

Students' Union Monthly Student Feedback Report

The following provides insights into the most noteworthy issues faced by Sheffield Hallam students in February 2021. This month, our Advice Centre had 75 new queries spanning housing, course, money, and fee refunds. Our Helpdesk also received 179 queries, with students contacting the Students' Union for issues related to housing, their course, the Students' Union elections, and other various queries. Lastly, 18 of our Department Reps provided insights from their Course Reps through their monthly Department Rep Reports, which help the Students' Union to see overarching, cross-College concerns for students.

Table 1: The source and number of enquiries received in January 2021.

**These were received between 1 – 20 February 2021.*

***These were received between 1 - 28 February 2021.*

Source	Number of queries
Advice Centre	75*
Helpdesk	179**
Department Reps	18

Accommodation & Housing

Similar to January 2021, nearly a third of the queries (n= 23) received in our Advice Centre were in relation to student housing and accommodation. These students sought advice on **leaving their housing contracts or how to get rent refunds** since many students are not currently living in their accommodation. Our Helpdesk, which does signpost students to the Advice Centre when needed, also received 25 unique requests for information about student accommodation and housing; generally, these were from students seeking information about rent refunds. Whilst not a major theme throughout Department Rep Reports, the Department Rep from Service Sector Management mentioned accommodation issues was a common concern amongst the students that they represent.

As highlighted in January 2021, the Advice Centre have created and continue to signpost students to [guidance for students regarding their accommodation](#), which encourages students to consider their options and their future.

A minority number of students have recently contacted Students' Union Officers regarding the use of vacated student accommodation to house vulnerable residents of Sheffield. These students have shared with Officers that Sheffield City Council have been using empty rooms to provide housing for those that might not have a safe space to sleep. Whilst this is an inherently good use of these rooms, students have shared that the new residents have broken lockdown rules, have participated in anti-social behaviour, and have left common spaces untidy. This has meant that these **students feel unsafe and unwelcome in their homes** and is especially concerning for the small number of **international students** that are living in Sheffield without a safer, local home to go to instead.

Course

Our Social Sciences & Arts College Officer, along with the College's Head of Teaching & Learning Enhancement conducted a small survey with Course Reps in that College to identify areas where learning and teaching could be improved. A common theme across nearly every Department in SSA (Art

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& Design; Humanities; Law & Criminology; Media, Arts & Communication; Teacher Education) was the **wish for more interactions from academic staff and peers**, through 1-to-1 support or a drop-in service. Results of this survey have been sent to Heads of Departments and senior teams for discussion within the College of SSA. Furthermore, there were also 33 students that contacted our Helpdesk seeking support and information about getting **help contacting their course leaders, course tutors, or other support staff on their course**. These students shared that normal methods of support on their course were being met with little to no response for additional assistance.

There was a common theme across four of our Department Reps related to **returning to campus and safety**. For students in Allied Health Professions and Biosciences & Chemistry, there are worries about coming on to campus and the possibility of the Coronavirus spreading, even within bubbles. There are also concerns from some students about travelling to campus and the complications that travel via public transport can have on health and safety of students.

Furthermore, students from Biosciences & Chemistry and Engineering & Maths are **concerned with their assessments and assignments**; for Biosciences, these students are now undertaking final projects that are non-lab based and are worried about the level of staff support that they will need to complete this well. For Engineering & Maths, students are struggling with access to laptops and computers, which impacts their ability to complete their assignments and assessments to a high standard. Furthermore, students are concerned that the changes to teaching and learning this year will negatively impact on their employability prospects. This was highlighted this month by the Department Rep in Biosciences & Chemistry due to the change in final projects, but this has been raised in previous monthly reports.

The highest number of queries that our Advice Centre supported during February were for course-related issues. Of the 32 academic issues, 10 were for students going through academic misconduct panels. Other students sought advice about withdrawing from or taking a break in study. In addition, whilst the number of queries from students about **course fee refunds** has decreased this month, the Helpdesk still received 16 queries about this (which all occurred at the start of the month) and our Advice Centre received 3 students seeking advice about this.

Wellbeing

Currently, the Students' Union and the University are jointly conducting a [survey on student mental wellbeing](#), due to close on 8 March 2021. The final results will be available in future monthly reports, but the Students' Union and Academic Reps have received a few comments about **student wellbeing** during the previous month. Course Reps in Social Sciences & Arts, as well as Department Reps in Health, Wellbeing & Life Sciences, have mentioned student mental wellbeing this month. Course Reps mentioned the need for **increased wellbeing checks or communication** from the University acknowledging the difficulties of this academic year. In addition, a Course Rep in Allied Health Professions suggested that **'wellbeing packs' be shared with students**.

Other

There were a number of small concerns that were mentioned by students during the month of February:

- Concerns with graduation for final year students and their ability to celebrate an important milestone after years of work

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- The allocation and communication about placements in a timely manner with Allied Health Professions students. This was similarly mentioned by Course and Department Reps in Nursing & Midwifery in January 2021 as well.

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