

**Students' Union's Monthly Student Feedback Report**

The following provides insights into the most noteworthy issues faced by Sheffield Hallam students in November 2020. This monthly report includes data from our bi-annual 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey, which asks students to share their thoughts with the Students' Union on key areas and forms the bulk of this report. This survey focussed on student wellbeing, finances, placements, assessments, and communication and was open from 9 to 24 November 2020. In addition, this report also includes data and insights from our Advice Centre, our Department Representatives, and feedback received from our Officer Team.

Table 1: Sources for this report. *\*This is new queries received by the Advice Centre between 1 to 24 November 2020. \*\*This is the number of Department Reps that provided updates to the Students' Union from their students and Course Reps since 30 November.*

Source	Number of respondents/ queries
Hallam, How Are You? Survey	1078
Advice Centre	71*
Department Rep Updates	11**

Course & Assessment

Our Advice Centre received 28 new queries from students in relation to their course and whilst most of these students accessed the service for help with appeals, misconduct or other concerns, there were 7 students that had complaints about their course specifically. Similarly, our Officers and the 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey also highlighted that there are significant concerns for some students in relation to their course. As Figure 1 indicates, 36 percent (n=354) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they have seriously considered dropping out of university this year and 35 percent (n=365) disagreed or strongly disagreed that their course is what they expected it to be given the circumstances. When asked to comment on assignments and assessments, there were some students that feel that their workload is overwhelming and some that are still struggling to access necessary resources through the library.

Furthermore, in relation to assignments and assessments specifically, the majority of respondents

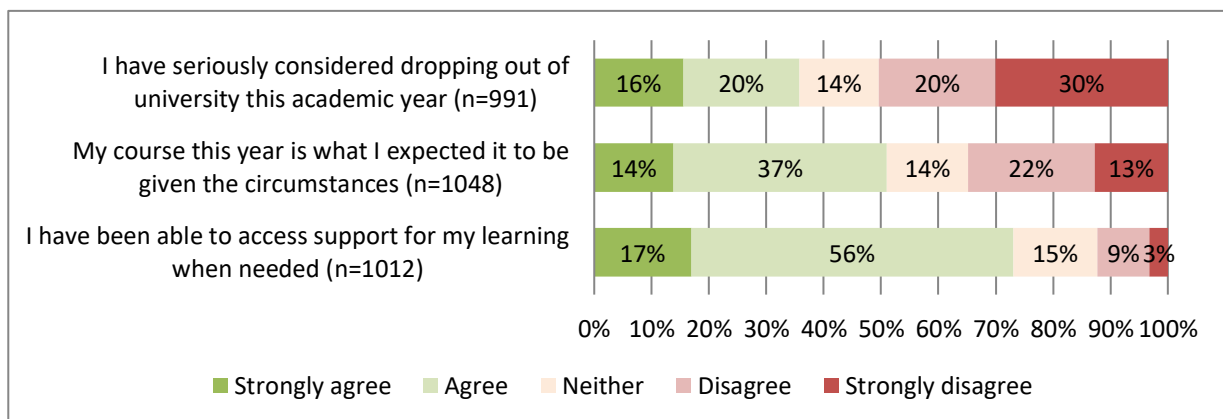


Figure 1: Extent to which respondents agree with the corresponding statements.

(64%, or n=681) strongly agree or agree that the criteria for assessments and assignments is clear, and this is a similar trend amongst the other questions in relation to assignments and assessments. Students responded less favourably to feeling supported and able to undertake their assessments, with 53 percent (n=567) students strongly agreed or agreed. As one student comments:

*"Support isn't like it was harder to find help and understanding what is needed due to online and cannot cater for peoples needs as much." - College of BTE student*

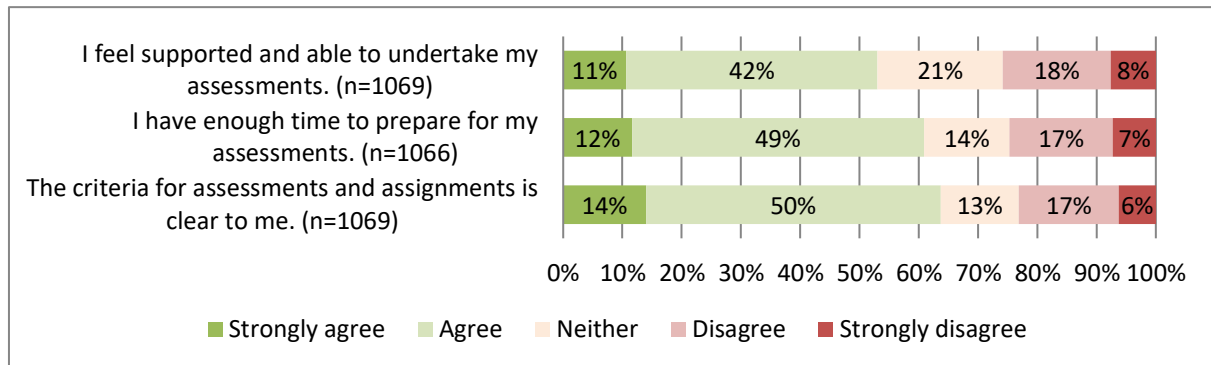


Figure 2: Extent to which respondents agree with the corresponding statements.

As assessments are starting, supporting students through this is important. For some students, the lack of support received from their tutors or the assessment criteria being unclear might make completing their assessments difficult. Two of our Department Reps in the College of SSA, from Education and Humanities, received feedback from Course Reps regarding lack of clarity with assignments and lack of support from course tutors. Other Department Reps, from Departments of Law & Criminology and Media, Arts & Communication, received feedback about the marking rubric used and misunderstanding and lack of clarity. Whilst these issues are being worked on at a Department level by our Department Reps, this is clearly an issue crossing Departments.

*"Lecturers haven't been as clear on what the assessments are and what is required for them as they were in previous years. And as the work is online, students tend to feel like they are teaching themselves - especially with lectures being recorded, we have no opportunity to ask questions while we watch the recorded lectures which can be difficult. Some lecturers take a while to respond to emails which can be worrying. Especially with assessments coming up, we need quicker responses." - College of SSA student*

In addition, three Department Reps (Law & Criminology; Media, Arts & Communication; and Psychology, Sociology, & Politics) found that some students are not turning on their zoom cameras nor speaking, even during small groups or seminars, when learning virtually. The Students' Union highlighted this in the October Monthly Student Feedback Report, and the recent Pulse Survey, administered by SETL, had a number of comments about zoom etiquette.

There were also 367 respondents that have, are currently, or will be completing a placement as part of this course this academic year. Understandably, those that are planning to go on a placement at some point in this academic year, but have not yet done so, are concerned about their safety on

their placement and are also unaware if their placement will still be going ahead as planned. For those that have been on placement or are currently undertaking this, 19 percent (n=54) disagreed or strongly disagreed that their placement has felt safe and secure (see Figure 3). As one student nurse commented:

*"I think it's disgraceful how unsupported we are by the university on placement, especially with regards to mental health. As student nurses we deal with some really traumatic stuff and there is little to no infrastructure to support us with that. The attitude I've experienced while in placement is still very much 'stiff upper lip, you get on with it' when something horrible happened. The learning we do in university rarely supports what we do in practice. Most of the modules that aren't practical or science feel like a complete waste of time. Since covid happened I've really missed the practical sessions in university where we practice our medical skills in a safe controlled environment. It seems ridiculous that it's 'not safe' for us to do this and yet it is 'safe' for us to be out working in the hospitals completely out of our depth." - College of HWLS student*

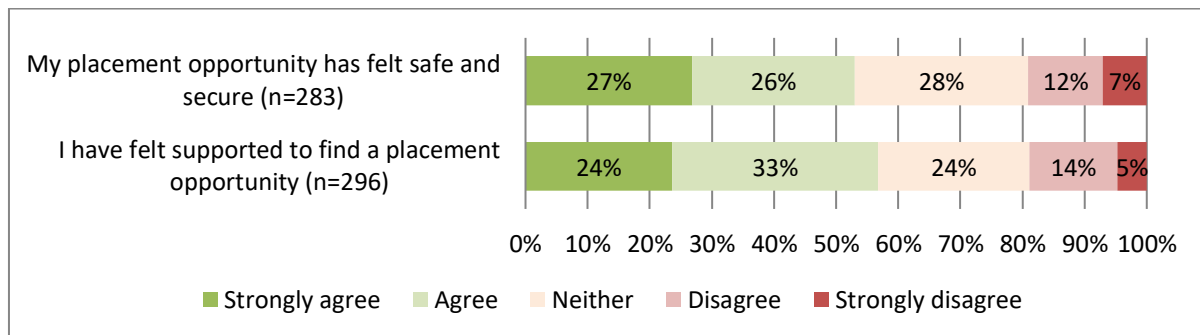


Figure 3: Extent to which respondents agree with the corresponding statements.

### Student Wellbeing

As the above comment highlights, there are some students struggling with their mental wellbeing and a section of the 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey focussed on this specifically. As Table 2 displays, overall life satisfaction has risen from our previous wellbeing check-in with students in May 2020. Nearly every respondent commented (n=1060) when asked to share how they currently are, but this had very mixed responses. There were some students that are doing well but are reasonably concerned about the ongoing pandemic. Conversely, there were some students struggling; they are worried about the pandemic, their course or the reverberating consequences of the pandemic on their lives. As many of our students are learning virtually, feelings of isolation and lack of course community and cohesion was a strong theme amongst comments received.

*"Lonely, isolated and not feeling like part of the university" - College of SSA student*

*"Not the best because of covid. I feel like the support has been hit and miss and online content has fallen short in comparison to in person. Blended learning has been awful and online people are often ignored which feels rubbish since we are being forced to isolate and be at and pay for university." - College of BTE student*

Table 2: On a scale of 1 to 10, please indicate to what extent you agree with this statement: I am satisfied with my life nowadays.

	Low (0-4)	Medium (5-6)	High (7-8)	Very High (9-10)
<b>Sheffield Hallam University (Nov 2020) (n=1078)</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Sheffield Hallam University (May 2020) (n=1105)	46%	31%	19%	3%
Sheffield Hallam University (February 2019) (n=1514)	20%	19%	47%	14%

Whilst comments are still being analysed, initial findings indicate that respondents have been supporting their wellbeing by engaging in physical activity, speaking with family and friends, or keeping themselves busy with extracurricular and course activities. Both the Students' Union and the University have a role in ensuring that students are doing well, especially with prolonged and continuous virtual learning. Nearly all our Department Reps highlighted that their students are struggling to engage with their course mates and are missing social opportunities which would normally happen in a classroom environment. Although additional analysis is currently underway to explore the extent of this impact amongst certain groups of students, this might be especially difficult for our students that are in their first year and/or commute to university, whom might not have a pre-established friendship group.

### Finances

A significant impact of the pandemic has been on individual's finances and this is the same for students. Sixteen students contacted our Advice Centre needing additional financial assistance and comments throughout the 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey were injected with respondents commenting on their finances.

*"I am currently stressed out over finance. Thinking of quitting my course as I can't finance this first year myself." - College of SSA student*

*"Enjoying my placement year however it's unpaid so worried about finances." - College of HWLS student*

As Figure 4 shows, where students have had additional costs associated with their course, 40 percent (n=361) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they have been able to afford this. When analysed by College, there were not any substantial differences in those who have been unable to pay for additional costs associated with their course. Furthermore, 19 percent (n=205) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they are able to pay their basic living expenses.

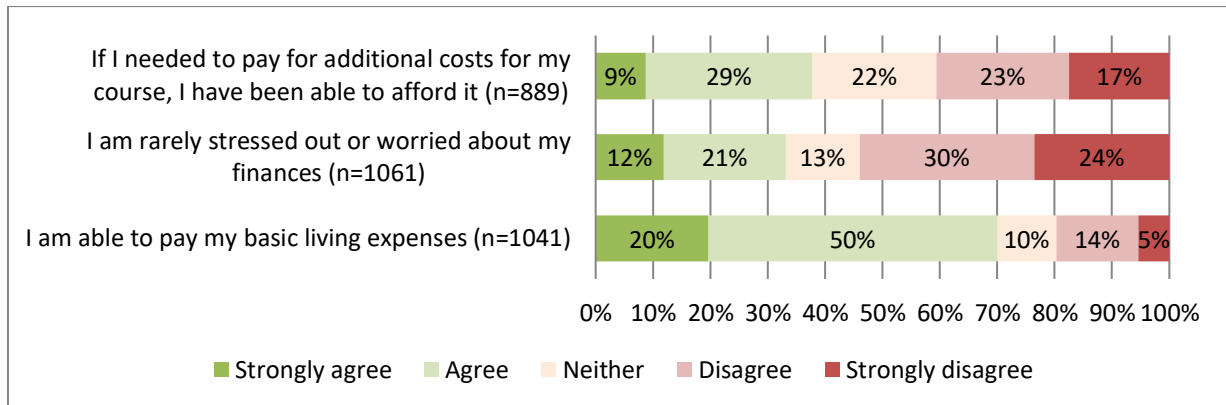
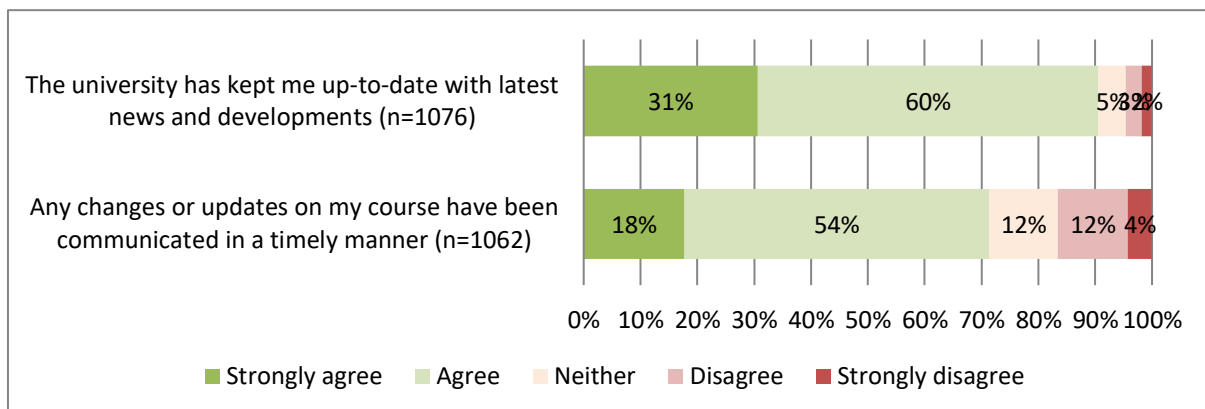


Figure 4: Extent to which respondents agree with the corresponding statements.

One Department Rep, from Art & Design, highlighted that only some students have been receiving supplies for their course, but this has not been consistent across the Department. Dependent on the supplies needed, this can become expensive for students, particularly those on art courses. This Department Rep and the College of SSA Officer will continue to work with the Department of Art & Design to ensure equitable assistance is given to students.

Communication

Lastly, the 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey asked students to feed back about the communication received from the university more generally and within their course. As Figure 5 illustrates, respondents were very satisfied with the updates received from the university; 91 percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the university has kept them up-to-date with the latest news and developments. There was slightly less satisfaction with local level updates and changes



being communicated in a timely manner (71% strongly agreed or agreed, or n=758).

Figure 5: Extent to which respondents agree with the corresponding statements.

When comments about communication were analysed, students mentioned that whilst the university has kept them updated with the latest news and developments, at times this information has been too frequent. As one student commented:

*"I do often feel bombarded with emails from the University which often contain near identical subject matter. I don't find the emails helpful; they're more overwhelming and stressful to constantly receive. That's why I strongly agree they have kept me up to date but it doesn't need to be as frequent as it is."* - College of SSA student

*"There are too many emails, I'm already struggling to keep up with work then all this other information is thrown at me and idk what to do with it all."* - College of BTE student

As was highlighted in the Students' Union's October Monthly Student Feedback Report and in the recent Pulse Survey, which was administered by SETL, there are still some students for whom the course level changes are not being communicated or are being communicated, but quite last minute. As the below comments highlight, timetable changes happen abruptly and their Blackboard site, as well as links for virtual learning on some courses, has not well organised. This was also highlighted by two Department Reps, one from Department of Biosciences & Chemistry and the other from Academy of Sport & Physical Activity. The Department of Allied Health Professions Rep also highlighted timetabling issues.

Whilst these comments are from students in the Colleges of SSA and HWLS, and Departments Reps from the College of HWLS highlighted this as one of the most significant issues in their Departments, College level analysis of the above quantitative data indicate that students across all Colleges are similarly dissatisfied (see Figure 6).

*"Timetable changes to classes have happened at short notice, without it being communicated to students meaning missed classes, one class did not even take place, with the lecturer telling us 5 minutes after the class should have started, (via email) that it was a self taught class, despite it being highlighted on the timetable as being Online Live. It is also a struggle everyday trying to find the Zoom link for the forthcoming classes, with each module and each teacher having completely different places for their Zoom links."* - College of HWLS student

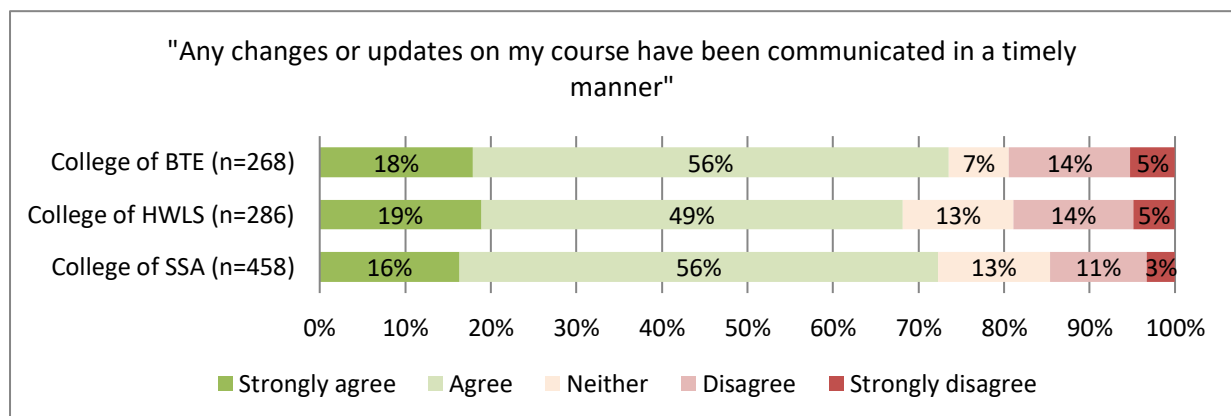


Figure 6: Extent to which respondents agree to statement "Any changes or updates on my course have been communicated in a timely manner", by College.

*"I think with covid stuff uni has kept me up to date with the rules. However my course timetable changes all the time but my actual timetable that I can find online stays the same, so often I have to*

*work out whether or not a session is still on or isn't. I have even missed session due to the fact I will get an email about a change weeks in advance and then forget as my timetable says other wise.*

*Things like checking is there are names linked to session is not an affective way of knowing if a session is going a head or not, my timetable some weeks is pointless as it's wrong. I brought this up to my head of year to be told the timetable lady is too busy to change our timetables." - College of*

SSA student

As this report highlights, there are some genuine concerns from students: their course and engaging with their materials; receiving support from their course tutors and understanding their upcoming assessments; feeling part of their university and course community and continuing to develop whilst at university. Considering this, the Students' Union Officer team will be prioritizing the following going forward:

- **Ensuring that students are receiving adequate assignment and assessment support and review assessment bunching and/or workload.** Our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey identified several areas for improvement and 26 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they have felt supported to undertake assignments and assessments. There were also comments from students about the lack of clarity around their assessment criteria.
- **Initial comments from the 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey suggest that some students still struggle to access necessary library resources, so Officers will be working with the University to make sure that this is provided in the coming months.** Especially as many students move into exam and assessment period, providing necessary texts is crucial to their success.
- Though only 367 students that have been, are, or will be on a placement this year completed the 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey, some of these students have felt unsupported whilst on their placement, citing a disconnect between their University and their placement provider. Therefore, **the Officers will prioritise working closely with the University to identify current students that are on placement to ensure that they are adequately supported.**
- As the 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey identified, most students strongly agree or agree that the University has kept them up to date with the latest news and developments, that **changes at the course level**, such as last-minute timetable amendments or other changes, are not communicated in a timely manner. **The Officer team will be working with the University to improve this for our students.**
- Whilst the 'Hallam, How Are You' survey found that overall life satisfaction has risen since May 2020, a very strong theme of lack of student community and feelings of isolation has come from the comments within this survey. In addition, our Department Reps and Officers have had feedback from students that **course community is significantly lacking. Going into December 2020 and for the remainder of the academic year, our Officers will prioritise working with the University to look after student wellbeing at a local, course level** by providing events, activities, and opportunities to socialise.