

Student Experience Strategy 2025-2028



It is with immense pride and optimism that I present the University of Northampton's Student Experience Strategy – a vision born not in isolation, but through the collaborative spirit that unites our University and our Students' Union. At Northampton, we believe that an exceptional student experience is not simply delivered; it is created, nurtured and continuously enriched by the voices of our vibrant community. This strategy stands as a testament to our shared commitment to place students at the heart of everything we do. By working hand in hand with the Students' Union, we have ensured that every aspiration, challenge and ambition voiced by our students finds its echo in our plans for the future.

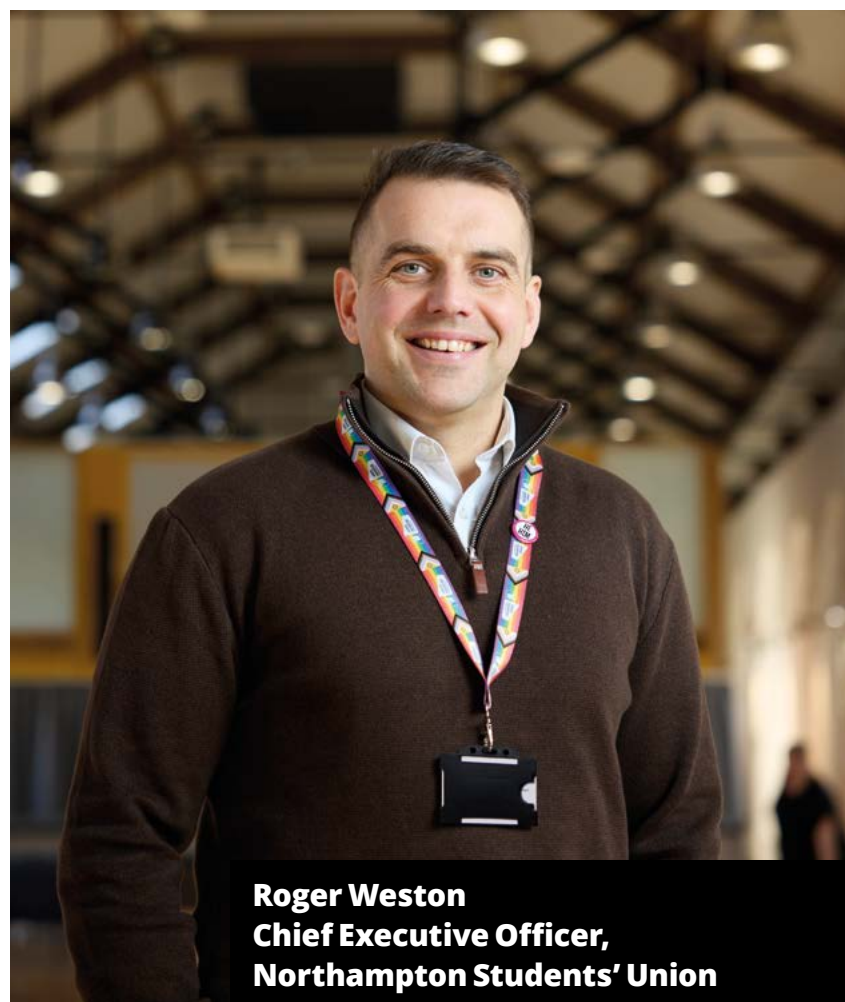
Our co-created strategy is built on the core principles of partnership, inclusivity and innovation. It recognises that the student journey extends beyond the classroom, encompassing academic achievement, personal growth, wellbeing and a genuine sense of belonging. We have listened carefully to the diverse needs and hopes of our student body, and together we have shaped a roadmap that seeks not just to respond, but to anticipate and inspire. This approach reflects our conviction that the most meaningful progress is achieved when every member of our community has a seat at the table. Through open dialogue with the Students' Union and ongoing engagement with all our students, we have sought to foster a culture where ideas flourish and actions follow.

As you read through our Student Experience Strategy, I invite you to reflect on the strength we gain through collaboration. Whether you are a new student joining us for the first time, a returning learner or a valued staff member, your voice matters. Together, we will continue to shape a student experience at Northampton that is empowering, dynamic and truly transformative.

With warmest regards and unwavering commitment to our shared success.

Professor Anne-Marie Kilday
Vice Chancellor





Roger Weston
Chief Executive Officer,
Northampton Students' Union

We are delighted to introduce the University of Northampton's Student Experience Strategy. This strategy is a genuine co-production between the University and the Students' Union, and we have very much enjoyed the process of working together to produce it. It represents the culmination of dedicated collaboration and open dialogue, drawing on the perspectives and expertise of a remarkable number of students and staff from across our University community. We wish to formally extend our thanks to everyone who generously contributed their time, insights and passion to this process; your voices have been instrumental in shaping the direction and ambition of this work.

From the outset, our aim was to ensure that this strategy would not be a document created in isolation, but a living reflection of what matters most to our students. By working hand in hand – University and Students' Union together – we have created a framework that places students at the centre of every decision, every innovation and every improvement.

The strategy is built around six core themes, each supported by key strategic enablers, ensuring that, in conjunction with the Learning and Teaching Strategy, we address the full scope of the student experience, both inside and outside the classroom. By aligning these themes with our broader University strategy, we ensure every initiative is cohesive and responsive to the evolving needs of our student community.

Now, as we move from strategy to action, the real work begins. We are committed to delivering on the promises set out in these pages and to continually adapting in response to student needs and aspirations. Together, we can ensure that the University of Northampton remains a place where every student feels empowered, supported and inspired to succeed.



Alice Wilby
Pro Vice-Chancellor,
Education and Student Experience



Introduction

The University of Northampton's Student Experience Strategy 2025–2028 sets out a clear and ambitious aim: to ensure that students – regardless of background, level or mode of study – feel supported, included and empowered throughout their time with the University. This strategy has been written collaboratively by the University and the Students' Union (SU) to ensure we focus on what matters most to students. It prioritises actions that make the most difference to student satisfaction and success.

The scope of the strategy is broad and inclusive, encompassing all students taught by the University of Northampton. This includes undergraduate and postgraduate learners from Levels 3 to 8, apprentices, online learners and those on Distance Learning programmes. The strategy recognises the diversity of the University's student body and seeks to reflect that diversity in the way support and experiences are designed and delivered.

Through ongoing consultation and partnership, the strategy reflects a shared vision between UON and the Students' Union, and shows a commitment to continuous improvement, student voice, and outlines how we should progressively empower our students at each stage of their study. Together, the University and the SU aim to create a culture where every student can thrive and contribute to shaping an outstanding university experience.



Our approach

The development of the University of Northampton's Student Experience Strategy 2025–2028 was a collaborative and evidence-informed exercise designed to centre student voice and promote institutional coherence. A core part of this approach was extensive consultation with both staff and students. These engagement activities included student listening rooms, student interviews, existing student feedback data, an online staff community and staff interviews to ensure our strategy was informed by the diverse perspectives of those that will be delivering it, and those that will be experiencing it.

The strategy is built around four strategic goals that collectively reflect the most important areas for enhancing the student experience:

- **Creating an inclusive environment and sense of belonging**
- **Promoting dialogue and co-creation with students**
- **Strengthening support for health and wellbeing**
- **Embedding employability across all aspects of student life.**

Notably, the first three goals are drawn directly from the overarching University Strategy, reinforcing institutional alignment. The fourth goal – employability – was introduced in response to clear and consistent feedback from students and staff, who identified it as a critical area for further development.

Throughout the strategy's formation, a strong focus was placed on prioritisation. Rather than proposing an expansion of activity, the methodology emphasised refining and focusing efforts to deliver what truly matters to students. This means making deliberate, evidence-based choices within each theme to direct resources and energy toward interventions with the greatest potential impact. Central to this approach is a recognition of the diversity of student experiences and needs, and a commitment to ensuring that all voices inform decision-making across the University.

Strategic themes



Theme 1: Strengthening student voice

At the University of Northampton, we believe that students must be active partners in shaping their educational experience. A strong, authentic student voice is central to building a responsive, inclusive and high-quality learning environment. Our strategy is to ensure that student voice is not just heard but genuinely listened to, acted upon and embedded into institutional decision-making.



Theme 2: Support students to confidently progress between levels of study

At the University of Northampton, we recognise that points of transition between levels of study are not just academic stages – they are crucial periods for building foundations, fostering belonging and equipping students for long-term success.



Theme 3: Embedding employability skills inside and outside the curriculum

At the University of Northampton, we are committed to preparing our students not only for graduation but for meaningful, future-focused careers. Employability is a priority and central to our student experience strategy. It is a core part of the student experience from day one, embedded in the curriculum, supported by co-curricular opportunities and aligned with regional and national skills agendas.



Theme 4: Enhancing the appeal of Northampton for students

To deliver a truly enriching student experience, the University of Northampton must play an active role in shaping and promoting the wider town environment in which students live and learn. We recognise that a strong connection between the University and the town of Northampton enhances students' sense of belonging, supports wellbeing and contributes to retention and success.

Theme 5: Structuring the academic year for the modern, working student

As Higher Education (HE) continues to evolve, so too must our approach to how learning is structured and delivered. Today's students increasingly balance study with work, caring responsibilities and other life commitments. To meet these changing needs, the University of Northampton will adopt a more flexible, student-centred approach to the academic calendar and timetabling, while maintaining academic integrity and regulatory compliance.



Theme 6: A University-wide approach to wellness and mental health

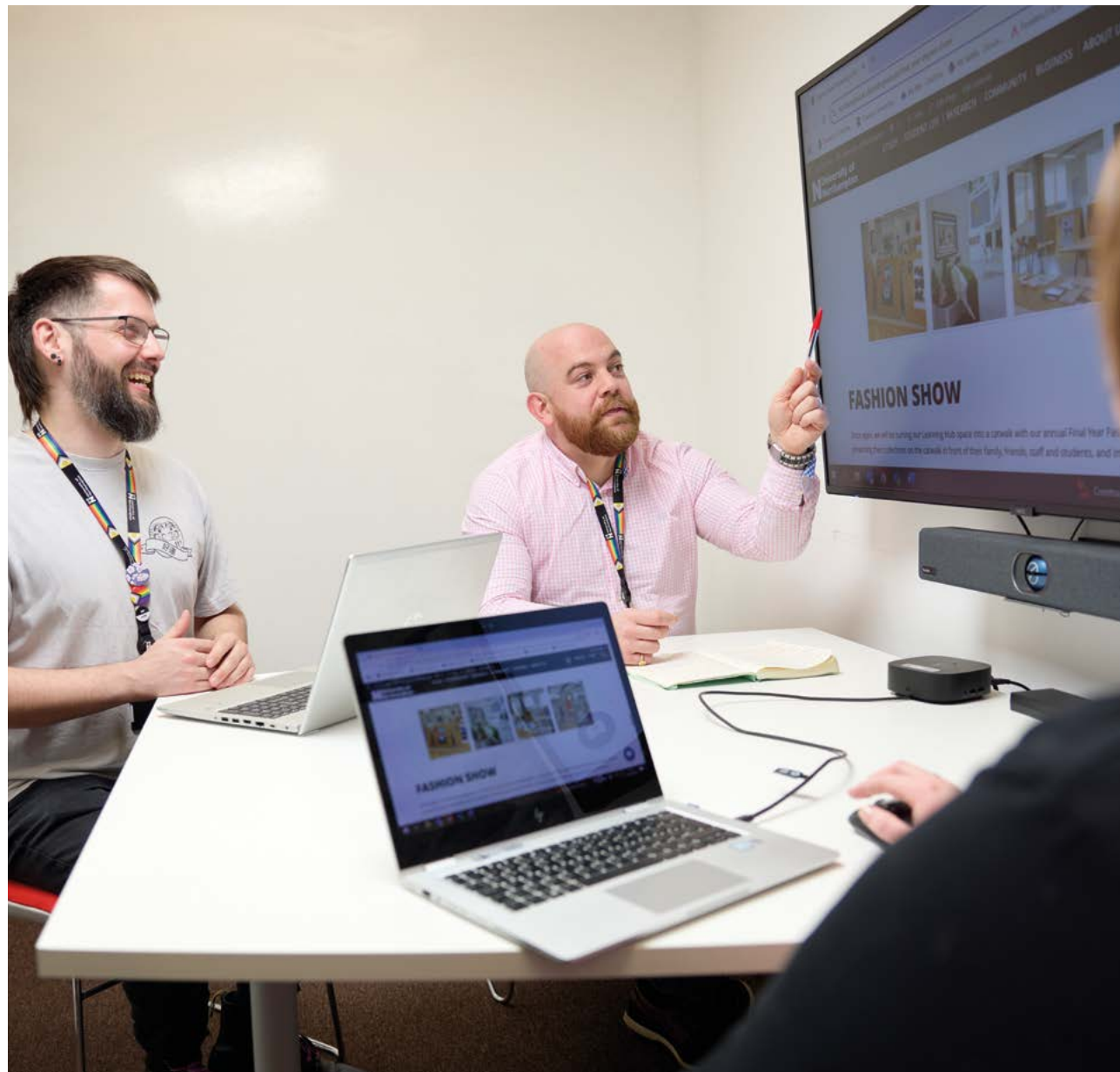
Wellbeing is not an add-on to the student experience – it is a core foundation of academic success, personal growth and community cohesion. The University of Northampton will take a whole-institution approach to wellness in line with its Mental Health Charter commitments, making it a visible, proactive and integrated part of university life for its students.



Strategic enablers

Staff training and development

We will provide targeted training and development for academic and professional services colleagues, enabling them to confidently deliver their parts of the strategy, and recognising their role as a UON ambassador. A development plan will be produced to align with the People Strategy, in conjunction with colleagues in Learning and Teaching Enhancement and Staff Development.



Student and staff communications

We will create clear, consistent and timely communication for students and staff by aligning University and SU messaging, ensuring everyone is informed, engaged, and able to contribute to the student experience. Our focus will be on transparency, accessibility and relevance across all communication channels.



Data and systems

We will work towards having simple, accurate and accessible data, supported by integrated and well-supported systems. A development plan will be produced to align with the Digital and Data Strategy, in conjunction with colleagues in IT.



Theme 1

Strengthening student voice

At the University of Northampton, we believe that students must be active partners in shaping their educational experience. A strong, authentic student voice is central to building a responsive, inclusive and high-quality learning environment. Our strategy is to ensure that the student voice is not just heard but genuinely listened to, acted upon and embedded into institutional decision-making.

Student-led priority setting

We will empower students to define what matters most to them. Rather than pre-determining agendas, we will actively seek their insights to shape institutional priorities in learning, support and campus life. Each Faculty and Directorate will be able to clearly articulate their approach to embedding this in their decision-making.

Genuine, ongoing dialogue

We will foster a culture of two-way communication, where student feedback is met with meaningful, timely responses. This requires a visible, continuous feedback loop, allowing students to see what has changed as a result of their input, whether on digital platforms, social media, or in physical spaces.



Transparent processes and survey planning

We will introduce a clear institutional plan and timeline for surveys and other feedback opportunities. Student feedback will be embedded into our quality assurance processes, and we will take responsibility for closing the loop on what has been heard and done.



Support and empowerment

We will review our approach to Student Representation across the University to ensure our approach is empowering for the student and effective for the University. Student representatives and committee members will be supported and trained to contribute with confidence and impact. Colleagues will be expected to actively mentor and include students in decision-making processes, not simply include them as a formality.

Staff development and accountability

We will develop a culture of openness and accountability, recognising the fact that listening to students is a skill. We will develop the capability of colleagues in empathetic communication and responsive practice, setting clear expectations about their role in the student feedback process.



Theme 2

Support students to confidently progress between levels of study

At the University of Northampton, we recognise that points of transition between levels of study are not just academic stages – they are crucial periods for building foundations, fostering belonging and equipping students for long-term success.

Scaffolding skills, not overloading content

We will prioritise the holistic development of the student both inside and outside of the classroom. There will be a breadth of development covering core academic, digital, social and employability skills, balanced with an appropriate level of subject content. This approach will support students in becoming confident, independent learners.

Inclusive, supported transitions

Whether students arrive from school, college or after a break from education, we will offer tailored, inclusive transition support to ensure everyone can 'hit the ground running'. This includes clear contextualisation of their learning and broader HE journeys, and being transparent regarding routes for progression.

Embedding a culture of attendance and engagement

Consistent attendance is a key indicator of student success. We will work to build a strong culture of participation, trust and belonging, supported by empathetic staff-student relationships and learning environments that encourage interaction and community.

Personal and social development

Alongside academic preparation we will foster the development of social networks, and provide opportunities for early friendship-building activities, such as field trips and group work. For those students living in dedicated student accommodation, we will support student transition to communal living.

Empowering self-reflection and employability awareness

Early engagement with reflective practices through Personal Development Planning and use of learner analytics data will help students identify areas for personal and professional development, preparing them to actively shape their academic and career journeys.

Encouraging pride in the institution

We will communicate in a way that reinforces students' connection to and pride in the University, and that allows them to see themselves as valued members of the UON community from day one.

Inclusive inductions fostering belonging, clarity and successful transitions

Develop and deliver inclusive course and University-level induction and re-induction experiences that actively engage students. Our priorities during this period are to develop early belonging, clarify academic expectations and build peer/staff connections, laying strong foundations for successful retention, progression and enhanced overall student satisfaction.

Setting students up to succeed at each level of study

We will develop a framework for re-enrolment and re-induction activities at each level of study and after any periods of study leave. We will also ensure that students who enrol late are supported, with key messages from induction, identification of named contacts and support to create a personal catch-up action plan.

Academic colleagues accessibility

We will explore ways to increase the visibility and accessibility of academic colleagues on campus. Enabling colleagues to feel a sense of belonging to, and pride in, UON will have an impact on students' sense of belonging.



Theme 3

Embedding employability skills inside and outside the curriculum



At the University of Northampton, we are committed to preparing our students not only for graduation, but for meaningful, future-focused careers. Employability is a priority and central to our Student Experience Strategy. It is a core part of the student experience from day one – embedded in the curriculum, supported by co-curricular opportunities and aligned with regional and national skills agendas.

Work-integrated learning and placements

We will create a co-ordinated framework to ensure that real work experience is embedded in every programme, progressively scaffolded across each academic year. Partnerships with employers will be strengthened to support guaranteed placements or work-based opportunities, including placement years, live briefs and consultancy-style challenges. Greater use of PSRBs (Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies) will further enhance course relevance and career awareness.



Curriculum integration and design

Employability will be embedded in all programmes through curriculum design that prioritises applying learning, digital fluency and the development of transferable skills. This includes the integration of authentic assessments, live projects and opportunities to engage with industry-standard tools and platforms, including AI and emerging technologies. A credit-bearing employability module will be explored to offer a structured, recognised pathway. We will also explore credit for volunteering and other skill-building activities.

Bringing industry on campus

We are committed to developing employer engagement boards to cover every department, to bridge the gap between education and employment. We will proactively invite employers onto campus for guest lectures, skills workshops, mentoring schemes and networking events. These activities will complement academic study and expose students to current industry practices and expectations.

Leveraging alumni expertise

Our graduates are a valuable resource. We will involve alumni in mentoring, career panels and storytelling initiatives that highlight real career paths and success stories.

Clear, targeted support for skills development

We will define and communicate what we mean by 'employability skills' in ways that are meaningful and measurable. Targeted support will be provided in areas of identified need, both within specific subject areas and across the University. Employability support will also be embedded within student academic societies and supported through peer networks.



Alignment with regional skills strategy

Our employability offer will align with the needs of the local and regional economy. We will work with partners to understand and address current skills gaps and use this insight to shape programme design and graduate pathways.

Enhancing on-campus opportunities

Supporting students to gain employability skills through working with and for us, whether as volunteers in the SU, via Unitemps in campus roles, through internships, or PGR students taking on teaching opportunities.

Developing students' entrepreneurial skills.

We will provide support to students to establish their own business, or to work as freelancers, including training opportunities, mentoring advice on funding streams and pitching competitions.



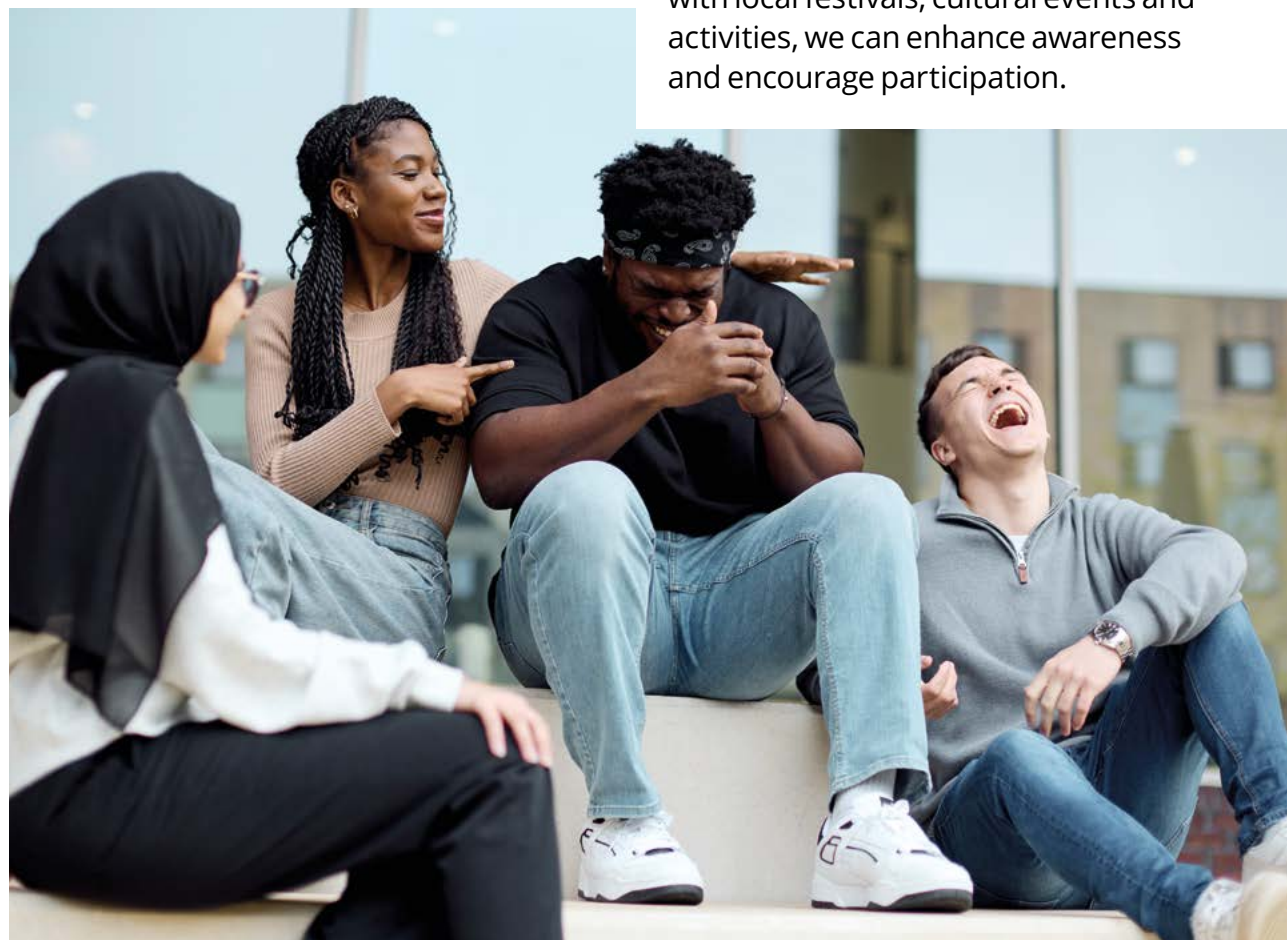
Theme 4

Enhancing the appeal of Northampton for students

To deliver a truly enriching student experience, the University of Northampton must play an active role in shaping and promoting the wider town environment in which students live and learn through our Estates Development Framework and influencing local plans. We recognise that a strong connection between the University and the town of Northampton enhances students' sense of belonging, supports wellbeing and contributes to retention and success.

Understanding what students need from Northampton

We will enhance our understanding of what our students want from the town and facilitate students being actively represented amongst local stakeholders.



Increasing awareness and engagement

We will improve how we communicate with students about events, opportunities and experiences in Northampton. By aligning University communications and social media with local festivals, cultural events and activities, we can enhance awareness and encourage participation.

Physical and social integration

There is a need to strengthen the physical integration between the University and the town. This includes encouraging more student-friendly walking routes, improving visibility of the University within the town and supporting the development of safe, inclusive spaces – both on and off campus – that offer alternatives to an alcohol-based nightlife.

Partnership and visibility

UON must be a visible and influential partner in local conversations, foregrounding student as well as University priorities. We will deepen engagement with the local council, employers and third-sector organisations to advocate for improved transport links, inclusive spaces and programmes that connect students and the local community.



Promoting Northampton's value

We will work to change perceptions among current students by celebrating Northampton's accessibility, connectivity, affordability and heritage. We will highlight key assets such as the Cultural Quarter and local history as unique selling points to both current and prospective students.



Theme 5

Structuring the academic year of the modern, working student



As Higher Education continues to evolve, so too must our approach to how learning is structured and delivered. Today's students increasingly balance study with work, caring responsibilities and other life commitments. To meet these changing needs, the University of Northampton will adopt a more flexible, student-centred approach to the academic calendar and timetabling, while maintaining academic integrity and regulatory compliance.

Maximising the value of campus

Recognising that students value our on-campus experience but often have competing priorities, we will continue to invest in making it worthwhile to attend. This means offering engaging in-person teaching, enhancing the feeling of community on campus via a mix of classroom and non-classroom-based interventions and ensuring efficient use of time for those balancing multiple priorities.

Flexibility within a clear framework

We will build flexibility into a structured academic framework. This means clearer timetables, sent earlier and with predictable in-person teaching days – such as three defined days per week on campus – so that students can plan work and personal responsibilities effectively. There will also be an effort to increase visibility of cancelled contact time and a reduction in instances.



Shaping the academic year

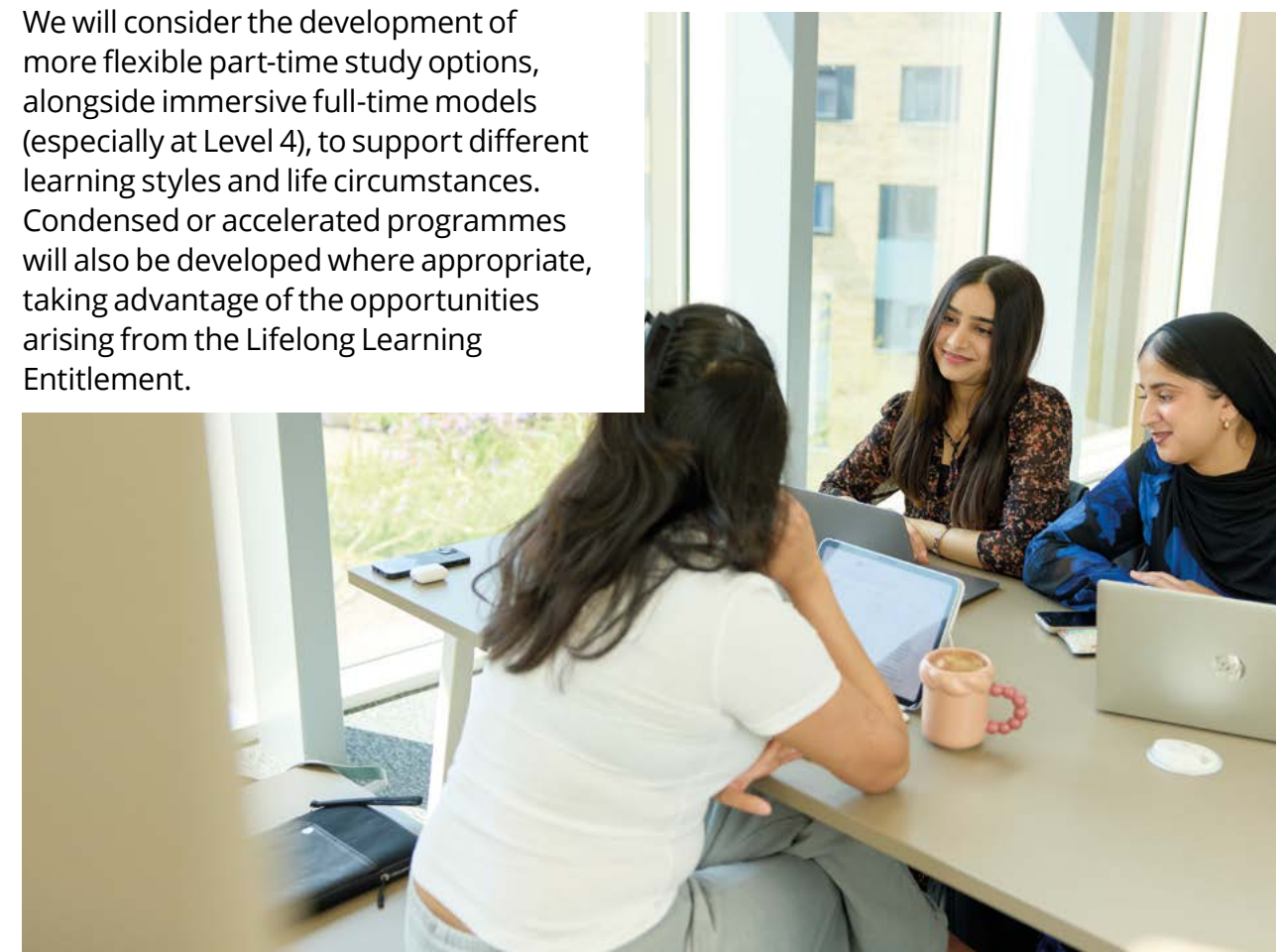
We will explore variations to the structure of the academic year. This should be shaped around student need and allow for more evenly distributed learning and assessment. This will include an exploration of flexible timetabling options, including pilot evening and weekend teaching sessions for some courses, to widen participation and support non-traditional study patterns.

Parking and transport

We will explore how we can improve student attendance and social belonging by making the campus more accessible to students with cars, as well as those using public transport, through the Estates Development Framework. We will also represent students' interests in influencing the development of improved transport infrastructure in the region.

Increased opportunities for part-time and immersive study

We will consider the development of more flexible part-time study options, alongside immersive full-time models (especially at Level 4), to support different learning styles and life circumstances. Condensed or accelerated programmes will also be developed where appropriate, taking advantage of the opportunities arising from the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.



Theme 6

A University-wide approach to wellness and mental health



Wellbeing is not an add-on to the student experience – it is a core foundation of academic success, personal growth and community cohesion. The University of Northampton will take a whole-institution approach to wellness in line with its Mental Health Charter commitments, making it a visible, proactive and integrated part of University life for its students.

Proactive and early intervention

By using learner analytics and other data sources effectively, we will identify early signs of disengagement or distress more frequently and intervene before problems escalate. Our approach will shift from reactive to proactive, spotting risks and supporting students sooner.

Mental health as a core study skill

We will embed the concept of mental wellness into the curriculum and broader student experience as a fundamental skill for academic performance and community integration. Building confidence, promoting balance and developing resilience will be central to the student journey.



Whole-community mental health first aid

All students and colleagues will be offered training in Mental Health First Aid, creating a community that is equipped to recognise distress, respond effectively and guide others toward appropriate support.

Visible, accessible, and inclusive support

Support services will be well promoted, easy to access and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of our students. We will normalise conversations around mental health, addressing cultural stigmas and fostering inclusive, judgment-free spaces.



Staff development and support

Colleagues play a key role in student wellbeing. We will invest in training and resources to help colleagues respond confidently to student concerns, to know when to signpost to specialist services and to understand how to maintain their own boundaries.

Integrated self-care culture

We will promote self-care through regular, positive opportunities such as sport, mindfulness, nutrition education and peer-led wellbeing activities. We will model these behaviours at all levels of the institution, encouraging colleagues and students to prioritise their health.

Empowered help-seeking

We will build students' confidence and knowledge in accessing the support they need. This includes demystifying available services, reducing barriers to engagement and encouraging peer-to-peer support networks.



Leverage our strengths and resources

We will make better use of our own academic expertise – such as psychology, health, and education programmes – to inform practice, innovate support models and involve students in co-developing solutions.

Partnerships and external connections

Continuing to develop strong links to local health providers, community organisations and wellbeing partners will ensure students receive holistic support that continues beyond the boundaries of the campus.

Measurable and transparent impact

We will demonstrate the effectiveness of our wellness approach through clear metrics, shared openly and developed in partnership with students.

Constructing a campus events calendar

The University and Students' Union will collaborate on an annual Campus Events Calendar to ensure that student health and wellness is at the centre of what students experience when attending UON locations.

Implementation plan

The implementation of the strategy will be overseen by the Student Experience Forum, which includes representatives from across the University, the Students' Union and students. Each of the six strands of activity has a dedicated sub-group tasked with developing a clear and measurable action plan and timeline. This includes milestones and targets for each year of the strategy. The sub-groups will incorporate feedback from colleagues and students, ensuring a collaborative approach. A paid, trained student lead will be appointed for each strand to ensure accountability and to oversee the delivery of the plan. [A copy of the action plans relating to the strategy can be located on the UON intranet, which is available for internal use only.](#)

Success measures

The strategy has formal KPIs linked to measures identified in the University Strategy. These relate to the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Student Survey and Graduate Outcomes Survey.

Throughout the operational action plan we have identified leading indicators linked to the theme areas, which will give us early confidence that our activities are having a positive impact.

However, the real impact of this strategy will be felt by our students and colleagues in their experiences as they study and work with us.





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Printed September 2025

