

## **Speak Week, 6 to 10 November**

**Katherine Rogers, Researcher, Hallam Students' Union**

Thirty Students' Union staff, including student officers, approached students across both campuses every day during the Speak Week (6-10 November). Students were asked to complete a postcard, telling us one thing they'd like to keep the same about their university experience and what they'd like to change. It was an amazing success, with more than 10% of Hallam students talked to, and 3157 postcards were filled in.

Speak Week was part of the Students' Union 2023/24 Visibility project, to increase awareness of who we are and what we do amongst students and staff at Sheffield Hallam University. Speak Week was intended to engage students in meaningful conversations and to support on-campus visibility.

We heard from students about all sorts of things, from how good the teaching and library facilities are, to how bad the parking can be. Students told us about the need to improve signposting around campuses, and the kinds of SU events they'd like to see in future.

Students' Union staff then indexed all the Speak Week postcards, and categorised them into broad themes. Cards were often categorised into more than one theme – students might praise both teaching and delivery and study facilities, or want both improved catering and more study space. Student feedback was also often mixed – students thought that catering was reasonably priced but wanted a better choice of dishes or more outlets.

### **Demographics**

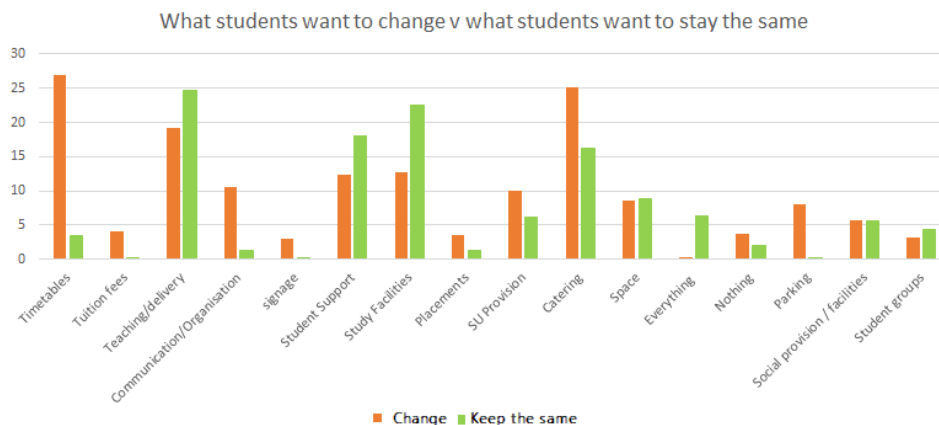
Students were asked to identify their year of study, their fee status (home or international) and their college; more than 80% provided some of this information (year of study, and college, mainly).

All students	3157
City campus	2130
Collegiate Campus	1027
Home	1382
International	391
Undergraduate	1995
Postgraduate	559
Home undergraduate	1201
Home postgraduate	128
International undergraduate	85

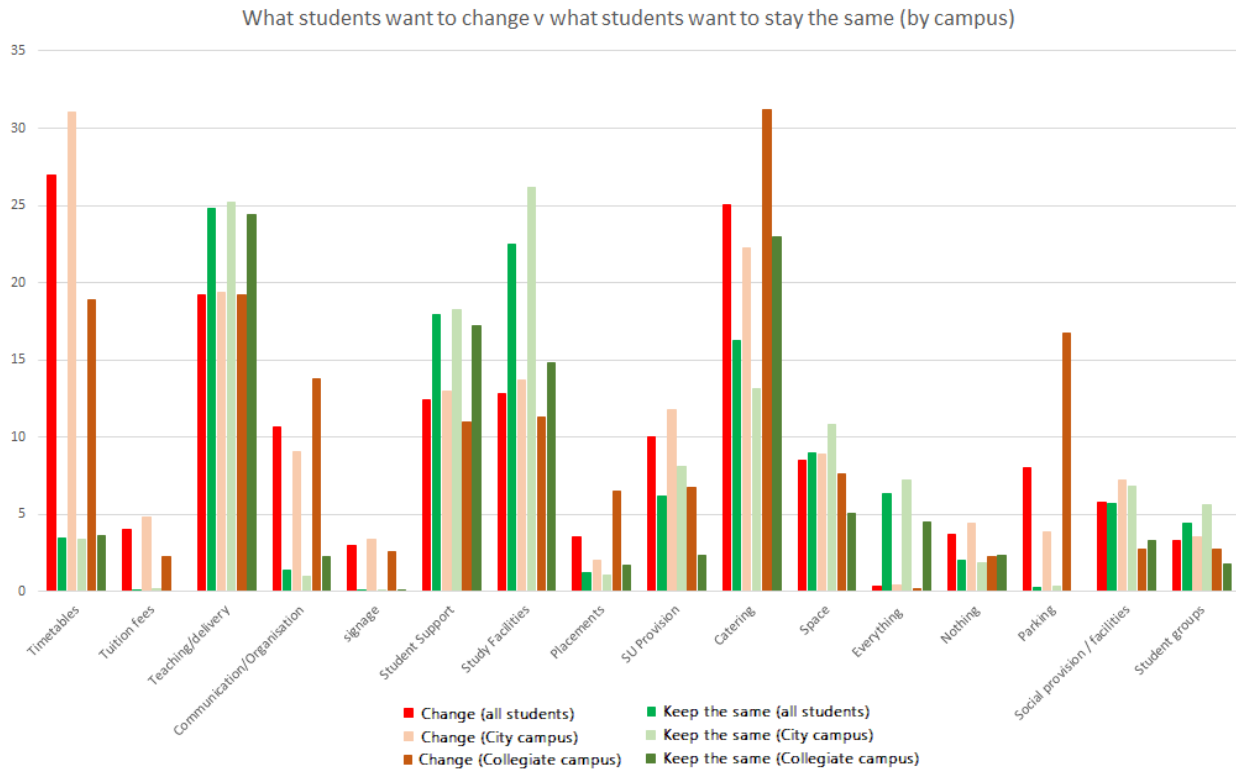
International postgraduate	302
Foundation	82
Undergraduate level 4	862
Undergraduate level 5	522
Undergraduate level 6	611
Postgraduate Taught	510
Postgraduate Research	49
BTE	944
HWLS	578
SSA	914

It is worth noting that there were relatively few responses from international undergraduate, home postgraduate and foundation year students.

### General Trends

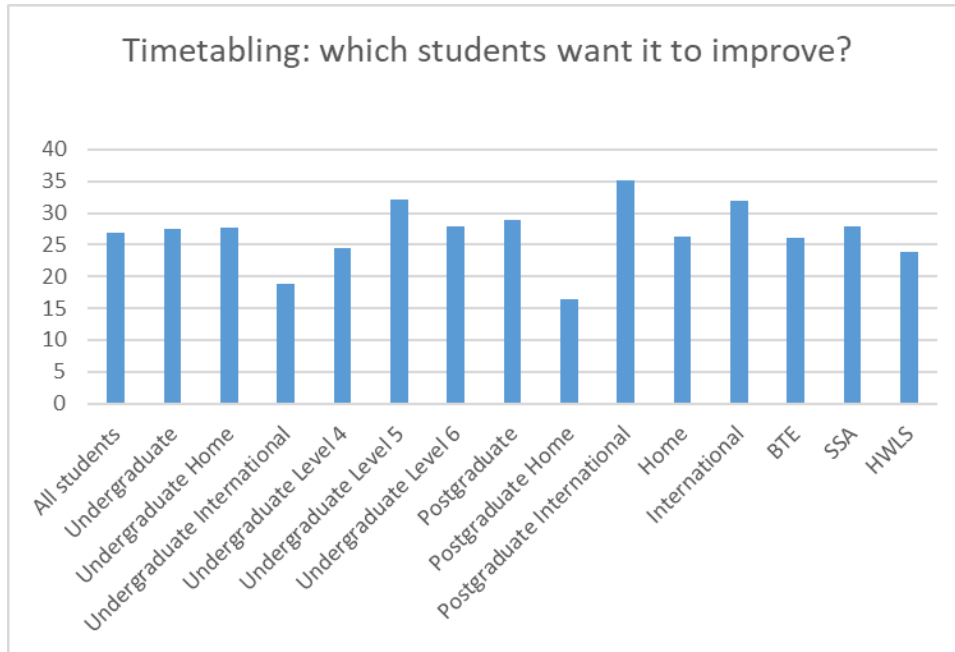


Generally, students provided mixed positive and negative feedback – 25% wanted improvements to catering, whilst 16% wanted catering to remain the same; 19% wanted changes to teaching and delivery but 25% were happy with it; 12% wanted changes to student support but 18% were happy with it, and 22% were happy with study facilities whereas 13% wanted changes. However, there was one clear area where students were unhappy, and feedback was not mixed – 27%, or 851 pieces of negative feedback were provided about timetabling (as opposed to 108 pieces of positive feedback about timetabling).



Breaking down responses highlights some interesting differences between campuses. Students on City campus were considerably more negative about timetabling than those on Collegiate. Collegiate students had much more to say, proportionately, about catering – both good and bad. Students were more positive about study facilities at Collegiate campus. Only 4% of students at City (82) wanted improved parking, but 17% (172) of students at Collegiate wanted improved parking. Satisfaction with student groups (and community) was significantly higher at City than Collegiate.

**Timetabling**



851 students had something to say about timetables, and these are just some of the issues raised:

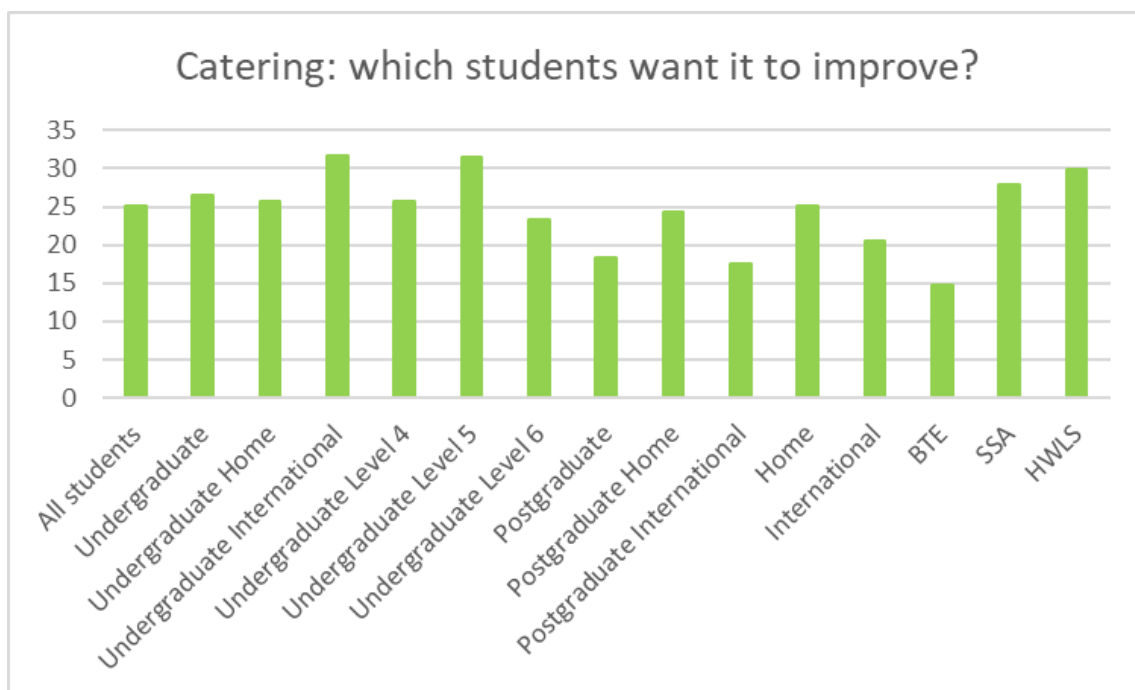
- A general lack of consistency/structure, making it hard to hold down a part-time job or make plans to go home, for instance.
- Only being timetabled for one hour per day, which particularly impacts commuters.
- Gaps too big between lectures (4+ hrs), again affecting when students can work jobs.
- Poor communication on late changes to timetables, with students not notified of changes until the last moment, or in some cases not at all.
- Seminars before lectures (does not make sense and makes learning more difficult).
- Different buildings for back-to-back lectures - students are sometimes being sent across campus and having to rush to get there in time.
- Early/late finishes - not good for student commuters, carers, or parents. Late finishes are particularly problematic as the nights draw in, as some students understandably worry about safety walking home in the dark.

Dissatisfaction about timetabling was highest amongst postgraduate international and undergraduate level 5 students.

## Catering

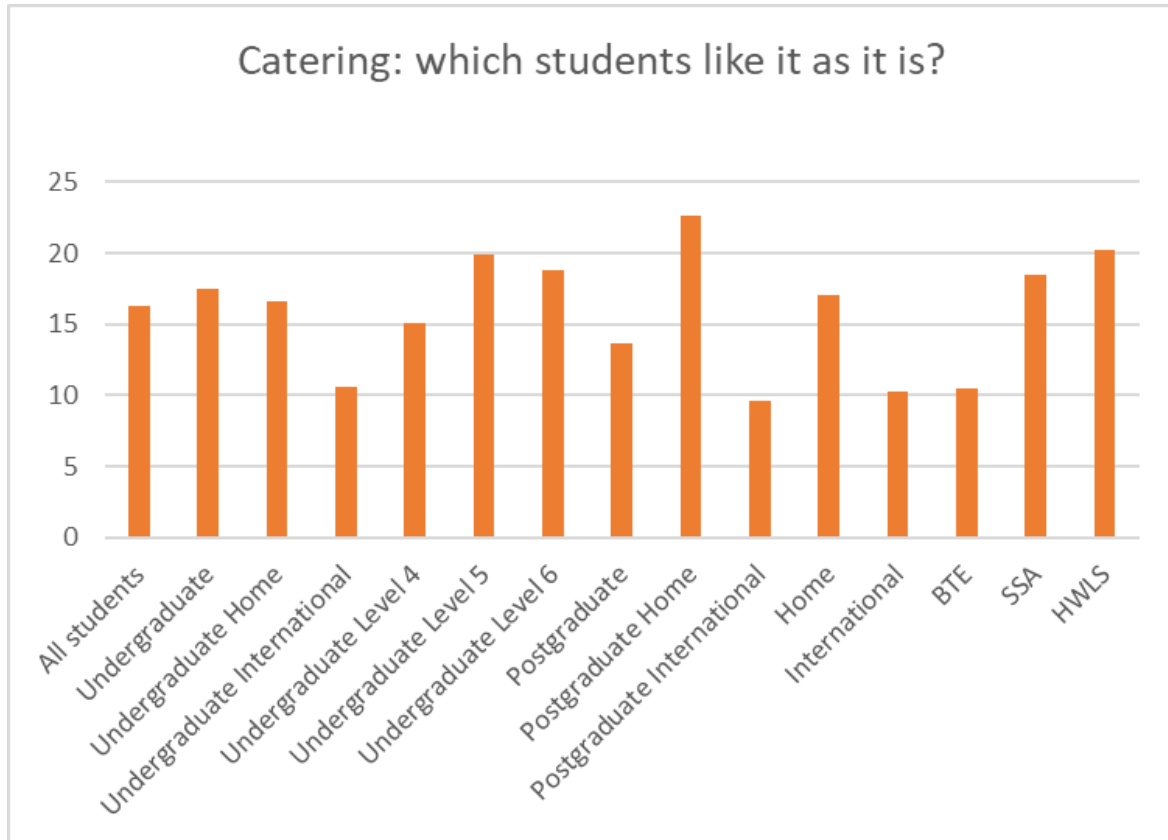
Students also had lots to say on catering! In fact, we received around 1,300 individual bits of feedback about food and drink at the University, much of it around cost and choice.

- Around 400 students said they are happy with the catering provision just the way it is.
- Almost as many said they like £1 Wednesday but want it to happen more regularly, to be expanded to other days, or for the food to be just generally cheaper.
- Lunch/street food boxes at City are popular, and the menu at Granary Café at Collegiate is appreciated too!
- But many students want more choice both in terms of the types of food available, and the number of outlets - especially at City Campus (and particularly Aspect Court). Fewer outlets meant longer queues with the Granary being particularly affected at busy times.
- Halal, and good quality vegetarian options were top of students' menu wish list, as was some spicier dishes from time to time.
- Students also asked for more hot water access and food preparation areas so they could bring their own food to uni.



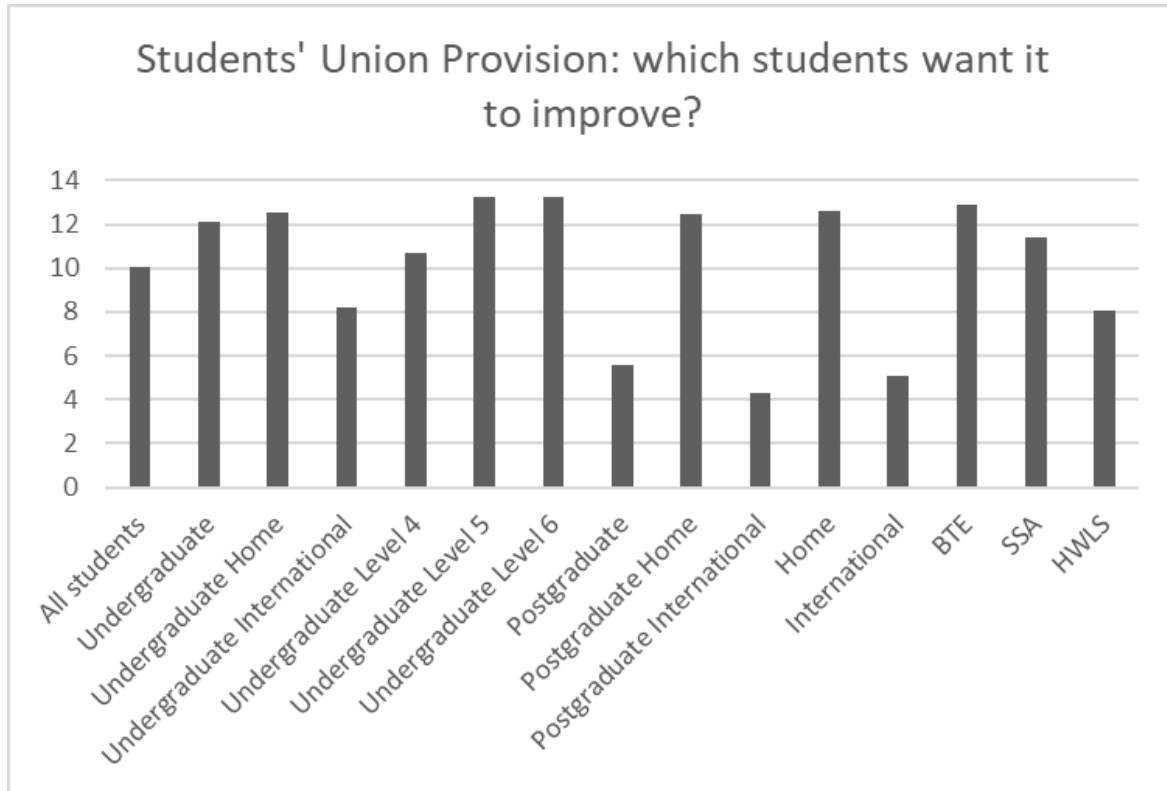
Home students were generally more dissatisfied with catering provision than international students, and students in HWLS were the most dissatisfied in any college. However, students in HWLS also provided more

positive feedback about catering than students in other colleges. Similarly BTE were least likely to provide positive or negative feedback about catering; it seems likely that those students who engage with catering provision have mixed opinions, identifying both what they like and dislike.

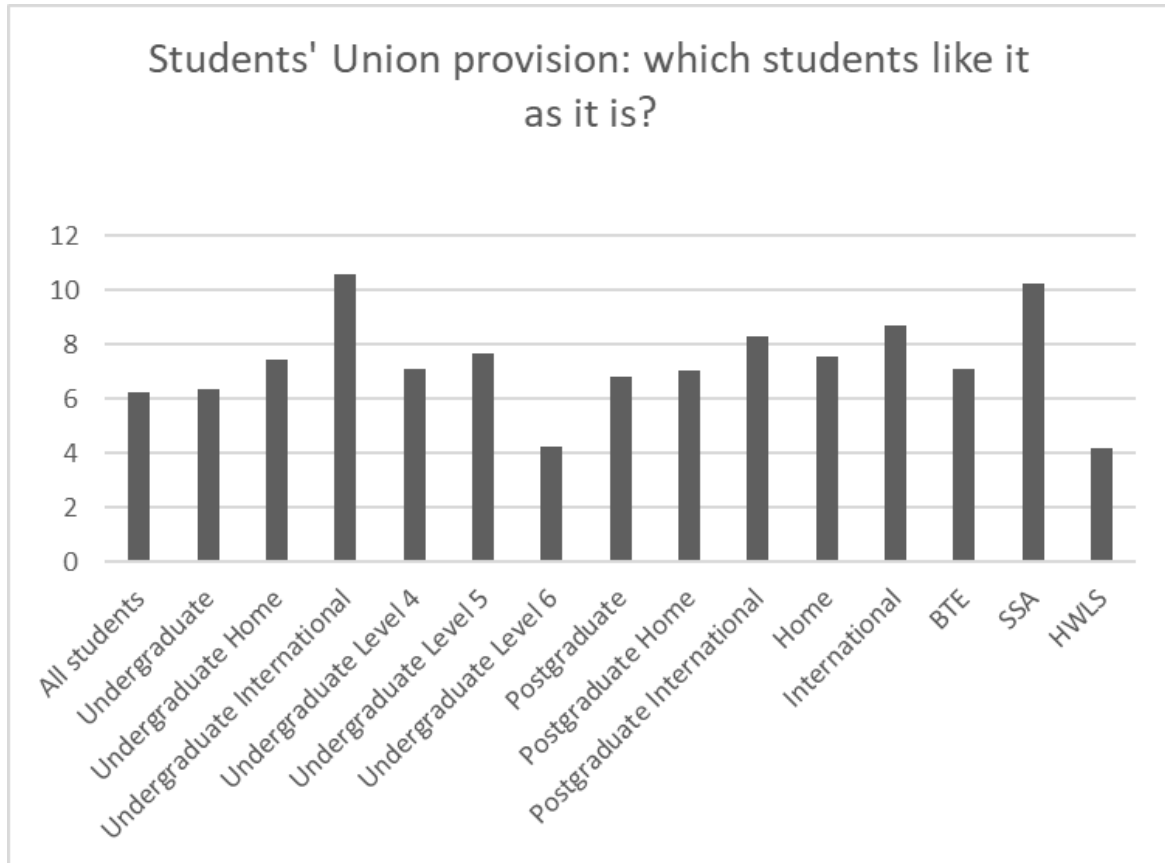


### **Students' Union Provision**

Comments that specifically related to the Students' Union were themed as Students' Union Provision. Limited positive and negative feedback was received on Students' Union Provision; it was the seventh most popular thing that students wanted to change and also the seventh most popular thing that students wanted to keep the same. Whether this reflects that other aspects of university life are more prominent in students' thoughts, or whether it reflects a level of disengagement or unawareness of the Students' Union, is not clear. Similarly, postgraduate students offered little positive or negative feedback about Students' Union provision; it is not clear whether or not this is because they view the Students' Union as less relevant to their University experience.



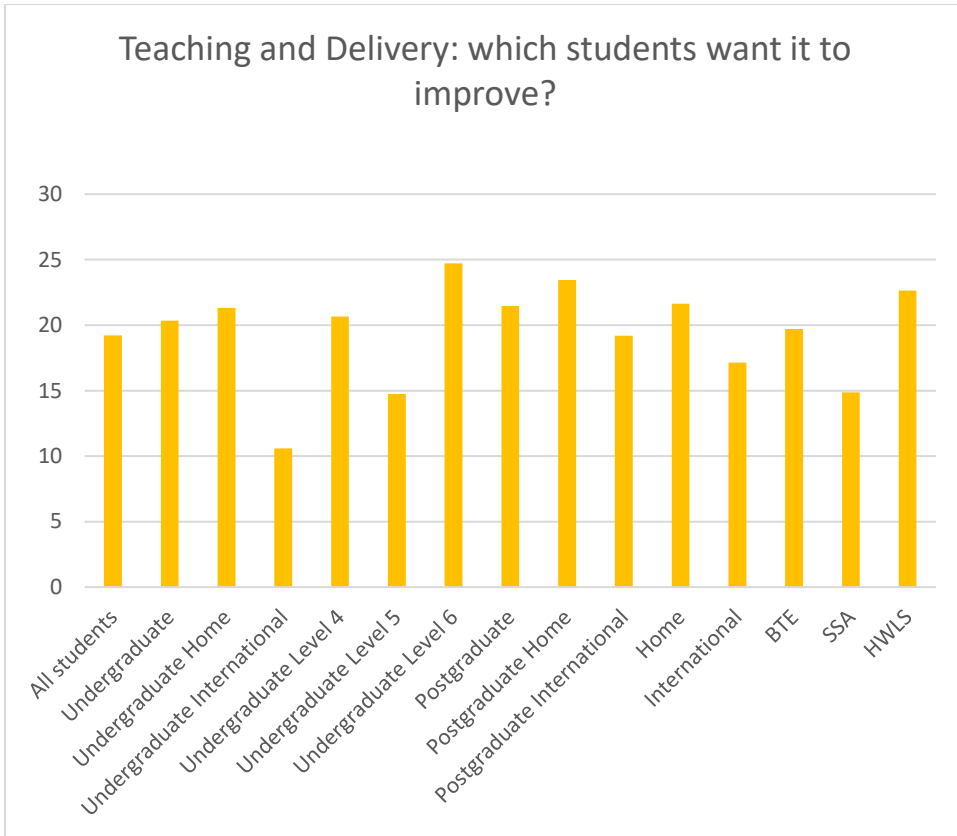
Students who wanted change generally wanted a bar or cafe at the Students' Union, or more social Union events. Students also wanted more support for societies and more events for specific subsets of students (mature students, international students). Students who were satisfied with the Students' Union mentioned events, and particularly, Give It A Go. They also appreciated the free tea and coffee, and the social facilities, at the Hubs. International students expressed most satisfaction with the Students' Union, whereas level 6 undergraduates and students in HWLS were least likely to be satisfied with Students' Union provision.



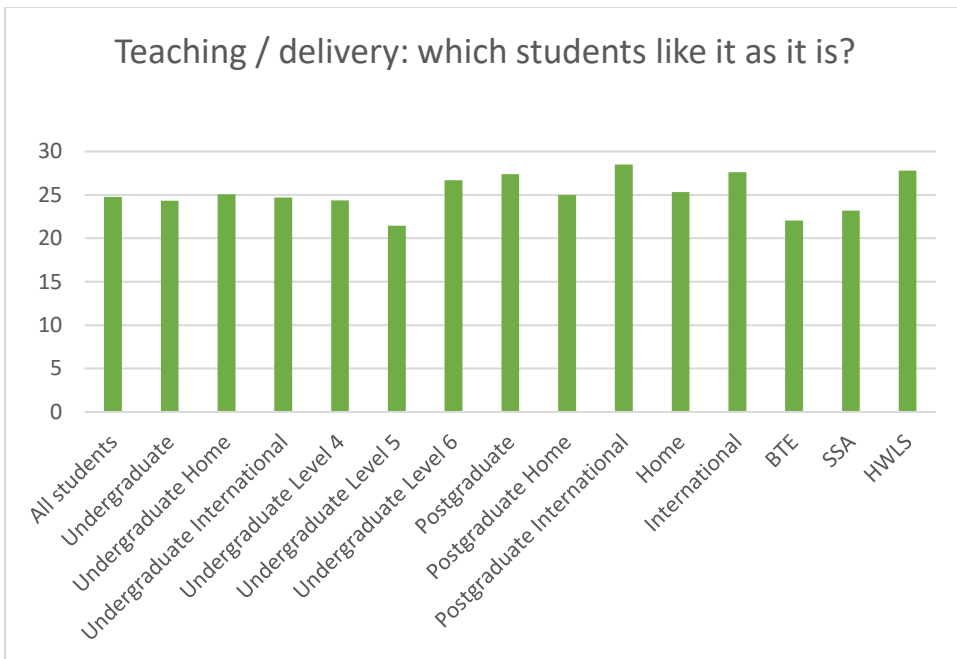
### Teaching and Delivery

25% of students identified teaching and delivery as something that should remain the same (as opposed to 19% that thought changes should be made to teaching and delivery). Undergraduate level six students and students in HWLS were most likely to want to see changes to teaching and delivery. However, HWLS students were also most likely to offer positive feedback about teaching and delivery.



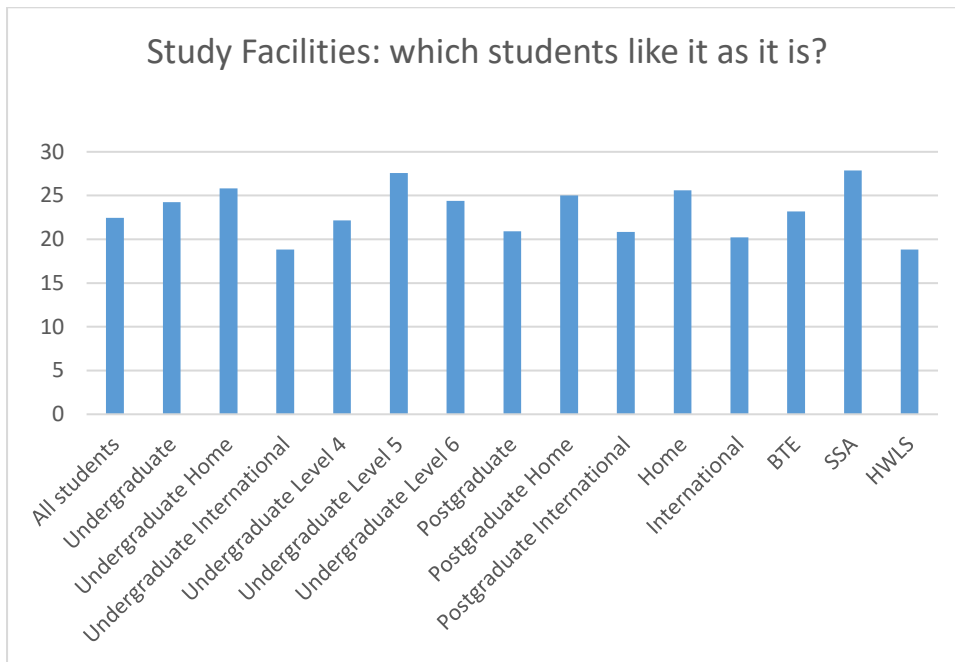


Students that were happy with teaching and delivery mentioned high quality teaching, and frequently identified specific members of staff as being particularly good. Some students described the teaching at Hallam as being excellent or as market leading.



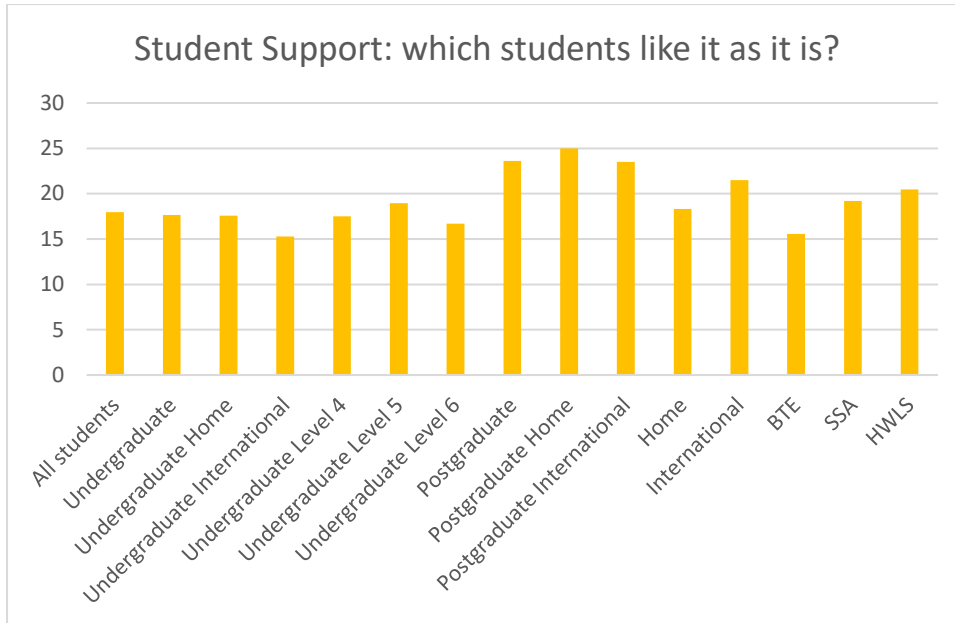
**Study Facilities**

Generally, students were more positive (22%) than negative (13%) about study facilities; undergraduate students were more positive than postgraduate students about study facilities. Students really appreciated library facilities and also made positive comments about the quality of learning spaces and also appreciated the library. Some praised online provision and many students really liked Blackboard. Some enjoyed course-specific facilities – for example, the Humanities lounge. Students that offered negative feedback often found Blackboard or the variety of communication channels confusing. They also wanted more study space, particularly group study spaces, as the available spaces often fill often quickly.



### Student Support

Students generally offered more positive feedback (18%) than negative feedback (12%) about student support. Students highlighted high quality support with respect to employability and careers. Some students also noted support from academic staff, and frequently identified named staff members. Students also appreciated the University’s wellbeing support and study skills support from the library. Postgraduate students were particularly positive about student support and international students were more positive than home students.



### Other topics

126 students identified **tuition fees** as something they would like to see changed. Whilst some students raised questions about whether their degree course represented value for money, the majority of comments around tuition fees were about the need for payment plans for international students.

282 students made positive comments about **space**, whilst 268 made negative comments. Negative comments largely focused on the lifts in Owen building, and the length of wait for lifts. Positive comments included comments on social spaces around campus and study spaces in the library.

Although limited feedback was received on **placements** (111 negative comments) and on **signage** (95 negative comments), these were two areas where the feedback was predominantly negative. Feedback on placements centred on a lack of support from the University with respect to finding placements, and a perceived lack of opportunity. Some students felt unsupported by the University during their placement. Students that commented on signage felt that navigating campus was not straightforward because there was insufficient signage or maps around campus. 17% (172) of students at Collegiate wanted better **parking** but parking was only an issue for 4% (82) students at City campus.

Relatively few students commented on **student groups or community**, but those that did generally proffered positive feedback (138 positive comments). Students commented on a strong sense of community at Hallam; some students also enjoyed being part of a society. Students that made negative comments sometimes observed that there were not enough student societies.