

# Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan

2020-24

 **STUDENTS'**  
**UNION UCL**

where **more** happens



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# Introduction

Welcome to Students' Union UCL's first Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan. Sustainability is increasingly becoming one of the biggest issues for our members, highlighting the importance of ensuring that the Students' Union continues to develop in ways that mean we will be able to meet the needs of future generations of UCL students.

***'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'***

*Brundtland, G. (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*





# *Vision*

**To be the most sustainable Students' Union in the UK, ensuring that our organisation minimises its environmental footprint, and makes a positive contribution to ensuring a sustainable environment and community for future generations of students**

A woman and a man are seated at a table, looking at a laptop screen. The woman is on the left, and the man is on the right. The image has a teal overlay. The word "Mission" is written in a large, bold, italicized font on the left side of the image.

# *Mission*

**To embed sustainability in everything we do and to help educate and empower our members to take positive action and to have the skills and opportunities to be leaders of wider societal change on issues of sustainability**

## Core themes

In order to achieve our vision and mission, we have created **four core themes** which reflect the distinct areas of work in our action plan. These are:

**Operations.** Covering how the Union operates as an organisation and the way in which we can be more sustainable as a charity.

**Student Engagement.** Cementing students in our decision-making and empowering students to embed sustainability in every part of their lives

**Governance.** Ensuring the Students' Union embeds sustainability in decision-making across the organisation, and that the Union is held accountable for the actions we will set out in the action plan.

**External Advocacy.** Ensuring that our members have the knowledge, skills and opportunities to influence sustainability practice across UCL, London and beyond, being community leaders and helping shape the national agenda for sustainability as it affects students.



# Headline commitments

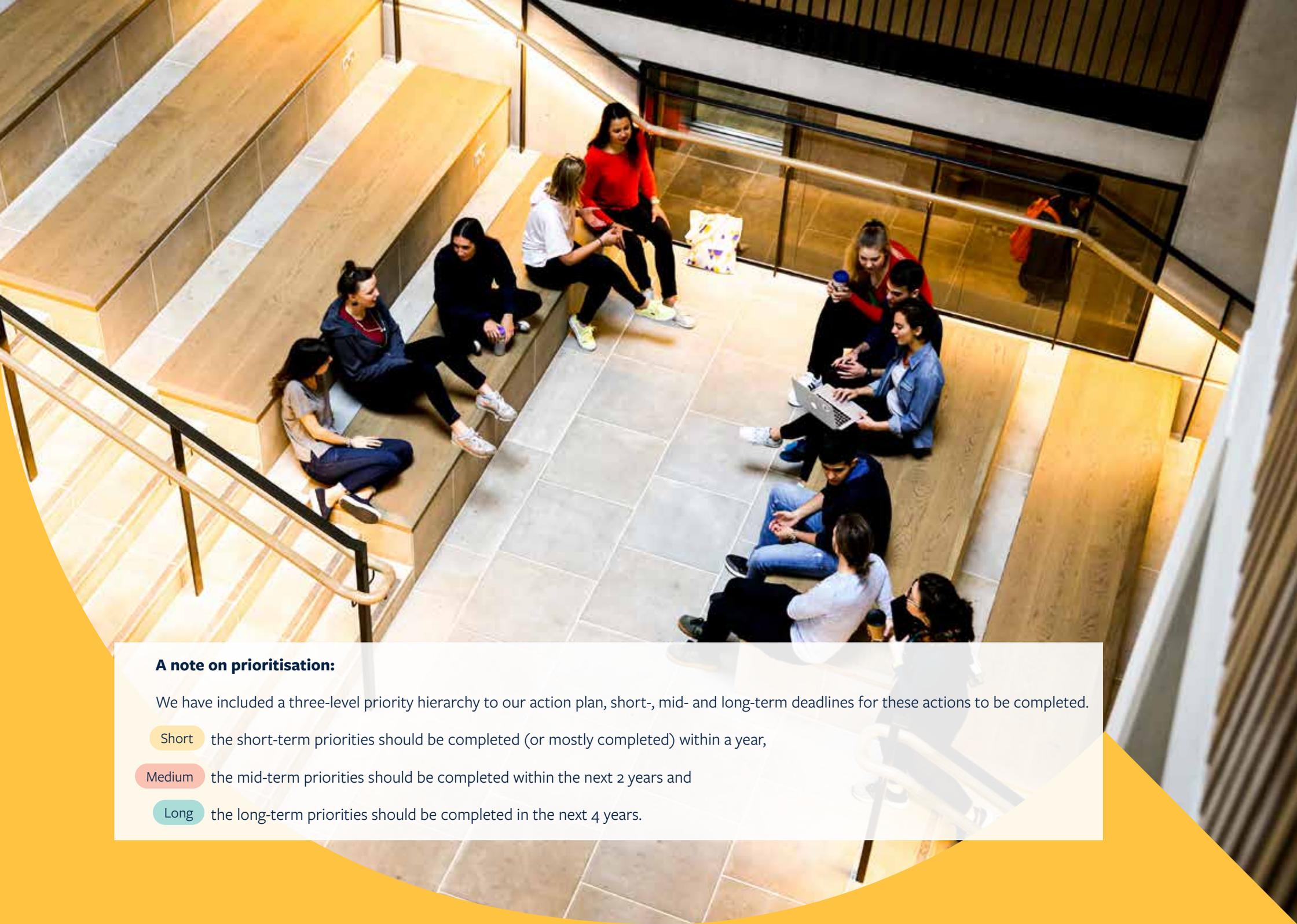
Our headline commitments are:

**Commission an external environmental audit of the Students' Union**

**Implement carbon footprint labels for all of our products**

**Launch a carbon offset scheme for our students and staff when they travel**

 **Academic  
Representatives**



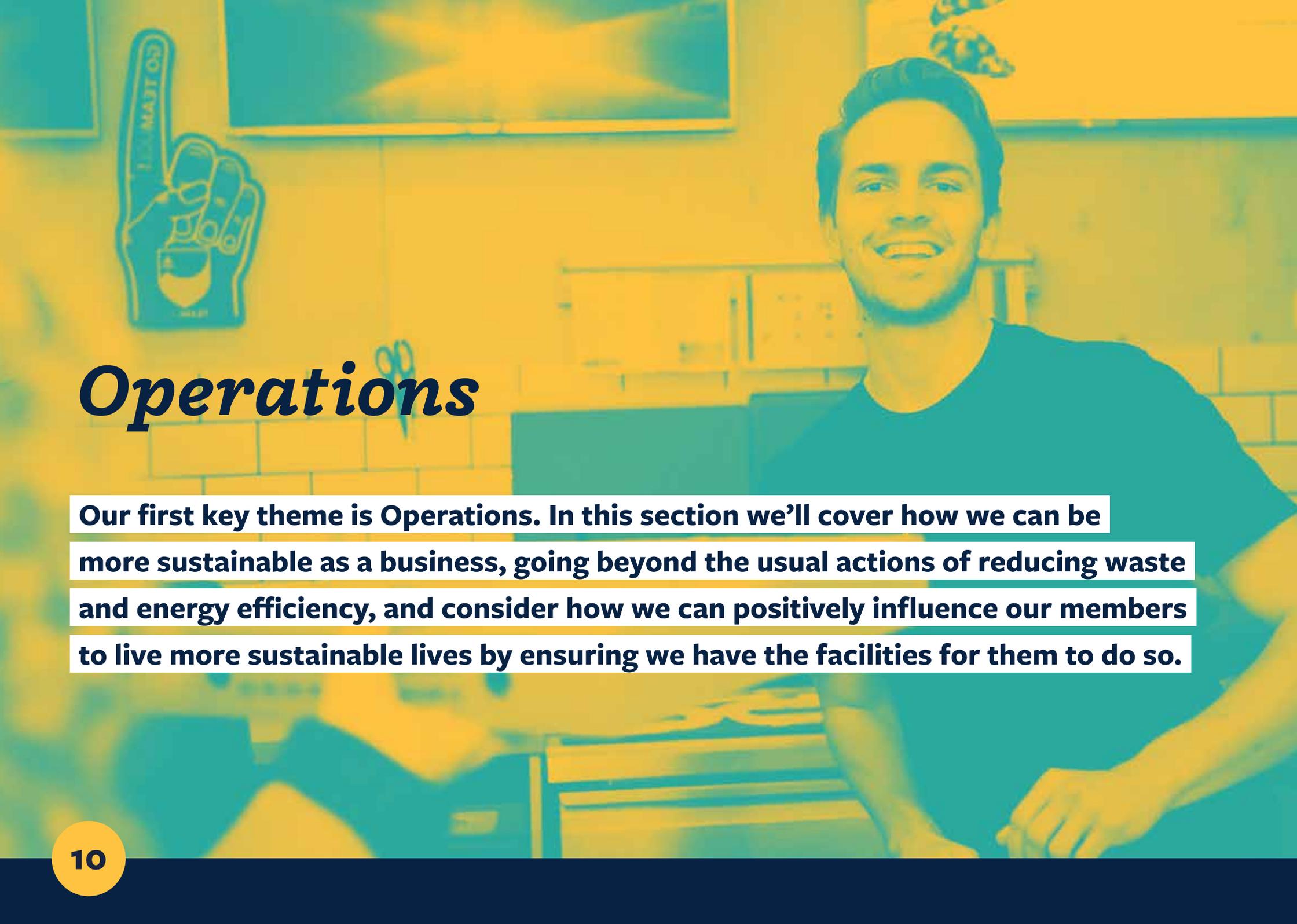
### **A note on prioritisation:**

We have included a three-level priority hierarchy to our action plan, short-, mid- and long-term deadlines for these actions to be completed.

**Short** the short-term priorities should be completed (or mostly completed) within a year,

**Medium** the mid-term priorities should be completed within the next 2 years and

**Long** the long-term priorities should be completed in the next 4 years.

A smiling man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a blue t-shirt, is sitting at a wooden table in a cafe. He is looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a brick wall with a hand-shaped sign that says "I'M MAJING" and a pair of scissors hanging on the wall. The overall scene is brightly lit and has a warm, inviting atmosphere.

# *Operations*

**Our first key theme is Operations. In this section we'll cover how we can be more sustainable as a business, going beyond the usual actions of reducing waste and energy efficiency, and consider how we can positively influence our members to live more sustainable lives by ensuring we have the facilities for them to do so.**

# Commerical outlets

Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Hot drinks</b>	Encourage more of our customers to use reduce their single use waste by incentivising the use of reusable cups and improving the 'sit-down' experience	Work with UCL on a joined up approach to significantly increase the price differential between single-use and reusable cups	Short
		Improve, and where possible, extend seating areas in all cafes and ceramic cup provision so that fewer people use single-use cups	Long
		Collaborate with UCL in investigating the use of disposable cups	Long
	We want more of our members to make informed choices about the drinks they buy	Effectively communicate the no extra cost for plant milk	Short
		Make plant milk the default	Medium
	We should be doing all that we can to reduce the waste we produce	Investigate and implement ways to reuse our used coffee grounds	Medium
<b>Food range</b>	Ensure that we only sell products that are sustainably sourced and that this is effectively communicated to our members	Reduce the number of beef products we sell	Short
		Increase the range of vegetarian and vegan food we sell	Short
		Encourage our members to eat more vegetarian and vegan foods by creating exclusive deals for customers	Short

Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Food packaging</b>	Enable our members to make informed choices about the food they eat	Collaborate with Sustainable UCL to implement carbon footprint labels for food, or simpler marketing showing how meat and dairy have the biggest environmental impact	Medium
	Ensure the packaging for our products is sustainable and 100% recyclable	Collaborate with Sustainable UCL to investigate ways of ensuring that all packaging from food products can be recycled or composted. Influence suppliers to develop more sustainable packaging to reduce amount of food packaging thrown away and ensure that this is a requirement when supplier contracts are re-tendered	Medium
<b>The Hanger</b>	Ensure we only sell sustainable products	Only sell fair-trade cotton products in our shop	Medium
<b>Bars</b>	Make our bars single-use plastic free	Introduce hard-plastic cups for busy nights instead of using disposable plastic cups	Medium

# The Students' Union as an organisation

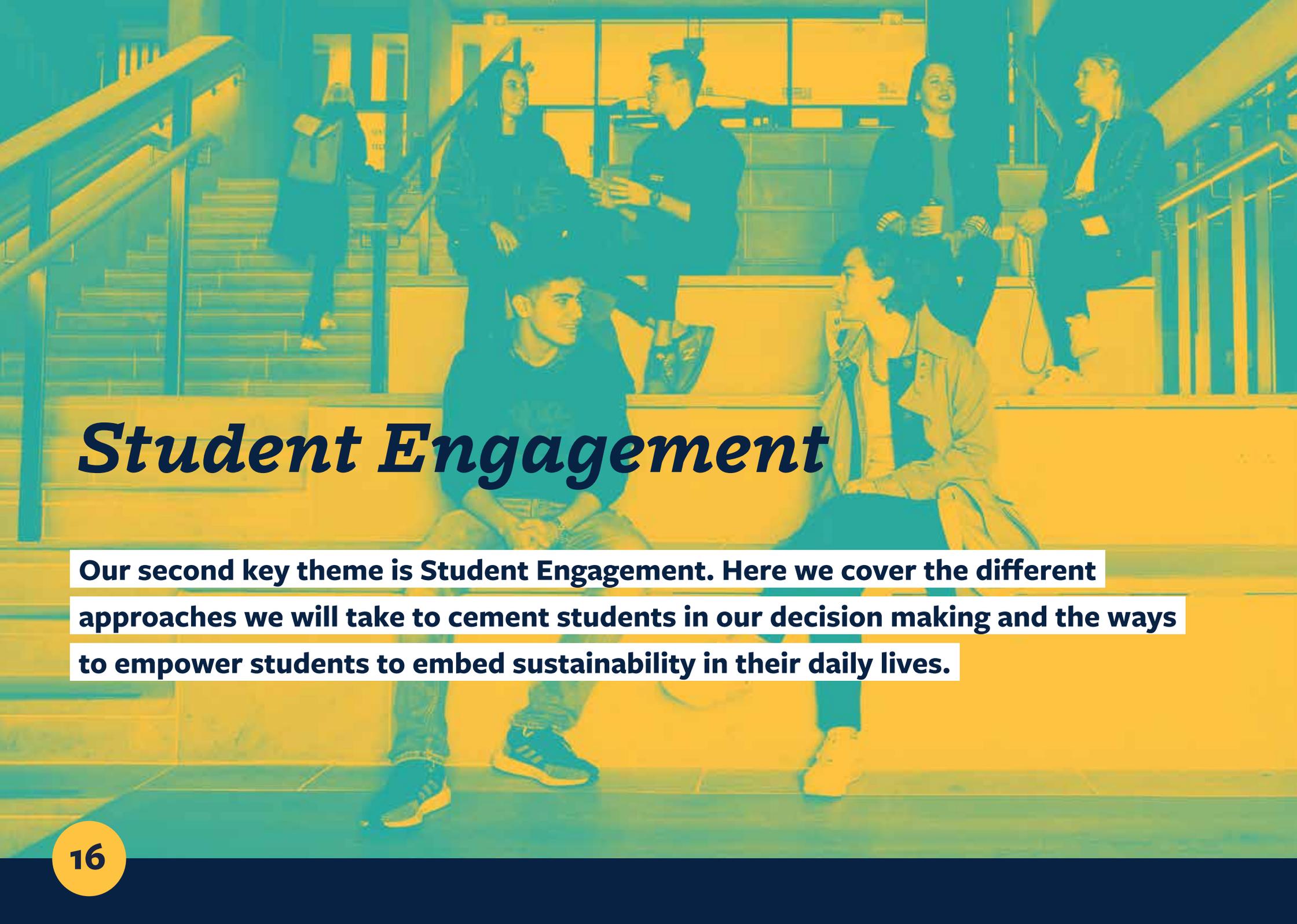
Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Entire organisation</b>	Understand our current strengths and areas for improvement in terms of environmental sustainability	Commission an environmental audit of the Students' Union	Medium
		Commission a departmental review of every department, to ensure tailored solutions are found for each part of the Union	Medium
		Establish a Sustainability Working Group to coordinate all sustainability actions	Short
<b>Human Resources</b>	Encourage our employees to work in the most sustainable ways	Adapt the home working policy to increase flexibility and encourage all of our employees to have the ability to work from home on a more frequent basis	Medium
		Encourage our employees to minimise travel and off-set their travel emissions	Working with Sustainable UCL, explore the establishment of a voluntary scheme for staff to off-set their travel to work via payroll giving or similar
<b>Meetings and events</b>	Ensure we are sustainable in everything we do, including in the office and at meetings and events	Eliminate bottled water in event and meeting catering	Medium
		Automatic opt-in vegetarian catering	
		Print by request, not by default	Medium
<b>Banking</b>	Ensure Union funds are placed in the most ethically responsible banks	Ensure our Welcome Fair is environmentally sustainable	Medium
		Review our current banking arrangements and ensure our investments are suitably placed	Medium

# Facilities and procurement

Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Energy use</b>	Ensure we only use energy when needed	Review and update lighting across our buildings and commercial outlets	Medium
	Utilise every opportunity for sustainable energy generation	Review energy efficiency and make shutdown protocols more stringent	Short
		Scope the viability of energy-generating gym equipment and of solar panels / wind energy generation at our sports ground	Long
<b>Facilities</b>	Ensure our facilities support students who want to live more sustainably	Install more water fountains in Union spaces	Medium
		Develop a 'student kitchen' in the Union, so that our members can have access to hot water and cleaning facilities	Medium
<b>Procurement</b>	Ensure we procure the most sustainable products with the lowest impact to the environment	Develop a new Union procurement policy with strong sustainability requirements, and implement ways to ensure suppliers are maintaining sustainability requirements	Short
		Audit how we clean our spaces and what products are used	Medium

# Clubs and Societies

Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Sustainable Societies</b>	Empower our student leaders and communities to be sustainable in everything they do	Develop a resource centre for clubs and societies so that they can use reusable crockery, glasses, pitchers etc. for their events	Medium
	Utilise every opportunity for sustainable energy generation	Update Sustainable Societies checklist	Short
		Review what products clubs and societies are buying most often and see if the Union can find and supply reusable alternatives	Medium
		Adapt club and society reimbursement to ensure our members are using the most sustainable products	Medium
<b>Travel</b>	Ensure our members travel with the least impact to the environment	Review then current lifespan of sports kits and incentivise multi-year use	Medium
		Adapt club and society travel reimbursement to ensure our members are using the most sustainable modes of transport and provide an easy to use optional scheme for clubs and society members to off-set their travel emissions	Medium
		Scope the viability of moving our sports ground so that our teams can use public transport to and from home matches	Medium



# ***Student Engagement***

**Our second key theme is Student Engagement. Here we cover the different approaches we will take to cement students in our decision making and the ways to empower students to embed sustainability in their daily lives.**

# Education

Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Academic</b>	Our members are able to embed sustainability in their education	Lobby for sustainability to be a permanent part of Student Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs)	Short
<b>Marketing</b>	Ensure our members understand the necessity of sustainability and the impact of the climate crisis around the world	Introduce weekly core messages and add key sustainability themes to Communications grids	Short
		Create a pledge that we ask all students to do at the beginning of every year, encouraging everyone to be more sustainable in their daily lives	Short
		Embed sustainability into all events we hold	Medium

# Community

Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Democracy</b>	Ensure our members know how they can get involved with sustainability within the Students' Union and more widely at UCL	Introduce re-use markets for students to donate their unwanted equipment for other students to use	Medium
		Develop and sustain a community of Sustainability Ambassadors	Short
		Develop a 'sustainability hub' on the Union website to help people find information and get involved	Medium
		Strengthen the Student Sustainability Council so that it becomes the forum for student participation sustainability at UCL	Short



# ***Governance***

**Our third key theme is Governance. Within this section we cover our approaches to ensure we embed sustainability in decision making across the organisation and the approaches to ensure we are held accountable for the actions we set out in this action plan.**

# The Students' Union as an organisation

Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Human Resources</b>	Embed sustainability into every person's role at the Students' Union	Embed sustainability in job descriptions of key roles across the Students' Union	Long
		Appoint a staff sustainability champion/SMT sustainability lead	Short
		Add a mandatory sustainability objective into the appraisal process for all staff	Medium
<b>Planning and accreditation</b>	Ensure we are forward-thinking, plan for a sustainable future and continue to push the Students' Union to be a world class sustainable Students' Union	Add sustainability as a mandatory requirement in all Departmental Operating Plans	Short
		Gain ISO 14001 accreditation	Medium
		Gain the Gold Green Impact Award	Medium

# The Students' Union as a charity

Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Board of Trustees</b>	Empower our Board of Trustees to hold the Students' Union accountable to this action plan and future sustainability work	Regularly report on sustainability to the Board to increase oversight and accountability	Short
		Require business cases presented to Board to have environmental impacts and sustainability	Short
		Establish a 'Sustainability' committee of the Board	Medium

A photograph of two young women with long hair, smiling and looking towards the right. They are wearing denim jackets. The background is a blurred library or study area with bookshelves. The entire image has a teal and yellow color overlay.

# *External Advocacy*

**Our fourth key theme is External Advocacy. Here we cover our approaches to ensure that our members have the knowledge, skills and opportunities to influence sustainability practice across UCL, London and beyond, and the ways to help our members shape the national agenda for sustainability as it affects students.**

# Local community

Key activity	Outcome	Action	Priority
<b>Democracy</b>	Our student leaders are able to influence local councils and national government to further sustainability in the UK	Lobby Camden Council to improve air quality and increase cycling provision around Bloomsbury	Medium
		Lobby the Mayor of London and local MPs to ensure sustainability is a priority on their agendas	Medium
		Invite candidates of local and national elections to events so that our members are able to directly question their sustainability agendas	Short



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