



STUDENTS' UNION 5-YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Prepared by
Megan Bennett (ARU London Manager)
& **Sorin-Marius Predica** (Vice President ARU London)



MARCH 2021

aru STUDENTS'
UNION

#Project5

ARU London Students' Union Five-Year Development Plan

The Students' Union at ARU London has now been in operation for three and half years. In that time student numbers have increased by approximately 300%, from 2,500 at the time of our initial agreement to now over 10,000.

An initial agreement in 2017 outlined the provision of a Students' Union, with a focus on advice and representation services for 3 years. As we approached the end of our third year we were able to expand our team and services with an increase of £60K to our block grant. We are now midway through our fourth year and in a position to establish a more solid and longer-term partnership with ARU London.

#Project5 has enabled us to develop exciting, innovative and ambitious plans to ensure longevity of the Students' Union with a powerful impact on our student community.

Over the next five years we are confident in our ability to grow into a truly outstanding organisation for our members. This paper outlines what we require to achieve this.

Where we are now

A snapshot into just some of the services and projects the Students' Union are currently running are below;

- ARU London's **Representation Structure**: electing Class Reps, Course Champions & Vice President and supporting these students through training, feedback gathering, and resolving issues.
- **Advice Service**: providing an independent, confidential and impartial service to all ARU London students. Offering support for a range of academic and wider challenges to university life, whilst also alleviating the workload of ARU London icentre staff.
- **Liberate ARU** project: ensuring easy access to equality-based support, celebration and challenge for all ARU London students with a focus on our BAME student community.
- **Employable Me** project: reshaping all of our training and other volunteering opportunities to be skills-based and employability focused. Working closely in partnership with the Employability Team and Events course staff and students through our Project Group fund.
- **Global Week & Students' Union/University Awards**: Two large-scale events led by the Vice President to celebrate students and recognise their talents.



"I'm **saying yes** because these goals give the Students' Union more tools to help the student body even more both in terms of their experience within the University and in their future careers upon graduating."

ADRIANA-MARIA DUTA

YEAR 2 IBM STUDENT



I'M SAYING YES

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)



"I am **saying yes** because #Project5 is the only way forward. We have 5 goals, an exciting journey ahead and the opportunity along the way to enhance our employability skills, to know each others strengths, weaknesses, and find solutions together, to get a voice, to be better represented and to speak up for our future... I say YES!"

MARIUS ABITEI

BUSINESS & TOURISM COURSE CHAMPION



I'M SAYING YES

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)



"I'm **saying yes** because this is an important objective! Students need more support and attention, especially during this pandemic! Focussing on employability is an excellent goal, as students are willing to find paid jobs or paid trainings during their studies."

EMILIA PRECOB

YEAR 1 BUSINESS & LAW STUDENT



I'M SAYING YES

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)



"I am **saying yes** because the Students' Union has an important role in supporting us and our student experience."

MARCELA NASUI

FOUNDATION YEAR, FINANCE & ACCOUNTING STUDENT



I'M SAYING YES

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)



"I'm **saying yes** because all 5 of them can help students now and later. Say YES for yourself and others!"

ANA CHIRUSCINCO

YEAR 1, LLB LAW STUDENT



I'M SAYING YES

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)



"I am **saying yes** to these goals because they will assist in creating a strong leadership that will interconnect more efficiently all the students at ARU by providing a well established career improvement, furthermore they will provide a link between the job market and students"

HALIL DRAGJOSHI

FINANCE & ACCOUNTING COURSE CHAMPION



I'M SAYING YES

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)

Impact on ARU London's NSS 2017 - 2020

Since the introduction of the Students' Union, the NSS results have improved considerably. Below are six key areas we strongly believe have improved as a result of the Students' Union. It is important to note that student numbers have also increased year on year yet the scores remain high, demonstrating our wide-spread impact consistently across the whole student body.



"I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course"



STUDENT VOICE



"The Students' Union has helped me develop useful life skills"



OVERALL SATISFACTION



"The Students' Union had a positive impact on my sense of belonging to the university"



"The Students' Union effectively represents students' academic interests"

Please see attached infographic for more detailed information from 2019-2020 ¹

We are extremely proud of what we have achieved for both ARU London students and the wider university, however a number of these scores are now beginning to plateau. As the University continues to develop there is a real threat to the capacity of our Union to be able to prevent these numbers from decreasing in years to come, unless we are able to see an increase to our funding. As of September 2021 our existing funding will not cover even the current staffing costs.

¹ ARU London Students' Union Infographic 2019-2020

Our vision

5 goals in 5 years

Within the next five years ARU London Students' Union will develop into a unique, transformative and indispensable organisation, relevant and empowering to each and every ARU London Student.

Through detailed analysis of student feedback such as Speak Week, SSLC's and advice appointment themes over the last three years we are confident in the direction we are headed. Together with our recent work specifically developing our five year plan, such as surveying students and holding focus groups², we have shaped realistic, relevant and transformative goals for the next five years.

Goal One

"We will place employability at the heart of our activities"

Students told us that developing employability skills is one of the biggest driving factors for joining ARU London. They want more opportunities to develop real-life practical skills whilst they are studying. We will create new student staff positions within the SU to provide employment opportunities for our students. We will explore both short-term student jobs, and consider longer-term student placements and internships within the Students' Union. Through this we will be able to improve graduate destination in both future career options and further study.

Key developments

- We will invest in student placements to work alongside the Students' Union staff team. These will involve basic administrative, marketing and project management roles.
- SU Coordinators will line manage these positions, providing support and development areas.
- We will work alongside the Head of Careers and the wider Employability Team to support these students in communicating their responsibilities and skills gained through their CV's and job applications.
- We will invest in any relevant training and qualifications for these students to give them the best opportunities at succeeding in their current and future roles.

² #Project5 Focus Group Analysis

Goal Two

“We will provide relevant and timely support to students - from the first appointment to resolution”

Students told us that the support they currently receive for mental health, housing and wider commitments is lacking. A typical ARU London student enrolls with an unconventional academic trajectory with complicated and often stressful lives outside of the University. They want a clear path to getting the help they need. We will work closely with the Wellbeing Team and expand our Advice Service to partner up with local organisations and services. This will ensure fast and effective signposting, direct referrals and ultimately an increase in student retention.

Key developments

- We will recruit a new Academic Adviser to ensure students across all ARU London locations can access advice quickly and easily both face to face and online.
- We will recruit a Welfare Adviser to work closely with the Wellbeing Team and local welfare organisations to directly refer students to necessary services, such as housing, mental health, finance, citizen’s advice, domestic abuse support.
- With the expansion of this team, we will recruit an Advice Service Manager to work alongside the core SU Advice Manager, the ARU London Director of Student Experience and Directors of Study.
- We will also be applying for [Advice Quality Standard](#) (AQS), an assessment and accreditation to both benchmark our service and ensure the most effective advice is given by our Advisers.

Goal Three

“We will have a strong representation mechanism in partnership with ARU London University”

Students told us that the chain of feedback from the Students’ Union and University is not good enough. If students have raised feedback, either themselves or on behalf of a group, they want a result and to know what that result is. We are proposing the creation of a Representation Partnership Agreement with the University to embed a joint framework to support the election of student representatives and the mechanisms in place to ensure feedback is taken forwards and responses are given in a timely manner. Through this we will be able to effectively support the University in improving upon lower-scoring modules and courses which we will monitor through the MES and NSS surveys.

Key developments

- We will establish a Student Partnership working group with ARU London to ensure representation is effective for students and staff at every level of decision-making.
- Through this group, we will create a Representation Partnership Agreement together to outline key responsibilities and expectations of students, the Students' Union and ARU London.
- Through the expansion of the Student Leadership Team we will be able to work more closely and effectively in partnership with ARU London University.

Goal Four

“We will have a Student Leadership Team that reflects our students”

Students told us that having a voice and being truly represented is really important to them. They want leaders they can relate to who are willing to advocate for their rights and feedback effectively. We are proposing an expansion of the current senior student leadership system to include an ARU London Student President, a Vice President (Farringdon) and a Vice President (East India).

Key developments

- We will expand our Student Leadership Team (officers) from one Vice President representing over 10,000 students to three; one President and two Vice Presidents.
- We will invest in leadership, communication and project management training for all ARU London officers.
- These officers will work as a team and with staff support they will manage the Course Champions within the new representation structure to form a student committee accountable to the student body.
- They will be given funding to use for all projects, campaigns and events.
- We will recruit an additional SU Coordinator to support the workload and mentor our student leaders.

Goal Five

“We will connect with our students wherever they are”

Students told us that communication is vital to a good student experience. They are busy, with many competing priorities and we want to work around that. We are proposing a review of our current office hours to be more available to students and to consider how

we can better improve our virtual office services to fit in with students' lifestyles wherever they are.

Key developments

- We will increase our availability to students through expanding our office hours. We will remain open for evening and Saturday students.
- We will staff the Students' Union live chat function and promoting to all ARU London students, working alongside the ARU London iCentre to ensure consistency and convenience for students.
- We will invest in our website to ensure maximum accessibility through translations, disability support and rebranding.
- We will recruit a Communications Coordinator to work in partnership with the ARU London Communications Team to ensure consistent messaging and advertising. This role will be responsible for all student communications including email, social media and website. They will act as the point of contact for all ARU channels such as the VLE, Microsoft Sway and the App.
- We are proposing that the Farringdon common area becomes an extension of the Students' Union.



"I am **saying yes** to #Project5 because this is the right time and direction to move forward to. I believe with the right leadership students stay united and TOGETHER we will reach out to a better student experience. SAY YES - to a better future to a better you!"



I'M SAYING YES

ALEXANDRA SZTOJKA
BUSINESS & MARKETING
COURSE CHAMPION

ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5



"I am **saying yes** to #Project5 because it is a carefully thought-out strategy that ensures students' needs are the central priority. Yes to increased interaction, employability skills and support - all to satisfy students' needs."



I'M SAYING YES

MARIAN OKUNOLA
POSTGRADUATE
COURSE CHAMPION

ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5

Headline developments

Students' Union Staff Team Expansion

As can be seen above, our biggest investment needed is to increase our staff resource and restructure the Students' Union. We are a very high performing team with a vast range of responsibilities, however our ability to support over 10,000 students in (at least) the same capacity and of the same quality as we are currently is not sustainable. The demands to keep our core services - advice and representation - running to a high standard is becoming extremely challenging and there is a real danger we not only stop improving, but begin to see a decline in quality.

Across the last year it has come to our attention that our staff team will soon be unable to continue delivering the quality of service we currently offer. The responsibilities of each staff member are vast and becoming unmanageable. We are at risk not only of making mistakes and supporting students inadequately but also of rapid staff turnover and/or exhaustion. As a small team we are key person dependent across all of our functions and so staff sickness and staff turnover is a significant risk factor to our ongoing success.

Current staffing model:

This is our current model which we have greatly outgrown. All services are currently managed by the ARU London Manager with support from the Director of Advocacy & Engagement, however this latter position is funded by core ARU to support core activities and services.



Proposed staffing model (within 5 years):

Head of ARU London

Over the next 5 years we will bring in a new role, the Head of ARU London. A senior position which will have greater oversight of the Students' Union in London with primary responsibility of strategy, finance and HR. This position would work closely with the

wider Senior Management Team of both the Students' Union and ARU London. We currently outsource a number of our HR, communication and financial services from the core Students' Union, this would reduce this cost and bring it further in-house.

Voice & Delivery Manager

This position would most closely resemble the existing ARU London Manager. They would have responsibility of all the day-to-day running of the Students' Union, line-manage the team of coordinators and provide operational support when needed. This position would also act as the Deputy Returning Officer for The Elections, coach the elected Officers and would regularly liaise with relevant managers within ARU London to ensure consistent partnership.

Advice Service Manager

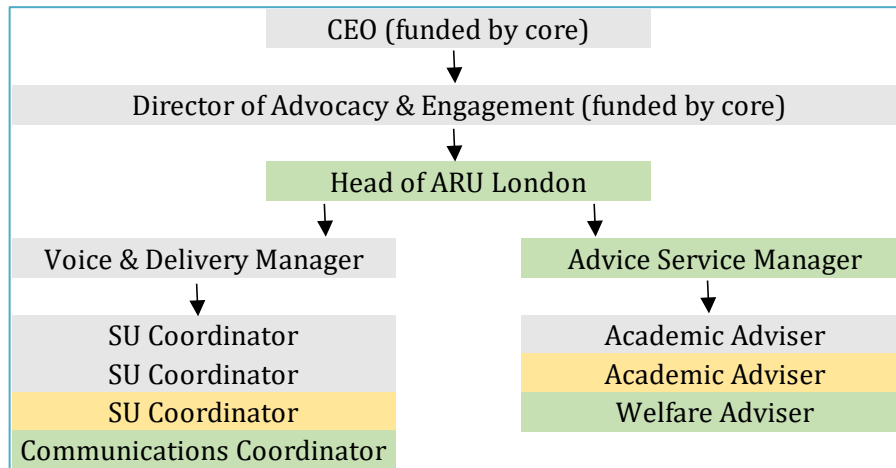
This position would take responsibility for the ARU London Advice Service, including the additional Academic and Welfare Advisers. They would regularly meet and engage with relevant ARU London members of staff to ensure an effective working relationship, transparency and support where needed. This person would also manage the AQS accreditation and continual monitoring of the standards needed to retain it.

Additional staff support

We are looking to recruit an additional SU Coordinator and Communications Coordinator. As described above, the workload of our current team far outweighs the number of people we currently employ. These additions, alongside the existing coordinators, would be responsible for all face to face and online student interaction including; initial front of house enquiries, advice appointment booking, rep election promotion, training and SSLC support, officer election promotion, training and project support, project group fund management and student support, liberation resource research and upkeep, their individual projects and all other administrative responsibilities. We will also contribute to a new designer working for the core Students' Union to alleviate some of the workload from the ARU London Manager who currently creates the majority of our content.

We will also recruit two more advisers. An additional academic adviser based at the alternative campus and a welfare adviser to work closely with the Wellbeing Team and local organisations. Currently our case load is exceeding the capacity of our lone adviser. It also creates significant challenges if this adviser is sick or on annual leave and a student is having an emergency.

Below is an example of our proposed new staffing structure. Those highlighted in grey already exist (Voice & Delivery replacing ARU London Manager) green would be introduced in Phase 1, those in orange would be introduced from Phase 2.



In addition to this, we are also proposing the addition of one student officer in Phase 1 and the second student officer in Phase 2.

Student Leadership Team

We want to ensure students have access to appropriate representation, and that those in the representative roles are in a position to carry out their duties to a high quality without impacting on their studies and wider commitments. Our current Vice President represents over 10,000 students alone and it is not possible for this role to continue as one part-time individual. To allow this role to be effective, manageable and in line with Students' Unions nationally we would like to introduce further officer positions to share the responsibilities and relieve the pressure for the representative, students and staff alike. Through the introduction of two new positions, which would remain part-time, students have greater access to these roles as both constituents and also potential candidates themselves. The role of an officer brings with it a wealth of experience and training and development opportunities which we want to provide for more students.

Student staff internships

We would like to give students practical experience to develop a skillset that can prepare them for work after graduating. Feedback from students has been consistently geared towards more on and off-campus placement opportunities. By offering these within the Students' Union we can ensure they get the maximum benefit from employment,

supporting their skills development and working with them 1-1, in partnership with the Employability Team, to prepare them for the next stages of their careers.

Farringdon Common Space Redesign

We are proposing that we take ownership of the common space in Farringdon directly opposite the Students' Union. The surrounding offices and noticeboards would still be owned by/available to any ARU London member of staff or service.

The computers and printer would also remain ARU London property and responsibility however we would have ownership of all other furniture, features and design. We would like to make the space as student friendly as possible and utilize the space to further expand the branding of the Students' Union.



I'M SAYING YES

"I'm **saying yes** because this is where I see the SU in 5 five years. I see a connected Students' Union, with a leadership that reflects the students, with employability at its heart. Say YES to 5 goals in 5 years and watch this vision turn into reality."

LENKE GALAMBODI
BUSINESS & HR
COURSE CHAMPION

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)



I'M SAYING YES

"I am **saying yes** because we definitely need these benefits in order to improve our student experience more."

ALIN CRISTIAN SALCA
YEAR 2 BUSINESS &
MARKETING STUDENT

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)



I'M SAYING YES

"I'm **saying yes** because these are the right steps to take for obtaining the best student experience possible!"

DOMENICO IMPROTA
BUSINESS & HOSPITALITY
COURSE CHAMPION

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)



I'M SAYING YES

"I'm **saying yes** because these goals reflect a pursuit of excellence for all students. A yes to these goals is a yes to the best you."

ADEBISI SASI
IBM COURSE CHAMPION
& VICE PRESIDENT ELECT

[ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5](http://angliastudent.com/london/5)

The funding required

We are asking for an increase to our block grant in two phases over the next five years to ensure a substantial but gradual development of the Students' Union.

Staffing: The costs below outline the broad costs of increasing our staff team in both year 1 and year 3, including the annual increases of salary each year. This also includes the employment of four members of student staff.

Operating Costs: The additional costs cover all other operating costs within the Students' Union, such as all basic office and computer equipment, annual subscriptions and services, staff development, all campaigns, projects and events, redesign of the Farringdon common area, external contractors.

Reserves: This budget also includes the increase of our reserves to ensure we are able to cover at least three months' worth of operating costs, in line with Charity Commission guidance.

Outsourcing: The outsourcing costs amount to the true cost of the staffing time of staff from core in order to support ARU London. This has been calculated by our Finance Manager with support from the Students' Union Trustee Board.

	YEAR	PERMANENT STAFF	STUDENT STAFF	OUTSOURCING	ADDITIONAL COSTS	RESERVES	TOTAL REQUIRED
PHASE 1	1	£ 305,020	£ 15,564	£ 41,800	£ 59,100	£ 20,000	£ 441,484
	2	£ 314,574	£ 15,923	£ 44,736	£ 43,980	£ 20,000	£ 439,213
	3	£ 406,760	£ 16,282	£ 47,857	£ 48,850	£ 20,000	£ 539,748
PHASE 2	4	£ 419,669	£ 16,640	£ 51,207	£ 47,040	£ 20,000	£ 554,556
	5	£ 429,926	£ 16,999	£ 54,791	£ 48,170	£ 20,000	£ 569,886

A detailed breakdown of these costs can be found in the appendix.³

In summary, by the fifth year of our plan, we are looking to receive a block grant of £569,886.05 per year (to rise annually in line with cost of living increases). However, the funding needed to reach three months' operating costs will decrease.

³ #Project5 Funding Breakdown

How we compare to the wider sector

ARU London Students' Union is currently significantly underfunded in comparison to both ARU Students' Union and to all London-based Students' Unions. Below is a comparison of block grant, how this could be split if divided per student, and the total number of staff members.

	# OF STUDENTS	BLOCK GRANT	PER STUDENT	# OF SU STAFF	# OF OFFICERS	# OF STUDENT STAFF
LONDON	10135	£ 142,000	£ 14.01	4	1 x PT	0
CORE	25000	£ 1,487,900	£ 59.52	31*	5 x FT	7**

*Full-time equivalent, not inclusive of commercial staff

**Not inclusive of commercial student staff

Below is a table outlining the comparative block grants given to each London Students' Union by their University. Whilst the student numbers differ, the cost of Students' Union services per student shows ARU London students receiving the least, quite considerably.

ORGANISATION NAME	BLOCK GRANT	NO. OF STUDENTS	PER STUDENT
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON SU	£ 4,381,295	32895	£ 133.19
LDN SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS & POLITICAL SCIENCE SU	£ 1,114,990	11850	£ 94.09
SU ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON	£ 908,372	11040	£ 82.28
QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON SU	£ 1,674,449	20565	£ 81.42
SOAS SU	£ 453,075	5800	£ 78.12
UNION OF BRUNEL STUDENTS	£ 1,109,891	14790	£ 75.04
UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER SU	£ 1,335,000	18880	£ 70.71
GOLDSMITHS SU	£ 703,778	10410	£ 67.61
GREENWICH SU	£ 1,261,232	18945	£ 66.57
SU UCL	£ 2,616,847	41180	£ 63.55
ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART SU	£ 151,263	2400	£ 63.03
LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY SU	£ 900,000	17125	£ 52.55
TRINITY LABAN SU	£ 56,454	1195	£ 47.24
CITY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON SU	£ 939,522	20215	£ 46.48
MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY SU	£ 880,000	19630	£ 44.83
ST GEORGE'S SU	£ 209,320	4695	£ 44.58
ROEHAMPTON SU	£ 513,450	12665	£ 40.54
GUILDHALL SCHOOL OF MUSIC & DRAMA SU	£ 30,344	1090	£ 27.84
BIRKBECK COLLEGE SU	£ 277,200	11395	£ 24.33
ARU LONDON SU	£ 147,850	10135	£ 14.58

→ The funding we are requesting would place us slightly ahead of Trinity Laban Students' Union, still within the lower section of comparable London Students' Unions but a far better position than we are currently. Our analysis shows that many of the services and opportunities we provide are comparable in terms of quality with Unions such as Kings College, London School of Economics and Royal Holloway.

Summary

We asked ARU London students to approve our final five goals of this plan. Just under 1500 students took part and 98% voted “yes”. This response, also seen throughout the comments in this document, shows just how positively this has been received.

A Students’ Union has the power to completely transform the lives of students. We have proved this through ensuring students stay on their course through our Advice Service when they thought they had nowhere left to turn. Through our representation structure we have given unique and sought-after leadership skills to hundreds of students who wouldn’t have had the opportunity otherwise. We have heard heart-wrenching stories from students within communities such as LGBT+, who had never felt the confidence to talk about their identity until we provided funding and support to a new LGBT+ society. We have gathered thousands of pieces of feedback to support ARU London in creating real positive change.

All of this and more was achieved as the least-funded Students’ Union in London and we are excited to embrace our next chapter and make considerable difference to even more students on a more personal level. We acknowledge that we have requested a substantial increase into the funding we currently receive but now is the time to properly establish a fully-functioning, record-breaking and life-changing organisation.

ARU London students are extremely proud to be where they are, and we want the Students’ Union to be a part of this pride as they leave and begin or continue their careers and their lives as fully rounded and successful individuals.

Prepared by

Megan Bennett

ARU London Manager

Sorin-Marius Predica

Vice President (20-21)

aru STUDENTS' UNION

"I'm **saying yes** to these goals because they are exactly what our students want and need. More student jobs on campus, quicker advice and support, and a bigger student leadership team."

SORIN-MARIUS PREDICA
VICE PRESIDENT
(ARU LONDON)

I'M SAYING YES

ANGLIASTUDENT.COM/LONDON/5