



# BUCS STRATEGY 2030

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SUPPORTED BY

MILK EVERY  
MOMENT



# WELCOME



*Professor Amanda Broderick,  
Vice Chancellor, University of East London  
Chair, British Universities and Colleges Sport*

For over 100 years BUCS and its forebears have been harnessing the power of sport and active participation to enrich the student experience, and whilst so much has changed over the course of a century the benefits of sport endure and are now more important than ever.

With the pressures facing the Higher Education sector it is critical that BUCS provides its members and participant students with value that extends beyond the pitch, court, track, mat and pool, and into the lecture theatre, laboratory, halls of residence and beyond.

I am proud that the BUCS board of Trustees can present an extended strategy to that first published in 2023, following careful review and consideration of our ambition and the critical importance of our purpose in challenging times.

Sport has the power to attract, retain, and graduate students. The BUCS strategy sets ambitious plans to extend this benefit to more students in more institutions by 2030. As you read these pages you will understand more about why, what and how we will do this – and we invited you to join us on this journey together.



*Will Roberts  
CEO, British Universities and Colleges Sport*

Sport and active participation are integral to the higher education experience across the UK, and our colleagues in fellow National University Sport Federations around the world often ask about the famous ‘Wednesday afternoon’ and comment on the breadth and depth of the BUCS programme.

Yet we cannot take this for granted. Changing experiences of student life with increased demands on time through study, work and commuting all put pressure on the provision of sport and active participation, amidst a period of financial challenge for institutions.

2030 will see the largest number of higher education eligible young people in the UK before demographics shrink. This quirk of the population data coupled with the changing sector we work in provides BUCS with a burning platform to drive change.

This strategy, and the goals and success measures in it reflect an organisation and membership acutely aware of the need to be agile not only in what we provide, but how we do this and for whom.

We know from our research and insight that participation in BUCS sport improves the sense of belonging and pride of students in their institution, that it supports good mental health and that around half of participants state that without sport they may not have stayed in higher education. Our key challenge, in collaboration with our members is how we bring these benefits to more students.



# OVERVIEW



# STRATEGY ON A PAGE

PURPOSE	BUCS exists to deliver higher education sport pathway competitions and experiences, and promote the lifelong benefits of physical activity for all.				
VISION	A future where sport and active participation are recognised at the top table, championing healthier, more connected, happier and empowered student communities.				
MISSION	To embed sport and active wellbeing at the heart of student experience.				
AMBITION	To deliver exceptional student sporting experiences that inspire, develop and unite				
VALUES	Respectful	Inclusiveness	Dynamic	Innovative	
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	PARTICIPANT VALUE	MEMBER VALUE		ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH	
STRATEGIC THEMES	Competition	Wellbeing	Data and Digital	People Development	
STRATEGIC ENABLERS	Strategic partnerships	Member engagement	Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance	People	Financial sustainability



# OUR PURPOSE

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BUCS exists to deliver higher education sport pathway competitions and experiences, and promote the lifelong benefits of physical activity for all.





# OUR VISION

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A future where sport and active participation are recognised at the top table, championing healthier, more connected, happier and empowered student communities.





# OUR MISSION

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To embed sport and active wellbeing at the heart of student experience.





# OUR AMBITION

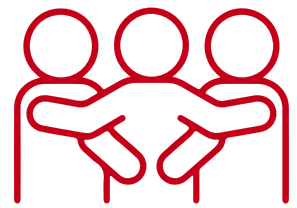
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To deliver exceptional student sporting experiences that inspire, develop and unite





# OUR VALUES



## INCLUSIVE

We value diversity and continually strive to create an inclusive and united culture.



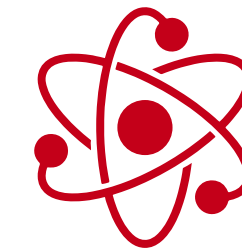
## RESPECTFUL

We treat our environment and everyone in it with respect.



## INNOVATIVE

We are known for our ability to think outside the box and create opportunities that enable our development and progress.



## DYNAMIC

We deliver with energy, enthusiasm and unequivocal commitment to students and our work.





# OBJECTIVES



# WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

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Each objective has an ambition 2030 goal, and four key levers that will drive our progress towards these goals.

The key performance indicator for each lever will be updated annually by the BUCS board of trustees, and progress will be regularly communicated with our members.





# TO DRIVE OUR STRATEGY BUCS HAS THREE OBJECTIVES:



## PARTICIPANT VALUE

Provide excellent experiences and value to participants representing the rich diversity of students in the UK, through an exciting programme of competitive sport and physical activity, supporting an active, happy and healthy student population.



## MEMBER VALUE

Provide excellent member value through a programme of delivery and support that demonstrates the unique contribution of the student sport experience as an integral component to achieving the best outcomes for students in their university education and beyond.



## ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

Ensuring that through transparent and strong governance and strategic clarity BUCS is a trusted partner for our members and stakeholders, is financially sustainable and is a great place to work for our staff.



# PARTICIPANT VALUE

Provide excellent experiences and value to participants representing the rich diversity of students in the UK, through an exciting programme of competitive sport and physical activity, supporting an active, happy and healthy student population

OUR GOAL IS ...

**Collaborating with our members,  
support 1 million students to be  
active each year by 2030**

- Ensure the capability of BUCS competition programme to meet the sporting needs of the next generation
- Enhance external perceptions of BUCS highest-ranked competitors' performance levels
- Provide experiences of an exceptional quality to BUCS participants
- Ensure that the BUCS competition programme meets the needs of the diverse range of students in the UK





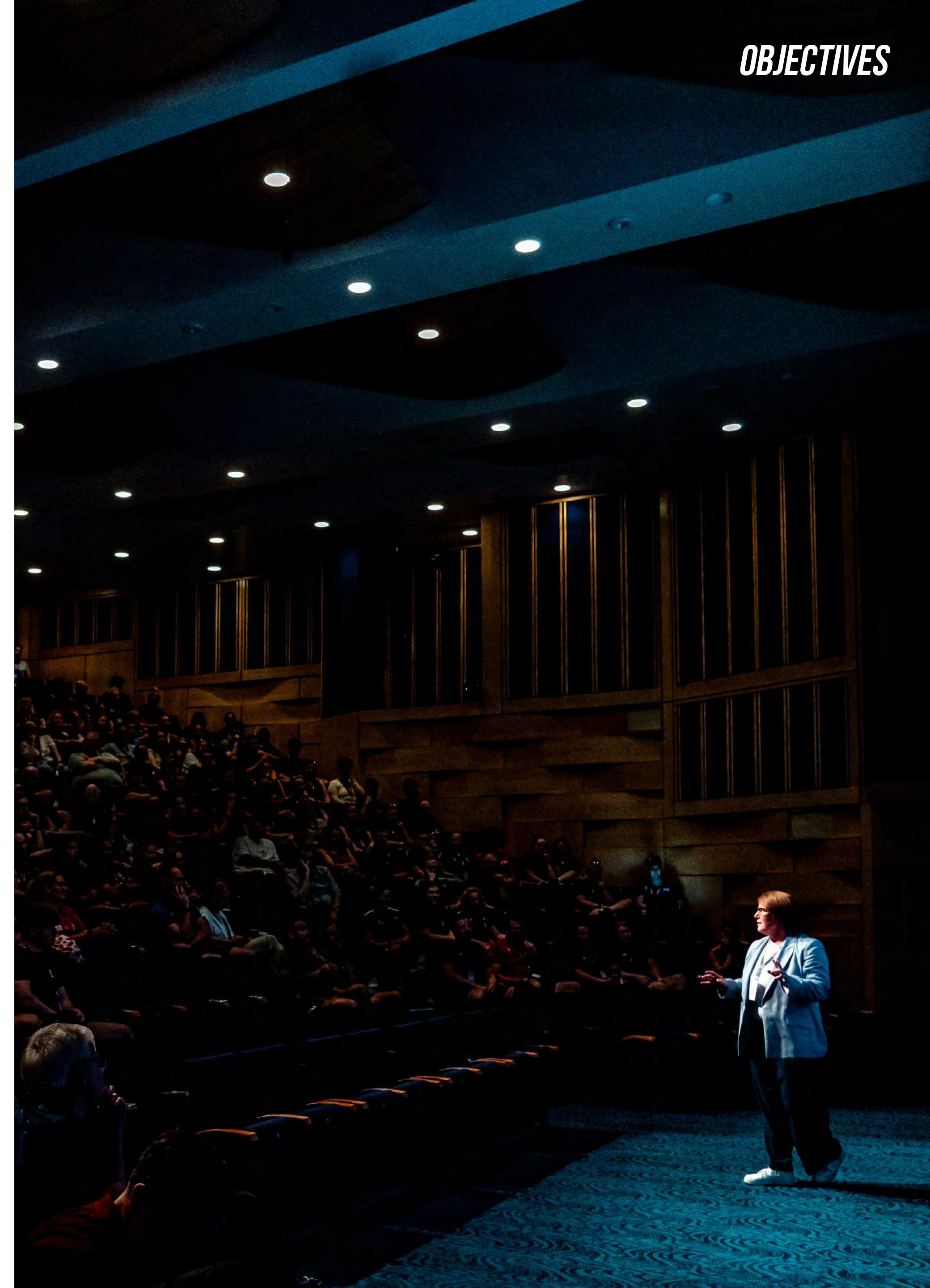
# MEMBER VALUE

Provide excellent member value through a programme of delivery and support that demonstrates the unique contribution of the student sport experience as an integral component to achieving the best outcomes for students in their university education and beyond.

## OUR GOAL IS ...

**The trusted and influential voice for UK student sport, achieving a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 70+ from our members by 2030**

- 🏆 Grow the number and range of BUCS members
- 🏆 Demonstrate the value of university sport through initiatives and measures that impact on the statutory measures that members are accountable for.
- 🏆 Build trust and confidence with our members that BUCS can represent their cause at the top table and deliver content and support to the highest standards.
- 🏆 Grow the number of students engaged in Higher Education Sports Pathways led by BUCS and Active Participation led by BUCS members.





# ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

Ensuring that through transparent and strong governance and strategic clarity BUCS is a trusted partner for our members and stakeholders, is financially sustainable and is a great place to work for our staff.

OUR GOAL IS ...

**A fully sustainable organisation, growing annual revenue by securing multi-year funding commitments from key partners by 2030**

- 🛡️ Grow the public recognition and stakeholder reputation of BUCS
- 🛡️ Reduce BUCS carbon impact
- 🛡️ Grow BUCS financial sustainability by increasing the annual surplus generated, and productivity
- 🛡️ BUCS will attract and retain the best talent, develop and support our people, and create an inclusive culture





# HOW WILL WE DELIVER?

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STRATEGIC THEMES  
STRATEGIC ENABLERS







# STRATEGIC THEMES

COMPETITION | WELLBEING | DATA AND DIGITAL | PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT



# COMPETITIONS

Drive participation through high-quality, co-designed and inclusive competitions

## WE WILL

- ❖ Dynamically evolve and co-design our portfolio of competitions to ensure it meets the demand and expectations of the student population, particularly outside of our traditional sport offering
- ❖ Continually improve the quality and standards of our competitions, ensuring our portfolio can attract and support the best student athletes as well as the more social participants
- ❖ Tackle the barriers to access and inclusion that have limited access to sporting experiences for students whose participation has been historically challenging
- ❖ Ensure all our competitions, events and activities are underpinned by good governance and reflect integrity
- ❖ Work with members to co-create a respectful and positive culture across university sport that is based on our values, tackling negative behaviours and safeguarding our participants

The breadth and depth of our competitions have given us a world-leading reputation as an organisation delivering opportunities for participants to reach their potential and build their sense of pride and achievement through competition.

And yet we know that we can do more and do better to engage a wider range of students in our programme. By exploring the barriers that prevent some students from participating we will need to adapt not just 'what' makes up our programme, but also 'how' it can be accessed. As thought leaders, we must support our members to understand and prepare for the next generation of students.

The scope of this challenge is increasingly complex, extending beyond the barriers on gender, disability and ethnicity lines that continue to demand action, to also include considerations of commuter students, those with jobs, and the impact of changes to the learning timetable in institutions.

BUCS competitions proudly include high level performance athletes in a number of sports and provides a platform to future domestic and international success through our programme and engagement in continental and global championships through their institution or for GB Students.

Equally as important is the opportunity to extend the benefits of representative sport to more students and innovating our offer to provide improved provision for the more social participant.

Through strong sports governance, safeguarding and wider business planning we can achieve an increase in access without compromising our standards. These considerations are critical if we are to meet our equity, equality, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) aspirations so central to ensuring BUCS has relevance and is welcoming to more students.



# PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Increase the quality and diversity of people delivering higher education sport

## WE WILL

- Work with targeted national governing bodies of sport to create and enhance training and support to develop and support those fulfilling key student sport workforce roles.
  - Work collaboratively with our members and partners in and beyond traditional sports bodies to co-create improvements to the training and development of those working within the higher education sport sector
  - Collaborate with our members to tackle underlying issues and provide the platform for the improved range of quality of ideas, perspectives and role models that come from a diverse higher education sport sector workforce.
- Higher education thrives not because of the direct work of BUCS staff and Institutional staff alone but relies upon a wider workforce that comes from community sport and the student body. Without coaches, officials and many others there is no sport.
- Our participants deserve access to high-quality delivery across all roles involved in higher education sport, and to encourage more students to be active and healthy we recognise that the diversity of this workforce must increase.
- There are a range of partners that we can work with to achieve these outcomes including National Governing Bodies of Sport, partners in the higher education sport sector including Scottish Student Sport, and sports charities such as Sporting Equals.
- Our commitment is to firstly understand the extent of the impact of this challenge on different groups of students and different roles in sport, and then to act upon these findings. We and our members are particularly committed to supporting the development of student volunteers and creating inspirational role models for their peers.
- Improving the diversity and quality of support and training for these roles will ensure a strengthened sense of community and belonging for participating students and encourage more students to feel that they can belong in university sport, whereas they may have felt excluded.



# PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Evidence and advocate for the impact of sport on student experience and success

## WE WILL

- Co-create and evolve an evidence base on the contribution of sport volunteering to student success, the wider sporting landscape and local communities.
  - Support our members to advocate for wider recognition of sport volunteering within formal university systems and processes as a key way of improving student development and employability.
  - Work with relevant national bodies to support wider recognition amongst employers of the transferable skills students develop through sport volunteering.
- Whilst we aspire to raising the quality and standard of all roles involved in higher education sport, we believe we have a particular responsibility to ensure the contributions of our student volunteers are recognised by them, their institutions and wider society.
- Whether our students are club committee members, referees, coaches or involved in any other way, their contributions should be celebrated and form a valuable foundation for their future success.
- This will require us to deepen our engagement with a range of national bodies, working collectively with our members to change perceptions and modernise perspectives.





# DATA AND DIGITAL

Place insight at the heart of all that we do

## WE WILL

- ✔ Increase our capacity and capability for generating high-quality insight and intelligence from our data
- ✔ Produce insight reports that provide credible and robust insight into the impact of sport and active participation in higher education
- ✔ Utilise data to improve the impact and performance of BUCS and its delivery, providing greater value to our members as a result
- ✔ Improve our data capture processes, identifying and implementing new approaches where needed
- ✔ Ensuring that our approach to streamlining and innovating our activities is data-led, drawing upon our own data, our members' data and from partners to enhance our perspective

People are the lifeblood of our organisation and in order to better understand, support and cater for them we need strong data and business intelligence so we can improve. Whether efficiency, effectiveness, quality or engagement, as a membership organisation it is critical we strive to achieve this and drive increased value for money for institutions.

This will require ongoing investment into insight-generating capability and capacity. This is both human and technological resource, and BUCS must continue to renew its vision of the future state of higher education sport to ensure we are fit for purpose with our capability.

BUCS cannot achieve this alone and will partner and collaborate wherever possible to accelerate and streamline our approach, driving improved decision-making capability.





# DATA AND DIGITAL

Develop a digital ecosystem that engages and influences

## WE WILL

- Optimise current and new technologies to provide innovative ways to increase and enhance participation and enjoyment
- Create easily accessible digital assets that provide a platform for our advocacy and influencing work
- Use our digital platforms to showcase exceptional sporting moments this inspire and help build stronger student communities
- Work with Commercial partners to deliver impactful and innovative campaigns that benefit our participants and members

A digital ecosystem that is fit for purpose underpins everything that we do at BUCS. Without a robust tech stack to support our purpose, we would not be able to deliver the programme of competitions and events at the core of our offering, and a platform that supports this is essential

A key role of BUCS is to advocate on behalf of our members, and a portfolio of news, case studies and purpose driven assets showcasing our work is crucial in reaching decision makers across the sector and beyond

Through social media, CRM, website and other digital touchpoints, we will celebrate the value and success of our members and participants, growing the BUCS brand and engaging directly with students and fans

Our commercial partners will offer core support for BUCS' strategic goals, through targeted campaigns, an enhanced on event offer and by providing financial stability and a platform to grow





# ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Stimulate lifelong wellbeing through active participation

## WE WILL

- Work with relevant bodies to develop and support the implementation of a comprehensive strategy for improving student wellbeing in UK universities
- Use our reach and influence to help members deliver the psychological and physiological benefits of physical activity in terms of building strong and inclusive communities, reduce isolation and support the development of long-term habits that lead to happier lives.
- Work with relevant partners to co-curate the evidence base for member and other stakeholders to use to promote the positive links between physical activity and mental health.

We have a unique role to play in supporting improved student mental and physical health, collaborating with our membership.

BUCS has the potential to be a catalyst for innovation and an advocate for the value of active participation of all kinds as a support mechanism for the physical and mental health of students – supporting retention, satisfaction and graduate outcomes. This will include the stimulation of network wide initiatives, the support of specific projects, and the development of evidence.

By developing and enhancing the existing evidence base of the benefits, we will help improve student belonging, integration and engagement whilst studying, enabling graduates to promote and bring to life for others the benefits of active participation and wellbeing in their communities after graduation.





# ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Facilitate the delivery of integrated active campuses

## WE WILL

- Work with our members to provide a wide-ranging programme of sporting, recreational and health promoting activities that welcome participants of all abilities
- Understand how we can become a key stakeholder in supporting the development of university curricula that have active participation and wellbeing embedded through learning outcomes
- Work with government agencies, trusts and foundations, commercial partners and sports governing bodies to secure funding for innovative projects that seek to create more integrated approaches to active participation and wellbeing within higher education.
- Utilise enhanced data and digital capability to provide easily accessible digital solutions.

The concept of an active campus has global traction and is one that reflects the integration of active participation and wellbeing within all aspects of university life. This not only includes the provision of suitable casual and formal opportunities to play, and to get involved in sport and physical activity of all kinds, but also how active participation can enhance mental and physical health and performance.

A truly active campus recognises the learning benefits of activity and embeds these principles in learning design, supporting students and staff alike. As a result, and with around 3 million students in higher education in the UK we have the potential to create a population level benefit and shape the future of the country.





The background of the slide is a photograph of a volleyball match. Three players are visible: one in a light blue jersey with the number 4, one in a green and yellow jersey, and one in a light blue jersey with the number 7. They are all jumping towards a yellow and black volleyball. The net is white with blue trim. The sky is blue with some clouds. A large red diagonal stripe runs across the bottom left corner.

# ENABLERS

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT | FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY | STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS | PEOPLE | ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE



# MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

## WE WILL

- Undertake a full review of our corporate governance structures, providing a refreshed platform to deliver our commitments to our member institutions, responsibilities to our wider stakeholders, and to operate at the highest standards as indicated by regulatory and industry bodies
- Deepen our relevance to national higher education bodies, bringing sport and active wellbeing to the top table decision-makers through thought leadership and advocacy
- Enhance the standing of student sport with sport organisations, demonstrating the impact of our performance programmes and international representation through GB Students
- Capitalise on the strength of our member network to both facilitate the sharing of best practice across members and speak externally with a united voice

As a membership organisation it is critical that we understand the needs and challenges facing higher education and the impact this has on sport and active participation provision. We can enhance the strength of our relationships with our members by modernising our governance so that it meets externally benchmarked standards and provides a platform for excellent service, support, transparency and accountability.

BUCS aspires to ensure that sport becomes a matter of importance for all those in decision-making capacity in higher education – not a ‘nice to do’ but an essential element in any institution striving to attract and recruit, retain and support, and graduate excellent students.

Equally, we will nurture our GB Students programme competing at a global level along with the performance end of our domestic programme to enhance perceptions of higher education sport, attracting recognition and support for the provision our members make for thousands of aspiring athletes.

We will ensure that our decision-making processes appropriately engage members whilst allowing for dynamic action to be taken that allows higher education sport to be progressive and thought leading. We will continue to ensure that our structures integrate wide member engagement enabling the sharing of practice and transparent feedback loops.



# FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

## WE WILL

- Significantly grow and diversify our income through increased commerciality and funding from partners that better reflects the quality, reach and impact of our brands and products.
- Progressively increase our targets for third party income derived from sources other than our members, increasing the sustainability of our membership base
- Ensure we deliver value for money in all our activities and clearly articulate the value proposition and impact in any decision to increase or reduce costs.

The business model that served BUCS since our inception in 2008 must transform in alignment with the rapidly changing financial climate of the higher education sector. Diversification of income is critical in this regard and the growth of commercial income a specific target.

BUCS recognises that such steps will require close communication with our members and sensitive management as we seek to generate opportunities that work for the central body and our diverse range of members whose own needs and opportunities vary significantly.

We are acutely aware of the financial pressures faced by the higher education sector and students and will seek ways to limit the costs they have to pay to engage with student sporting competitions, events and activities. Any attempt to progressively reduce these cost will have an impact on quality and accessibility unless BUCS is successful in driving greater efficiency and productivity internally, and implementing a successful income generation strategy.

In addition, we will continue to actively pursue funding to help us invest in value-adding initiatives for members, and to create partnerships that could reduce related costs for members.



# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

## WE WILL

- Develop a clear partnerships strategy that focuses on attracting, securing and maintaining true strategic partnerships based on mutual benefit and a clear value proposition
- Leverage our partnerships to successfully advocate our members' positions on key issues in sport and influence the subsequent direction taken by sporting bodies.
- Understand how our brands and assets such as GB Students, LUSL and BUCS Play could be leveraged to generate value and impact with wider audiences.

We must ensure we have a clear sense of which organisations we would be best partnered with to deliver this impact, as well as having a compelling view of how our brand and activities add value to our proposed partners' brands.

We are blessed with a range of assets not least the students that engage in our programmes and benefit from the wider participation programmes run by our members.

Through effective stakeholder engagement and tracking we will ensure that we nurture and develop high performing partnerships, and move dynamically to shape these as is required by the prevailing conditions at that time.





# PEOPLE

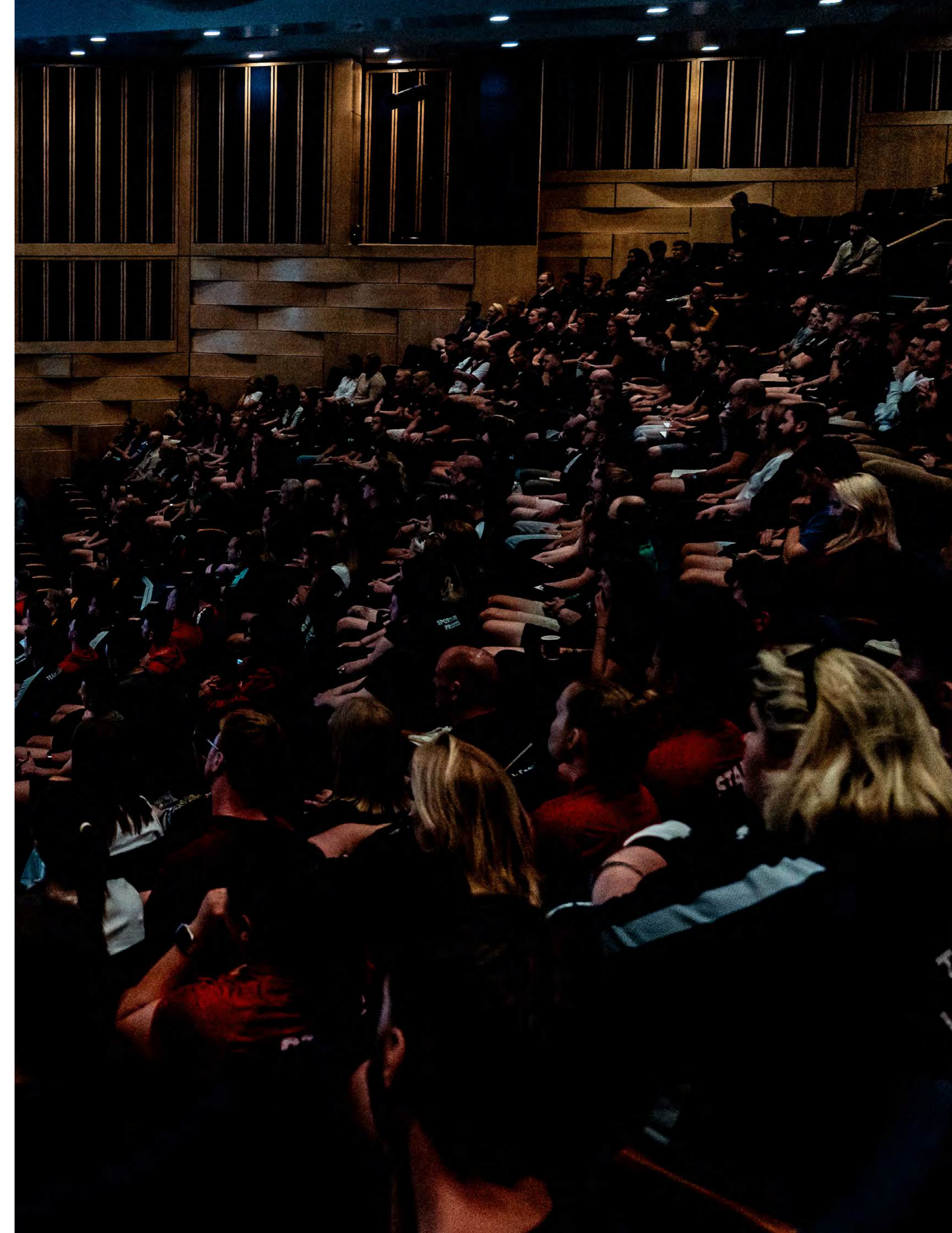
## WE WILL

- Develop a culture based on mutual respect and understanding, as well as freedom of thought and expression in line with our core EEDI principles
- Identify, nurture and retain talent within BUCS, using effective and fair performance management and reward processes as well as dedicating appropriate support and resource to staff development that meets corporate and individual needs
- Ensure that all staff have appropriate and meaningful opportunities to inform and influence key strategic decisions in ways that will enthuse, value, engaged and motivated.

Our people are our greatest asset. Without the dedication, drive, talent and innovation of the sector we would not be able to confidently set out such an ambitious strategy. We must continue to build an environment that is values-led and enables unheard voices to come to the fore and feel appreciated for doing so. Such psychological safety is hard to create, and we will strive to create such an environment for members, volunteers and staff alike.

Ensuring our staff are recognised and valued for the skill and dedication they bring to their roles is critical for the senior leadership team, board and members. we will foster an inclusive approach to decision-making that engages staff at an appropriate level to promote a shared sense of purpose, direction and achievement. Alignment of personal success to organisational success is central to this.

We will actively provide high-quality and role-relevant staff development opportunities that will help attract retain and grow our staff and enhance the quality of our services and overall productivity.





# ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE (ESG)

## WE WILL

- Take action on climate change and environmental sustainability, referring to the United Nations (UN) Sport for Climate Action framework and wider UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Collaborate with our members to influence EEDI in sport through both the domestic and international higher education sport sectors, advocating for and sharing best practice
- Develop and curate case studies of good practice relating to environmental sustainability and EEDI and social justice in sport to enable autonomous action from our members

Climate change and environmental sustainability feature in the higher matters of concern for students, and the higher education sector as a whole is driving thought leadership and action in this area. Through the guidance of the United Nations and now embedded in the funding requirements of government agencies, BUCS must respond and set ambitious goals relating to emissions.

With an extensive events programme and a sector steeped in the value of clothing that can be deemed disposable, there is great scope for reducing landfill waste and increasing recycling and reuse, as well as driving the circular economy. BUCS can also partner with organisations that can support member institutions in combatting the impact of climate change on their sport and active participation provision.

We recognise that to drive change in environmental impact and tackling inequalities we must collaborate with our members to develop a powerful united voice and culture of sharing best practice to raise the baseline of common practice.



# THANK YOU

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To all our member institutions, participating students and student leaders, including those who support BUCS' governance through formal and informal member committees and our Board of Trustees





# CONTACT DETAILS



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The University of Nottingham

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BUCS' WOMEN'S FOOTBALL HEADLINE

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM