



Commercial Strategy 2024-2026

Pre-Strategy Narrative

Staffing

In the summer of 2023, Winchester Students' Union Commercial team went through a restructure, see below:

Pre-Summer 2023	Post-Summer 2023
Marketing & Events Manager Retail Manager Bars & Events Manager <i>Finance Manager (Line Manager for other Commercial Managers)</i>	Head of Operations Retail Manager Bars & Events Manager Assistant Bars & Events Manager

Post restructure in the academic year 2023/24 the Assistant Bars & Events Manager left and the post was replaced by a team of four student 'Senior Supervisors', 2 in Bars & 2 for the Terrace.

The role of Retail Manager was expanded to cover all daytime trade, which primarily meant the management of the Terrace Coffee Shop and Bar moving from the Bars & Events Manager to a newly titled Commercial Manager (Retail & Coffee) role.

Entering the academic year 2024/25, 3 of the Senior Supervisors graduated and an Assistant Commercial Manager role was created to replace these, primarily to support the Commercial Manager to run The Terrace. One of the graduating student Supervisors was appointed into this role.

Staffing issues with the Bars & Events Manager role throughout 2023/24 had a significant negative impact of the commercial development of this area and subsequent impacts on the Head of Operations and Commercial Manager in particular. From July 2024 this role had no post holder as whilst recruitment is happening, as of writing in November 2024, is yet to be filled.

Commercial Performance

Terrace Bar finances have been split out from bar performance so the viability of running a coffee shop in this space can be assessed. Analysis of income in 2023/24 show that it was losing money. To give it the best chance to succeed 'Terrace Bar proudly serving Costa Coffee' was rebranded to 'The Terrace' with coffee being supplied by Hampshire based coffee roasters and bakery; Hoxton Bakehouse. Hoxton have a strong brand that relates highly to the student demographic. In September and October 2024, the Terrace has been outperforming its previous incarnation in daytime sales but is struggling in the evening.

A significant barrier to the success of this area is the age of the coffee machine. If the area continues to show progress, this machine will have to be replaced but is a significant outlay.

The SU Shop Moving away from the NUS meal deal has proved successful as has additional freezer space. The biggest challenge for the SU Shop is lack of traffic on campus throughout the week because of lower student numbers and timetabling. The shop has key performance periods, primarily around lunchtimes and lectures.

West Downs Shop was slated to not re-open in Autumn 2024 due to the University seeking an external retail partner for their pantry space. Failure by the University to get this project off the ground has meant that West Downs Shop has re-opened in Autumn 2024 to provide a service to students at that location. This shop is used sporadically by students in West Downs Village and performs just above break even.

The SU Shop has one broken fridge that would be a significant outlay to replace, some dated branding exists in both shops and they are in need of some TLC, significant in the case of West Downs.

Events in The Vault and Terrace/Lounge spaces are performing with mixed success. BOP is still holding its own with good attendances every Wednesday, making it the core profit making Commercial activity. Traditional successful calendar events such as Halloween are few and far between with Christmas Parties and Summer Balls no longer a strong income stream for us.

Bar performance is directly linked to events performance due to the lack of regular footfall in the evenings away from event nights.

Laundries: We're in the middle of a long contract with Circuit laundries for our three launderettes. Prices for students keep increasing, and there are regularly issues in this managed service. It continues to make us some (mostly passive) profit.

Strategy	Winter 2025/26 Update
Staff	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop members of the student staff team to continue to fill team leader and supervisory roles in bars, events, retail, coffee and technical. Always being prepared to replace student leaders in these roles as they graduate.• Have a comprehensive staff training and development programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have continued to recruit students into these roles, with the Venue Supervisor and Retail Team Leaders being filled by students.• Staff training and development has progressed, with welfare training in the venue team and professional coffee training. A refresher of induction training was carried out in Summer 2025. Training is not yet fully comprehensive.
Advertising & Fayres	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue relationship with SU Network where profitable, or explore other companies if it is not	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SU Network relationship remains profitable and in line with budget at the halfway point of the year.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with external contractor to develop resources to increase advertising income, such as more screens, commercial fayres & sponsorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased signage is on the agenda but hasn't yet proved fruitful. Additional commercial fayre activity throughout the year has not developed as we would like.
<h2>Venue</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase external hires; both private and public events Generate weekend business aimed at the general public; which may include club nights, alcohol festivals and live music Launch The Vault website and social media, aimed at the general public Increase student run events in our spaces; particularly those with expected attendances over 100 people Sustain BOP attendances in line with previous year Develop Operations Assistant to role to provide event planning support to students Have a clear events booking process that is easily accessible to students and external hires Work with catering to develop events that include catering provision Work with conferences to increase Venue bookings Work with academic programme leaders to support development of new events and running new events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2026 saw us have had our first live event, which made a profit - We have barriers in the sound and lighting system that make it harder to take full advantage of this opportunity. We have had a couple of bookings recently based on people attending this event. The Vault website exists and a few enquiries have come in from this, including daytime club nights for the general public booked in for Summer and Autumn 2026 We have 3 or 4 established recurring student events for over 100 people but overall, have not seen an increase. Operations assistant has moved towards supporting in retail due to the lack of Assistant Manager. Venue support has come from the Commercial Supervisor having more of an events focus An agreement has been made with university conferences to put some of their marketing budget for 25/26 into SU spaces focusing on corporate party bookings. This is in the development stages Some work has been done with the music centre doing tech for student events and production students recently crewed on our live event. More

	development that has SU and Uni benefits could be made in this area.
Bars	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce product range, with clear upsells to higher cash margin products in each category • Sustain an £11-12 spend per head at BOP • Develop competitive socialising opportunities in our spaces • Develop a profitable evening trade in the Terrace & Lounge Monday to Friday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profit margins are sustainable and we have removed some lines. More work to be done here. • Spend per head at BOP has significantly reduced due to student behaviour moving more towards late arrival, so they're spending much less time in the Venue. • Profitable evening trade in the Terrace has not yet been possible, despite a lot of effort.
The Terrace/Coffee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase spend per head through increased breakfast and lunchtime food trade • Sustain product quality with a view to buying a new coffee machine • Be the busiest community hub on campus • Develop loyalty programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have had inconsistent relationships with food suppliers. • 2024/25 rebrand and move to Hoxton coffee proved successful, with a significant increase in coffee trade for 2023/24 • Summer 25/26 saw us move the River Coffee, another local supplier who could give us more comprehensive training and better pricing. • The Terrace has an investment in furniture, decor, a new coffee machine and televisions showing TNT Sport • Footfall in the Terrace is up, with it being heavily utilised as a community space • Spend is down despite the increase in footfall during the day. • The loyalty programme LOCAL has been launched in January 2026

Retail

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve spend per transaction through upsells at the till and increased sales in product lines with a high cash profit (through upsell from basic to premium and new product lines)• Launch a new online shop for merchandise sales targeted at graduates, family members and product ranges with additional value from person sales (i.e. not to replace in person sales)• Develop loyalty programme• Replace outgoing disposable vape sales with reusable vapes• Continue pop up concept and expand where possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The loyalty programme LOCAL has been launched in January 2026• We have an online store for merch• Spend per transaction has increased by 10%. Cost of sales has negated this somewhat but it still makes us 16p more profit per transaction• We saw a 39% reduction in the vapes category in year one of this strategy, but post the ban on single use vapes in June 2025, we have seen the category increase by 20%• Campus Crust pop up concept remains viable despite supplier changes. Other pop-up concepts haven't proved as profitable
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Commercial Wide

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote not for profit messaging campaign. Specifically showing where the money goes.• Increase social media engagement• Empower student staff wherever possible• Build a strong and healthy student staff community• Seek student feedback on current service and always be improving standards• Be pro-active in finding out about student behaviours and trends• Be aware of the industry standards and trends• Retail and Terrace to both feel like the same business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not for profit stage one messaging is in use. Stage two messaging going out this semester• Student staff continue to be key to support in commercial services and comms. We have someone excellent staff who are empowered to run events, marketing campaigns etc... However, there is an ongoing struggle to keep consistency and engagement in the wider student staff team.• Food for feedback in the shop and Terrace has delivered regular feedback in line with the amount we receive from speak week.• We haven't found the time resource to deliver on some of the industry knowledge and targeted marketing projects we would have liked to.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research and targeting towards groups who use us less	
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