

**Sheffield Hallam Students' Union**  
Student Voice Report 2015-16



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# Foreword

"The first degree awarding educational institution in the world was set up in Fes, Morocco. It was founded by Fatima Al-Fihri in 859 AD, the daughter of a wealthy merchant who chose to invest her inheritance into the idea that education was a right, not a privilege, and should therefore be made equally accessible, empowering and liberating for everyone.

I'm not entirely sure if Fatima knew back then that what she has founded would blossom into thousands of educational institutions like ours across the entire planet. I can't be certain that she'd know that these institutions would become landmarks to major metropolitan cities, crucial drivers and contributors to local, national and even international economies, or the homes to life saving medical advancements, ground-breaking technological innovation and revolutionary discoveries.

It's telling that our educational institutions have changed very much, but the underlying principle that our institutions should both be accessible, and be providing an educational experience which is empowering and liberating for all students remains the same.

The Student Voice Report provides us with a variety and range of feedback from students; it delivers a very strong reminder that our institution must continue to strive in making the experience of its students as accessible, empowering and liberating as possible, and this can only be done by taking into account the experience of students and considering the solutions students themselves propose to the issues they face.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped in the compilation of this report; I would also like to give a special mention to our Students' Union Research Team, Pete Crowson and Vicki McGregor, who have worked tremendously throughout the whole academic year to ensure the report reached the outstanding calibre it is.

I sincerely hope that the findings of this report can be used to enhance the student experience at Sheffield Hallam University, and that we can lead by example of taking on-board the student voice and place it into the heart of everything we do."

**Hassun El-Zafar**  
Education Officer 2015/16

# Introduction

The annual Student Voice Report is a key document that highlights what students have fed back to Sheffield Hallam Students' Union this academic year, and makes recommendations aimed at addressing the issues raised. Improving the student experience is at the heart of the Students' Union and its purpose, and the Student Voice Report is a product of the desire to make things even better for students at Sheffield Hallam.

This is the sixth formal written report produced by the Students' Union, and it aims to reflect the student experience through the collection and analysis of feedback from students at Sheffield Hallam University. By collating this information into a single report, we are able to establish clear actions, priorities and goals which can be reached through a joint partnership with students and the University.

The report is presented in three main sections, with a slightly different grouping to previous years. The first section, 'Education and Teaching', encompasses feedback relating to improving the academic experience inside the classroom, such as assessment feedback, timetabling, and funding. The second section, 'Learning Environment and Resources', relates to feedback connected to the academic experience outside of the classroom, such as computing resources, transportation, and the graduation schedule. The third section, 'Representation, Support, and Opportunities', discusses feedback relating to the University experience outside academia. This includes extra-curricular activities, mental health, the Student Rep system and the Students' Union itself. These are prefaced with sections relating to progress from last year's report, an executive summary of the report itself, and a list of all recommendations made throughout.

Student feedback is paramount to understanding what we do well, and where we can improve, and we would like to thank everyone, both staff and students, who have contributed their feedback in the last 12 months.

# Progress from the last 12 months

Following last year's Student Voice Report, recommendations were made based on the analysis of feedback received. Progress and implementation of these recommendations were overseen by the Student Voice Committee, a joint strategically focused working group of students, key University and Students' Union staff, and Elected Student Officers that joins together the governance of both organisations.

For the first time, this committee championed 5 recommendations where it was felt it could influence and make a difference to its delivery: Student Representation, BME Student Attainment, Communication of Changes to Teaching, PC and Specialised Software Availability and Associated Costs. The University, in partnership with the Students' Union, has worked hard to ensure that these issues have been addressed, and improve the student experience at Sheffield Hallam.

A full list of the recommendations from the 2014/15 report and the actions taken are included in the appendices.

The following actions have been successfully implemented:

- The Assessment Journey Programme is an ongoing project to improve the assessment experience. The approach to anonymous marking is now formally part of this work, which involves Elected Officers in its governance. The Assessment Scheduler used by all faculties, provides consistent information on the dates of submission and return of work.
- The new Extenuating Circumstances policy has been reviewed with the latest changes upheld. The decision to change the policy was made with the involvement of the Students' Union and student representation.
- A full report was produced from D&S with regards to communicating changed/rescheduled teaching. An updated text system is in place, as well as improved utilisation of social media to keep all students informed of late changes to their timetable. This can provide a basis for consideration and adoption of good practice across the University.
- There has been increased availability of core textbooks and online journals, with awareness raising of recommended purchases. Increased computer availability for students was also achieved with student ambassadors in place to help students find a PC on campus.
- Online submission for coursework is being implemented for level 3, 4 and 7 students from September 2016, with a full roll out to all students from September 2017. This is to address printing costs and to make the University more environmentally friendly.
- Travel discounts for travel cards, when purchased from the Students' Union, have been introduced to help improve the affordability of transport for students.
- There have been improved food and drink offers via SHUcards, with £22-24 per year per student savings on average. Free hot water has also been introduced at the Library Café.
- The University and the Students' Union Trustee Board has financially supported the Students' Union with some refurbishment work at the HUBS building. This includes

revamped learning spaces in the upstairs part of the building, a new Advice Centre, and a rebranded Students' Union café (Coffee Union).

- There has been continued funding for the Student Support Fund, with the University anticipated to spend £1 million in 2015/16 on support for students. This figure has also been agreed for the 2016/17 academic year.

# Executive Summary

The Students' Union has found various recurring themes within the feedback it has received during this academic year, and has made recommendations to the University throughout this report in order to address these issues. Several points were raised with regards to assessment and feedback, with a particular focus on ensuring that assessment criteria is fair, and that feedback given can be understood and acted upon. A large amount of feedback was received with regards to timetabling and contact time; whilst some of this related to increasing contact time, the majority made reference to the organisation of scheduled teaching itself. This includes concerns regarding timetable gaps, deadline bunching, and problems with scheduled teaching on Wednesday afternoons which can be a significant barrier to participation in extracurricular activities such as sport.

Issues with placements were raised, including the increased need for support, greater notice of allocated placements, and issues for some students with travel to and from placements that are a distance away from their residence. The issue of transport was raised later in the report, in relation to cross-campus links, and transportation to University facilities such as the sports park off campus.

Throughout the year, the Students' Union received a large amount of feedback relating to the financial implications of student life; this ranges from bursaries and funding, to printing or textbook costs, and even to food and drink costs at University outlets. As a common theme throughout the report, financial issues in general are a great concern for students, and the impact of which should be considered in all aspects of University life.

The Students' Union has measured student opinion with regards to the current graduation schedule, and has found an overwhelming preference from students for the main graduation event to take place during the summer with a smaller graduation event in winter, as opposed to a singular graduation event in November.

Feedback relating to learning resources was frequently received, with students suggesting a greater need for textbook access, computer access, and learning spaces for group work. Students have given their views on non-academic resources too, such as those available for sports clubs and societies, as well as additional opportunity for leadership and development skills training, with suggestions for improving the delivery of both.

Finally, one of the key aspects of the student experience is feeling a sense of belonging, good wellbeing, and representation. Again, each of these issues are discussed further with a deeper discussion around the feedback received regarding this topic. Students have a particular concern for feeling comfortable in their environment, which relates to mental health, and ensuring that the student representation system is in place and functioning well. Above all else, students wish to be healthy, happy, and to have a representative voice.

# Recommendations and aims

## Students' Union recommends that:

### SECTION 1.0 - EDUCATION AND TEACHING

- R1. Assignment feedback gives explicit suggestions for making improvements (*Section 1.1, p13*)
- R2. All written feedback to be given electronically (*Section 1.1, p13*)
- R3. The University ensures assessment criteria consistently remains fixed following the start of the module, as stated in assessment framework (*Section 1.1, p14*)
- R4. There is a reduction in timetabled gaps between scheduled teaching sessions (*Section 1.2, p16*)
- R5. The University conducts a review where assessment deadline bunching occurs, to inform actions to reduce assessment stress (*Section 1.2, p16*)
- R6. There is the creation of a strategic plan by the University, aiming to reduce Wednesday afternoon scheduled teaching further (*Section 1.3, p18*)
- R7. The University reviews late placement allocation and identifies where long distance travel is most negatively affecting students (*Section 1.4, p20*)
- R8. The University ensures that funding to support its most disadvantaged students continues at the same level or higher (*Section 1.5, p21*)
- R9. There is Students' Union representation in the creation and development of future access agreements and funding agreements (*Section 1.5, p22*)

### SECTION 2.0 - LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES

- R10. There is a change of graduation schedule to a main summer event (to take place in July or September) and an additional winter date (to take place in December or January) (*Section 2.1, p24*)
- R11. Teaching staff consider the cost of printing for students, and direct students to use free printing resource for assignments and coursework (*Section 2.2, p25*)
- R12. The University conducts a full review of computer software availability, with a particular consideration for the needs of students with specialist computing needs (*Section 2.2, p26*)
- R13. There is an increased availability of small bookable rooms, with computer access, to facilitate group working (*Section 2.3, p27*)
- R14. The University considers the introduction of a cross-campus shuttle-bus, with links to the University Sports Park (*Section 2.4, p28*)
- R15. The University supports the Students' Union in the expansion of the Students' Union Book Exchange service (*Section 2.5, p30*)
- R16. The University ensures all students are able to access either physical or electronic copies of all core text books (*Section 2.5, p31*)
- R17. There is greater communication to students regarding the auto-renewal system for library books (*Section 2.5, p31*)
- R18. The University improves range and affordability of food at University outlets (*Section 2.6, p32*)

SECTION 3.0 - REPRESENTATION,  
SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITIES

- R19. There is increased funding for sports clubs and societies at Sheffield Hallam (*Section 3.1, p36*)
- R20. The University works in partnership with the Students' Union to increase University staff engagement with the Student Rep system (*Section 3.2, p37*)
- R21. The University ensures expectations are met with regards to the distribution of Staff Student Committee Meeting materials (*Section 3.2, p37*)  
The Students' Union and the University works in partnership to ensure there are appropriate
- R22. numbers of reps in each course/department to effectively represent their cohort (*Section 3.2, p38*)
- R23. The University ensure mental health and wellbeing support is given to all students (*Section 3.3, p39*)
- R24. The University has a consideration for specific mental health issues in the sale of exercise supplements at University outlets (*Section 3.3, p40*)
- R25. The Students' Union and University to work in partnership to provide greater resource to leadership training programmes for students (*Section 3.4, p41*)

**Students' Union aims to:**

SECTION 1.0

- A1. Conduct more in depth research into student satisfaction with the organisation and management of their course (*Section 1.2, p16*)
- A2. Further investigate support needs for placement students throughout the 2016/17 academic year (*Section 1.4, p20*)

SECTION 2.0

- A3. Continue to improve student satisfaction with Students' Union facilities, and work with the University to provide greater visibility at Collegiate Campus (*Section 2.4, p29*)
- A4. Expand the Students' Union Book Exchange service to help meet the demand for textbooks and key texts (*Section 2.5, p30*)
- A5. Review outlets at the HUBS to ensure it caters for the wide range of student demands (*Section 2.6, p32*)

SECTION 3.0

- A6. Conduct a review into sponsorship contract processing time, and provide clearer guidance for sports clubs and societies (*Section 3.1, p34*)

# Methodology

## Overview

This report has been compiled by Sheffield Hallam Students' Union's Student Engagement Team, and the Education Officer, and is supported by a wide range of quantitative and qualitative research aimed at understanding the student experience here at Sheffield Hallam University.

Data used in this report comes from three main areas; national surveys, research conducted by the Students' Union, and indirect feedback. National surveys, such as the National Student Survey (NSS) or Sheffield Hallam Student Barometer, are helpful to give a broad overview of student experience in different areas. These can also act as trigger points for more in-depth research in areas where performance is low. More specific pieces of research have been conducted by the Students' Union, and these can offer a more detailed explanation of why student satisfaction is lower in some areas, and suggestions for how to make improvements. In addition to this, indirect feedback that has been gathered can also provide evidence of where we perform well, or where we can improve.

Research commissioned or conducted by the Students' Union will not receive a response rate to the same level as national surveys such as the NSS or PTES, however still has immense value. As a result of this, topics and themes are based on the triangulation of opinion (for example, when the same issue is raised via different feedback mechanisms); it is argued that if the theme is reoccurring, it is significantly more likely to affect a wider proportion of the student body at Sheffield Hallam University.

A full list of research data sources can be found in the table below, with a further description of each source found in the appendices.

## Table of data sources used

### Indirect feedback

Source	Year	Population	Number of Responses	Type of Data	Abbreviation
All I Want for Christmas' Campaign	2015	All students	290	Qualitative	AWC
Staff-student Committee Meeting Minutes	2015-16	Student representatives	n/a	Qualitative	SSCM
Education Zone Meetings	2015-16	All students	n/a	Qualitative	n/a
Community Zone Meetings	2015-16	All students	n/a	Qualitative	n/a
Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Advice Centre	2015-16	All students	n/a	Qualitative	n/a
Officer Candidate Manifestos	2016	Student Officer Candidates	n/a	Qualitative	n/a

### Students' Union formal research

Source	Year	Population	Number of Responses	Type of Data	Abbreviation
Annual Student Rep Survey	2015	Student representatives	448	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Understanding our Students Report	2015	Selected students	n/a	Quantitative	n/a
Students' Union Satisfaction Research	2015-16	All students	53	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Mapping the Student Experience	2015-16	Selected students	48	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Assessment and feedback	2015-16	All students	141	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Wednesday afternoon report	2015-16	All students	58	Qualitative	n/a
Where I Belong	2015	All students	15	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Leadership Report	2015-16	Selected students	114	Qualitative	n/a
Sports and Societies Sponsorship Report	2015-16	Selected students	20	Qualitative	n/a
Room Booking Report	2015-16	Selected students	40	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Women in Leadership Report	2015-16	n/a	n/a	Quantitative	n/a
Sports Kit Survey	2015	Selected students	125	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Graduation Report	2015-16	All students	1,244	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Student Body Image Report	2015-16	All students	98	Quantitative	n/a
Social Media Research	2015-16	All students	1,601	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a

### National surveys

Source	Year	Population	Number of Responses	Type of Data	Abbreviation
National Student Survey	2015	Level 6 (final year) students	4,804	Quantitative & Qualitative	NSS
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey	2015	Postgraduate taught students	3,922	Quantitative & Qualitative	PTES
Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey	2013/14	Final year undergraduates	4,536	Quantitative	DLHE
Sheffield Hallam Student Barometer	2016	Undergraduates (excluding level	5,632	Quantitative	SB

## **Report Structure**

The main body of this report follows three main sections: 'Education and Teaching', 'Learning Environment and Resources', and 'Representation, Support, and Opportunities'. Sub-sections within this are based on areas that have received notable feedback via local research and student reps, issues that could be considered particular areas of interest, or areas in which specific improvements could be made.

Where possible, academic and demographic breakdown of the data (such as faculty, year group, fee status, mode of study, or disability status, amongst other measures) has been conducted, which has led to more specific issues and action points. Regarding the free-text feedback, key themes were identified, and key verbatim quotes have been extracted and included to reference findings.

A cross-comparison of the different data sets has highlighted areas where students indicated that they were less satisfied, or where improvements are needed, and these form the main themes of the report.

## **SECTION 1.0**

### EDUCATION AND TEACHING

## 1.1 Assessment and feedback

The 2015 Student Rep Survey found that assessment and feedback was the most common issue noted by students, with 70% of student reps who completed the survey stating this issue was raised with them throughout the year. A question was subsequently asked via a social media poll as to whether students were satisfied with the assignment feedback they had received from their University tutors, which resulted in 60% of participants responding 'no'.

As a consequence, the Students' Union research team, in partnership with the Education Officer, produced a survey in order to look more in depth at this issue, with a particular focus on assignment feedback.

Via the survey, students were again asked about their overall satisfaction with the feedback they had received, with over half of students stating that they were not satisfied. When further broken down, the majority of students (over 60%) stated they 'definitely disagree' or 'mostly disagree' that their feedback was lengthy and in depth. Furthermore, over 50% of students stated they 'mostly disagree' or 'definitely disagree' that they believed the feedback they receive helps them to understand the subject better.

Students were asked questions about how they would like their future feedback to look. Overall the majority of students (over 90%) agreed that they would like their feedback to help them to understand how they can improve in future. When asked to comment on how their feedback can be improved, the most reoccurring comments were for it to be more in depth, constructive and consistent.

*'Explain in more detail where I went wrong. On a lot of occasions the feedback has been too vague...'* - (Assessment and Feedback Survey, 2016)

Over 90% of students stated they would like feedback to help them to understand how they can improve in future; however, only 40% of students stated they felt their feedback currently does this. It is recommended therefore that all assignment feedback should explicitly state how their assessment could be improved if repeated.

### **Students' Union Recommendation 1 (R1) - That assignment feedback gives explicit suggestions for making improvements**

Students wished for the feedback to be more in depth and have also stated they would like their feedback to be more constructive, explaining how it can be improved by having less generalised comments such as 'lack of critical evaluation'.

Students commented on how they would like a more consistent layout for feedback with suggestions of a common system that all lecturers follow. Furthermore, some students explained how they received no feedback from some lecturers and detailed feedback from others. Therefore, it could be argued there needs to be some sort of process all academic staff follow when giving feedback.

*'Write so students can read the feedback given, otherwise the feedback is pointless if it's illegible'* - (Assessment and Feedback Survey, 2016)

Some students mentioned how their feedback was hard to read when handwritten which meant they could not always use it. Therefore, it is recommended all written feedback is typed up to ensure all students can read what has been written.

### **Students' Union Recommendation 2 (R2) - That all written feedback to be given electronically**

Further comments received also asked for feedback to be turned around more quickly and for there to be the opportunity to have one to one meetings; the latter particularly helping students make more use of the feedback they receive.

With regards to the marking process itself, students were asked how fair they believe the coursework and examination marking and feedback process is. Overall, just over 50% of students stated they 'definitely agree' or 'mostly agree' with the statement 'the feedback I receive for my coursework is fair'; suggesting that almost half have experienced a perceived 'unfairness' with regards to assessment marking. This could be linked to the need for more guidance on assessment, and reports of assessment criteria being changed mid-module. Both of these issues have been raised via the course reps, and evidence of this can be seen in the Staff Student Committee Meeting minutes.

*'It was noted that the assessment criteria sometimes changed mid-module, and that academics did not always consistently mark in accordance with it.' - (SSCM, D&S, 2015/16)*

Policy currently exists which states that assessment criteria should not be changed after any module begins. It is recommended that the University ensure that this policy is consistently followed, in order to guarantee fairness is maintained for all students.

**Students' Union Recommendation 3 (R3) - That the University ensures assessment criteria consistently remains fixed following the start of the module, as stated in assessment framework**

## 1.2 Timetabling

The structure of life as a University student is often as wide and varied as the courses on offer. With multiple modules available within each course, and time needed for both teaching and independent study, scheduling teaching time for students that is appropriate for both the teacher and the student is naturally a challenge. In order to ensure that teaching hours are being scheduled effectively, as well as efficiently, listening to our students is of paramount importance.

The Students' Union has received significant feedback with regards to timetabling, notably via the Student Reps. The Student Rep Survey for example found that timetabling issues were one of the most common topics raised by students, with almost 50% of respondents receiving some feedback regarding this area.

Some of the issues raised by Student Reps have been fed back to University staff via the Staff Student Committee Meetings. One example of this can be found in the meeting minutes for the D&S Staff Student Committee Meeting, which states the following:

*'...timetable changes affect commuters, the timetable location and time of class changes every week, there are large gaps between sessions, teaching happens after hand in dates, rooms not big enough for purpose, and no time for volunteering or sports.'* - (SSCM, D&S, 2015/16)

Similar issues relating to timetabling were raised during the All I Want for Christmas campaign, including wishes for more contact time, better organisation of scheduled teaching each day, and the wish for later start times. Again, there has been feedback received that reflects these themes through both Staff Student Committee Meetings and via the Education Zone. Further research was

needed to better understand which issue with timetabling was of greater concern for students. The issue of contact time has been raised previously by students, and the University has responded by creating a minimum contact time policy. This is a welcome action by the University; however there is an issue in defining 'contact time' itself. The Students' Union has an expectation that contact time is not just time that teaching staff are contactable (for example via email), but rather that direct and immediate teaching or guidance is both accessible and available.

Using social media, students were asked what they felt was more of an issue when it came to their University timetable, with the three options being 'contact time', 'early starts', and 'timetabling gaps'. Almost half of participants stated that timetabling gaps were the biggest issue, followed by early starts; 13% of respondents stated that contact time was the biggest problem. Timetable gaps are therefore appear to be an area of concern for a large proportion of students, and could be one of the main reasons for lower scores received by the University in surveys such as the NSS 2015 and the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey 2016, against comparable institutions for 'organisation and management'.

*'...the 2nd year students have a 3 hour gap on Wednesdays.'* - (SSCM, ACES, 2015/16)

A reduction in timetable gaps would also have a particular benefit for students who commute into the city, and are unable to return home between scheduled teaching periods. In order to improve student satisfaction with timetabling therefore, a reduction in large gaps between scheduled teaching should be prioritised.

**Students' Union Recommendation 4 (R4) -  
That there is a reduction in timetabled gaps  
between scheduled teaching sessions**

Feedback was received via the All I Want for Christmas Project and Student Reps that students were sometimes dissatisfied with the assignment deadline schedule. Students have commented that there is often a bunching of deadlines for multiple modules, which has caused issues for students. It has also been raised informally to the Elected Officers by students that this is a particular issue around the winter exam period, following a reduction in the length of the period from two weeks to one week.

*'Organising the assessment schedule' -  
(AIWFC, 2015)*

As there is little information as to which departments this affects the most, the Students' Union can only raise this in a broad sense to the University.

**Students' Union Aim 1 (A1) - Conduct more  
in depth research into student satisfaction  
with the organisation and management of  
their course**

The Students' Union will aim to look at this more closely in the coming year, and urges the University to also review which subjects/courses experience undue bunching of deadlines, in order to more evenly balance the assessment scheduled for students throughout the year.

**Students' Union Recommendation 5 (R5) -  
That the University conducts a review where  
assessment deadline bunching occurs, to  
inform actions to reduce assessment stress**

### 1.3 Wednesday Afternoon scheduled teaching

Leading on from timetabling, scheduled teaching on a Wednesday afternoon has been an ongoing issue for several years. The University aims to reduce scheduled teaching at this time to allow for students to participate in sports, and other non-academic pursuits.

The target for reducing Wednesday afternoon scheduled teaching is currently only applied to undergraduate (UG) students, and it could be argued that this is therefore still a significant barrier for postgraduate and other non-UG students. This can arguably be illustrated in the breakdown of the types of students who participate in University sports included in the 'Understanding our Students Report', with undergraduate students representing a much larger proportion of sports club members than seen in the breakdown of the overall student population at Sheffield Hallam.

Despite measured improvements in recent years, a large amount of feedback is still received by the Students' Union from students, and by the University via the Staff-Student Committee Meetings, reporting experiences of Wednesday afternoon scheduled teaching acting as a significant barrier to sports participation.

*"Some students can't attend Wednesday afternoon sports due to lectures." - (SSCM, D&S, 2015/16)*

The Students' Union created a questionnaire for students to complete when they had been prevented from sports participation on a Wednesday afternoon. It was found that a wide range of students from all faculties completed the form, due to scheduled lectures, seminars and group work. The majority agreed that this had not only had a

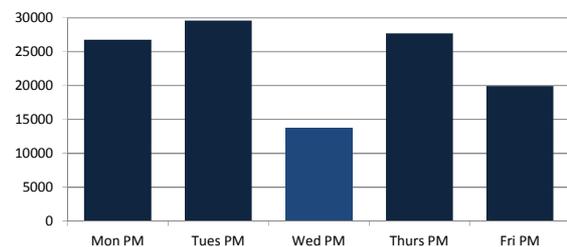
strong impact on team selection, but a strong negative effect on them personally.

*"...it has made me feel quite detached and lonely" - (Wednesday Afternoon report, 2016)*

A case study of a student who had experienced this barrier was produced, giving greater insight into the effects this issue causes. It was found that the effects of Wednesday scheduled teaching include a negative impact on making friends and fitting in, developing a sense of belonging, team selection, academic performance, and developing the students' own talent.

University data was reviewed to investigate how reduced the scheduled teaching on Wednesday afternoon actually is in comparison to other afternoons, and this can be seen in **Figure 1** (below).

**Figure 1: Total afternoon scheduled teaching hours for UG students across all faculties, breakdown by day.**



A breakdown by faculty shows D&S to be the most successful in reducing Wednesday afternoon scheduled teaching, whereas ACES is the least successful.

Organisation and management was one of the lowest scoring areas in the NSS 2015; faculty breakdown shows H&WB showing the least satisfaction whereas D&S showed the highest, and this therefore could link to a wider timetabling issue.

*"I felt cheated! Obviously one of the main reasons I came here was to join in with Sport and then when I came here and realised that was not case, I was disappointed" - (Wednesday Afternoon report, 2016)*

Participation in sports on a Wednesday afternoon has a positive effect on students and the University itself. Sports participation is not only a direct draw for prospective students, but an increased sports participation leads to an enhanced BUCS performance, thereby promoting the University and its reputation. The Students' Union therefore makes the recommendation that the University creates and implements a strategic plan ensuring that the mandate is followed more strictly, in order to reduce the negative effect the Wednesday afternoon scheduled teaching brings.

**Students' Union Recommendation 6 (R6) -  
That there is the creation of a strategic plan  
by the University, aiming to reduce  
Wednesday afternoon scheduled teaching  
further**

## 1.4 Placements

With Sheffield Hallam University being one of the largest providers of student placements in the country, a significant proportion of students at Sheffield Hallam will have placements as part of their overall student experience. This could be a 'module placement' for a defined period of time, commonly 12 weeks, or a 'full year placement' which can be paid or unpaid depending on the circumstances.

With the changing climate of Higher education and employability, students are increasingly aware of the benefits of placements. This is reflected not only in the NSS 2015, but through the Students' Union own research; 75% of students via the Mapping the Student Experience study agreed that doing a placement will make a positive difference to their employability. Research conducted at the University of Aston has found that degree performance is improved not necessarily by a placement, but by a 'successful' placement<sup>1</sup>. Ensuring the placement is successful therefore is a key way to ensure the experience is an academic benefit to the student.

Amongst the students at Sheffield Hallam, overall satisfaction with placements is high, and remains steady in comparison to previous years as measured via University surveys; however there is still areas in which improvements can be made. Issues with placements were often received via the Students Reps, with almost one quarter of all Reps stating that this was a common theme raised with them. Many of the issues students have raised this year are still the

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<sup>1</sup> Driffield, N.L., Foster, C.S. and Higson, H.E. (2011), 'Placements and degree performance: Do placements lead to better marks, or do better students choose placements?' *Association of Sandwich Education and Training*, online.

same as previous years and predominately concern the allocation of placements along with the support and sense of belonging when our students are out on placement.

One of the main themes appearing within our research and discussions with course and departmental student reps is regarding the allocation of placement. This is broken down into common themes of notice time, travel time and the cost of travel to and from placement. Whilst it could be argued that this is a particular issue for module placements, it does not exclusively affect that group.

There has been a large body of feedback from Reps regarding short notice times given to students of where they will be going on placement, the common aim is for students to receive details of their placement provider within 2-3 weeks of their start date. However some students have fed back that notice has been as little as a few days before placements. In addition, there is evidence that short notice has also been given to the placement provider, with little information given in advance. This unfortunately has been experienced by the Students' Union itself in allocating placement students, with allocation not being confirmed until just a few days before the placements are due to start.

*'There were also issues with some students arriving on placement and their placement area was not expecting them.'* - (SSCM, HWB, 2015/16)

It is recommended therefore that the University reviews placement allocation time, in order to assess where placement allocation deadlines are not being met.

Due to the challenges of securing high quality placements, the University has a policy that placements can be within a 2 hour travel distance, which in itself has caused

difficulties. Cost of travel, which is an underlying issue throughout the report and for students in general, is a large factor for students on placement, and with longer distances for travel comes an increased financial burden to students. Moreover, with short notice as an added factor, students have found it extremely difficult to plan approximately their travel to and from placement; this causes increased anxiety that students already feel going into a new placement setting.

*'Help with travel costs to uni/placement (not eligible for NHS support due to 'choosing' to live outside Sheffield)' - (AIWFC, 2015)*

The Student Reps have also received feedback that last minute allocation not only leads to underprepared placement providers, but that the issue of long distance travel can also exacerbate the issue. These situations clearly lead to a negative learning experience, and reduce the chance of a successful placement, which as discussed is the key issue for students.

**Students' Union Recommendation 7 (R7) - That the University reviews late placement allocation and identifies where long distance travel is most negatively affecting students**

Feedback regarding these situations appears to be more prominent in the Health and Wellbeing faculty and it can be argued that lower NSS scores reflect this. Health and Wellbeing for example consistently score lowest in the NSS with regards to support about the organisation of placements, being prepared for placements, and developing skills in relation to course, helping learning, general life skill. Encouragingly Health and Wellbeing are already looking into improving the placement experience for their students and it is accepted that this is a difficult

situation due to the changes in the Healthcare and NHS sector nationally. The added issue of proposed changes to the NHS funding system and how this will impact placement costs, is again a further complication for these students and coupled with increasing transport costs, could become a significant issue for students.

Finally, feedback received suggests that support prior to the placement, and whilst students are attending placements, is an issue to be tackled in the future. Students have fed back to Student Reps that they feel that the academic learning they complete on their course was not good preparation for work based placements, and as mentioned, this could be reflected in lower NSS scores for that measure.

*Support for students while on placement has room for improvement. Some individual cases where students felt unsupported. - (SSCM, ACES, 2015/16)*

Whilst there is little detailed feedback in relation to this, the University should be aware that this is an ongoing issue, and one that the Students' Union wishes to explore in more depth in the coming academic year.

**Students' Union Aim 2 (A2) - Further investigate support needs for placement students throughout the 2016/17 academic year**

## 1.5 Bursaries and funding

Following similar findings from previous Student Voice Reports, student funding is a common theme raised throughout student feedback, and is often an underlying factor for a number of other issues that affect the student experience and wellbeing.

Students are concerned with the significant changes within the national funding systems and in particular the loss of bursary and grant support. This has led to a number of understandable worries regarding the effects it will have on them now as a student and in the future as a graduate. The most common theme raised by students via the All I Want for Christmas campaign was that of money and finance, with half of these directly mentioning bursaries and/or grants. Whilst a large proportion of comments were very simply asking for a bursary or grant, many of these comments named specific courses, mostly relating to education or healthcare.

*'Bursaries for those who are short of money during teacher training'- (AIWFC, 2015)*

With the large amount of wishes made for the re-introduction of bursaries such as the bursary for nursing students, it is clear that recent governmental funding cuts have had an effect on a large number of students. This is understandable in terms of the impact this may have on students after graduation; the NUS calculates that in their starting role, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals will lose over £900 a year due to increased loan repayments<sup>2</sup>. Whilst the changes have been as a result of the shifting political landscape and are therefore beyond the control of the University, it is important

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<sup>2</sup> NUS (2014). *UNISON's Gail Adams on saving NHS Bursaries*. Available <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/unisons-gail-adams-on-saving-nhs-bursaries/>. Last accessed 31<sup>st</sup> Mar 2016

to acknowledge the work that the University has been doing in consultation with the Students' Union. This is particularly in relation to its financial management situations and working on the difficult task of trying to ensure that limited funds are distributed to the student groups in most need.

One of the largest contributors to this is the Student Support Fund. The University finances the fund with a million pounds, and its remit is to help students who may have extra costs due to their individual circumstances such as parents or disabled students or students in emergency situations. This year, Sheffield Hallam Students' Union, in consultation with students, has passed as policy via Union Council that it resolves to lobby the University not to cut any financial support it provides to students.

**Students' Union Recommendation 8 (R8) – That the University ensures that funding to support its most disadvantaged students continues at the same level or higher**

At the time of writing the fund has supported 600 of students with £697,038 and will have helped a significant number of students be retained on their course. This year the fund administered by the Student Financial Support Panel has looked to record more data regarding applicants in the hope that this can feed into future planning, not just for in year emergency support but for University bursary support also.

The panels that control the different types of funding on offer from the University have also been streamlined for the benefit of students, with all panels related to the matter feeding into a singular board, the Pricing Executive Board. A further group, is also involved in the University's Access Agreement, which includes the strategic

approach to enrolment and the success of all students, particularly of those students who are from a disadvantaged background. Further to this, the board also discusses the setting of study fees. With the recent Government Green Paper bringing the possibility of further fee rises, greater student representation should be included in these processes, in order to ensure the concerns of students can be properly conveyed when making these important decisions.

**Students' Union Recommendation 9 (R9) -  
That there is Students' Union representation  
in the creation and development of future  
access agreements and funding agreements**

Currently, financial issues are a primary concern for a large proportion of our students, and therefore the University has a responsibility to ensure that being a student is accessible to all, and that financial hardship is not a barrier to education.

## **SECTION 2.0**

### LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES

## 2.1 Graduation

After feedback has been received by the previous and current Elected Officers regarding a preferred change in graduation dates, different techniques were used to measure student opinion on whether graduation should change or stay as it is.

A 'token system' was set up within the Students' Union and found students voting overwhelmingly in favour of changing the main graduation event to summer, with over three quarters voting for a change. A Twitter poll was also created and over 90% of voters selected the option for a change to the summer.

This issue was subsequently raised on Facebook using a sponsored post. This received a significant amount of traffic, with 161 'likes' and 224 comments received. A small number of comments supported the idea of not changing the graduation due to their own personal travel plans, and so nursing students can graduate along with the rest of the undergraduate year group. A large number of comments however supported the idea for change, with the main reasons being international students not being able to attend (due to international student visas now being restricted to just 3 months after finishing a course), more convenience due to being more likely to still live in the area (therefore still having accommodation), and better weather and lighting for the event itself.

*"Give international students a chance to attend graduation. A lot of them have their student visa expired before the graduation." - (Graduation Report, 2015)*

The graduation schedules of Sheffield Hallam comparator institutions were analysed, which showed that the vast majority of these institutions had a main 'summer' graduation

in July, and a further 'winter' graduation which accommodated students from courses that finished later (e.g. postgraduate students, resits, nursing students, etc.).

It is noted that in 2015, **312** of our international students had their study visas expire before the graduation week, representing a significant barrier to attendance for hundreds of our students each year.

**Students' Union Recommendation 10 (R10) - That there is a change of graduation schedule to a main summer event (to take place in July or September) and an additional winter date (to take place in December or January)**

Student opinion has been measured using multiple methods to determine that there is a strong preference by the majority of the student body to change the main graduation event to summer. With a change in graduation to the summer, the added benefits of allowing allow for international students to attend their graduation before their study visa expires, having a greater ease for students with the difficulty in finding accommodation for the event, and having a positive impact to the overall atmosphere of the main graduation event, would make a real difference to a large proportion of the current student cohort should changes be brought into effect as soon as possible.

## 2.2 Computing resource

Whilst computer access is essential for all students, almost one quarter of UK students do not own a laptop or personal computer<sup>3</sup>. For Sheffield Hallam, this means over 7,000 students must rely on computing resources at University libraries and learning centres for studying, writing assignments, and printing work.

Feedback has been received by the Students' Union relating to several different aspects of computing resource, for example via the All I Want for Christmas (AIWFC) campaign, often linked to printing costs, computer availability, and software.

The majority of students who commented on printing made reference to the price of printing, with a large number of wishes asking for it to be made free. This is part of a wider issue of 'hidden costs' at University (an issue raised in last year's report), and this financial burden to students should be avoided where possible. This has also been reflected in staff-student meetings, with the issue of price being raised through the meetings themselves and the University therefore being made directly aware.

*'Students think that the printing fees are expensive' - (SSCM, HWB, 2015/16)*

It is understood that the University has committed to online submission of all coursework from September 2017, which could significantly reduce printing costs. Despite this, printing costs could be reduced further by reducing the amount of hard copies of hand outs in scheduled teaching, and directing students to use free printing

facilities for essential printing needs. The Students' Union has introduced free printing at the HUBS, in order to improve student experience with regards to this issue. This would ensure that the cost for all compulsory printing (such as coursework or assignments) is shouldered by the department, rather than the student.

**Students' Union Recommendation 11 (R11) - That teaching staff consider the cost of printing for students, and direct students to use free printing resource for assignments and coursework**

Again via the AIWFC campaign, half of the participants that made wishes regarding computing mentioned availability, with many students wishing there were more computers for them to use within the library. This was not just limited to the library however, with several different locations from across both campuses mentioned.

*'More sit down computers in Owen building' - (AIWFC, 2015)*

A recommendation for an increase in computer availability was included in the 2014/15 Student Voice Report, with the actions taken being listed in the full table in the Appendices. Further feedback was received relating to increased availability of rooms with computer access for group work, and this is discussed further in the subsequent section relating to 'learning spaces'.

Finally via the AIWFC campaign, many students have also commented on the software that is available to them, firstly most of the comments focused on it being free. Students also wished for more specific types of software to be made free to them, or an increased availability of this computer software on University computers. This view

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<sup>3</sup> NUS (2014). *Degrees of Discrimination*. Available <http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nusdigital>. Last accessed 1<sup>st</sup> Mar 2016

has been reflected in student feedback received via the Education Zone, and via Student Rep Committee Meetings, particularly those from ACES courses, with various types of software being named as not working properly or being 'difficult to locate' a computer with that software installed. Software that has been named includes 'Visual Paradigm', 'Tableau', 'SAS', 'SAP', 'VM Ware' and 'Netbeans'; although it is not an exhaustive list, it does provide some useful examples.

This issue could also be reflected in the NSS scores for 2015, with the question relating to specialised equipment (question 18) not only scoring lowest out of the 'learning resources' NSS questions, but also receiving the lowest satisfaction scores from ACES as a whole.

Whilst some software programmes have been cited to the Students' Union, it is not clear as to how many more computer licences are required for each programme to meet demand.

It is recommended therefore that the University conducts a full review of computing software availability, in order to increase satisfaction of computing resources with students from all faculties, but with a particular consideration for the needs of ACES students.

**Students' Union Recommendation 12 (R12) - That the University conducts a full review of computer software availability, with a particular consideration for the needs of students with specialist computing needs**

It should be noted that the University is already in the process of increasing specialist software availability across the University, and raising awareness of this with students could also help to address the issue in the first instance.

## 2.3 Learning spaces

In previous sections, feedback had been received about the need for increased computer availability, however some of this feedback related to the wider issue of greater learning space availability. More specific feedback received, often via the student reps, suggests a lack of facilities is a particular issue for students preparing group work (for example, small rooms with a single computer and a large screen) at busier times of the year, such as towards assessment deadlines.

*'Can get busy at peak times with it being hard to locate free group work PCs' - (SSCM, ACES, 2015/16)*

This is perhaps reflected in the 2015 NSS results with the question around access to general IT resources receiving a higher satisfaction score (88%) than the subsequent question relating to accessing specialised equipment, facilities, and rooms (84%). Similarly, it was noted during Staff Student Committee Meetings that students felt more desk space and rooms to conduct confidential interviews are necessary. The Where I Belong project also highlighted the importance that some students have with regards to the bookable group working spaces.

*'...like Level 3 bookable spaces. I like the group booths as I don't like working on my own, I like working with other people around me... ...so I tend to go to group areas' - (Where I Belong, 2015)*

With the demand for more computing resources, with a particular focus on resources available for group work, it is recommended that not only is there a greater investment in computing resource across the University, but that there is a

greater availability of small rooms with computer accessibility for group work. This could be achieved through making use of empty teaching spaces such as seminar rooms with computer availability.

### **Student's Union Recommendation 13 (R13) - That there is an increased availability of small bookable rooms, with computer access, to facilitate group working**

Research conducted by the Students' Union has also recorded trends in what makes certain bookable spaces favoured over others. Bright spaces with natural light, and rooms that were not isolated were preferred, and so future bookable spaces would benefit from being in central areas, rather than bookable rooms being available in remote locations. The Students' Union has attempted to bring these features to learning spaces at the HUBS, as part of the recent refurbishment of the building.

The Students' Union Satisfaction Research found that in areas where students would like to work, comfort was a key factor that students often look for in learning spaces. Comfortable chairs and a good amount of desk space, were both cited as important, with some students going further and suggesting 'bean-bag chairs' would help to create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. Furthermore, students commented via the focus groups that the availability of plug sockets was important yet not always considered or accessible in learning spaces.

It is hoped that this feedback could be used to better understand what students look for in learning spaces, and help to ensure University learning spaces are not only suitable for study, but help students develop a sense of belonging at the University.

## 2.4 Cross-campus links

In last year's Student Voice Report, it was noted that there was a significant disparity between the student experience at City campus and at Collegiate campus, with lack of computer availability ('Education zone', 2014), parking ('All I Want for Christmas', 2014), Students' Union presence ('Satisfaction research', 2015), and student engagement ('Alterline Survey', 2014) at Collegiate campus. It was suggested that the introduction of a shuttle-bus could improve this issue.

Students were asked via Twitter and Facebook whether they would utilise a shuttle bus between City and Collegiate campus. A Twitter poll received 150 votes, resulting in almost 80% of respondents stating they would make use of a bus.

Overall, the Facebook post reached over 60,000 users (which were comprised of primarily current students and alumni), and receiving over 1,500 likes, all of which suggests there is significant interest in this issue.

*"This would be perfect for dark nights rather than walking from the library at city to get home at Eccy Road - so so much safer" - (Social Media report, 2015/16)*

Via the Facebook post, over 90% of the comments were in favour of the introduction of a shuttle-bus, with various benefits cited including personal safety (example above), reliability, convenience, and improving the connection between the two campuses. Suggestions were also made for a shuttle bus link to the Sports Park, helping to link Sheffield Hallam University facilities further.

*"...would mean students at collegiate can feel more involved in stuff going on at the hubs" - (Social Media report, 2015/16)*

The issue of transport was also raised via the All I Want for Christmas project. The majority of the comments relating to transport referenced a shuttle bus to connect the two campuses. This wish was raised in the 2015 'All I Want for Christmas' report, and desire for better campus connectivity appears to have grown from last year.

Due to the overall feedback received regarding transportation, it is suggested that the University review and consider introducing a cross-campus shuttle-bus, with consideration for lack of parking facilities and improving cross-campus connectivity. A shuttle-bus stop outside the HUBS building could also enable societies and sports teams to have greater reach, improving extra-curricular activities for a wide range of students.

**Students' Union Recommendation 14 (R14) - That the University considers the introduction of a cross-campus shuttle-bus, with links to the University Sports Park**

Whilst the question posted on Facebook did not specifically address the Students' Union presence at Collegiate Campus some comments touched upon a perception that students at Collegiate Campus have less engagement with the Students' Union. Satisfaction with Students' Union facilities has been a focus this year, particularly with regards to the recent refurbishment within the HUBS. After securing funding to make some changes, the Students' Union has sought to measure opinion from students about their Students' Union. Following this, some additional changes will be made, and it is understood that the refurbishment is an ongoing project rather than a singular change. It is an aim of the Students' Union to continue to improve its facilities and to ensure that students play a large part in

establishing the future direction of the physical Students' Union space.

**Students' Union Aim 3 (A3) - Continue to improve student satisfaction with Students' Union facilities, and work with the University to provide greater visibility at Collegiate Campus**

It has been established that students are aware that the Students' Union currently has only a limited presence at Collegiate Campus, with a small office representing the Students' Union base at that campus. A larger area would not only provide a better platform for the Students' Union to operate from, but would help increase awareness of the Students' Union with students that are based at Collegiate Campus.

## 2.5 Textbooks

The All I Want for Christmas project, indicated that almost one quarter of participants made a wish regarding University course textbooks or journals. This represents a significant amount of the overall sample, and it could be argued that this therefore could be an issue for a substantial proportion of the overall student body at Sheffield Hallam.

Almost half of the participants who made a wish relating to textbooks did so more specifically with regards to lowering, or even removing, the cost of buying a book. Many of the comments for example suggested issuing text books for free. Whilst it might not be feasible to provide all Sheffield Hallam University students with free textbooks, the Students' Union does provide a 'Book Exchange' service for students. The Students' Union could perhaps expand this further with reference to buying textbooks from graduating students, to be sold to first year undergraduate students at a discounted rate.

### **Students' Union aim 4 (A4) - Expand the Students' Union Book Exchange service to help meet the demand for textbooks and key texts**

In expanding the service, the University can help the Students' Union not only by helping to advertise the service to students, but working in partnership to support this expansion.

### **Students' Union Recommendation 15 (R15) - That the University supports the Students' Union in the expansion of the Students' Union Book Exchange service**

Referring back to the AIWFC campaign feedback, a large proportion of participants who made a wish relating to textbooks stated

the need for greater availability of the textbooks themselves from University libraries and learning centres. Some of these comments were more detailed, making reference to core textbooks or required reading not being available. Several comments directly named their course, which included Computing, Engineering, PR and Science courses.

*'all recommended reading available in libraries and all required textbooks to be provided by university' - (AIWFC, 2015)*

In response to the high level of feedback received via the AIWFC campaign, the Students' Union created a short poll on Twitter asking whether 'online e-books' or 'more physical copies' were more of a priority with regards to library books. Results revealed a roughly even divide between the two options, with 58 votes.

In order to give more clarity, an open question was posted on social media asking what students felt the biggest priority was to improving library books as a resource. A slightly higher proportion of the comments related to the need for more physical books over e-books, however a demand for more copies of key textbooks being an overriding theme.

*'...When there's around 500 students on a course and 14 books in the library for one module (none of which are ever available because they're always on loan) it's so difficult to do work...' - (Social media report, 2015/16)*

Currently, demand for textbooks currently appears to be outstripping supply and students have requested that more could be done to ensure that core textbooks or required reading is available at the University

library before it is selected to be essential reading for students.

**Students' Union Recommendation 16 (R16) - That the University ensures all students are able to access either physical or electronic copies of all core text books.**

Despite a large amount of feedback received regarding the increased need for more textbooks, the library system has also received much positive feedback. This is evident not only from feedback received by the Students' Union but through the high satisfaction scores received in the NSS and PTES. Particular praise was received via the Student Reps for the new 'auto-renewal' of books; however there was some confusion about how the process works.

*'Many students provided positive feedback about Library Services. This included good opening hours and people liked how books are now auto-renewed. However, students felt there was not enough communication surrounding auto-renewal.'* - (SSCM, HWB, 2015/16)

Based on feedback received, greater communication of how the 'auto-renewal' system works, would help students make better use of the library resources, which is vital to so many Sheffield Hallam Students.

**Students' Union Recommendation 17 (R17) - That there is greater communication to students regarding the auto-renewal system for library books**

## 2.6 Food and drink outlets

In last year's Student Voice Report, it was highlighted primarily via the All I Want for Christmas project, that there was a large amount of negative feedback regarding the price of food and drinks at University outlets. This saw the Students' Union, and subsequently the University, offer free hot water to all students. Since hot water has been made free, the Students' Union has received a large amount of positive feedback from students, suggesting the change has been well received.

This year's campaign again saw a significant proportion of the overall respondents comment again on food and drink price however. Therefore it could be argued that this is still a large issue for a proportion of the student body at Sheffield Hallam. The most reoccurring comments in the selection were wishes for food prices to be cheaper, with some students even commenting on how they would like the food to be free.

*'Cheaper food available at shu cafes - most can't afford it' - (AIWFC, 2015)*

The issue of food prices on campus was also raised at the December Education Zone, where it was argued that the University appeared to have prioritised locally source and high quality food in outlets such as the Granary at Collegiate Campus. Whilst this is welcome, students in general tend to prioritise lower budget food as opposed to locally sourced high quality ingredients, and therefore the aim of University outlets appears to be at odds with student expectation or desires.

This view could be reflected in the 2016 Times Higher Education Student Experience (THESE) Survey, where Sheffield Hallam scored below average with regards to 'cheap

shop/bar/amenities'. It could also be argued that by having a category relating to price over quality, the THESE Survey has already identified what student priorities are in relation to food provision.

One option for reducing prices could be to have more deals within the food outlets and this was suggested by a small number of students, such as offers or 'meal deals'.

### **Students' Union Recommendation 18 (R18) - That the University improves range and affordability of food at University outlets**

Consequently, it could be suggested that there is a review of the prices of food in food outlets to see if prices can be made more affordable for students, perhaps achieved through special offers.

Again via the All I Want for Christmas Campaign and Community Zones, the request for more food options were made, particularly in relation to vegetarian, vegan, gluten free, and halal food options. In reviewing food price, the type of food should also be considered to ensure food is not only affordably priced, but caters for our wide range of students here at Sheffield Hallam.

This year, Sheffield Hallam Students' Union, in consultation with students, have passed as policy via Union Council that requires the Students' Union to look into the production of allergen free menus, and the provision of more allergen free options, and to also encourage the University to do the same.

*'Group would like to see the Students' Union cater for a wider variety of dietary requirements (gluten free, veggie, vegan, halal, etc) as the University do not' - (Community Zone, 2015-16)*

With the request also being made for a wider variety of food at the Students' Union, due to

the lack of certain items at University outlets, the Students' Union aims to review what it offers in its food outlets, to ensure it too meets the wide demands of students who make use of the facilities.

**Students' Union Aim 5 (A5) - Review outlets at the HUBS to ensure it caters for the wide range of student demands**

## **SECTION 3.0**

### REPRESENTATION, SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITIES

### 3.1 Sports Clubs and Societies

Extra-curricular activities have a hugely positive impact on students' lives, and are a large part of the University experience. Not only is this a real benefit to the social experience but it can have a positive impact on the academic lives of students as well. The University itself, in partnership with the British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS), has suggested, in its own funded research, that involvement in University sport can also boost students' employment prospects<sup>4</sup>. Students themselves have also identified this with comments made during Staff Student Committee Meetings that extra-curricular activities are 'CV enhancing'. The importance of sports and societies therefore is clear, and it is hoped that the University will continue to work in partnership with the Students' Union to encourage student participation in these extra-curricular activities.

Following feedback from students that funding can be a barrier to societies and sports club development, focus groups were held with regards to sponsorships for societies and sports teams. Within the focus groups it was discussed how many clubs and societies are struggling with funding and how money should be spent helping clubs and societies to develop.

Sponsorship is a key way in which sports clubs and societies can improve their financial situation, with only limited funding available. Strong themes emerged, with some relating to dissatisfaction with Students' Union and the sponsorship process, and some offering solutions as to how these can be improved.

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<sup>4</sup> Allen, K., Bullough, S., Cole, D., Shibli, S., and Wilson, J. (2013). *The Impact of Engagement in Sport on Graduate Employability*. London: British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS).

Nearly all of the students in the focus groups stated they have bars as sponsors as it was felt that clubs and societies have little else to offer apart from utilising their venues and were unable to provide visual advertisement for that sponsor such as logos on their kits.

Students commented on the length of time it takes to "get things processed" within the Students' Union, in particular getting contracts processed and accessing their own money. Some students explained how the process of getting contracts took so long they missed out on the benefits of their sponsorship deal.

*'The Union doesn't offer much information really and I think small societies panic and take the first deal. The Union just says yes or no, they don't give any reasons or offer guidance...' - (Sports and Societies Sponsorship Report, 2015/16)*

Students commented on how there needs to be clearer guidance from the Students' Union, for example, a better support network or a primary contact, particularly if clubs or societies are trying to organise a larger contract. The Students' Union therefore resolves to improve this process, by conducting a full review into the sponsorship process, with a particular focus on processing time and guidance structures.

**Students' Union Aim 6 (A6) - To conduct a review into sponsorship contract processing time, and provide clearer guidance for sports clubs and societies**

With funding clearly being seen as an issue by students that prevents both sports clubs and societies from developing further, the Students' Union urges the University to help increase funding for sports and societies.

**Students' Union Recommendation 19 (R19) -  
That there is increased funding for sports  
clubs and societies at Sheffield Hallam**

As illustrated in this section, an improved sports and societies provision not only benefits the students at Sheffield Hallam, but would reflect positively on the University and the Students' Union itself.

### 3.2 Student Reps

Students become partners in their educational experience through effective representation. Student representation provides a recognisable and structured approach to engaging students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience and to facilitating their meaningful involvement in University life. Student Representation is also a valuable source of collective feedback on the wider student experience and a route for communication and dissemination of resulting actions between the student body at all levels and the Students' Union and University.

Last year, the Students' Union conducted a review of the Student Rep system, which aimed to ensure consistency across faculties, increase the effectiveness of the Student Rep system, and ensure adequate student representation on committees. This has led to several changes to the system, including centrally collating the achievements of reps to close the feedback loop, and the introduction of Department Reps.

There has been a slow decline in staff-student meetings attendance since 2012; a trend which has continued into this academic year, as measured by the Annual Student Rep Survey. Furthermore, a proportion of Reps commented that staff occasionally fail to attend meetings with little to no warning, leading to inconvenience for Reps as well as preventing them from discussing feedback. Furthermore, this could have a negative impact on the engagement of the Reps themselves. Course Reps, and Department Reps in particular, advised that informal staff-student meetings were the best preferred method of relaying feedback to the University, which highlights the importance of the meetings themselves.

*'Some are very engaged however it doesn't seem to phase [sic] other tutors because some of them don't attend the meetings...'* -  
(Annual Student Rep Survey, 2015)

The survey also highlighted other aspects of engagement with the Student Rep system. Staff engagement with the system has continued to decline since 2012. In order to improve this, the University needs to continue to work in partnership with the Students' Union to ensure that staff are made fully aware of the importance of the Student Rep system, with the aim of boosting both staff and student engagement and attendance of Student Rep meetings.

**Students' Union Recommendation 20 (R20) - That the University works in partnership with the Students' Union to increase University staff engagement with the Student Rep system**

The survey has shown that only 60% of Reps reported receiving minutes after the meeting, which is consistent with last year. Furthermore, when breaking down the results there were inconsistencies between the four faculties receiving minutes after the meetings.

The Students' Union therefore urges all University departments to meet the expectations for sending an agenda to all attendees of Staff-Student meetings a minimum of one week before the meeting, and minutes of the meeting to be sent to all attendees within three weeks following the meeting, with actions and outcomes included. This would allow enough time for amendments to be made and actions to be taken, and would also ensure the materials are distributed to all Reps, thereby closing the feedback loop.

**Students' Union Recommendation 21 (R21) - That the University ensures expectations are**

### **met with regards to the distribution of Staff Student Committee Meeting materials**

Overall, there has been a slight increase in Rep confidence in gathering feedback from other students. It could be argued this is due to using social media or face to face methods, which have increased since the previous year.

Throughout the Student Rep system there are large discrepancies with regards to the number of Reps on each course, with some courses having a particularly high number of Reps in comparison to the overall population of that course. For example, LLB Hons Law course has 60 Reps for 522 students, which means over 12% of students on that course are registered as Course Reps. These high numbers however do not often translate into higher Rep involvement, which suggests that having more Reps does not lead to greater engagement. Some Student Reps themselves have even commented via the Student Rep Survey that there are too many reps in certain courses, leading to difficulty in defining the role and varying degrees of involvement.

*'Have a limit of student reps, some years have a lot, and I question the spread of involvement between them.'* - (Annual Student Rep Survey, 2015)

Having such a high number of Student Reps per person on a course not only takes away from the importance and responsibility of a single Rep, but can create confusion for students as to who to report an issue to.

Whilst we wish to encourage as many students as possible to be involved with the Student Rep system, the Students' Union recommends that the number of Student Reps per course is limited. This is not only to ensure that identification of student reps by follow students is clear, but so that the

responsibilities of the Reps are clear to the Reps themselves.

**Students' Union Recommendation 22 (R22) - That the Students' Union and the University works in partnership to ensure there are appropriate numbers of reps in each course/department to effectively represent their cohort**

### 3.3 Mental health and wellbeing

The Students' Union has noted a perceived rise in student concern with regards to mental health and wellbeing in recent years. As awareness of mental health issues increases, so too do the number of discussions around what can be done to help students not only in improving poor mental health, but maintaining a good mental wellbeing.

Last year's Student Voice Report identified that the majority of students at some point experience some feelings of mental distress, such as stress, lack of energy, feeling unhappy or down, or feelings of anxiety, which also reflects the wider student population on a national level<sup>5</sup>. Clearly University life can have both a positive and negative effect on the mental health of students, and this has been identified as an issue often by the students themselves, as well as the supporting research. Elected Officer Candidate manifestos, for example, featured key manifesto points relating to wellbeing and mental health, from not just the Welfare and Community Officer candidates but from candidates in all full-time Officer categories. These points often focused on reducing the perceived stigma of mental health issues, improving mental health training for staff and student leaders, and signposting to mental health support services. Services such as Nightline and Hallam Headspace were referenced as being a positive support mechanism that could be made more effective with greater advertising and signposting.

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<sup>5</sup> National Union of Students (2013). *Mental Distress Survey: Overview* Available: <http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/Campaigns/20130517%20Mental%20Distress%20Survey%20%20Overview.pdf> Last accessed 14th Apr 2016.

Students have also given feedback relating to mental health and wellbeing via Community Zone, with a particular concern for how much of a responsibility the University has for ensuring students continue in good mental health. Suggestions were made via this forum that the University could make use of attendance monitoring to act as triggers for safeguarding, as this may indicate levels of mental distress. This also links to a wider point made that corrective action by the University should be supportive and not punitive.

The University cannot be solely responsible for the mental wellbeing of all students. Students themselves have general responsibility for taking steps to ensure they remain mentally healthy as they would with their physical health. However, the University can ensure that proper support is in place to help students when they need it. With several support services, such as Nightline and the University Student Wellbeing Centre, currently in place, the need therefore is to ensure these services are properly signposted to all students. This is not only to make them easy to find for students, but as a part of all scheduled teaching, to ensure there is a culture shift in the wider student body of supporting fellow students as well as being confident and knowledgeable enough to support themselves.

#### **Students' Union Recommendation 23 (R23) - That the University ensure mental health and wellbeing support is given to all students**

The Students' Union Welfare and Community Officer, in partnership with the University, commissioned a piece of research relating to the mental health of Sheffield Hallam students, focusing on body image and the associated effects of poor self-body image. The Student Body Image Research found that

one quarter of participants have taken performance- and appearance-enhancing substances, with the biggest source of obtaining these substances being via the internet, and unregulated sources. It could be argued that with the University sale of exercise supplements (such as protein powder) that market towards students with a particular focus on 'anabolic' protein (which is currently on sale at University outlets), students could be made more susceptible to taking additional substances without proper knowledge of what effect this may have. This is due to the use of words such as 'anabolic', which could have an association with steroid use, not being properly explained to students, and therefore misinterpreted. There has also been academic research produced in recent years which suggests supplement users present a significantly more open attitude towards doping<sup>6</sup>; in turn suggesting students at the highest risk of doping are those that are likely to purchase supplements on offer.

The Students' Union does not suggest preventing the sale of legal exercise enhancing substances, such as protein powder, that is currently on sale at University outlets. However, in order to ensure the University is supportive to students, and with respect to mental health issues currently affecting students, it is recommended that more information on supplement use is made available to students who are considering using and/or purchasing supplements. Consideration of how supplements are marketed to students by the University is suggested; this is to ensure

the advertisement of supplements (that can benefit an individual when used correctly) does not also inadvertently misinform them.

**Students' Union Recommendation 24 (R24) - That the University has a consideration for specific mental health issues in the sale of exercise supplements at University outlets**

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<sup>6</sup> Backhouse, S. H., Whitaker, L. and Petróczi, A.. (2013). Gateway to doping? Supplement use in the context of preferred competitive situations, doping attitude, beliefs, and norms. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*. 23 (2), 244-252.

### 3.4 Leadership and development

Sheffield Hallam students often aspire not only to be qualified in their field, but to lead it. Employability and leadership skills are essential for students in pursuing their chosen career, however not all students that graduate from University feel they have developed these skills, which has had an effect on their confidence in taking the next steps in their careers.

The DLHE survey found that from those students who graduated at the end of the 2013/14 academic year, the majority felt that they were 'well' or 'very well' prepared for employment (84%), and an even greater proportion felt they were 'well' or 'very well' prepared for further study. Students felt significantly less prepared however for self-employment, with just (53%) responding that they were 'well' or 'very well' prepared. It can be argued therefore that Sheffield Hallam students are well prepared for employment, but not so well prepared to set up their own business or work on a freelance basis.

*'Confidence, how to deal with stress better...'  
- on preferred support (Leadership Report,  
2015/16)*

The 'Mapping the Student Experience' longitudinal surveys found that in two different groups of students, the vast majority felt their chosen degree will help them get a job when they graduate, however only between 15-20% of each group actually felt 'very confident' to take that next step. The Students' Union aims to improve student confidence with skills training such as leadership and organisation training. Skills and training provided, as well as award programmes such as the Hallam Award, link directly with employability and the self-assurance to venture into self-employment (which students themselves are less likely to

feel their degree prepares them to do). It is noted that the Library Services conduct training sessions for students; however these appear to relate more towards building on specific academic skills, as opposed to developing wider transferrable skills.

The Students' Union has conducted its own research using surveys and focus groups to analyse how best to deliver sessions such as a leadership training, in order to improve confidence and ability in students. In the survey and focus groups, students rated 'developing people', 'building strong relationships' and 'how to talk about your skills, experience and achievements in interviews' most useful.

Students who completed the survey and took part in the focus groups both advised they would like the sessions to be delivered 'face to face', which is in line with findings from the Library Services 'Have Your Say' (HYS) report which reviewed the current Library Services skills sessions.

Delivering in depth face-to-face sessions inevitably incurs cost and requires resource. Students from the focus group were asked whether they felt a fee would be appropriate for the training programme. Some students explained how they felt this would put people off, with students already often struggling financially without this added pressure. In order to overcome this therefore, it is recommended that the University and the Students' Union work in partnership and share resource in order to provide leadership training to students, which will have a positive effect on students during their time at University and after graduation.

**Students' Union Recommendation 25 (R25) -  
That the Students' Union and University to  
work in partnership to provide greater**

### **resource to leadership training programmes for students**

Finally, students were asked within the survey what their ideal leadership programme would look like, this included there being training on motivation, team work, real life practice and public speaking. Additionally students were asked what would encourage them to take part, the most popular comments were a certificate or qualification and the sessions being at convenient times.

# Closing Statement

Students are passionate about improving their experience. This year, we have received feedback from more students than ever before about their experience at Sheffield Hallam University, which reflects both the growing student passion for ensuring their views are heard, and the Students' Union's willingness to converse with its members and to campaign on their behalf. Sheffield Hallam University strives to improve both the academic and non-academic experience for students, and has shown a sustained commitment to making positive changes each year, in response to feedback. It is hoped that this movement can continue this year, and that the University continues to respond positively to this year's Students Voice Report, and the recommendations made therein.

This report has used a variety of methods to gather feedback from students about their University experience, and put their views to the University, in order to affect change. The report has drawn from formal research conducted by the Students' Union, the University, and in some cases outside of Sheffield Hallam, as well as indirect feedback and comments, to allow for students to be represented and supported in their views. Recommendations have been made in order to respond to help improve or remove the issues facing students, and it is hoped that the suggested actions are both well received and effective. In the coming academic year, we hope to track progress with regards to these actions, and ensure that the University, in partnership with the Students' Union, continues to provide the very best University experience for tens of thousands of students across Sheffield.

A big part of University life is academia and study. Despite this, the student experience outside of the classroom is not only vast but equally important to ensuring our students are happy, healthy, and giving students the skills and abilities to go on and do great things in their chosen careers.

The Students' Union looks forward to working with the University in the coming year to ensure that the student experience, both inside and outside of the classroom, can be the very best for our students.

# Appendices

## Sources used in the 2015/16 report

Data used in this report comes from three main areas; national surveys (see 1-4 in the list below), formal research conducted by the Students' Union (see 5-10 in the list below), and indirect feedback (see 11-14 in the list below).

A cross-comparison of the different data sets has highlighted areas where students were reportedly less satisfied, or where improvements are needed, and these form the main themes of the report.

Any questions can be directed to the Students' Union Researcher, Pete Crowson, at [p.crowson@shu.ac.uk](mailto:p.crowson@shu.ac.uk).

### Students' Union formal research

**1. *Annual Student Rep Survey 2015***

The Student Rep report is based on an annual survey sent to all student reps asking for feedback on their experiences of the Student Rep system and the interaction with the University staff and processes.

**2. *Understanding our Students report 2015***

An analysis of the demographic breakdown of students involved in sports, societies, and volunteering, conducted to better understand engaged students involved in these extra-curricular activities.

**3. *Students Union Satisfaction Research 2015/16***

Comprised of both social media question and focus groups. This piece of research aims to measure student satisfaction with the Students' Union itself, with a particular focus on the recent building refurbishment.

**4. *Mapping the Student Experience 2013-2016***

This project is a longitudinal study that is now in its third year, with aims that include investigating how students understand employability. The study is based on surveys that are conducted throughout the academic year, which provide insight into the changing views and experiences of employability and skills development.

**5. *Assessment and Feedback report (A&F) 2015/16***

Working in partnership with the Education Officer, Hassan El Zafar, a survey was designed to measure student opinion of assessment and feedback, with a particular focus on assignment feedback length and appropriateness.

**6. *Wednesday Afternoon report 2015/16***

Working in partnership with the Sports and Physical Activities Officer, Emily Wilkes, this project consisted of a survey to be completed by students who have experienced a barrier to sports participation, University data on scheduled teaching, and a case study of a student who has been affected.

7. ***Where I Belong project (WiB) 2015***  
This is a qualitative research project, using 'auto-driven photo-elicitation' technique, to found how students identify themselves and their communities. The outcomes of this piece of research will include an academic paper, suggestions for how to recreate an environment that enhances 'belonging', and to uniquely measure the student experience.
8. ***Leadership report 2015/16***  
Consisting of focus groups with students in 'leadership positions' within Students' Union led extra-curricular positions. The focus group aimed to analyse the current leadership training programme within the Students' Union, and a wider view of student leadership skills as a whole.
9. ***Sports and Societies Sponsorship report 2015/16***  
Consisting of focus groups with students who are members of sports and societies team. Focus groups primarily revolved around the sponsorship process, and at points expanded to wider issues with sports and societies as a whole.
10. ***Room Booking report 2015/16***  
Working in partnership with the Activities Officer, Peter Neild, A survey was produced that was designed to measure student satisfaction with the room booking system, and a wider implication of booking learning spaces as a whole.
11. ***Women in Leadership report 2015/16***  
Survey and report measuring satisfaction with the women in leadership conference, with a wider reference to female students in leadership roles throughout the Students' Union.
12. ***Sports Kit Survey 2015***  
Working in partnership with the Sports and Physical Activities Officer, Emily Wilkes, a survey was delivered that was designed to measure student satisfaction with the Team Hallam sports kit, and a wider view of satisfaction with sports participation as a whole.
13. ***Graduation Report 2015/16***  
Working in partnership with the Students' Union President, Dapo Adaramewa, this project made use of social media, simple survey techniques, as well as University data, to assess the current graduation schedule.
14. ***Student Body Image report 2015/16***  
Working in partnership with the Welfare Officer, James Manson, a survey was delivered that was designed to measure student opinion on body image, steroid use, and mental health issues within Sheffield Hallam students.
15. ***Student Media Research 2015/16***  
Through the use of Twitter and Facebook, the Students' Union have made use of Social Media to collect both qualitative and quantitative data through simple questions. This can often prompt further, more in-depth, research in specific areas.

## Indirect feedback

### **16. All I Want for Christmas Campaign 2015**

In December 2013 the Student Officer Team ran an 'All I Want for Christmas' campaign for its second year, collecting feedback on what students would like the University to improve, which was subsequently analysed and reported.

### **17. Staff Student Committee Meeting (SSCM) minutes 2015-16**

Minutes from Student Rep Committee Meetings, where staff and student reps work together to improve the student experience.

### **18. Education Zone Meetings 2015-16**

Students may submit any idea they have about their education to the Education Zone. This allows the issue to be discussed and debated, and zone committees can vote on whether a change in policy is to be passed as a result.

### **19. Community Zone Meetings 2015-16**

Students may submit any idea they have about the student community to the Community Zone. This allows the issue to be discussed and debated, and zone committees can vote on whether a change in policy is to be passed as a result.

### **20. Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Advice Centre 2015-16**

Our Advice Centre offers free, independent and impartial advice on all issues such as housing, academic, money matters, benefits, and employment. The data collected through the Advice Centre indicates issues students are facing.

### **21. Officer Candidate Manifestos 2016**

Student Officer Candidate manifestos were themed and analysed to highlight trends in what students' campaign for, vote for, and have raised as a current issue that needs to be addressed.

## National Surveys

### **22. National Student Survey (NSS) 2015**

The National Student Survey is a survey of final year students which asks questions about different aspects of their learning experience, such as academic support, and assessment and feedback.

### **23. Postgraduate Taught Survey (PTES) 2015**

The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is a national survey specifically for taught postgraduate students, which focuses on students' experience of the course, learning and teaching, and skills development.

### **24. Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey (DLHE) 2013/14**

The annual Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey asks leavers about their employment or further study six months after graduation. The data collected most recently therefore refers to those who graduated at the end of the 2013-14 academic year.

### **25. Sheffield Hallam Student Barometer (SB) 2015**

This survey evaluates the student experience at Sheffield Hallam; from expectations and satisfaction with arrival, to learning and living experiences, to support services and facilities.

## Review of progress from 2014/15 report - full spreadsheet

THEMES	RECOMMENDATIONS	COMMENTS ON PROGRESS	HAS THIS BEEN ACHIEVED?
<b>1.0 YOUR TEACHING, LEARNING AND COURSE</b>			
<b>1.1 Assessment and feedback</b>	1. Consider the phased introduction of anonymous marking and other fairer marking practices, via the Assessment Journey Programme.	Assessment essentials for staff now published and includes guidance on assessment design and marking practice. A student version is being developed in partnership with students. Anonymous marking is now scoped into the technical considerations of the assessment journey programme which has another 18 months to run.	Achieved
	2. Monitor the use of the maximum feedback timescale, consistently across all faculties.	Assessment scheduler is now used by all faculties and allows the monitoring of the return of work via helpdesk but not work online or in class. In future tracking of online return of work will be considered as part of the assessment journey programme.	Achieved
	3. Address the BME attainment gap through offering support mechanisms and choice of assessment type, where appropriate.	A University BME student experience and success steering Group has been established and now coordinates actions to reduce the attainment gap. This work is ongoing and includes detailed analysis of data, initiatives within the REACT programme, awareness raising and addressing unconscious bias.	Partially achieved
<b>1.2 Extenuating circumstances</b>	4. Reconsider updated Extenuating Circumstances policy, to instead offer deferral opportunities to all students that have Extenuating Circumstances awarded, regardless of grade.	Decision was reviewed and upheld. The decision was reached with full involvement of the Students' Union by due process and was made on the basis of the single figure uptake of the retake option by students where ECs were approved. The overwhelming majority of students accepted the pass mark achieved.	Achieved
	5. Ensure students with Extenuating Circumstances who have to re-take one or more modules, are better supported to complete their studies and access funding.	622 students are on FT degrees but are taking an extra year to make good credit. They are eligible for SFE funding pro-rata provided they are only taking one extra year. 222 students have additional study at the end of their award which they are taking as external candidates. Student Finance does encourage students to talk to SFE, especially where there are compelling personal circumstances, to discuss funding. [Report requested from Student Financial Support Panel]	Partially achieved
<b>1.3 Careers and employability</b>	6. Further include and embed careers, employment, and extra-curricular activities advice within courses.	Ongoing planning with StEER, SU & LSSS around an extra/co-curricular award.	Partially achieved
<b>1.4 Organisation and management</b>	7. Review the effectiveness and cross faculty consistency of communication around changed and/or rescheduled teaching.	Report produced from D&S with recommendations around communication. Every staff cancellation should be recorded at Helpdesk, including providing the class code (activity name). Implement a student communication policy for when staff are absent and how they should report it to Helpdesk. An updated text system should be in place that utilises a free service such as iMessage or WhatsApp and can send more than one text out at a time. This should allocate texts on a monthly or semesterly basis. Utilising social media forums across the University will allow for more seamless communication regarding notifying students of a change to timetabling.	Achieved
	8. Evaluate Wednesday Afternoon timetabling across all faculties to identify key problem areas and devise appropriate solutions.	A 39% reduction in teaching activities scheduled for Wednesday afternoons has been achieved over the past three years for standard full time undergraduate students. Demand on specialist space continues to be a constraint and work is ongoing to improve the way we use space in order to further reduce teaching on Wednesday afternoons.	Partially achieved
	9. Introduce maximum timetable gaps between scheduled teaching sessions for all undergraduate students not on placement.	Timetabling have developed a report that will identify where a number of student experience issues occur in the timetable, including gaps of more than three hours between sessions. This report will help timetablers identify where problems are occurring. It will also help identify barriers to resolving gaps.	Achieved
<b>1.5 Teaching materials and resources</b>	10. Ensure core materials, journals, and textbooks are available to students online, as well as physically across both campuses.	Awareness raising and call-outs twice in the last year to encourage students to recommend purchases. We will buy an e-book version of books if available, or additional copies of a print book. Students are encouraged to refer back to resource lists online and advise us of recommendations from lecturers.	Achieved
	11. Give consideration for increasing computer availability across campus	For the last year, there have been student ambassadors at both libraries during busy periods to help students find a PC on campus.	Achieved
	12. Give consideration for the reduction and/or removal of the requirement to print learning materials.	From September 2016 where possible coursework will be submitted online for levels 3, 4 and 7 (students new to the University) and for all students from September 2017 significantly reducing the printing costs to students of assessed work.	Achieved
<b>1.6 Placements</b>	13. Give all placement students appropriate and ongoing support, in order to facilitate planning and travel, and to discuss any concerns.	The international experience team runs Culture Connect the biggest mentoring scheme in the University with 200+ participants. A third are UK students. Participation has increased by 30% since last academic year. Culture Connect is promoted throughout the year and has two intakes in October and February to give more students the opportunity to take part. We are working closely with academic teams to encourage referrals into the scheme.	Partially achieved

<b>2.0 YOUR REPRESENTATION AND OPINIONS</b>			
<b>2.2 Student Rep Programme: Feedback</b>	14. Ensure consistency of approach between faculties regarding distribution of materials before and after staff student meetings.	Work has been ongoing this year, with greater support and consistency given to departmental reps in particular. Departmental reps have reported to Faculty forums, although there have been some hurdles to communication between course and departmental reps.	Partially achieved
	15. Review staff-student meeting time and meeting structure, with consideration for meetings split into individual year groups where appropriate.	Faculties have continued to improve support given to course representatives and have developed a number of process improvements around student voice. There is a wider emphasis on trying to support an ongoing conversation rather than only having discussions at SSCs. SRMG is also due to conduct a review of the structure of Staff-Student Committee Meetings, with a view to improving the meeting structure.	Partially achieved
<b>3.0 YOUR UNIVERSITY LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT</b>			
<b>3.1 Learning and social communities</b>	16. Expand University-led peer-to-peer learning and home-international student mentoring.	Opening of The Bridge : There is a programme of workshops, shorter bite-size sessions, drop-ins, appointments, and a Writing Café. The Bridge will continue to expand this range of skills areas and a major part of the development will be to recruit student peer mentors to provide support. There are plans to extend this model to Collegiate campus and to develop the online presence and self-help resources. More information about the Bridge and a programme of events is on the shuspace Learning Essentials tab.	Partially achieved
<b>3.2 Cross-campus links</b>	17. Introduce a cross campus transport link and/or reduce transport costs for students.	Discounts on travel cards when purchased at the Students' Union.	Achieved
<b>3.3 Sports and activities</b>	18. Review transport costs to sports training/fixtures, with a view to reducing the financial burden on students.	A review is currently ongoing with regards to membership fees and transport costs, with the outcomes pending. This recommendation has been taken into account with this review.	Partially achieved
	19. Support the Students' Union to offer free-trials and taster sessions with sports team.	No formalised free-trials and/or taster sessions currently in place.	Not achieved
<b>3.4 Food and drink outlets</b>	20. Reduce the price of food and drink at University outlets and hot drinks in learning spaces across campus.	Improved offers to students via SHUcards, with £22-24 per year per student being saved on average. Free hot water at Library Cafe.	Achieved
<b>3.5 The HUBS</b>	21. Review the suitability of the HUBS building and to support necessary improvements.	Completed refurbishment of the upstairs space at the HUBS, as well as a complete rebrand of the Studnets' Union cafe. Review into student opinion is continuous and ongoing.	Achieved
<b>3.6 Student funding</b>	22. Continue to supply the Student Support Fund, with sustained levels of funding from the University.	The university spent £900,000 on the Student Support Fund in 2014/15 and we are on target to spend £1 million in 2015/16, a figure which has also been agreed for the 2016/17 academic year. 72% of applicants to the fund so far this year have received a payment. Alignment of applicants to the fund with figures on retention also suggest that students applying for support are more likely to continue on their course, even if their applications are unsuccessful. Further work is required to understand this fully, but simply accessing available financial support appears to be having a positive impact.	Achieved