

RHSU Impact Report 2024/25

This year has seen us delivering on year one of our new Strategic Plan, **Building Community, Leading Change**. Our strategy was set by working with our members and staff to set out a pathway to deliver on our overall mission which has remained the same for the past 10 years, making student life better at Royal Holloway.

As part of Rate Your Union we ask students directly how well we are performing, we launch this exercise towards the end of term three to ensure we capture feedback on all our activity. This year we received **1,099** responses and as you can see below, we have been successful in reaching many of our targets for 2025.

Objective	RYU 2025 Results	Target 2025
The Students' Union makes student life better at Royal Holloway	86%	85%
I am satisfied with the Students' Union at Royal Holloway	84%	85%
I know how the Students' Union works and how decisions are made	66%	65%
I am kept well informed about what the Students' Union does	87%	75%

All tabled results are calculated by combining the Agree and Strongly Agree responses from RYU

Strategic Aims

Building Communities for all Students

Over the past year we have been working with students and staff to understand the best way to provide more opportunities for them to build communities on campus. To achieve this, we have worked on a project to establish and build Academic Communities, these groups will ensure all students have access to a community that is linked to their academic discipline.

Each year we hold our annual Freshers Fair in which all communities can showcase themselves to students. This year we started strong with **7,289** students attending the event, this paved the way to a very strong year for our communities at Royal Holloway.

They have organised so many great events this year, providing an amazing opportunity for students to get involved in a wide range of areas. They also give the chance for students to become leaders and gain valuable transferrable skills, experiences and connections for their future careers.

Overall, we have had **1,029** elected community leaders, running **184** student led communities and collectively they have run **2,602** events for their **4,271** members and wider audiences.

Access fund

This fund was set up to support students in accessing extracurricular activities, given the continual struggle with the cost of living. It is very important for students to have the opportunity to take an

active part in their communities, this year we have seen **112** applications and awarded **£6,955** in funding directly to students.

Below are the key performance indicators we track to measure our success in this area:

Objective	RYU 2025 Results	Target 2025
I feel a sense of belonging to one or more communities at Royal Holloway	87%	75%
I feel supported in my community role and it helps the community to thrive	87%	50%
I feel empowered as a leader and see the success of my community	88%	50%

Building Stronger Student Voice and Representation

Ensuring we have a comprehensive understanding of our students, and their wants and needs is key to the success of RHSU. When designing our new strategy, it was vital we made sure we had the correct mechanisms for gaining student insight and empowering students to use their voice. One of our main aims in year one has been to conduct a Governance and Democracy review of our Union and its activities. This review has entered its final stage, with a set of recommendations to be implemented across 2025-26.

Leadership Elections

Our main elections period provided a great opportunity to celebrate student representatives and launch a new way for students across the University to direct our work. For the first time, alongside deciding the leadership team, students chose the priorities they would like to see us working on.

This year saw **27** candidates running across the 3 days of voting, with **3,473** individual students cast **16,157** votes. This gave us a turnout of **24.3%**, another great achievement as we look to strengthen our engagement, as seen below:

Year on Year elections comparison

Category	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
% Turnout	16.7%	18.2%	20.7%	19.5%	24.3%
Number of voters	2124	2497	2833	2700	3473
Number of votes cast	11,796	12,368	11,269	12,822	16157

Priority 8

Across the academic year we gathered insights from students using various methods. We went out and spoke to students on campus about their experience, we ran several surveys into elements of student life and held focus groups to further understand student's needs. This allowed us to bring together 20 areas of work that reflected our members' key issues, and we sent those to ballot alongside the elections. It was a very successful activity with **2,627** students selecting the new 8 priorities we will focus on across the next academic year. They include:

- More affordable food options on campus
- Reduce deadline stacking for assessments and coursework
- More financial support for students
- Increase social and study spaces
- More student friendly timetables
- Cheaper and more frequent local transport
- Make SU events more affordable
- Improve parking on the Egham Campus

Below are the key performance indicators we track to measure our success in this area:

Objective	RYU 2025 Results	Target 2025
The Students' Union actively seeks out and engages students on their opinions	89% of RYU respondents have interacted or engaged with student leaders and/or campaigns in some way	70%
The Students' Union represents me on the issues that matter to me	73%	70%
The Students' Union provides me with the tools and opportunity to effect change in my community	Academic Rep Average (current and newly elected): 83% Community Officer (current and newly elected) average: 76% Executive Average: 89% Overall Average: 83%	50%
The Students' Union improves student life at Royal Holloway	86%	75%

Providing Inclusive activity and spaces

Year one saw us deliver on our promise to commission a joint strategic review of commercial activity, with the University, to better understand what services our students need as part of their time at Royal Holloway. It has reinforced that the changing student demographics requires us to look more closer at the spaces we have on campus for students. Recommendations include looking at increasing the offer of social and study spaces that has no commerciality, so students can feel comfortable at university. Also, to vary the offers we provide to suit a wider range of interests and cultures including better provision of daytime and early evening events.

We know a great university experience is supported by offering a varied and active events calendar, so on top of all the great student led events we also need a RHSU led calendar of events. Across the year we have run **810** events in our venues spanning daytime and evening. That means we have provided fun experiences for **6,907** unique students, **55%** of the student population. These suit a

range of tastes and ensure students can have a great time in a safe environment. You can see a breakdown of the events below:

Event Type	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Student Groups	79	84	18
Day time	46	54	24
Late night	57	43	19
Packhorse	66	78	37
Give it a Go	36	19	20
Use of space/other	64	40	26
Totals	348	318	144

Our Summer Ball saw another fantastic year, this event transforms the heart of campus into a festival like no other. This year we saw **3,474** individuals attend the evening giving us our highest attendance ever. We also introduced our inaugural Student Impact Awards as part of our Summer Ball celebration. The ceremony celebrated student leaders and staff who have aimed to make student life better at Royal Holloway, as well as supporting our strategy of building community, leading change on a daily basis. We received **102** award submissions with over **160** attendees in the Picture Gallery for the event, we will now ensure this forms part of the annual calendar of celebrations at Royal Holloway.

Below are the key performance indicators we track to measure our success in this area:

Objective	RYU 2025 Results	Target 2025
Students' Union events and activities promote a sense of belonging on campus	87% (taken from 'Students' Union communities, events and activities promote a sense of belonging on campus.')	60%
The Students' Union provides events and activities which are entertaining and fun	86%	90%
Students' Union supports and empowers student-led activity on campus	77%	50%
The Students' Union provides safe and inclusive spaces on campus	84%	75%

Providing Advice and Advocating for students

We have many ways to support and help students face the challenges of Higher Education, and one of the key services we offer is our Advice Centre. A team dedicated to educating and supporting students to understand their rights and responsibilities. We do this through one-to-one sessions and outreach activities which look to proactively engage students on the issues they may face. Our outreach activities range from upskilling students with all they need to know about plagiarism to helping them understand their responsibilities as a tenant, we ran **31** of these activities across the year.

This year we have provided **867** students with direct support, ensuring they had help when they needed it most.

Below are the key performance indicators we track to measure our success in this area:

Objective	RYU 2025 Results	Target 2025
Students' Union events and activities promote a sense of belonging on campus	87%	60%
The Students' Union provide clear and useful advice and guidance on university life	78%	70%
The Students' Union is there for me when I need advice	75%	70%
I am satisfied with the service the Advice Centre gave me when I needed advice	Academic Issues (87%) Housing Issues (88%) Wellbeing Issues (82%) Average: 86%	60%
The Students' Union advocates on my behalf and creates effective change	76%	70%

Academic Reps

Ensuring we have great representation across disciplines at Royal Holloway is key to us supporting students and helping to improve the overall educational experience. We have **420** representatives across 25 academic departments, these reps provide course and department level representation to the University staff teams on what matters to their cohorts. These roles take part in termly course action meetings and support the departments in finding solutions to the issues that their fellow course mates raise.

Campaigns

Empowering our students is at the heart of what we do. Over the past year we have ensured that we are campaigning on issues that matter to students, and we have seen some great impact from the campaigns we have run. This year we delivered and supported [21 campaigns](#) that aim to celebrate the diversity of our students and challenge issues that they face, several successes have come from these, as seen below:

[Deaf Awareness Week](#)

This campaign aims to bring awareness to the experiences faced in and by the deaf community. The awareness week, delivered as a student-led campaign, explores this theme through a variety of different events such as a movie screening and a guest speaker as well as informative and engaging content like Instagram reels.

[Shout about it](#)

This week was dedicated to celebrating the incredible work of student leaders over this year! We showcased all of the successes achieved, all while supporting recognition of transferable skills.

[Help Not Harm](#)

A harm reduction campaign dedicated to promoting safety, health, and dignity for individuals navigating substance use and risky behaviours. Our mission is to minimise harm through practical, compassionate approaches that put people first, offering non-judgmental support and lifesaving resources.

[Never Ok](#)

A student led initiative to combat various forms of harassment and sexual misconduct. Including action to stamp out spiking, introduction of mandatory EDI and consent session and the establishment of a working group with student leaders to lobby the University to make campus safer for students.

[Just Mention it](#)

This campaign was dedicated to empowering men to speak up about mental health. Throughout mental health awareness month, we shone a light on the importance of men openly discussing their mental wellbeing and breaking down the barriers of stigma. A collection of activities to bring people together to open up conversations around mental health and a host of fundraisers to support the community raising money for men's health services.

[Black History Month – Reclaiming Narratives](#)

This month saw several great events that looked to recognise the work and life of Black Students and Academic who have made significant contributions and impacted the field. It's an opportunity to shine a light on the discrimination and inequalities that Black people have historically experienced in Academia and Educational settings and still face to this day. This culminated in an exhibition that asked students to feed directly into an Anti-Racism action plan that is now being worked on.

[Disabled History Month - Disability Livelihood and Employment](#)

This month is about exploring the rich history of disabled individuals in the workforce, their contributions, and the barriers they continue to overcome. Employment is not just a means of survival; it's a key to independence, identity, and social inclusion. Throughout history, disabled people have faced countless challenges in accessing fair employment, but they have also made invaluable contributions, transforming workplaces and society in the process.

[LGBT+ History Month - Activism and Social Change](#)

The month was all about exploring and shining the light on the discrimination and inequalities that LGBT+ people have historically experience in society, and still face today. There were a lot of exciting events on throughout the month including LGBT+ Speed Dating. The funds generated by this event went on to support the establishment of the RHUL Transition Fund. The transition fund is a mutual aid transition fund to help transgender members of the LGBT+ Society funds private healthcare costs.

[Women's History Month - Moving Forward Together: Women Educating & Inspiring Generations](#)

This month saw several themes that celebrated extraordinary women who have shaped our past, present, and future. A big focus on celebrating diversity, promoting inclusion, and empowering one another to create a world where all women can thrive.

We pride ourselves on understanding our students, and whilst all we do reflects that, our research is where we can really influence change for students. This year we have been busier than ever with **5,310** students responding to our surveys allowing us to run several policy inquiries and student voice reports that delve deeper into key areas of interest. We then produce recommendations for improvements to the student experience at Royal Holloway. Below you can see a summary of each piece and its impact:

[Women's Only Gym Hours Survey](#)

This piece saw us engage 381 members of the community to look at how we could provide inclusive workout spaces for female-identifying students. The survey posed questions about general interest in a trial and the preferred time when it should take place. We also wanted to learn a little more about female-identifying students' use of the gym and we asked respondents whether they have a gym membership and, if not, whether they would get one with women's only sessions.

This work led to a trial of Women's only hours across term two, which continued throughout term three. Due to its success, there will now be permanent Women's Only Hours x 2 a week permanently in Term One of 2025-26.

[Student Safety Survey](#)

We launched the Survey in term one to get student's feedback on how safe they felt in Egham and Englefield Green. 506 people responded across all year groups, it painted a holistic view of students experience in the area and became extremely valuable for us when lobbying for change. This data was used to discuss safety aspects with the University and local council and community groups. So far this has led to the University improving lighting across campus.

[CPZ Survey](#)

When we heard about the local calls to introduce a controlled parking zone, we pulled together a piece of work to ensure the student voice was heard in the debate. 806 people responded showing an overwhelming 97% expressed opposition to the CPZ. There is very low support for the CPZ across all proposed streets among both current students living within the zone and those intending to reside there next year. These results were shared with the Royal Holloway Runnymede Consultative Parking sub-group and Surrey County Council will now try to find a solution that works for all residents, including students and will be going out for formal consultation again in the Autumn when students return to study.

[Commuter Student Policy Enquiry](#)

The commuter student population has risen significantly over the past few years, with changes to students habits around moving to university and the increased pressure of the cost of living crisis. We know that more needs to be done to support commuter students and ensure they have a great university experience. This research project aims to monitor the journey of commuters across an academic year and make a set of recommendations to improve their overall experience. Across 3 surveys, a set of focus groups and an online journal activity we have collected over **1,000** pieces of insight that have helped shape a list of **38** recommendations that have been shared with students and staff.

[Sport & Physical Activity](#)

The Students' Union has been interested in better understanding sports and physical activity opportunities at Royal Holloway and whether there are barriers to engagement for specific communities on campus. Former and current Sabbatical Officers have raised these issues in their manifestos, and it was time to take a deeper look at sports service provision, how students prioritised their physical health and whether there is a correlation between sport, physical activity and academic success. **487** people responded to our survey and we held a focus group to better define the outcomes, this has helped us to produce some recommendations in partnership with the University that will now be worked on over summer and into next academic year.

[International Student Survey](#)

In 2024, the Students' Union launched a survey to learn more about the international student experience at Royal Holloway. This year, we delved deeper and asked more detailed questions about the specific areas of the international student experience at Royal Holloway. We wanted to know about students' arrival experiences and culture shock. We asked about academic support and English-language requirements. A total of **177** people responded to the survey where they discussed their sense of belonging, feelings of loneliness and encounters with discrimination on campus. Finally, respondents told us how they engaged with student groups, academic communities, and student leadership opportunities. We will be working on a set of recommendations to look at improving their experience going forward.

Strategy next steps

As we enter year two, the table below shows some of our goals:

Strategic Aim	Objectives
Building Communities for all Students	Development of Community Leadership Framework and Empowering Future Leaders Programme Develop a Sports Strategy for Royal Holloway, in partnership with Royal Holloway
Building Stronger Student Voice and Representation	Empower more student-led campaigns through the creation of a Campaigns Hub and support programme Work with Royal Holloway to ensure our elected leaders are in the right governance spaces and are supported to lobby for and effect change
Providing Inclusive Activity and Spaces	Work in partnership to invest in the creation of or re-purposing of existing spaces to a new student activity centre with social, recreational and non-alcoholic event space Review of new technologies and online platforms to engage with students
Providing Advice and Advocating for Students	Student journey mapping for RHSU and development of 'right door first' approach. Partner and collaborate with Royal Holloway on a student retention project

We have had a strong year and delivered many aspects of our new Strategy - Building Community, Leading Change. We have created a short video to talk about some of these successes, and you can [watch it here](#).

We want everyone to be kept up to date with the progress we make towards our strategy, so we have created a [website which you can visit anytime](#).