …	By…	By…

GOVERNANCE

Objective	Minimise commercial risk to AUSA	Need to understand, control and articulate flow of money	Ownership of CRM data	Strong AUSA involvement in physical space design	Uni SLAs or student charter in place	Formalise agreements between Uni and AUSA	Risk management and forecasting
Why is this important?	Commercial services are not core to AUSA's purpose and with such an unpredictable operating environment, de-risking activity is vital	AUSA cannot hope to talk about or demonstrate financial credibility until it has proper budgetary and accountability procedures in place	Any membership organisation should be able to gather, analyse and use its own membership data for communications through a CRM solution	AUSA needs to ensure that it had significant influence of the development of any student spaces both within and outside AUSAs own building	Formalised agreements on what students should expect from the University, and detailed remedial actions would satisfy many students' need for accountability	AUSA cannot operate successfully without surity or ability to forecast. Formal agreements with the Uni will increase stability and accountability for both parties	As AUSA demands more from the University it must improve its own credibility and demonstrate professional governance and a mature approach to securing its own future
What are our SMART goals?	….	. …	….	….	By…	By…	By…