

## **Newcastle University Students Union People and Culture Plan 2026**

### **Introduction**

This plan has been formulated in line with Strategic Plan NUSU 2026 and sets out our ambition for our people to deliver on the NUSU priorities over the next four years. We recognise our staff are our greatest asset and are critical to our success. It is for that reason we will continue to listen to staff to help inform our work and objectives in this plan. Colleague Survey results over the last 4 years have generally been very positive.

Year on year most colleagues (94% or above) said they would recommend NUSU as a place to work and overall satisfaction has been high (90% or above). The colleague survey has also indicated where some of the focus should lie in the future such as learning and development and talent management. In terms of culture significant progress has been made over the past 2 years in terms of training and awareness raising relating to diversity and inclusion, and we continue to embed good practices as part of this work.

### **Overarching Objectives**

In line with NUSU 2026 we aim to be an excellent employer that is genuinely interested in our colleagues wellbeing and development. As well as developing this new People & Culture Plan we will:

- maintain a positive organisational culture which promotes collaboration and reflects and celebrates the diversity of our student body, by continuing and enhancing our wellbeing and inclusion work.
- Review our staff benefits package and look to, amongst other things, implement discretionary and accelerated increments to improve talent management.

### **WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE:**

- 90% of staff will be satisfied or better with their working conditions
- 90% of staff would recommend NUSU as a good place to work.

In delivering these overarching objectives we have chosen to concentrate on key areas and set a list of actions which we will work through over the next 4 years:



**Learning and Development** – In response to staff surveys and recommended practice, we will continue to develop, train and provide support and guidance for Managers to ensure that they are supportive, professional and consistent

Objective	Milestone	Timescale	Lead	KPI's	Progress
Increase leadership skills of Managers and emerging Managers	Offer Leadership in Practice training and associated ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management) Award to all eligible people managers and support them on the training program and continuous learning development	Dec 2023	HRM	ILM training delivery to all People Managers (Grade F, E and potentially D if funding allows) as per annual training schedule	
Senior Managers to adopt a coaching management style to develop new skills, free thinking and empowerment amongst colleagues	<p>Foundation learning through ILM training, supported by PDR training prompts</p> <p>Continue to support coaching skills for line managers by reviewing learning needs with CEO and directors annually around October</p> <p>Source bespoke training for senior management team</p>	2026	HRM, CEO and Directors	Over 80% of colleagues feel their Manager takes time to coach me and develop my skills	
Ensure there is opportunity for colleagues to participate in personal development	<p>Implement benefits analysis on training and review annually</p> <p>Provide and promote access to 'Elements' training packages (and other optional) training</p> <p>Offer HR information sessions to colleagues on topical subjects</p>	Aug 2023	HRM	<p>Numbers of staff attending core training</p> <p>Numbers of staff participation in additional training</p>	

**Communication** – We will look to ensure colleagues are well informed of our activities and initiatives and are engaged in developments moving forwards.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead staff member</b>	<b>KPI's</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Ensure effective two-way communication between colleagues and Managers	Continue to develop new communications channels and feedback mechanisms between Senior Managers, Managers and colleagues	Jun 2023	HRM	Over 80% of colleagues will be satisfied with the information they receive about what is going on in this organisation  Over 80% of colleagues will feel that Senior leaders make the effort to listen to colleagues	Colleague forum, listening groups etc.
Ensure colleagues understand NUSUs ambition and how their role contributes	HR and line Managers to engage in the PDR process and through coaching, encourage colleagues to link their role to NUSU's purpose	Dec 2023	HRM	Over 80% of colleagues will understand the organisation's aims and purpose	
Ensure HR policies are up to date as a written source of guidance on how a wide range of issues will be handled to support fairness and consistency across NUSU.	Update colleague handbook to align with new people and culture plan and employment changes  Review all HR policies and procedure every 2 years in line with cultural changes and legislation; policies to be tailored to reflect the size and unique culture of NUSU and in line with the wider people plan.	July 2026	HRM	First review and publishing of all HR policies to be completed	
Effective communication and implementation of policies through HR and Line Managers	Continue to maintain and promote access to HR policies and procedures		HR and all directors	80% of colleagues to believe communications are effective	

	Support the relaunch of intranet, encourage colleagues to refer to intranet using links and staff comms			Colleague newsletter and Intranet click rates	
<b>Pay &amp; Reward</b> - We look to continually ensure that our roles offer competitive salaries and appropriate package to help attract and retain talent.					
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead staff member</b>	<b>KPI's</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Maintain alignment with University pay scales and grades	Annual review with university, amend scales as required to ensure alignment	Annually up to Aug 2026	HRM/CEO /FD		
Ensure there is opportunity for all colleagues to access pay awards and recognition	Complete implementation of access to discretionary awards and accelerated increments.	Aug 2023	HRM	Numbers of staff put forward for discretionary awards; departmental and EDI breakdown.	
Maintain Real Living Wage Employer award	Review annually in line with RLW increases to ensure accreditation is maintained	Annually up to Aug 2026	CEO / FD	Rates implemented in a timely manner to retain accreditation	
Benefits review	Complete an initial benefits review and look to implement improvements where necessary. Repeat every 3 years	Aug 2024	HRM		
Recognise the achievements of staff through our annual colleague Awards	Review current colleague awards and consider new ways to recognise colleagues	Apr 2023	HRM / CEO		

**Talent Management** – NUSU aims to attract, identify, develop, engage, retain and deploy a diverse workforce.

Objective	Milestone	Timescale	Lead staff member	KPI's	Progress
Continually review of recruitment practices to ensure it is aligned with best practice	<p>Assess recruitment data to ensure we attract a diverse range of staff from different cultures and backgrounds.</p> <p>Continue to update and train Managers on recruitment processes</p> <p>Role out new recruitment request form</p>	May 2023	HRM	<p>Annual Staff Diversity Report; staff diversity to match or exceed national/regional averages.</p> <p>Numbers undertaking Elements recruitment training.</p>	
Review interviewing process	Partner with Managers to identify key skills and competencies; create a bank of questions related to the competencies; review Managers interview skills and training needs	Aug 2024	HRM		
Effectively implement the new PDR process	Partner with Managers to ensure colleague objectives are identified, supported and linked to strategic objectives of the department	Aug 2023	HRM, Line Managers and all colleagues	90 % colleagues engage in the PDR process	Consider 9 box grid approach to talent management and development
Implement essential elements training to new hires	Review 'Elements' training and roll out to all new hires by incorporating essential training in the onboarding process and monitoring engagement	Jan 2024	HRM	100 % new hires to complete essential Elements training from Jan 2024	

<b>People Analytics</b> – NUSU will analyse data to solve problems, make improvements or take appropriate actions					
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead staff member</b>	<b>KPI's</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Conduct colleague survey report each year	Measuring our effectiveness through the annual colleague survey and promoter score	March 2023	HRM	50% engagement to be improved year on year More than 80% promoter score	
EDI data reviewed each year	Review data to assess impact of EDI work and identify priorities for the year ahead	March 2023	HRM	Annual report and recommendations	
Create more racially diverse and inclusive workplace	Monitor and review EDI metrics and what they mean each year set up listening group, understanding challenges colleagues face and breaking down barriers	Annually	P&C Cttee	Comparison and benchmarking with other similar organisations and national data available  Introduce positive action where necessary	
Implement HR system	Investigate and implement a new HRS to ensure data can be collected tracked and monitored in a timely fashion	August 2024	HRM		
<b>Colleague Wellbeing</b> - NUSU looks at colleague experience at work from a holistic view and asks, “do colleagues have what they need to do their best work?” This includes reducing work related stress or instituting ideas and incentives for healthy living					
Embed an effective mental health first aid structure as a key step to ensuring the mental wellbeing of the work force	Ensure all volunteers are up to date in terms of training and feel confident and competent to provide emergency support as required	Aug 2024	HRM	Number of staff trained in Mental Health First Aid	

Enable access to timely and high quality services which provide easy and early interventions for the main causes of sickness absence such as mental health & wellbeing	Promote EAP programme and other associated services.	June 2024	HRM	Annual Survey results; caring for colleague wellbeing	
Monitor and review colleague absence rates and what we can learn from them in terms of colleague health	Identify ways to improve attendance and set appropriate targets (if necessary) Conduct audit to ensure sickness absence procedures are being followed	Aug 2025	HRM/CEO	Absence metrics	
Encourage mental health and physical wellbeing amongst employees	Offer annual health checks starting in Jan 2023  Continue to arrange wellbeing and awareness days and learning sessions to encourage employees to think about their health and wellbeing.  Promote wellbeing resources	Aug 2026	HRM/Colleague forum	Consider reengaging with Excellence for NHS Better Health at Work.	

The People & Culture plan and progress against the objectives will be reported to the People and Culture Committee annually.