

# Annual Plan 2024




# Introduction

Starting from 2024, the Student Union has a new long-term strategy that forms the basis for our Annual Plans. This Annual Plan is largely an operationalisation of the Strategic Plan, but also contains additional goals and indicators. Based on our new strategy, input from many stakeholders, and our own experiences as Student Union board, the Annual Plan for 2024 has been created.

In this Annual Plan of 2024, attunement has been sought with the overarching vision of Shaping 2030 to align the goals with the broader strategy of UT. Furthermore, through valuable input from diverse stakeholders, we have identified key focus areas and established an overview of important trends and observations that have a significant impact on students and student life. These trends are the changing student population, increased focus on personal development, decline in active students, digitalisation, political developments on the potential lowering of Binding Study Advice (BSA) and internationalisation, the changing financial pressure on students, the financial situation of UT and lastly student's mental well-being under pressure.

In all these changing external circumstances, the Student Union underlines what she stands for: the extracurricular personal development of students at UT. Yet it is crucial to remain in touch with these changes, to update and identify in which ways students can achieve 'More Than A Degree' in 2024. So besides identifying *in what ways* students wish to personally develop themselves, it is of equal importance to ensure that it is actually possible to do so. Therefore, the organisational and financial continuity of both the Student Union as an organisation and the Union Participants it supports is the other major point of focus. Alongside ensuring continuity it is also vital to address ever-relevant topics such as well-being and sustainability. What may be complementary to both points of focus discussed above is seeking the connection with other Student Union-like organisations to share knowledge and experiences.

On the following page our mission, values and vision will be introduced. Thereafter the focus points mentioned above will be touched upon, each with its own goals and indicators. Lastly, Appendix A provides context on our current organisational structure.



# Structure

As the Student Union our mission is **to do everything in our capacity to empower our fellow students, to achieve more than a degree.** This mission forms the basis to reach our vision, to create an UT community where every UT student can work on their personal development through extracurricular student engagement.


The vision is built upon our following core values:

- **Student well-being:** Everything we do contributes to the mental and physical well-being of our students;
- **Student-driven:** Students fuel our organisation and are the main part of our organisation;
- **In two-way interaction with students and UT staff:** We involve students, student organisations and UT staff to fulfil our mission and reach our goals. We are easy to approach;
- **Inclusive, equitable and diverse:** We stand for a diverse organisation and student life in which everyone can participate;
- **Quality above quantity:** We aim to deliver high quality policies and services;
- **Entrepreneurial:** We are constantly looking for new opportunities, setting up and stimulate new initiatives that support our mission;
- **Sustainable:** We commit to promoting and fostering a sustainable future in all aspects of our organisation.

Our strategic priorities are forming our strategic plan, built on our vision, mission and core values, and are as follows:

- **Personal development is what we stand for**
- **Support of our Union Participants**
- **Continuity**
- **Making connections**

For each strategic priority we formulate multiple focus points, that give a concrete direction for what we want to achieve in the coming four years. At the same time, these focus points leave sufficient room for their implementation. Each focus point is provided with clear goals and one or more (measurable) indicators. The goal sets a clear point on the horizon, while the indicator gives insight into future progress. Altogether, this structure creates a clear guide for future plans and reports.



# Context

This section aims to explain important trends and observations that significantly impact students and student life and thus our strategy.

## Changing student population

Through several developments, the student population at UT and on its campus has changed and is anticipated to change in the upcoming years. Notably, UT experienced substantial growth from 2018 to 2021, with a remarkable increase of 17.6% in student enrolment (Source: UT annual reports). However, this growth in student numbers is expected to stagnate. Concurrently, the student body has witnessed a notable surge in international representation. Furthermore, the relocation of the ITC faculty to the campus has introduced a new cohort of students on campus. In line with UT's heightened emphasis on Lifelong Learning, the student population is expected to further diversify in terms of age.

## Increased focus on personal development


In a broader context, there is a growing societal emphasis on the personal development of individuals. Recognising the significance of self-development, UT has incorporated this important aspect as one of the three fundamental elements in their Vision on Learning and Teaching (Source: UT). These evolving developments present valuable opportunities for advancing the Student Union's mission, as the line between extracurricular and curricular personal growth is increasingly becoming less distinct.

## Decline in active students

A decrease is noticed in the number of students actively seeking involvement in student organisations and engaging in student life. While it remains uncertain whether this decline is a permanent or temporary trend, similar patterns have been observed in other student cities across the Netherlands. Several factors could contribute to this decline, including societal shifts toward individualism, the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has limited certain cohorts of students' connections with student life, and an increased emphasis on student well-being, leading students to opt for a lighter extra-curricular workload.

## Digitalisation

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the digitalisation of education, developments such as blended education can have advantages for the quality of education. However, more online education can also have negative implications for student life. One notable side effect is the reduction in face-to-face interactions among students, leading to negative consequences for community-building. However, it is important to recognise that online platforms also present opportunities for students to connect with one another in alternative ways.



## Political developments

Discussions within national politics hold significant implications for student life, and we rely on their outcomes. The first important topic is the potential lowering of the Binding Study Advice (BSA), which could provide students with greater flexibility to engage in extracurricular activities during their first year of studying while also leading to a prolonged period of uncertainty about whether they can keep following their study program. The second ongoing national debate revolves around the internationalisation of Dutch higher education, a matter that directly affects the well-established international community at UT. It is crucial for us to closely monitor these discussions and actively engage in the conversation to advocate for the interests and needs of our student population.

## Financial pressure


The escalating costs of accommodation and the overall cost of living have placed a growing financial burden on many students. While having a (side) job(s) to deal with this increased financial pressure has various benefits for the personal development of students, the increased financial pressure can also directly impact their ability to participate in extracurricular activities and hinder their forthcoming personal development. However, the reintroduction of the Basisbeurs (basic grant) holds the potential to provide students with greater financial freedom. By alleviating some of the financial constraints, the Basisbeurs offers students the opportunity to pursue a wider range of extracurricular activities, fostering their personal growth and development. However, it must be noted that the reintroduction of the Basisbeurs only alleviates the financial pressure on Dutch students.

## Student's mental well-being under pressure

Within society, there is a growing emphasis on the mental well-being of students, driven by concerns over the declining mental health among the student population. Findings from the 'Mentale Gezondheid en Middelengebruik Studenten Hoger Onderwijs' survey indicate that nearly all students experience stress, with 62% reporting high levels of stress. Additionally, 54% of students feel significant pressure to perform. While engaging in activities to achieve 'More Than A Degree,' can positively contribute to students' well-being by fostering connections with like-minded peers, it is important to acknowledge that the pursuit of such goals can also exacerbate the pressure felt by students.

## Financial situation UT 2024

The feasibility of the objectives outlined in this annual plan will depend on several factors, including the university's challenging financial situation and the currently unknown impact this may have on the Student Union. Furthermore, the transition from UT-Flex to Driessen and the resulting financial implications directly influence the Student Union's potential workforce and, consequently, its output for the year 2024.



# Personal development is what we stand for

This section aims to explain the subthemes within the personal development theme, including their respective goals and indicators.

## Conveying the More Than A Degree message

Starting from the orientation phase and throughout every phase of student life, students should be well-informed about the opportunities available to them and the value of pursuing 'More Than A Degree.' The message conveyed should be motivational, aiming to inspire students without imposing extracurricular activities upon them. The goal is to ensure that students understand the benefits and possibilities of engaging beyond their studies, allowing them to make informed choices that align with their personal and professional goals and circumstances. To broaden the reach of the MTAD message it is essential to optimally use the available channels of UT and the SU.

### Goal

The range of channels used to spread the MTAD message is broadened.


### Indicators

- During the Open Days at UT, there have been two or more possible contact moments for new students with the 'More Than A Degree' brand.
- The 'More Than A Degree' message has been promoted through channels of all umbrellas.
- It has been determined whether and how the other available SU and UT channels can be (better) utilised to spread the MTAD message.

## Enabling students to achieve 'More Than A Degree'

The Student Union recognises the necessity of adapting to the evolving needs of students in their personal development. To effectively respond to these changing needs, it is crucial to monitor and analyse trends in students' extracurricular activities. Currently, the tracking of data is primarily focused on active students within student associations. However, it is highly valuable to gather data on other forms of student engagement as well, such as student entrepreneurship or student engagement within foundations.

Expanding the scope of data collection to encompass a wide range of student engagement is essential. Moreover, it is imperative to ensure that the data collected is reliable and accurate. By harnessing the power of data, the Student Union can make more informed decisions regarding the actions taken to motivate and support students in achieving 'More Than A Degree'. Data-driven insights will enable the Student Union to tailor their initiatives effectively, thereby facilitating students' personal development in the most meaningful and impactful ways.



## Goal

More data in terms of quantity and reliability is gathered to monitor the personal development of students.

## Indicators

- Three actions have been defined, and their execution has started to improve the reliability of data gathered by the activism monitor.
- Two ways have been researched and mapped to extend the monitoring of the personal development of students.

## Recognition and appreciation for active students

In the Strategic Plan 2024-2027 there is a focus on recognising and appreciating extracurricular activities, with study advisors being a crucial stakeholder in this regard. Study advisors should be informed about the significance, benefits, and opportunities that 'More Than A Degree' entails. By raising awareness and promoting understanding, we aim to cultivate a supportive environment where study advisors value and appreciate the involvement of students in extracurricular activities. The current educational vision of UT, Vision on Learning and Teaching, takes personal development as one of its key pillars. Therefore, collaboration between the Student Union and the execution of the Vision on Learning and Teaching would strengthen both efforts.


## Goal

Study advisors are better informed about the possibilities and the advantages of More Than A Degree.

## Indicators

- A plan has been drafted to inform study advisors about (extra-curricular) personal development in collaboration with the execution of UT Vision on Learning and Teaching.
- The execution of the plan as described in the indicator above has started.


Edubadges have the potential to serve as an excellent means of recognising students' extracurricular activities. Currently, the Student Union grants Edubadges for full- and part-time board positions, confidential contact persons, and committee members. However, there are additional forms of student engagement that have yet to be eligible for an Edubadge. Furthermore, the brand awareness surrounding Edubadges remains limited. Therefore, there should be a focus on making the value of an Edubadge better known by important stakeholders such as students, the university, and future employers. By showcasing the value and benefits of Edubadges, the Student Union can enhance its recognition and acceptance, ensuring that students, the university, and future employers are fully aware of their worth.



## Goal

Edubadges are a commonly known form of recognition for a broad range of ways of working on personal development.

## Indicators

- Student entrepreneurs that participate in e.g., Novel-T Advanced program or UT Challenge can receive an Edubadge for their efforts.
  - Student trainers or instructors providing above 60 hours of training or instruction per academic year can receive an Edubadge for their contribution to sports or culture associations.
  - A promotion plan has been written and executed for the promotion of Edubadges towards students, the university, and future employers.
  - In 2024, 200 Edubadges have been awarded in recognition of the personal development of students (2022: 49).
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# Support of Union Participants

This section aims to explain the subthemes within the Union Participants theme, including their respective goals and indicators.

## Well-being & social safety

Boards of the different Union Participants informed the Student Union during input sessions for the strategic plan 2024-2027 and during an evaluation performed for the Amnesty Manifesto that they need more guidelines regarding social safety and well-being. This information would help them support members or refer them to the right facilities at UT when they are struggling with mental health or end up in unsafe situations. The Student Union will set up and distribute these tools and guidelines in collaboration with parties such as SWIP, DE&I and Integral Safety.

### Goal

The Student Union provides guidelines to support the Union Participants regarding the well-being and social safety of its members.

### Indicators

- Research has been conducted to determine the necessary guidelines to support the Union Participants.
- Guidelines are being created in collaboration with the Union Participants, SWIP, DE&I, and Integral safety.

Besides the need for additional and more precise guidelines, associations have also highlighted that there is still a lack of awareness regarding existing resources for well-being and social safety at the university. Hence, it is crucial to keep focusing on providing the boards of Union Participants with information to increase knowledge of existing resources. Notably, in 2023, an information session during the well-being weeks held by SACC in collaboration with the SU, was very well received. So the goal is to continue and expand these efforts the upcoming year.


### Goal

The boards of the Union Participants are informed about the well-being and social safety offer at UT.

### Indicators

- A training, workshop, or information session has been hosted two times.
- 20% of the Union Participants have attended the training, workshop, or information session.

Last year, confidential contact persons (peer listeners) were set up in collaboration with SWIP and SACC working for all students of the university. Associations stated that the confidential persons from their associations would like to receive similar training as the confidential contact persons of the university. The Student Union would like to support its participants by setting this up.



## Goal

The Student Union supports its Union Participants regarding social safety by providing a training for the Union Participants confidential persons.

## Indicators

- A training, workshop, or information session has been hosted two times.
- 20% of the Union Participants have attended the training, workshop or information session.

## Contribution to a sustainable environment

With the introduction of the sustainability fund, the demand for additional support for associations around making sustainable choices has become apparent. Moreover, sustainability is becoming an increasingly important topic discussed within the university partly due to regulations and sustainability goals imposed by the government. To ensure that associations do not incur unnecessary fines for violating regulations e.g. Single-Use Plastics, and become more aware of sustainability and sustainable choices they can make, the Student Union foresees it as her task to support Union Participants in various ways. Moreover, events that create awareness around this topic should be retained and innovated. The Eco-Challenge is a nice example of an event that is accessible to any student and still has the potential to grow to be a larger event where more topics in sustainability are touched upon.

## Goal

The Student Union supports its Union Participants in regard to sustainability.

## Indicators

- Every Union Participant has been stimulated to appoint a sustainability coordinator.
- There is a training, workshop, or information session available for the sustainability coordinator within each affiliated association.
- The sustainability fund has been evaluated based on offer and financial capacity in comparison with demand.
- Two sustainable events have been organised for Union Participants to raise awareness and stimulate sustainable initiatives.

Recent years have made it very clear that the sustainable development of the UnionLocations is not only an option, but a clear mission. The Student Union recognises this. The durable renovation of the University Watersports Complex is already part of the *Long-Term Strategic Housing Plan (LTSH)* at UT and will start at the beginning of 2024. Furthermore, there is still potential for development in two key aspects for the buildings Bastille and Pakkerij: the technical state of the UnionLocations and the behaviour of its residents.



## Goal

The Student Union makes the UnionLocations Bastille and Pakkerij more sustainable.

## Indicators

- For the Bastille and Pakkerij short-term maintenance and upgrades have been set up to make these buildings more sustainable. This is in close cooperation with CFM.
- For the Bastille and Pakkerij, a road map that stimulates sustainable behaviour for its residents has been developed.



# Continuity

This section aims to explain the subthemes within the continuity theme, including their respective goals and indicators.

## Continuity of Union Participants

The involvement of Union Participants plays a vital role in extracurricular student engagement. Union Participants provide opportunities for students to engage in personal development in a wide range of topics and at various levels. Without the active presence of Union Participants, the Student Union cannot fulfil her mission. Therefore, ensuring the continuity of Union Participants is crucial. Unfortunately, some Union Participants face challenges in areas such as recruiting new board members, securing sufficient financial resources and accommodation (for example accommodating themselves, their members or the events that are organised). The Student Union recognises these capacity issues and aims to support and address them by providing assistance and monitoring capacity gaps. Please note that this Annual Plan is the first one written after the new Strategic Plan 2024-2027 has been established. Therefore, during this year first steps will be taken which consist of monitoring, evaluating and gathering data. In the next years, this information will be used to set up concrete actions to reach the following goal.


### Goal

The Student Union supports Union Participants in reaching or maintaining a healthy organisational, financial and accommodation capacity.

### Indicators

- The data derived from the activism monitor regarding the percentage of students that are volunteering to support the organisation of the Union Participants has been evaluated.
- An overview of the number of people on the waiting lists of every association has been composed.
- The implementation of the new world sector design has started.
- All viable sports and culture associations have a place in the new FAM (Facility Allocation Model) Sports and FAM Culture respectively.
- An evaluation has been conducted on the accommodation capacity for student entrepreneurship, student teams, boards or substantial committees.
- It is advocated that the Masterplan Sports & Culture plans will be realised as soon as possible.

The Student Union deeply values the contributions made by all Union Participants. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that resources are limited. For this reason, occasionally choices need to be made to establish a sustainable and thriving community of Union Participants that can be built upon. As the Student Union, it is necessary to determine the desired level of viability for the Union Participants and develop strategies to reach this level. Ultimately, the objective is to establish a vibrant community comprising of diverse Union Participants that actively promotes and facilitates extracurricular student engagement in the best yet feasible manner.



## Goal

The Student Union encourages the existence of viable Union Participants.

## Indicators

- The vision of the Student Union outlining when a Union Participant is considered viable and when it is not, has been discussed and written.
- It is discussed and written down what will be done when a Union Participant is not considered to be viable enough according to the vision.
- All Union Participants have passed a recognition check.
- A plan has been written on how the recognition checks will be continued.

## Student Union as a durable organisation

Due to the dynamic nature of the organisation, with new board members joining each year, the Student Union faces a challenge in establishing robust financial planning that extends over multiple years. As a result, the ability to ensure a proper long-term financial strategy is currently lacking. Therefore, a thorough financial overview that discusses trends in financial strength, resilience and flexibility over multiple years could significantly help the Student Union during her budget planning. As a first step, an analysis of the financial flows within the Student Union budget needs to be made over the past two Strategic Plan cycles. Such financial (budget) flows are housing costs, personnel costs and project-based costs.

## Goal

The Student Union investigates how its financial durability can be improved.

## Indicators

- An analysis has been made of the Student Union's financial flows of the past 8 years.
- A first proposal has been written to formalise the distribution of the Student Union's equity.

Throughout the years, the UnionShop has always felt the tension between being a self-sustaining business management component on the one hand, whilst also keeping the offer at a student-accessible level on the other hand. The latter is of course the main idea behind the use of this space and the UnionShop in general. To make the business case more attractive, the Student Union could explore the possibility of expanding the current offer and utilising the space for additional services. Therefore, it is important to investigate what other services could be offered.



## Goal

The space of the UnionShop is optimally exploited.

## Indicators

- A proposal has been written investigating the possible multivariable use of the UnionShop's space.

To address the shortage of interested students for vacancies within the Student Union such as board positions, committee positions and student employees, it is crucial to conduct research and implement effective measures. The first step involves mapping out a Student Union journey to target students more effectively. Subsequently, an evaluation should be carried out to assess the success of the implemented measures.

## Goal

Establish and maintain a diverse and sufficiently large pool of interested students for the Student Union.

## Indicators

- The student journey with respect to the Student Union has been mapped.
- The results of the mapped student journey are being implemented in the communications strategy.
- The communications strategy has been evaluated.

As part of the Strategic Plan 2024-2027, the Student Union aims to ensure a stable organisational structure. This objective arises from the substantial growth in university initiatives and participants, along with an expanded focus on well-being and sustainability. The increased workload has strained the current organisational structure, prompting a critical evaluation of its durability despite minimal changes over the years. To determine what necessary adjustments are needed, it is imperative to conduct an evaluation of the current organisational structure. This evaluation will provide valuable insights into how the structure can align more effectively with the evolving needs and goals of the Student Union.

## Goal

The organisational structure and way of working of the SU as an organisation is evaluated and improved.

## Indicators

- An (external) evaluation has been executed to evaluate the organisational structure and way of working of the Student Union.
- The work pressure on SU-board members has been mapped.
- A research has been conducted about the option of creating an advisory board for each portfolio.

# Making connections

This section aims to explain the subthemes within the making connections theme, including their respective goals and indicators.

## Student Union network

Currently, the Student Union lacks structural connections with other organisations that share similar interests. To promote growth and development, it is highly advantageous for the Student Union to establish these connections with like-minded organisations. By building strategic partnerships and networks, the Student Union can tap into resources, ideas, and experiences that can fuel its progress. These connections will create opportunities for collaboration, exchange of knowledge, and mutual support, ultimately contributing to the thriving of the Student Union as a whole.

### Goal

The Student Union makes connections with organisations that represent the interest of students.

### Indicators

- The Student Union has made a connection with two student organisations representing the interest of students within the Netherlands, like the 'Landelijk netwerk studentenorganisaties' meeting.
- The Student Union has made a connection with two Student Unions abroad that have been visited by the SUB in the past 10 years.


## Social partnerships

As mentioned in the Strategic Plan 2024-2027 the point of focus within partnerships has started to shift from only profitable partnerships to social partners. Since this is the start of a new way of perceiving partnerships, the Student Union will need to research what social partnerships withhold and what kind of partnerships are desired. By collaborating with other stakeholders, a comprehensive overview can be created to guide this endeavour.

### Goal

The Student Union will research possible new social partnerships to support Union Participants.

### Indicators

- The Student Union has made an overview of possible areas in which they can support associations in their way of operating.
  - The Student Union has consulted with four parties, such as Green Hub and Novel-T, regarding potential partnerships in areas such as sustainability and entrepreneurship to ultimately support affiliated associations.
  - The Student Union has created an overview of companies in the area that have a shared vision for possible social partnerships.
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## Additional goals

The following goals do not directly follow from the Strategic Plan 2024-2027. However, these additional goals do contribute to the fulfilment of our mission.

The sector 'Other' is a collection of associations that have a very broad range of needs and concerns. They cannot be related to one another and therefore as the Student Union it has been hard to support them like other umbrellas. However, we do see the necessity in supporting these associations. Therefore, more research needs to be done on how we can redesign this sector.

### Goal

The representation of associations in the sector 'Other' is up to standard.

### Indicators


- Two input sessions have been organised to map the wishes of associations in the 'Other' sector regarding representation.
- A plan has been drafted for (in)formal representation of associations in the sector Other.

For the past 25 years, the Student Union and her Participants have been enriching the lives of many students. This is accomplished by motivating students to partake in the active and unique student life, together with the encouragement to achieve More Than A Degree. To cherish this student life, the Student Union will celebrate her fifth Lustrum, just like in 2014 with the "Ter land, ter zee en op de UT".

### Goal

The Student Union celebrates the community feeling at UT on her 5th Lustrum.

### Indicators

- A committee has been set up that will organise the 5th Lustrum;
  - The celebration has reached a minimum of 1000 individuals, comprising both students and employees at UT.
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## Appendix A – Definition list

- **Active students:** Students that partake in extracurricular student engagement.
  - **Extracurricular activities:** The activities that do not fall within the curriculum of the study. Examples of such activities are fulfilling a board position, doing committee work and having your own company.
  - **Extracurricular personal development:** Personal development resulting from partaking in extracurricular activities.
  - **More Than A Degree (MTAD):** The mission of the Student Union is to stimulate and inspire students to further develop competencies by participating in extracurricular activities
  - **Union Locations:** UT buildings that fall under the responsibility of the Student Union. These locations are the Bastille, Pakkerij, University Watersports Complex (UWC), Wallstreet and Future Factory.
  - **Union Participants:** Every association, organisation or foundation that is recognised by the Student Union and therefore meets the requirements in the recognition regulations.
  - **Social partnership:** Groups that cooperate in working to achieve a mutually agreed-upon goal, typically for the benefit of all parties involved.
  - **Student engagement:** All forms of effort within the extracurricular activities at UT. Examples of this are taking part in committees and/or boards. This (voluntary) effort of a student contributes to the continuity of the vivid student life at UT. A membership of an association and/or participating in activities alone does not count as student engagement.
  - **SU journey:** Steps a student takes during their student life and when they encounter the Student Union, mapped out.
  - **Masterplan Sports & Culture:** The strategic plan containing all planned facility upgrades and new construction within the Sports & Culture ecosystem at the University of Twente.
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