

## Front Cover



# Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Student Voice Report 2014-15

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# Foreword

As the end of my term of office as Education Officer & Deputy President approaches, it is my pleasure to share with you Sheffield Hallam Students' Union's annual Student Voice Report. The Students' Union has a strong priority of listening to students, and gathering student feedback; without that focus, the report really wouldn't be what it is today.

Recording of student feedback is vital to this report and being able to effectively spot trends in the feedback we are gathering and receiving, ensures we are able to present a full and accurate representation of the student voice. Feedback is key in every aspect of life at Sheffield Hallam; whether it's a large scale issue associated with learning or teaching, or maybe something as simple as the filling of the sandwiches in the food outlets. Without feedback things wouldn't be able to change for the better. It is important that not only do we maintain the high level of experience that our students face but to work to improve their experience.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the students for their contributions that have helped to shape this report and to thank the staff that have been involved with the creation of the report. Please read this report, have a think about the area that affects you and let's continue the positive change for students at Sheffield Hallam University.

**Kieran Pearson,  
Education Officer & Deputy President 2014/15**

## 1.0 Introduction

**The annual Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Student Voice Report highlights what students are telling the Students' Union and makes recommendations in order to address these issues and improve the student experience.**

This is the fifth formal written report produced by Sheffield Hallam Student's Union, which reflects the student experience through the collection and analysis of both formal and informal, and qualitative and quantitative feedback from students at Sheffield Hallam University. This includes issues brought to the attention of the elected officers, ranging from comments received via informal feedback pathways to formal pieces of research conducted by the Students' Union. By collating this information into a single report, clear actions, priorities and goals can be established, which can be reached through our joint partnership between students, the Students' Union, and the University.

The main body of this report follows the three main sections of the Student Charter: 'Your Teaching, Learning, and Course', 'Your Representation and Opinion' and 'Your University, Life, and Environment'. Three initial sections have also been included. The first highlights the progress and development over the last 12 months, and reflects on actions taken based on recommendations from last year's report. The second is an executive summary, which aims to outline the main conclusions of the report. Finally, the third section itemises the strategic priorities and actions recommended for both the University and the Students' Union separately, as well as jointly, for the next academic year.

## 2.0 Progress from the last 12 months

Following last year's Student Voice Report, recommendations were made based on the collation and analysis of student feedback. The Students' Union, in partnership with the University, has worked hard to ensure that these issues have been addressed, to improve the University experience as a whole for students.

A full list of the recommendations from the 2013/14 report and the actions taken are included in **section 10.2** in the appendices.

The following actions have been successfully implemented:

- In order to ensure that teaching staff at the University are well-qualified and experienced, a timescale has now been implemented for all staff to complete professional teaching qualifications. This is currently monitored as a University Key Performance Indicator (KPI)
- In response to a large amount of student feedback suggesting dissatisfaction with contact time, a proposal for a new University policy for minimum contact hours is currently being finalised.
- A feedback policy establishing a minimum expectation for feedback turnaround has been implemented, in response to student comments that assessment feedback was not useful and took too long to be received. The policy states that feedback should be received when staff advise; usually within a norm of 3 weeks.
- Feedback from students, particularly from Health and Wellbeing, suggested that some placements were not appropriate for students to demonstrate professional competencies. The University have always been and continue to be committed to ensuring that this is not the case, with an accreditation process in place, and close scrutiny of placements from OFSTED and other professional bodies.
- A significant number of Postgraduate Research students fed back to the Students' Union that there was not enough careers advice to cater specifically to their needs. The University has now committed to offering specifically tailored advice to these students, with the delivery of integrated careers programme within the postgraduate development programme.
- Feedback from a number of students (particularly long-distance learners and carers) suggested that many were being significantly impacted by cancellations of scheduled teaching hours. All faculties now have a process to inform students of any changes or cancellations by email or text message where appropriate.
- The Students' Union now has representation on the University's new Bursary Policy Strategy Group, to ensure that future bursaries are best directed towards those students who need them the most.

## 3.0 Executive summary

The Student Voice Report is structured around themes based on feedback, both formal research and informal comments, that has been provided by students to the Students' Union. Whilst a large proportion of the feedback is based on teaching, learning, and courses, there is also a significant amount of feedback received that relates to the importance of University life outside academic work.

With regards to teaching and learning, students have highlighted the need for a reduction of timetable gaps, and have requested an increase in contact hours. Furthermore, the commitment to having zero teaching hours on Wednesday afternoons for all students not on placements is reviewed, and there has been a reiteration for the wish for a consistent approach to communicating cancellation of lectures. Students as a whole have commented strongly on current marking and assessment practice, with many wishing for a fairer system, links to anonymous marking, and for feedback to be more constructive and practical, as well as timely. The issue of fairness extends beyond this, and also links to recommended improvements with the extenuating circumstances procedure, and the need for improved support for placement students and those students seeking career advice. There has also been a large amount of feedback relating to learning materials and resources, in particular the increased provision of more core text-books and the increasing demand for computer and laptop facilities.

The financial implications of being a student at Sheffield Hallam have also been raised, and these come in various forms, often relating to hidden costs, rather than the up-front fees. Students have highlighted issues with the cost of learning materials such as textbooks, but also the impact of printing costs and the price of food and drink at University outlets. The cost of transport was also raised as an issue; between campuses, to sports games and training, and to and from placements all being recurring themes alongside parking charges.

The social aspects of study and the development of learning communities also came through, with students emphasising the need for more learning and social spaces, improvements to the HUBS building, and better access to sports. An aim of both the Students' Union and the University is to ensure that students are brought closer together, and the introduction of peer-to-peer learning schemes and/or mentoring schemes has emerged as one of several recommendations.

Finally, a strong representation system acts as a foundation for all student experience and feedback. Whilst a full review of the Student Rep system has now been conducted, this report outlines specifically the student voice within that review. Student feedback stresses the importance of consistency across the faculties and the importance of the staff-student meetings, in order to effectively feed the views of the student body, to the University directly.

## 4.0 Recommendations and actions for 2015/16

### **YOUR TEACHING, LEARNING, AND COURSE (section 6.0):**

*"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to:"*

**Recommendation 1.1:** *"Consider the phased introduction of anonymous marking and other fairer marking practices, via the Assessment Journey Programme." (section 6.1, page 9)*

**Recommendation 1.2:** *"Monitor the use of the maximum feedback timescale, consistently across all faculties." (section 6.1, page 10)*

**Recommendation 1.3:** *"Address the BME attainment gap through offering support mechanisms and choice of assessment type, where appropriate." (section 6.1, page 10)*

**Recommendation 1.4:** *"Reconsider updated Extenuating Circumstances policy, to instead offer deferral opportunities to all students that have Extenuating Circumstances awarded, regardless of grade." (section 6.2, page 11)*

**Recommendation 1.5:** *"Ensure students with Extenuating Circumstances who have to re-take one or more modules, are better supported to complete their studies and access funding." (section 6.2, page 12)*

**Recommendation 1.6:** *"Further include and embed careers, employment, and extra-curricular activities advice within courses." (section 6.3, page 14)*

**Recommendation 1.7:** *"Review the effectiveness and cross-faculty consistency of communication around changed and/or rescheduled teaching." (section 6.4, page 15)*

**Recommendation 1.8:** *"Evaluate Wednesday afternoon timetabling across all faculties to identify key problem areas and devise appropriate solutions." (section 6.4, page 16)*

**Recommendation 1.9:** *"Introduce maximum timetable gaps between scheduled teaching sessions for all undergraduate students not on placement." (section 6.4, page 16)*

**Recommendation 1.10:** *"Ensure core materials, journals and textbooks are available to students online, as well as physically across both campuses." (section 6.5, page 18)*

**Recommendation 1.11:** *"Give consideration for increasing computer availability across campus." (section 6.5, page 18)*

**Recommendation 1.12:** *"Give consideration for the reduction of printing costs for students, and reduction and/or removal of the requirement to print learning materials." (section 6.5, page 19)*

**Recommendation 1.13:** *"Give all placement students appropriate and ongoing support, in order to facilitate planning and travel, and to discuss any concerns." (section 6.6, page 21)*

## **YOUR REPRESENTATION AND OPINIONS (section 7.0):**

*"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to:"*

**Recommendation 2.1:** *"Ensure consistency of approach between faculties regarding distribution of materials before and after student-staff meetings." (section 7.2, page 23)*

**Recommendation 2.2:** *"Review staff-student meeting time and meeting structure, with consideration for meetings split into individual year groups where appropriate." (section 7.2, page 23)*

## **YOUR UNIVERSITY LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT (section 8.0):**

*"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to:"*

**Recommendation 3.1:** *"Expand University-led peer-to-peer learning and home-international student mentoring." (section 8.1, page 25)*

**Recommendation 3.2:** *"Introduce a cross-campus transport link and/or reduce transport costs for students." (section 8.2, page 26)*

**Recommendation 3.3:** *"Review transport costs to sports training/fixtures, with a view to reducing the financial burden on students." (section 8.3, page 27)*

**Recommendation 3.4:** *"Support the Students' Union to offer free-trials and taster sessions with sports teams." (section 8.3, page 28)*

**Recommendation 3.5:** *"Reduce the price of food and drink at University outlets and hot drinks in learning spaces across campus" (section 8.4, page 29)*

**Recommendation 3.6:** *"Review the suitability of the HUBS building and to support necessary improvements." (section 8.5, page 31)*

**Recommendation 3.7:** *"Continue to supply the Student Support Fund, with sustained levels of funding from the University." (section 8.6, page 32)*

## 5.0 Methodology

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

Data used in this report comes from three main areas; informal feedback, formal research conducted or commissioned by the Students' Union and national surveys. Informal feedback gathered not only gives a real insight into specific cases for students and allows us to help that student on a personal level; it can also provide evidence of where performance is good or where improvements can be made. This can also act as trigger points for more in-depth research in areas requiring further scrutiny, or where issues appear to be reoccurring. More specific pieces of research have been conducted by the Students' Union; these can offer a more detailed explanation of why student satisfaction is lower in some areas and suggestions for how to make improvements. 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 and can validate pieces of research conducted by the Students' Union.

This year, for the first time, the Students' Union is particularly pleased that it has been able to incorporate the work of five Sheffield Hallam Student Researchers (D&S: Psychology, Sociology and Politics) who took up placement opportunities with the Students' Union during February and March. It is testament to the calibre of those students and the hard work that they put into their placements that this body of work has been included.

A full list of research data sources can be found in the table on page 8, with a further description of each source found in **section 10.1** (page 34).

### 5.1 Report Structure

The main body of this report follows three main sections: 'Your Teaching, Learning, and Course', 'Your Representation and Opinion' and 'Your University, Life, and Environment'. Sub-sections within this are based on recurring areas and issues found in formal and informal feedback and, where appropriate, also link with feedback gathered via national surveys. These sub-sections show particular areas of interest and often where 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.

## 5.2 Table of data sources used

### STUDENTS' UNION FORMAL RESEARCH:

Source	Year	Population	Number of Respondents	Type of Data	Abbreviation
Annual Student Rep Survey	2014	Student representatives	206 (13% response rate)	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Student Rep Review Feedback	2015	Student representatives	240 (15% response rate)	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Barriers to Sport report	2014	Sports team members only	302 (22% response rate)	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Alterline Report	2015	All students	3,431 (10% response rate)	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Assessment and Feedback survey	2014	All students	228 (1% response rate)	Quantitative & Qualitative	A&F
Students' Union Satisfaction Research - Survey & Focus Groups	2014	All students	121 (<1% response rate)	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Mental Health and Wellbeing survey	2015	All students	91 (<1% response rate)	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a
Where I Belong Project	2014	All students	15 (<1% response rate)	Qualitative	WIB
Mapping the Student Experience	2014	selected second year students	18	Quantitative & Qualitative	n/a

### INFORMAL FEEDBACK:

Source	Year	Population	Number of Respondents	Type of Data	Abbreviation
Sheffield Hallam Students Union Officers 'All I Want for Christmas' Campaign	2014	All students	282 (1% response rate)	Qualitative	n/a
Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Officers' Listening and Representing	2014	All students	n/a	Qualitative	L&R
Student Rep Meeting Minutes	2014	Student representatives	n/a	Qualitative	n/a
Education Zone Meetings	2014	All students	n/a	Qualitative	n/a
Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Advice Centre	2014	All students	n/a	Qualitative	n/a

### NATIONAL SURVEYS:

Source	Year	Population	Number of Respondents	Type of Data	Abbreviation
National Student Survey	2014	Level 6 (final year) students	5,115 (78% response rate)	Quantitative & Qualitative	NSS
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey	2014	Postgraduate taught students	1,923 (43% response rate)	Quantitative & Qualitative	PTES
Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey	2012/13	Final year undergraduates	7,642 (80% response rate)	Quantitative	DLHE
Sheffield Hallam Student Barometer	2014	Undergraduates (excluding level 6)	5,865 (21% response rate)	Quantitative	SB

## 6.0 YOUR TEACHING, LEARNING AND COURSE

### 6.1 Assessment and feedback

Assessment and feedback has been a manifesto priority of this year's elected Students' Union Education Officer. As a result a survey, led by the Education Officer, was conducted to specifically measure different aspects of assessment and feedback and reflected on the potential for different forms of anonymous marking; consideration for which was suggested in last year's report (Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Voice Report 2013/14, suggested action 1.7). The Assessment and Feedback (A&F) Report found that students felt that the marking criteria was clear in advance, however less likely to feel that assessment arrangements and marking overall was fair. These views are also reflected in the NSS 2014 and PTES 2014, suggesting that this is a view shared by a variety of students, regardless of level of study. Marking criteria has also been measured as having the lowest satisfaction out of many various aspects of learning (SB, 2014), suggesting that improvements could be made.

*"I strongly, strongly believe that anonymous marking of coursework should be done at SHU..." - (A&F, 2014)*

Breakdown of the A&F results by faculty shows that satisfaction with the marking process is slightly lower in ACES and D&S. It has been found that impartiality of assessment was brought more into question in these faculties by students through surveys and feedback channels. Interestingly, the A&F report found that approximately half of students surveyed from D&S, H&WB and SBS felt that the introduction of anonymous marking would have a positive impact, whereas markedly fewer students from ACES felt the same.

*"In arts subjects, anonymous marking may detract from the work as tutors build a relationship with the student to understand the development process and final piece..." - (A&F, 2014)*

Analysis of free-text feedback suggests that this could be due to the usefulness of personalised feedback in ACES subjects, which would be negatively impacted by anonymous marking. It could be argued however that the introduction of anonymous marking in D&S and SBS particularly would improve student satisfaction with the marking process, particularly with examinations.

***Recommendation 1.1:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to consider the phased introduction of anonymous marking and other fairer marking practices, via the Assessment Journey Programme."*

Further analysis of free-text feedback in the A&F report suggests that many students feel that prompt and constructive feedback has as much importance as how their work is marked. The high importance of feedback was also measured in the Student Barometer 2014 (SB). Perceived fairness of exam feedback was found to be low in ACES and D&S specifically, whilst perceived fairness of coursework feedback was found to be low in H&WB. Many comments relating to feedback not being received promptly (and therefore cannot be acted upon in time for other deadlines and exams), small in amount or vague (meaning that more detailed and coursework specific would be more helpful) and that handwritten feedback could not be read by students. The Mental Health and

Wellbeing research conducted by the Students' Union found that more than half of students who responded and indicated they had experienced some form of mental stress felt that deadlines, exams, and academic performance contributed or acted as a trigger, which highlights the importance of students feeling prepared with good prompt feedback.

*"...not meeting the 3 week turnaround regarding feedback. If students have to meet deadlines, surely it is reasonable to ask the tutors to do the same..." - (Student Rep Review Feedback, 2015, SBS)*

Introducing a maximum feedback time limit of 3 weeks, with regular audits to monitor how often this timescale is exceeded and where, could improve this. Feedback also could introduce measurable targets for students to be able to reach a higher score in future assignments.

**Recommendation 1.2:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to monitor the use of the maximum feedback timescale, consistently across all faculties."*

A final notable distinction when comparing differing demographics are the differences of opinions between 'white British' and BME (black and minority ethnic) students. It was found that significantly fewer BME students felt that the assessment arrangements were fair than 'white British' students, and there were considerably fewer BME students who felt that the marking criteria was clear in advance. This difference was particularly striking in relation to coursework, which could suggest that anonymity (which is less strictly regulated with coursework in comparison to exams) is a factor. BME students were also more likely to feel that the introduction of anonymous marking would have a positive impact on their work.

*"All work being marked should be anonymous; I see no reason why it [my name] is needed to be included. I'm thinking back to job applications, and while it is illegal to judge by race or name, it still happens..." - (A&F, 2014)*

BME students have shown an attainment gap both at a local and national level in comparison to 'white British' students, and it could be argued that assessment and feedback is a factor in this. A paper produced by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) reflects this view, and made several suggestions for improvements<sup>1</sup>. The paper highlights the need for fairer marking practices, which may include offering a choice of assessment types or anonymous marking. There was also a highlighted need for further peer-assisted learning and mentoring programmes, aimed to increase the availability of support mechanisms (without targeting BME students directly) and the benefit of early feedback. Since the 2012 paper, many other higher education institutions have begun to adopt these practices, and a recommendation therefore is that the BME attainment gap can be addressed through not only offering support, but through the offer of a choice of assessment type, where this is appropriate.

**Recommendation 1.3:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to address the BME attainment gap through offering support mechanisms and choice of assessment type, where appropriate."*

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<sup>1</sup> Stevenson, J. (2012). *Black and minority student ethnic degree retention and attainment*. The Higher Education Academy. Available from: [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/bme\\_summit\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/bme_summit_final_report.pdf)

## 6.2 Extenuating circumstances

The Students' Union Advice Centre has observed the impact on students of regulation changes, made shortly before the 2014/15 academic year, regarding extenuating circumstances (ECs). The purpose of ECs is to mitigate the impact of unpredictable life crises on students, and the Students' Union welcomes the clarity of the change in regulations whilst acknowledging that, as the policy stands, some students may still experience a detriment.

It often disadvantages higher achieving students and may have a negative impact on their final degree. For example, if a student normally achieves a high grade for their academic work then falls ill, but still manages to produce and hand in work of good enough quality to just pass. Currently, they are not given the opportunity to re-submit this work when they are able to perform to the best of their ability. This puts the student in a dilemma; do they submit a piece of work of impacted quality along with their EC, or do they submit an EC without submitting work or attending exams, with the chance that they may re-submit the work or attend the exam when they are not affected by their current circumstance.

The Advice Centre has found that the inclination of most students would naturally be to try to do as much work as they can, even when impacted by difficult circumstances. However this can negatively impact their final degree outcome, even if the University has acknowledged their difficulties.

A recommendation therefore is that a student who has had ECs awarded and has submitted work and/or sat an exam, would be given the option to re-submit or re-sit should the mark given for that piece of work be significantly lower than the students predicted mark.

***Recommendation 1.4:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to reconsider updated Extenuating Circumstances policy, to instead offer deferral opportunities to all students that have Extenuating Circumstances awarded, regardless of grade."*

Through cross-boundary working between faculties, the Students' Union and the University's Central Services, it was noted that there were some inconsistent and concerning decisions being made where students with clear 'extenuating circumstances' were being rejected. Working in partnership, these issues were highlighted to the relevant teams and changes have since been made. Following these changes, there has been a dramatic reduction in these concerning cases, and continued work on the EC policy is being made by the University. Proposals to change the profile of the EC decision panel, simplifying and re-wording the policy, as well as streamlining the advice and application process, have all had a positive impact on students who may require extensions or ECs. Despite the great progress made, there is still more that could be done.

The Students' Union Advice Centre has noticed an increase in the number of students being able to take modules without attendance, as a result of their ECs. This means however, that they cannot be enrolled as students, and are therefore classed as external resit students (XRS). These students welcome the chance to do the modules affected by their ECs again, however as they are not officially attending students, they are not eligible for student funding. Similarly, as they have not withdrawn from University, they cannot claim welfare benefits either. This therefore means that a student can be awarded an EC to offer them another chance to study, but their XRS status rules them out of financial support which effectively means they cannot continue. This can particularly affect

vulnerable students such as disabled students who may be unable to work part time in order support themselves, or students from a low income background who are unable to be supported by their parents.

There have also been significant rule changes regarding how many credits can be carried forward into subsequent academic years. Students are now only able to carry forward 20 credits, and it is recognised that this has helped with timetabling issues amongst other things. However, it is likely that this has also increased the number of students with XRS status, and therefore an increase in the number of affected students. It is suggested that students affected be made aware of the wider impact that the XRS status will have on them, particularly with regards to their financial situation.

In order to address these issues, it is recommended firstly that students with XRS status are able to access the Student Support Fund; which they are currently unable to do. It is also recommended that students, who have to re-take a significant number of modules because of ECs, are to be given the opportunity to re-take them with attendance where appropriate, as this would allow them to enrol and access appropriate funding.

***Recommendation 1.5:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to ensure students with Extenuating Circumstances who have to re-take one or more modules, are better supported to complete their studies and access funding."*

### 6.3 Careers and employability

Improving career prospects and employability was found, via the Alterline report, to be the joint top reason for coming to University (along with learning more about the chosen subject, and making a better life for themselves in future). As such, careers and employability is a fundamentally important aspect of University life for students.

Results from the 'Mapping the Student Experience' survey, although drawing from a purposefully small sample size, suggest that as students' progress through their first year, they are less likely to know what they would like to do in their future career; this does not necessarily mean that more advice is sought however. Looking forward to 2020, the Alterline report found that many students believe that finding a suitable career path and employment will be a challenge, despite many hoping for this.

*"Hopefully, I'll be settling down into a career. However, I'll probably be struggling to find a job." - (Alterline Report, 2015)*

The Mental Health and Wellbeing research found that almost 30% of respondents who experience some form of mental stress felt that the issue of graduate employment contributed or acted as a trigger. This suggests that despite careers advice being available, the wellbeing of some students is still being affected.

The role of extra-curricular activities (ECAs) in supporting student employability via skill development cannot be understated. Students are aware of this importance, with over 75% of students involved in the 'Mapping the Student Experience' survey agreeing that ECAs both help prepare them for working life and will make them more employable in future. Despite this, less than half were measured to be actively involved in ECAs, with this amount only growing when the benefits to their University experience were highlighted. This view is reflected in academic research conducted measuring the positive influence ECAs have on the number of initial job interview offers received post-graduation<sup>2</sup>, with a particularly strong effect in business and accountancy<sup>3</sup>. This does have a wider impact however across all faculties and subject type. Involvement in ECAs is achieved through various programmes and schemes; from joining a society or sports club, to volunteering and involvement with the Hallam Award.

*"...when I mentioned I received my Hallam Award for activities such as mentoring which I volunteered for I believed that helped me stand out." - (Hallam Award Case Study, 2014)*

With consideration for the above, it is suggested that there needs to be a more pro-active approach of providing not only careers advice during contact hours for all students, but information on how to get more involved in ECAs via the course leaders. It is hoped that this would improve careers advice satisfaction and improve the experience for students as a whole. The 'Mapping the Student

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Yew Ming Chia. (2005). Job offers of multi-national accounting firms: the effects of emotional intelligence, extra-curricular activities, and academic performance. *Accounting Education: an international journal*, 14(1), 75-93

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, T. D. et al. (1983). What the academic advisor needs to know about job placement. *Journal of Accounting Education*, 1(Fall), 135-142

Experience' research has also highlighted the importance of having specific targets when planning a career path, as well as advising how to build confidence and skills through ECAs, and therefore consideration of this is needed in the pro-active approach of providing advice.

*"More difficulties in finding a job - as there are now so many people that have qualifications - high competition..." - (Alterline Report, 2015)*

Looking to the future, it was found through the Alterline survey that students felt that in 2020 they will struggle to find employment due to the extremely competitive job market. Further to this, the increasing number of graduates with degree-level qualifications was also considered an ever-increasing problem for students. The problem of how to find a job was also raised by students, and it is clear that this is concern for future employability is experienced by many of our students.

***Recommendation 1.6:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to further include and embed careers, employment, and extra-curricular activities advice within courses."*

## 6.4 Organisation and management

The organisation and management of courses not only has an impact on day-to-day academic life of University students, but also how they arrange their lives outside their course. For some students, simply attending a lecture or seminar can mean having to plan and organise childcare, re-arrange part-time work, miss out on extra-curricular activities and ensure they have a means of transport or have planned their commute.

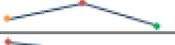
In last year's report, feedback received was based mainly around the lack of communication of any changes or cancellations made to teaching time and the scheduling clash of Wednesday afternoon lectures with extra-curricular activities, which prevented students from taking part in sports and societies both supported by, and outside, the Students' Union.

This led to a recommendation by the Students' Union that faculties have a process to contact students by email or text as soon as possible where appropriate; this has now been implemented (see **section 2.0**). Whilst this is currently underway, feedback received via the Students' Union Education Zone suggests that text notifications are in effect in ACES, HWB & SBS, but not D&S. It was suggested that text notifications would be helpful for students in this faculty to advise them of cancellations. To ensure this is working effectively, it is recommended that this contact process is in place in all faculties, and to ensure that student satisfaction has improved, to monitor effectiveness.

**Recommendation 1.7:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to review the effectiveness and cross-faculty consistency of communication around changed and/or rescheduled teaching."*

The University committed to ensuring that Wednesday afternoons were kept free from teaching events, with the exception of placements, and this has been partially achieved with a 40% decline in scheduled teaching on Wednesday afternoons.

**Figure 1: Scheduled teaching hours on a Wednesday afternoon throughout October, breakdown by year and faculty:**

Faculty	2012	2013	2014	Trendline
ACES	1,203	2,056	794	
HWB	1,976	1,478	639	
DS	1,554	490	459	
SBS	982	1,558	544	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,715</b>	<b>5,582</b>	<b>2,435</b>	

However, feedback suggests extra teaching sessions, or re-scheduled sessions, often then take place on Wednesday afternoons, thus causing a further issue in extra-curricular participation.

It has been fed back to the Students' Union through informal pathways, such as the Education Zone and Officer's 'listening and representing', that teaching is still planned at this time. The Barriers to Sport survey, highlighted that Wednesday afternoon teaching was still being scheduled and causing students a significant barrier to sports participation. Using this survey, students who have experienced this barrier had also informed us which subjects they were part of, and these are listed in the appendices (**section 10.3**) for information. Due to the significant numbers of students still indicating to us that they do not have Wednesday afternoons free, Union Council, the highest decision making body in the Students' Union, unanimously approved a policy to continue to insist

that the University commits to keeping Wednesday afternoons free of scheduled teaching hours. This policy mandates all full time elected Officers to lobby the University and to campaign to keep Wednesday afternoons free from timetable sessions. This also established a protocol for students to report any Wednesday afternoon timetabling issues, which can and should be fed straight to the University.

**Recommendation 1.8:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to evaluate Wednesday afternoon timetabling across all faculties to identify key problem areas and devise appropriate solutions."*

The data in **Figure 1** shows scheduled teaching hours on Wednesday afternoons only in the October of 2012, 2013 and 2014, with a breakdown by faculty. This shows that in the last year, the University has made good progress in reducing the number of scheduled teaching hours on Wednesday afternoons; however the target it still only half way to being achieved.

Feedback was received via a number of different pathways regarding a different timetabling issue; that of large gaps in between scheduled teaching hours. The All I Want for Christmas campaign for example found that one in six students who completed a postcard made wishes relating to timetable improvements, with the vast majority of these citing timetable gaps as a big problem.

*"Better timetables, less gaps understand those who travel" (All I Want for Christmas, 2014)*

Students noted that reducing the number of gaps between lectures could result in less time spent travelling to and from University per week and improve attendance of teaching sessions, whilst other mentioned that this would be of particular benefit to long distance learners. Interestingly, the number of comments wishing for fewer timetable gaps far outweighed the number received relating to Wednesday afternoons, suggesting this is a more pressing issue. Negative feedback regarding large timetable gaps has also been received through other feedback pathways, including via Course Reps, and the Education Zone.

*"Timetabling has been a big issue. Many students have complained about large gaps between their lectures and seminars which have in some cases been up to five hours." - (Student Rep Review Feedback, 2015, D&S)*

This view has also been reflected in national surveys, including the NSS 2014 (with negative comments relating to gaps between sessions) and via the Student Barometer (with course organisation the lowest rated aspect of all teaching issues). Therefore it is recommended that there is an introduction for a maximum timetable gap length for all undergraduate students, for example, a timetable gap of no longer than 3 hours between lectures. This will ensure that this is not a recurring issue for students, particularly those that travel larger distances to attend teaching sessions.

**Recommendation 1.9:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to introduce maximum timetable gaps between scheduled teaching sessions for all undergraduate students not on placement."*

Finally, it is worth noting that there is significant feedback relating to the level of contact time; an issue that has been consistently raised by students each year. In the 2014/15 academic year, a large

amount of negative feedback was again received by the Students' Union through its own feedback channels, such as the All I Want for Christmas project and through national surveys, such as the NSS. Following last year's Student Voice Report, the University in partnership with the Students' Union developed a 'Contact Hours policy', which is due to be introduced to address these concerns.

## 6.5 Teaching materials and resources

There has been a large quantity of feedback relating to teaching materials and their availability, received by the Students Union. One area of feedback relates to the lack of core textbooks available from the library; this feedback has again been collated through various avenues, including via the Student Reps. This feedback explicitly states for many subjects, for example Law, core textbooks are constantly out or 'on hold'. A large amount of feedback was also gathered via the All I Want for Christmas project, with one in six students completing a postcard mentioning the need for more textbooks in the library, with the subjects of Psychology and Criminology cited on more than one occasion. This appears to be reflected in NSS 2014 results, with satisfaction of learning resources being markedly lower in the aforementioned courses, and in D&S as a whole. This feedback not only has a commonality in the issue raised, but also in the suggested solution; that core materials and textbooks are consistently made available online.

*"More accessible course books (e-books)" (All I Want for Christmas, 2014)*

The need for improved access to resources online has also been highlighted by the University in its analysis of NSS 2014 data, and a recommendation therefore is that all core textbooks are made available online, as well as physical copies in libraries and learning centres across campuses. In relation to the selection of core materials, it could be argued that the availability is considered as a key factor, to fully ensure that core materials are accessible by all students.

***Recommendation 1.10:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to ensure core materials, journals and textbooks are available to students online, as well as physically across both campuses."*

It is noted that where there has been good access to eBooks and online resources, students respond very positively, for example via the Student Reps in Health and Wellbeing.

With a greater reliance of online resources, comes a greater strain on the availability of laptops and computers throughout the University's learning centres and libraries. This has been strongly felt by students who have advised that access to computers and laptops is at times difficult, particularly during examination weeks.

*"Students find the Collegiate Learning Centre very busy and there are never enough PCs (especially during assessment periods)". - (Student Rep Minutes, 2014, D&S)*

This issue is not limited to just Collegiate Learning Centre with the Adsetts Building and the Library also being noted as occasionally difficult. The All I Want for Christmas campaign indicated a large proportion of students wished for more access to computers within the University. Therefore a recommendation is for a review of computer access throughout the University to find where the specific need for more resources lies, and how further supply can be achieved.

***Recommendation 1.11:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to give consideration for increasing computer availability across campus."*

Feedback has also noted that whilst the library is now open 24 hours a day, the computers reboot at midnight, which is causing an issue for those students wishing to work late. It could be argued

therefore that this suggests a greater need for laptop provision over desktop computers, in order to allow students to continue to access the University network after the desktop computers shut down. It should be acknowledged however that the University has made improvements in the booking system for computers, and this has been noted and fed back via the course reps.

Finally, a large amount of feedback received related to the negative impact of printing costs. As mentioned previously, the Alterline Survey found that the cost of living and financial worries are some of the biggest issues on students' minds, and printing costs have been seen to be a hidden course cost (Education Zone, 2015) which is causing further financial strain. Although printing costs are relatively low (ranging from 5p to 27p per page), large assignments can become increasingly more expensive to print, for example costing between £10-15 per full print (Education Zone, 2015).

*"Lower print costs / free for lecture or seminar material" - (All I Want for Christmas, 2014)*

Feedback received via the course reps suggests that printing can be an unexpected requirement for the course for example in printing items for portfolios. It was also raised on several occasions by different groups of students as to whether the printing was necessary at all. This view was also reflected in the All I Want for Christmas campaign, with some feedback even suggesting that students were not able to attend a seminar if they had not printed certain notes. It is recommended therefore that there is a review of printing costs throughout the University and a review on whether the burden for printing work materials should be placed on the student.

A review of printing costs should include costs of large scale printing and 3D printing, with feedback suggesting that with regards to the latter, it is currently cheaper to order a 3D print from the USA than use University equipment. The Students' Union is aware of initiatives in other Universities where free printing for all students can be achieved through partnership with a printing company.

***Recommendation 1.12:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to give consideration for the reduction of printing costs for students, and reduction and/or removal of the requirement to print learning materials."*

## 6.6 Placements

Many of our undergraduate students will be involved in a placement module or even a full paid placement year at some point during their time at University, as part of their course. The benefits of a work placement such as valuable work experience, improving transferrable skills, and developing an understanding of the professional industry they will likely work in, are becoming more apparent to our students as they become more concerned about the future job market, as measured via the Alterline survey. Similarly, via the 'Mapping the Student Experience' longitudinal survey, it was found that 80% of participants agree that placements will make a positive difference to employability.

Satisfaction with the placement programme has seen a consistent increase, as measured via the NSS. However, many students still wish to see further improvements that could help them in their placement. For example, via the All I Want for Christmas project, nearly one in six students completing a postcard made reference to their placement through their wishes. The majority of these related to travel costs, and a further large proportion also wished for more support regarding their placement.

*"Cheaper transport to placements" (All I want for Christmas, 2014)*

With regards to travel, the prevalence of this issue has been seen by the Students' Union Advice Centre, as well as through other feedback pathways such as the Course Reps. The hidden associated costs do not just affect our students at Sheffield Hallam, but have been found to be one of the most significant barriers to students involved in placements and work experience nationally, by the NUS<sup>4</sup>. Placements have become, in the last few years, reportedly more difficult to find and therefore travelling further afield has been required for a suitable placement. A longer commute will lead to a greater financial burden on our students, and therefore a consideration is needed for travel distance when arranging placements, with greater travel planning support and funding required.

As previously mentioned, not only were travel costs for placements a recurring issue, but further support was also requested via the All I Want for Christmas Campaign and through the student reps. This support includes rearrangement of assignments based around placement, more advanced warning of where the placement will take place and a more detailed debrief following the placement. Furthermore, this is reflected in national surveys such as the NSS, where particularly students that are on longer-term placements have felt unsupported or even forgotten, with little or no communication throughout their placement.

*"Some students felt let down by their visiting tutor, as they felt they didn't receive enough support." - (Student Rep Minutes, 2014, HWB)*

The 'Mapping the Student Experience' longitudinal project found that there was a very strong correlation between students feeling supported in their placement and students feeling confident in working in their placement; highlighting the importance of support provided.

*"More communication and organisation with schools about what we should be doing." - (Mapping the Student Experience, 2015)*

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<sup>4</sup> National Union of Students (2012). *The Pound in Your Pocket. Summary Report*. Available: [http://www.poundinyourpocket.org.uk/downloads/PIYP\\_Summary\\_Report.pdf](http://www.poundinyourpocket.org.uk/downloads/PIYP_Summary_Report.pdf) Last accessed 27th Apr 2015.

Support issues during placement can also be linked to the Fitness to Practise (FtP) procedure. The FtP procedure is used in order to ensure that "students on courses leading to professional accreditation are fit to practise in the relevant profession and that they meet the professional standards of the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body". Students often appear to become involved in the FtP procedure when their relationship their placement has broken down; a good relationship with a mentor is crucial to the success of a placement. Conversely, where this placement support is less good, students appear to fare less well. This lack of support can frequently be attributed to issues in the placement setting that are beyond the students control, for example understaffed departments or high pressure work environments.

The Students' Union Advice Centre has seen many students use their service for support due to difficulties with mentoring and relationships in the placement setting. There have been recorded instances both within healthcare, education and hospitality placements, of students raising concerns only to have their own practise and professional integrity questioned as a result. It is suggested therefore that a safe reporting space or specialised support is embedded for all placement students to discuss difficulties and concerns they have about their placements, without fear of their complaint impacting on their own performance on placement.

***Recommendation 1.13:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to give all placement students appropriate and ongoing support, in order to facilitate planning and travel, and to discuss any concerns."*

The Students' Union Advice Centre has been hugely encouraged by the University, particularly the Faculty of Health & Wellbeing, making significant improvements with regards to the professionalism and transparency with which problems arising on placements are dealt.

Interestingly, there were suggestions made via the Course Reps that final year students who had completed a placement could act as mentors to students applying for placements. This would act as a positive support mechanism, and would lend itself to a University-led mentoring scheme, as discussed further in **Section 8.1**.

## 7.0 YOUR REPRESENTATION AND OPINIONS

### 7.1 'Student Rep' programme: Overview

Sheffield Hallam Students' Union has a strong student led approach to implementing a positive change to the student experience at Sheffield Hallam University. Working in partnership with the University, in the 2014/15 academic year, there were over 1,600 student reps in place, ensuring that students on their course had a voice at a course, faculty and University level. Not only is the feedback gathered by the reps used to support their peers, campaign for change and improve various aspects of the student experience, but it also feeds into this year's Student Voice Report at various points to support suggested actions and recommendations. It is essential therefore that the Students' Union and the University ensure that this system is working efficiently and effectively.

Leading from the recommendation in last year's Student Voice Report, the Students' Union has just completed a fundamental review of the Student Rep system and structure, and some of the changes to the system are ready for implementation. A full list of the recommendations from this review can be found in the appendices (**section 10.4**). The Student Rep Review not only takes into account what students, both reps and non-reps alike, are telling us about the rep system but also takes into consideration a wider view of the programme, including views from the University, best practice from other institutions, an analysis of the strengths of the current system and where it needs to be improved. The Student Voice Report focuses on the main feedback themes from students only to highlight what are the most important issues to students.

### 7.2 'Student Rep' programme: Feedback

The annual Student Rep Survey in 2014 measured that 94% of student reps who took part in the survey would recommend being a student rep to a friend; an increase of 3% on last year. This suggests that being a student rep is an overwhelmingly positive experience.

*"It allows you to be able to have a say in what happens and get to know first-hand. Seeing changes being made is also very empowering" - (Annual Student Rep Survey, 2014)*

The annual Student Rep Survey found that whilst most students received notice of the meeting dates, many commented that there was not enough notice before the meeting date. Students within ACES however were more likely to receive sufficient notice than the other three faculties. Based on feedback from reps, an analysis of how meetings are arranged within ACES to be conducted, with a view to standardising the process through all faculties, is recommended. This includes several consistent targets to be met across all faculties; for example, a three-week minimum notice period would ensure that all reps are given enough notice of the meetings before they take place. Additionally, an agenda sent out no later than a week before the meeting would ensure that this is received by all reps, allowing for these reps to make amendments or additions before the date.

*"Area for improvements will be the availability of the minutes from the student rep meeting available to all students. By doing this, all students can see the issues raised at the meetings and their outcomes." - (Annual Student Rep Survey, 2014)*

Finally, minutes of the meeting should be distributed within a maximum time period following the meeting, with action points clearly stated.

**Recommendation 2.1:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to ensure consistency of approach between faculties regarding distribution of materials before and after student-staff meetings."*

It was noted by some reps via the annual student rep survey that meetings were viewed to be too large, too long and not well enough attended due to scheduling clashes. Meetings were set to increase from 2 to 4 from 2013/14 to 2014/15, and it is suggested therefore that 4 meetings a year is kept as a cross-faculty standard with meetings split into individual year groups where appropriate. This would ensure that a) meetings are smaller and less intimidating, b) more focused and not as long, and c) meeting-timetabling clashes are reduced. Meeting planning scheduled in partnership with lecture planning would help to avoid clashes and allow for meetings to be booked well in advance.

*"Frequent meetings. Smaller scale, more related to course. The last meeting was rushed..." - (Student Rep Review Feedback, 2015)*

Finally, it was suggested that meetings should be booked half way through a module, rather than towards the end (therefore clashing with exams and deadlines) or the beginning (at which point there are fewer points raised).

**Recommendation 2.2:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to review staff-student meeting time and meeting structure, with consideration for meetings split into individual year groups where appropriate."*

As already mentioned, the Students' Union conducted a full review of the student rep system and is working with the University to implement specific improvements. For example, to address the issue of the lack of mechanisms in place that facilitate communication between course reps and faculty reps, which is a previously noted concern (Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Voice Report 2013/14, suggested action 3.2); the introduction of 'Departmental Reps' is recommended. This is supported by feedback received in the Student Rep Review Feedback focus groups, which highlighted problems with the current process in terms of passing the feedback upwards through the system.

It is finally worth noting further feedback gathered from reps included problems in engaging other students, the need for improved training and the difficulty in giving feedback to staff members. With regards to the latter point, many of the comments relating to staff were very positive, with only a small number of reps who felt that it was difficult to give constructive criticism to staff. The Students' Union hopes that the relationship between student reps and University staff continues to grow and improve following the review.

*"It is sometimes hard to raise points (especially if they are negative) when the module leaders are present, as they can take offence." - (Annual Student Rep Survey, 2014)*

## 8.0 YOUR UNIVERSITY, LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT

### 8.1 Learning and social communities

The 'Where I Belong' project is one of several ways in which the Students' Union explores how students build their communities and develop their sense of belonging, through taking photographs and interviewing participants to gain insight into their experience. Last year's pilot project gave some insight into the social impact of belonging, suggesting the real importance of developing a strong learning and social community on having a great experience as a student at Sheffield Hallam. This importance was explored further in this year's project and it was found that students showed a more developed inclusive and supportive working community in courses that involve spending a lot of time in a work space with fellow students outside of scheduled teaching hours, for example in art-based subjects.

*"...it is a communal area where the group get to talk and make a cup of tea, which is popular when you are working... ...so you know it is comforting that you have somewhere, it is a social thing and we have all made a community of it." - (Where I Belong, 2015)*

This is significant, as learning communities help build friendships with fellow students from a range of ages, backgrounds and cultures. In other areas, this has been found to be more of an issue, with mature and international students feeding back to the Students Union through satisfaction focus groups for example, that they have found it more difficult to integrate and build friendships with the majority of the student population. This is also reflected in national surveys, such as the Student Barometer, which found that students at Sheffield Hallam found it more difficult to make friends from other countries, as well as home students. Some of these views were again found via the Where I Belong project, with students who were not between 18-21, home students, or undergraduate students finding it more challenging to integrate with the general student population.

*"...undergraduates either don't want to talk to me or see me as an irrelevance" - (Where I Belong, 2015)*

Students reported communication challenges with international students via the NSS in group work in lectures, which would lead to less integration inside the classrooms. This lack of integration was found outside of the classroom with feedback via the Education Zone suggesting particularly that Asian and non-Asian students are generally separated. This again is creating segregation in the overall student population and preventing students from mixing.

A further consideration when thinking about learning communities is also for our more vulnerable students. The Mental Health and Wellbeing research conducted by the Students' Union found that the vast majority of students completing the survey at some point experienced some feelings of mental distress, such as stress, lack of energy, feeling unhappy or down, or feelings of anxiety; these were at levels consistent with the national student population as found by the NUS<sup>5</sup>. At Sheffield

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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 29th Apr 2015.

Hallam, it was found that over 50% of our students who had completed the survey, opened up to their friends about their mental distresses, suggesting the significant importance of building a good social community as well as a learning community.

*"...I was sensible enough to realise I should share with people how I feel so they can look out for me..." - (Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey, 2015)*

In reflecting on suggested actions from the 2013/14 report, the University and the Students' Union were able to achieve many targets, and partially achieve almost all others. However the single target that remained unachieved was the suggested action in relation to establishing strong learning communities. This has continued to be a key issue in the year 2014/15, with international students and mature students feeling particularly isolated in their learning and social community.

Whilst there has been consideration for peer to peer learning in order to improve the academic experience, there does not seem to be the same scheme in place in order to improve the social experience. A recommendation therefore is that there is consideration for the expansion of a peer-to-peer learning scheme designed to improve the academic experience, as well as the introduction of a mentoring scheme, designed to pair home students with incoming international students. Feedback from international students regarding the international student mentoring system has advised that this has been helpful in expanding their social groups, and this could be replicated with home students to help build wider social groups in our students.

***Recommendation 3.1:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to expand University-led peer-to-peer learning and home-international student mentoring."*

The inclusion of international students can also be encouraged through specific international events and projects that are led by the Students' Union and the University in partnership. The Students' Union is aware of good practice from other Universities and Unions that could improve cultural awareness and the social aspect at University for international students.

With regards to mature students, much of the feedback has made reference to the benefit of a mature student's society, and this has since been created in the 2014/15 academic year.

## 8.2 Cross-campus links

Student experience should be consistently good across all faculties and both campuses, for all students. Over the course of the year however, the Students' Union has been made aware of a number of inconsistencies between the experiences of students at City Campus and Collegiate Campus. These issues include transportation, parking, computer availability and an inconsistent Students' Union presence between campuses.

There were a significant proportion of comments received via the 'All I Want for Christmas' project regarding a lack of parking available at Collegiate Campus. Parking at Collegiate Campus is a particular issue due to existing parking being mainly on-street parking rather than the availability of large multi-storey car parks and the campus itself being located away from major transport links such as the bus interchange and coach station or the train station.

Other feedback received suggested further contrasts between the two campuses such as the lack of a Students' Union bar at Collegiate Campus (via 'All I want for Christmas' and 'Satisfaction' research), poor computer availability at Collegiate Campus learning centre (via 'All I want for Christmas' and 'Education Zone') and lower awareness of the Students' Union specifically with Collegiate students (PTES, 2014). This feedback all indicates a lack of cross-campus connectivity and a distinct separation between the two campuses and the experience for students. The Alterline survey also found that this separation between campuses negatively impacts Students' Union engagement with students; students who do not visit city campus or are unable to, feel alienated from the Students' Union. These students commented that it was too far away and inconvenient to get to.

The introduction of a shuttle-bus between the two campuses would not only meet demand recorded by students through feedback (such as through the 'Education Zone' or the 'All I want for Christmas' project) and improve satisfaction with University transport links (as recorded in the Student Barometer 2014, which measured a decrease in satisfaction from 2013), but could address a number of other the previously mentioned issues.

*"Free bus between city and collegiate" (All I want for Christmas, 2014)*

The introduction of a shuttle-bus could, for example, allow students to park at city centre car parks and then very easily travel to Collegiate Campus. An available bus service between campuses and/or sites is commonplace at many other institutions that are based across multiple sites, and are specifically designed to provide this solution.

*"Buses running from Eccy road to HUBS on a Wednesday to get the main coach to either the Sports Park or away match." (Barriers to Sport, 2014)*

The term 'University transport links' used in the Student Barometer does not just relate to links between City Campus and Collegiate Campus, but also relates to transport to sports training/fixtures. Whilst this is discussed in more depth in **section 8.3**, a shuttle bus running from Collegiate Campus, to City Campus and on to the Sports Park, could address the large amount of feedback relating to free/discounted bus service for sports.

**Recommendation 3.2:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to introduce a cross-campus transport link and/or reduce transport costs for students."*

### 8.3 Sports and activities

Student satisfaction of sports and extra-curricular activities is not measured using the NSS, PTES or DLHE; it is however a very important aspect of student life, as well as of great importance to the University as a whole, and therefore is worth individual consideration. The Satisfaction Survey, conducted by the Students' Union towards the end of 2014, measured satisfaction rating around different aspects of sport; including transport, kit, support from the Students' Union and facility provision. This found that whilst satisfaction with the facility provision was high (reflecting results found in the SB); other areas such as transport or kit had a much lower satisfaction rating.

The Students' Union commissioned further research into satisfaction with different aspects of involvement in sports and any barriers that students may experience in relation to sports participation. It was found, surprisingly, that more than half of those surveyed experienced a barrier to sport, with the main reasons cited as being academic commitments and financial issues (the former issue of academic commitments is explored in **section 6.4**, with reference to Wednesday afternoon lectures and seminars). It was encouraging to find that a demographic breakdown of results suggest that there are no significant difference in the barriers to sport experienced by specific ethnicity, gender, or sexuality.

With regards to financial barriers to sport, it was found that transport costs to training and fixtures were measured significantly lower in satisfaction by students. It was often felt that the additional cost for transport was not only high but an inappropriate expense. This view was reflected by focus groups held by the Students' Union relating to services overall, the All I Want for Christmas campaign, and through informal feedback such as the Officer's 'listening and representing'. A recommendation therefore is a review of how this is managed with a view to reducing costs for students.

*"Better transport to the sports park for cricket, I am fed up having to fork out over £5 to get to there and back, this really impacts my weekly budget, I sometimes put off going food shopping just so I have enough money to get to training..." (Barriers to Sport, 2014)*

This could potentially be accomplished in two ways; by the University subsidising transport costs for students or through a review of the Team Sheffield Hallam membership fee to include transport costs.

**Recommendation 3.3:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to review transport costs to sports training/fixtures, with a view to reducing the financial burden on students."*

The issue of transport could also be linked to a wider issue around transportation, parking and more strongly linking the two campuses, which has been discussed in more depth in **section 8.2**.

With respect to the financial barriers to sport, another factor that has been raised through feedback was the requirement to pay a membership fee before taking part. Many students felt that they were less likely to try a new sport as payment was required before they can participate, which prevents them from seeing if this was the right for them, or from trying new things, without commitment.

This view was reflected in the Students' Union Satisfaction Focus Groups, with students commenting that taster sessions would be more likely to involve them in sport.

*"Taster sessions to try teams and societies would be good. Free sports trials; I am not going to pay to go to a trial, this puts a lot of people off." - (Students' Union Satisfaction Research, 2014)*

It is recommended therefore that taster sessions can be organised by the Students' Union, in order to engage more students in sports, with the hope that this increases participation. This could run concurrently with Fresher's week, or independently as a stand-alone sports week.

***Recommendation 3.4:*** " *The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to support the Students' Union to offer free-trials and taster sessions with sports teams.*"

Finally, other feedback regarding sports clubs and societies led to further suggestions around reviewing the kit supplier for sports and reviewing the room booking system through the Students' Union for societies. These are currently both under review with the Students' Union and further work will be done to ensure that any changes made will improve the experience.

## 8.4 Food and drink outlets

In the 'All I Want for Christmas' campaign, it was found that the most frequently occurring wish related to the price of food and drink in University outlets, with one in three students who had completed a postcard wishing specifically for a reduction in cost. This represents a very significant proportion of the overall sample and suggests that this is a wider issue for the overall student body.

Venues that were named specifically were the main building canteen at City Campus, and the Granary at the Heart of the Campus building; it was suggested that these venues had high prices, and offering less of what students want. This view was also reflected in focus groups as part of the Students' Union Satisfaction Research; initially the participants were asked to give views of the Students' Union outlet, however conversation often turned to the prices at University outlets. Again, Cantor café and the canteen at the Heart of the Campus building (the Granary) were named specifically for their high prices and for perhaps offering the wrong type of food.

*"Posh food is nice but too expensive" (All I want for Christmas, 2014)*

Feedback regarding the price of food has been gathered through various other avenues, including Officer's 'listening and representing' and Education Zones. During the latter, it was raised that meal deal options at local supermarkets were more competitively priced and better quality, with suggestions that the University should introduce their own meal deal options at a better value. It was suggested that "overpriced" food was designed to "take advantage" of students that were spending a lot of time within the University trying to meet deadlines. High food prices also appear to be linked with the greater demand for microwaves in the library, which would allow students to source cheaper hot food within University premises.

Whilst much of the feedback received regarding food and drink related to the price of food in canteen spaces, there were a substantial number of comments also relating to the cost of tea, coffee, and even hot water. Some students in particular noted the latter as being unjustifiable, with a charge of 60p being placed on machines in libraries and learning spaces.

*"Cheaper food in the library - 60p for hot water is excessive..." (All I want for Christmas, 2014)*

Again, this view was reflected in feedback from students gathered from other sources, such as via the Satisfaction Research focus groups, Officer's 'listening and representing', Student Representative Management Group and the Education Zone. A recommendation therefore is a reduction in the price of food and hot drinks, with a consideration for meal deals and/or offers particularly around assessment or exam time. It is also recommended that there is a particular consideration for the reduction of the cost of hot drinks in general at peak times such as exam weeks, and completely removing the fee for hot water altogether.

**Recommendation 3.5:** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to reduce the price of food and drink at University outlets and hot drinks in learning spaces across campus"*

In making this recommendation, the Students' Union has removed the 50p charge for hot water with immediate effect.

## 8.5 The HUBS

As noted in previous sections, much of the feedback received by the Students' Union focused on the Students' Union itself. Many students consider the physical building of the Students' Union when thinking of the Students' Union as a whole and the HUBS building itself repeatedly receives poor feedback from students.

The Alterline survey found from a student sample of almost 3,500 students, fewer than 40% liked the building or felt that it can offer good services. Furthermore, 66% of students did not like the layout and only roughly one quarter felt that the building enabled the Students' Union to provide first class facilities. This survey also highlighted how vital the building itself is to students wishing to interact with the Students' Union, as 50% of students stated they would want to visit the building specifically for their interaction with the Students' Union.

*"Terrible layout, with a lot of wasted empty space." - (Alterline Report, 2015)*

The Students' Union Satisfaction survey reflected the poor building rating, with a particular note that students who were less satisfied with the Students' Union overall, were more likely to suggest that the building itself was an issue. In this case, suggestions were made by students for improving the physical building itself including increasing the size, changing the location and improving the atmosphere and lighting.

*"A new location or at the very least give the hubs a facelift so it's not dark and grey inside, the weather is about all the grey Sheffield needs!" - (Students' Union Satisfaction Research, 2014)*

The focus groups conducted as part of the Students' Union Satisfaction Research again echoed these views, with students in separate groups noting some of the buildings distinct disadvantages. This includes a location that is 'out of the way' and the appearance that it is very dark building inside, particularly upstairs, that discourages students from using it as a social area.

In various avenues of feedback, including the All I Want for Christmas campaign, not only was location, lighting, atmosphere and layout a common recurring theme, but so were comparisons to the University of Sheffield Students' Union building. These comparisons highlighted the neighbouring Students' Union building as being large, modern, vibrant and full of life; a stark contrast to the feedback received by Sheffield Hallam Students' Union regarding the HUBS.

*"The Students' Union building is rather unappealing and certainly not seen in the same light as the University of Sheffield Students' Union building. It has a bad reputation amongst students." - (Students' Union Satisfaction Research, 2014)*

As mentioned, the Alterline survey highlighted that many students equate the physical HUBS building with the Students' Union as a whole and this could be a contributing factor in national satisfaction surveys such as the NSS. In the local area, the University of Sheffield measures very highly in satisfaction and many students make positive associations with the building itself, in comparison to Sheffield Hallam Students' Union building. When monitoring most improved Students' Unions across the country as measured via the NSS, a common theme is a new or upgraded building, including the University of Suffolk (13% increase in satisfaction), Nottingham

Trent University (11% increase in satisfaction), and the University of West London (10% increase in satisfaction).

*"It's not very welcoming to first years because it's quite small and closed off." - (Alterline Report, 2015)*

Academic research conducted in relation to the Where I Belong project not only highlights the importance of a physical study space for students (as currently extensively provided by the University), but also suggests how a student interacts with their environment from a social aspect can even impact on retention<sup>6 7</sup>. The Students' Union not only aims to support students in their academic life, but provides a social space, great facilities and a place that students feel a deep sense of belonging. This recommendation is based not only on a large amount of feedback received by the Students' Union regarding the building, but also looking outwardly to other institutions and Students' Unions across the country and academic research that highlights the importance of the physical building.

A recommendation therefore, would be for increased funding either for a new building that is more fit for purpose and in an improved location, or to make large-scale refurbishments to the Students' Union building.

***Recommendation 3.6:*** *"The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to review the suitability of the HUBS building and to support necessary improvements."*

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<sup>6</sup> Pascarella, E. & Terenzini, P. (1991). *How college affects students; Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>7</sup> Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University Chicago Press.

## 8.6 Student funding

Throughout this report, a common theme raised by students relates to the struggle they have with the general cost of living and how national funding has not met their needs. Financial issues are not only an important aspect of the student experience for the vast majority of our students, but for some can lead to significant stress. The Mental Health and Wellbeing research for example, found that almost half of students responding, who have experienced some form of mental distress, believe that financial difficulties contributed to, or even triggered these feelings.

One way students can access financial aid is through the 'Student Support Fund' (the direct replacement for the Government funded 'Access to Learning Fund'). The Student Support Fund is University financed and has a remit to support students who may have extra costs due to their individual circumstances, or to support students in an emergency situation. This fund is now managed by the Student Financial Support Panel, which is represented by members of staff from both the Students' Union, and the Student Learning Services within the University. The University, in consultation with the Students' Union, has acknowledged the importance of the Student Support Fund by not only implementing the recommendation from last year's report, to continue the level of funding to the Student Support Fund, but has increased the contribution to that fund significantly, from £600,000 in 2013/14 academic year, to £900,000 in the 2014/15 academic year, to £1,000,000 for the 2015/16 academic year. In addition, it was decided to amend a number of the rules and eligibility criteria, with an aim to make it more accessible and effective for students.

The Students' Union Advice Centre has worked with students to access this fund on multiple occasions, and is proud to claim that it has, as of the end of April 2015, been able to successfully help students with 689 individual claims totalling £738,317. Although it is recognised that there have been some teething problems with the new Student Support Fund system, the bold direction taken to improve the size and access of the fund has been very positive, particularly when considering how similar funds at many different institutions across the sector have reduced in size and become more difficult to access. In order to continue to support students at Sheffield Hallam, particularly those who are most vulnerable, it is recommended that the fund is continued beyond 2016/17, with a sustained amount of funding at its current level. It is also recommended that the fund continues to be reviewed in order to evolve with shifting student financial situations and behaviours.

***Recommendation 3.7:*** "The Students' Union, on behalf of the student body, urges the University to continue to supply the Student Support Fund, with sustained levels of funding from the University."

With regards to other vulnerable students, the government has made a number of significant changes to the way disabled students will be financially supported in the future, which a number of students have raised concerns about via the Students' Union Advice Centre. These changes will not affect the current students, but does highlight potential future barriers to funding for disabled students. It is acknowledged that the University is working extremely hard in very difficult circumstances to ensure that disabled students are not adversely affected by these government changes.

2014/15 saw the end of the government-led National Scholarship Fund, with emphasis now on Universities and Higher Education institutions to develop their own systems of support based on their own requirements in consultation with their respective Students' Unions. Sheffield Hallam

University has again moved away from the current Higher Education trend on focusing its new financial bursary system on those students from a background household income of under £25,000, to specifically focus on much less targeted students from a background household income of between £25,000 to £42,000. These students are expected to receive a contribution from the household to support their education; however our experience is that often the student household cannot support the student as they have their own commitments to meet. This issue is not monitored directly, as the current national student funding system is based on a 'basic income' test, rather than a 'means' test. Whilst it is unlikely to see a near future change in the current national household income assessment, it is encouraging to see the University try to support this group of students who are often overlooked.

It has been highlighted throughout this report that not only are students at Sheffield Hallam University subject to considerable fees and living costs, but they are also subject to hidden costs, for example the costs of learning materials, printing, food and drink, transport, and extra-curricular activities. It is hoped that the University can take the same positive attitude towards reducing these hidden costs that affect all students, as it has taken to raising and maintaining funding for our most vulnerable students.

## 9.0 Closing statement

This report has used a portfolio of student feedback, both formal research and informal comments, to raise key issues about which students have expressed their concerns. It has also made recommendations designed to address these concerns and to ensure that the student voice is not just heard, but listened to and answered.

It is clear that what is important to students is not just their teaching and learning but the impact of the University environment as a whole, living and interacting as a student in the area and how they are represented.

Whilst not exclusively about teaching and learning, a great deal of feedback was received about issues within this area. Fairness is important to students; whether that is fairness in the availability of teaching materials and resources, objectivity and impartiality in marking criteria and the assessment process, an effective system to deal with extenuating circumstances outside of their control or equal opportunities to use their degree to take the next step in their career. Students wish to get the most out of their time at University, both inside the classroom and out, and getting value for money is a key factor in students feeling satisfied.

To students, University life is more than just attending scheduled teaching, and completing assignments. Being a student means being part of new learning and social communities, with the opportunity to find unique experiences and try new things. Developing a real sense of belonging not only enriches the student experience, but has a direct effect on attainment and the success of that student academically.

Both academic and non-academic experience is underpinned by a strong representational structure, and the importance of the Student Rep programme as a fundamental feedback pathway has been highlighted in this report. Both the University and the Students' Union are committed to ensuring that this pathway is both easily accessible and effective and the upcoming changes, as a result of the Student Rep Review, are an opportunity to continue to improve and strengthen the representation structure at Sheffield Hallam.

Significant progress has been made throughout the 2014/15 academic year to respond to student feedback, and whilst much has been achieved, there is much more that can be done to improve the student experience. The Students' Union looks forward to engaging with the University, and in partnership, begin to plan, prepare, and implement the priorities highlighted in this report, in the year ahead.

# 10.0 Appendices

## 10.1 Sources used in the 2014/15 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 informal feedback (see 11-14 in the list below).

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.

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 2014*  
The student rep report is based on an annual survey that is sent to all student reps asking for feedback on their experiences of the student rep system.
2. *Student Rep Review Feedback 2015*  
Using both surveys and focus groups, feedback was gathered relating to how the current Student Rep system works, what should be changed to improve the system, and views on hypothetical changes going forward. This was then fed back into the Student Rep Review. Led by Student Researchers George Wilmot, Tom Williams and Max Mountney, in partnership with the Student Representation Team.
3. *Barriers to Sport report 2014*  
The Students' Union Sports and Physical Activities Officer, Melissa Penny, led on the creation and delivery of a survey aimed at students who were members of Team Sheffield Hallam or recreational clubs in November and December, regarding differing of aspects of sports participation, including barriers to sport, ease of transportation, and appropriateness of sports kits.
4. *Alterline report 2014*  
Sheffield Hallam Students' Union commissioned Alterline to support them with a programme of market research and to feed into strategic visioning. Survey was conducted January and February 2015, with the majority completing online.
5. *Assessment and Feedback report (A&F) 2014*  
The Students' Union Education Officer, Kieran Pearson, led on the creation and delivery of a survey designed to measure student opinion of assessment and feedback in relation to exams and coursework. This piece of research also measured opinions of the potential impacts of introducing further anonymous marking techniques.
6. *Students' Union Satisfaction Survey 2014*  
A survey constructed and delivered in Q4 of 2014, uses a mixture of quantitative as well as

qualitative questions to capture student feedback. This is helpful in exploring how students interact with the Students' Union, give insight into why scores are falling, as well as information and suggestions for how to improve in various areas.

7. *Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey 2015*

Feedback was gathered using a survey to measure our students' mental health and wellbeing in comparison to national levels. Survey was based on NUS 'Mental Distress Survey' referenced in **section 8.1**. Led by Student Researcher Jasmin Mar and Students' Union Welfare Officer Emmet Cleaver.

8. *Where I Belong project (WiB)*

This is a qualitative research project, using 'auto-driven photo-elicitation' technique, to find 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. Led by Student Researchers Paul Westbrook and Jasmin Mar, in partnership with Students' Union Welfare Officer Emmet Cleaver and Students' Union President Emily Connor.

9. *Mapping the Student Experience 2014*

This project is a longitudinal study that is now in its second 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.

### **Informal Feedback**

10. *Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Officers' Postcard Campaign 2014*

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.

11. *Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Officers' Listening and Representing*

The Student Officer Team spend at least 3 hours a week gathering student opinions on a range of issues so that they can represent students' views. This data is collected and analysed by the Students' Union.

12. *Student Rep meeting minutes 2014*

Minutes from Faculty meetings, where staff and student reps work together to improve the student experience.

13. *Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Advice Centre*

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.

14. *Your Education Zone*

This is a regularly held open forum for all Sheffield Hallam Students, to voice their views regarding their education. Education Officer, Kieran Pearson, attends.

## **National Surveys**

15. *National Student Survey (NSS) 2014*  
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.
16. *Postgraduate Taught Survey (PTES) 2014*  
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.
17. *Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey (DLHE) 2013*  
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, in 2013-14, therefore refers to those who graduated at the end of the 2012-13 academic year.
18. *Sheffield Hallam Student Barometer (SB) 2014*  
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.

## 10.2 Review of progress from 2013/14 report - full spreadsheet

We, the Students' Union, thank the University in the efforts made to act on the recommendations and suggested actions from last year's report. The 'Student Voice Committee', with support from the 'Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee', has worked hard to ensure that each recommendation was addressed individually and actions were taken where possible.

THEMES	RECOMMENDATIONS	COMMENTS ON PROGRESS	HOW FAR HAS THIS BEEN ACHIEVED?
<b>1.0 YOUR TEACHING, LEARNING AND COURSE</b>			
<b>Teaching</b>	1.1 Develop a consistent approach to uploading learning resources onto Blackboard from all module leaders	This is partly explicit in the University's minimum expectations of Technology Enhanced Learning. It will be factored into the development of the new threshold standards for Technology Enhanced Learning so a University wide approach can be agreed as policy. A policy statement for this will be brought forward at the start of academic year 2015/16.	Partially achieved
	1.2 Provide opportunities for all postgraduates to develop teaching skills, and give support to students who deliver a significant amount of teaching alongside their research	A policy has been approved by Academic Board and is in place - Policy on Postgraduate Research Students Engaged in Teaching - <a href="http://extra.shu.ac.uk/sas/quality/AcademicPoliciesDocuments/PostgraduateResearchStudents&amp;Teaching.pdf">http://extra.shu.ac.uk/sas/quality/AcademicPoliciesDocuments/PostgraduateResearchStudents&amp;Teaching.pdf</a> . The 'Researchers who Teach' course is delivered by staff in the Sheffield Institute of Education supported administratively by staff based in the Research and Innovation Office / Graduate School.	Achieved
	1.3 Agree a timescale for all teaching staff to complete professional teaching qualifications	This is already in place and is a University Key Performance Indicator (KPI). As of April 2015 the percentage of staff holding an appropriate postgraduate qualification or fellowship of the Higher Education Academy was 70% placing the University ahead of the majority of benchmark institutions.	Achieved
<b>Contact Time</b>	1.4 Work towards a more personal learning experience for students through increasing tutorials and a reduction in the amount of large class teaching	A Contact Hours Policy is being developed - may wish to propose work is undertaken to explore with students what constitutes a 'more personalised learning experience' and the types of contact that students' value. However, this is likely to be an ongoing issue related to the University strategy implementation and possibly the academic advice framework. A draft policy will be considered in June 2015	Partially achieved
	1.5 Review contact time, looking at the minimum number of timetabled hours students can expect	A consultation is being conducted on proposals for a University policy on contact hours. A policy has been drafted and will be considered in June 2015	Achieved
<b>Assessment and Feedback</b>	1.6 Develop a minimum expectation of feedback for students	The Feedback Policy approved in 2013 sets a min expectation for turnaround. The Assessment Journey Programme will also result in improvements related to assessment and feedback for students. The Sheffield Hallam Students' Union's President and Education Officer are the SU representatives on the Assessment Journey Programme.	Achieved
	1.7 Address the potential for bias in assessment marking and consider the possibility of introducing anonymity into the marking system	This is a campaign/lobbying issue for the Education Officer and important part of the SU's work for 2014-15 and 2015-16. It will also be addressed in the Assessment Journey Programme.	Partially achieved
<b>Placements</b>	1.8 Undertake a review of mandatory placements to minimise the negative impact of travel and cost implications for students and implement recommendation	Work is being undertaken in the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing led by Judy Redman and Vanessa Coleman (Student Services Manager).	Partially achieved
	1.9 Ensure that mandatory placements allow students adequate opportunities to demonstrate necessary competencies	This is the case already and is part of the accreditation process. Much of our provision is also subject to additional close scrutiny by OFSTED.	Achieved
	1.10 Ensure that where student consent has been given, placements providers are always informed by the University of any reasonable adjustments which students require.	The Faculty of H&WB has initiated a project looking at the progression of students on health and social care programmes (health and disability). The project is being sponsored by Jean Flannagan and is looking at the whole student lifecycle with the aim of improving the student experience - placement activity forms a significant part of the journey. The project is aiming to clarify processes particularly with respect to disclosure and reasonable adjustments. The intention is that the learning from this project will be shared with other Faculties.	Partially achieved
<b>Fitness to Practice</b>	1.11 The University and Student's Union Advisers should ensure that all students going through Fitness to Practice are directed to the Students' Union Advice Centre, at each stage of the formal process (investigation panel and appeals).	In HWB a workshop on health and disability was held in December, the final detail of which are being considered and these will be communicated and disseminated soon. For D&S, FTPs are managed carefully by an experienced Student Experience Manager who advises students appropriately. The SE manager works closely with members of an academic panel (who are also a small, experienced team).	Partially achieved

Continued overleaf...

THEMES	RECOMMENDATIONS	COMMENTS ON PROGRESS	HOW FAR HAS THIS BEEN ACHIEVED?
<b>2.0 YOUR UNIVERSITY LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT</b>			
<b>Careers and Employability</b>	2.1 Embed careers guidance into courses from level 4, ensuring that advice is discipline specific	As part of the Careers & Employment Service's (CES) annual operational plan all Level 4 students receive information on the Services we offer as part of their semester 1 induction. In semester 2, preferably as a timetabled session within a core module, all L4 courses receive a guide to developing their employability whilst at SHU during a presentation on the range of potential career options after their course; the full range of services and activities available from CES; and how to access individual 1:1 guidance on career choice (from careers advisers) and job seeking support (from employment advisers) from the Careers and Employability Centre and in Faculty. All students have a named adviser for their course/ department whose job it is to provide up to date discipline specific information and advice based on in depth knowledge of potential job sectors and further study options and graduate employers' recruitment practices. They design and deliver with Faculty colleagues a suite of discipline specific careers workshops at all levels as per the University's career management skills framework.	Partially achieved
	2.2 Invest in tailored careers guidance for postgraduate research students, including the provision of specialist postgraduate research careers advisers	PG researchers seeking careers advice are offered an appointment with the most appropriate careers adviser according to their needs and signposted to specialist information sources. One of the careers advisers leads on the Service's work with PG researchers and designs and delivers an integrated careers programme within the University's PG development programme which is open to all Sheffield Hallam University Postgraduate researchers at any stage of their PhD or Masters by Research programme.	Achieved
<b>Organisation and Management</b>	2.3 Ensure that any changes to teaching are communicated to students in a timely manner, utilising the ability to text students where appropriate.	All Faculties have processes in place to inform students of changes/cancellations due to staff illness by email and/or text.	Achieved
<b>Wednesday Afternoons</b>	2.4 Faculties should ensure that Wednesday afternoons are kept free from teaching events, unless students are required to be on placement by their course	This is underway via timetabling steering groups and the amount of teaching on Wednesdays has fallen by approximately 40% since 12/13. Work continues on this and this routinely reported at faculty and departmental level by the timetabling team in the Facilities Directorate.	Partially achieved
<b>Learning Communities</b>	2.5 Identify ways of establishing learning communities within disciplines, looking at encouraging peer to peer learning, supporting the development of departmental societies and improving both virtual and physical spaces for students on particular courses.	This is complex and related to 1.4 and 3.1 The University is exploring how to support the development of academic societies with the Students Union.	Not achieved
<b>3.0 YOUR REPRESENTATION AND OPINIONS</b>			
<b>Course and Faculty Representation</b>	3.1 Carry out a thorough review of the Student Representation structure and system, including developing systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the student rep system and tracking what happens to student feedback.	These are critical activities for 2014-15 in preparation for Higher Education Review in 2016-17. They will form an important part of Sheffield Hallam Students' Union's current review of student rep system. This is a key priority and something which is being done in partnership with the University. The outcomes of the review have the potential to have high impact on the Union's visibility and student voice, as well as lead to enhancement of students' experiences.	Partially achieved
	3.2 Create mechanisms to facilitate communication between course and faculty reps.	This has been addressed in some areas through use of Blackboard organisations/discussion boards and forums. The review (3.1) will consider the wider roll out of this practice.	Partially achieved
<b>Student Funding</b>	3.3 Ensure that the Students' Union has representation on the University's new bursary policy strategy group.	Sheffield Hallam Students' Union now has representation on this group.	Achieved
	3.4 Continue to enable students facing financial difficulties to remain in higher education by sustaining the Access to Learning Fund at its current level	Sheffield Hallam Students' Union now has representation on the Access to Learning Fund group. More information needed to know how feasible it is to affect this through this route.  The Students' Union notes that financial support has been continued via the newly created Student Support Fund which has replaced the government funded Access to Learning Fund. The University has increased this fund by 50% on the previous year's level, and therefore it is felt by the Students' Union that this action has been achieved.	Achieved

The table above lists each suggested action from the 2013/14 report, with a monitor by the Student Voice Committee against a strict measure as to whether each issue has been fully resolved. Some recommendations throughout the current report may relate to some suggested actions within the table above, albeit with a refined focus.

### 10.3 Subjects with timetable barriers to sport participation

The list below shows subjects that have been named by **two or more** students in the 'Barriers to Sport' Research, as having Wednesday Afternoon lectures or seminars, which have acted as a barrier to sport.

This list is by no means exhaustive, as this was produced through one survey, with a limited sample size.

- Accounting and Finance
- Adult Nursing
- Aeronautical/Aerospace Engineering
- Business and Marketing
- Business Economics
- Business Studies
- Chemistry
- English Literature
- Environmental Science
- Events Management
- Food and Nutrition
- Geography
- Graphic Design
- Journalism
- Mathematics
- Mechanical Engineering
- Nursing
- Physical Ed and School Sport
- Physiotherapy
- Sport Development with Coaching
- Sports Coaching

## **10.4 Student Rep review - list of recommendations**

The Student Rep Review offers the following recommendations, divided into 5 main sections:

### **1. Reviewing faculty and departmental level representation**

- 1.1 Introduce a new position of Departmental Rep to replace the current Faculty Executive Reps.
- 1.2 Identify the faculty requirements for departmental representation.
- 1.3 Recruit and support Departmental Reps through the Students' Union in partnership with faculties.
- 1.4 Establish Faculty Forums to enable Departmental Reps to identify faculty level issues and represent students accordingly.

### **2. Ensuring consistency of experience for student reps**

- 2.1 Develop consistent training for all Course Reps.
- 2.2 Develop appropriate and consistent resources for all student reps.
- 2.3 Create guidelines for rep recruitment that are agreed and adhered to.
- 2.4 Introduce resources and networking opportunities for staff involved in the delivery of the rep system.
- 2.5 Further develop the Students' Union Course Rep Conference and create new networking opportunities at departmental and faculty level.
- 2.6 Establish working groups to look at distance learning representation and postgraduate research representation.

### **3. Monitoring and oversight of reps and the success of the student rep system**

- 3.1 Create a central hub where Students' Union and University staff can share information on rep activity.
- 3.2 Centrally collate the achievements of the student rep system to monitor impact.
- 3.3 Create faculty specific Student Voice Reports.
- 3.4 Formalise a removal mechanism for ineffective student reps.

### **4. Effective student representation on committees.**

- 4.1 Introduce student focused briefings on committee papers.
- 4.2 Introduce pre-meetings for reps with senior staff.
- 4.3 Provide specialist training for reps on committees.
- 4.4 Draw up minimum expectations for rep support on committees.

### **5. Student Representation Agreement**

- 5.1 Draft a Student Representation Agreement.