

Students' Union Student Feedback Report – November 2023

The Student's Union Monthly Feedback Report aims to provide a summary of the most prominent issues and concerns raised by students with the SU within the previous month. This report contains statistics from our Advice Centre, Helpdesk, and our online feedback platform Share Your Experience (previously Union Voice) for November 2023, an update from student representatives, and a summary of initial findings from the Students' Union Speak Week.

Report Summary

- The [Students' Union's Advice Centre](#) received **67** new enquiries between 1st November and 30th November 2023. Over a third were about academic issues, but students also approached the advice centre for help with funding and fees. Most enquiries were initiated through the online AskUs platform, although nearly a third were in-person drop-ins at The Hubs.
- The [Students' Union's Helpdesk](#) received **178** queries from students across between 1st November and 30th November 2023. Approximately third of the enquiries were face-to-face and a third by email. Merchandise was the most enquired-about topic but students also wanted information about academic issues and societies.
- There were **sixteen** new submissions to [Share Your Experience](#) (formerly Union Voice), seven of which related to placements.
- [Student Representatives](#) have provided updates on department Welcome Week events, and on current issues impacting students; timetabling is a recurrent theme. Placements are also an issue, particularly for some Nursing and Midwifery students.
- Hallam Students' Union staff spent a week on campus in November for [Speak Week](#). Union staff spoke to more than **10% of students** and students filled in more than **3000 postcards**. Two topics that came up over and over again were catering and timetabling.

Click on the links above to view more detailed information.

Table 1: The source of data used throughout this report, as well as the number of queries or responses. All instances of Feedback received between 1st November – 30th November 2023, unless otherwise stated.

Source	Number of queries / respondents
Advice Centre	67
Helpdesk	178
Share Your Experience	16
Speak Week	3115

Monthly Statistics from the Students' Union

The **Students' Union's Advice Centre** received **67** enquiries from students during November, 2023. Approximately half of these (**31**) were submitted online via our new '[Ask Us](#)' online platform, although there were **20** adhoc in-person inquiries at our advice desk in The Hubs.

Total	67
Ask Us online platform (submitted by student)	31
In Person - ad-hoc (@ The Hubs)	20
Advice Centre Telephone drop-in	9
Email	7

Main topic areas of advice enquiries

Academic Issues	
Academic Conduct / ACP / AM	10
Appeal (challenge a decision or grade)	8
Progression problems / repeat year	3
Other	3
Placement issues	2
Funding & Fees Issues	
Tuition fee debt	8
Funding - check what's available	3
Funding - other	3
Maintenance loan / issues with SFE	2
Something Else	
Other	3

The most enquiries were received about Academic Conduct / ACP / AM. These enquiries mostly related to plagiarism or poor referencing (potential AI use was sometimes cited on the allegation form but it has seemed to come out as poor referencing). Both Home and International students asked for advice about tuition fee debt. Home students experienced tuition fee debt issues when they needed to request an additional year of tuition fee funding from SFE (for example, when they were repeating a year or changing their course).

The **Students' Union's Helpdesk** received **178** queries from students during November (not including enquiries about pool cues, gaming controllers, shuttle bus, directions / toilets, etc.). This list excludes those Ask Us issues that are referred to the Advice Centre.

Total	178
Face-to-face at SU Helpdesk	67
SU email	56
SU phone	46
SU live chat	3
Conversation with staff member	5
Ask Us online platform	1

Main SU enquiry topic areas

Total	178
Merchandise	33
Societies	27
Academic issues;	22
Student Reps (Course or Department);	20
Student Rights / Campaigns;	17
Give it a Go / Events;	14
Funding / Finance	12
Volunteering;	6
Officers;	5
SU Jobs	4
Accommodation (e.g. finding, problems);	3
Bullying / harassment;	2
Wellbeing	2

- (Other sub-topics had a count of 1 or less)

Academic issues tend to be signposted to students' representatives (i.e., Course or Department), the University's Hallam Help, Course Leaders, or the Advice Centre, dependent on need.

Share Your Experience

The Students' Union online feedback platform, [Share Your Experience](#) received **16** new submissions in November. **13** submissions were resolved and **7** (2 from October) remain open.

The new submissions relate to:

- Placements (**8**)
 - Two students from Media Arts and Communication questioned what the placement fee paid for; two course reps from Biosciences felt there was a lack of placement opportunities for students on their course. Two students highlighted the difficulty of undertaking an unpaid placement with only a small bursary or maintenance grant. An engineering student felt that the placement offer had been misrepresented before enrolment and that there was a lack of

support from the University with respect to finding placements. A computing student did not expect to arrange their own placement and felt under-prepared for undertaking a placement.

- Timetabling (5)
 - Five submissions were about timetabling, four from Biosciences and one from a Finance, Accounting and Business Systems student. Students wanted to be taught over three days, not five; they disliked evening sessions, last minute timetable changes, and the lack of preparation time before assessments. Two bioscience students were told to attend a mandatory session with one week's notice; this caused them to lose work shifts that they needed to support themselves.
- Course-related concerns (2)
 - A postgraduate engineering student was confused about the academic requirements of their course, felt unsupported by their academic adviser and was also concerned about placements. A Nursing and Midwifery student told us that inadequate arrangements had been made to address the impact of a staff absence due to illness and consequently students were commuting on to campus unnecessarily for cancelled sessions.
- Students' Union (1)
 - One student was not aware that the first Union Council meeting had taken place, and felt that the Students' Union should do more to promote it to students.

Student Reps - Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences

Department Reps

Nursing and Midwifery: Issues surrounding placements are coming back to the forefront after the university sent a blanket email to students due to graduate next year saying that they may not be able to qualify / finish their course due to a shortage of hours. The university also explained that the financial support which had been made available to students during their make up hours would be rescinded for those who refused to make up their own hours during term time. Disabled students, especially, felt at a disadvantage due to their incapacibilities of working the overtime, and working for an extended period without sufficient time off. These issues seem to be affecting the 2020/2021 and the 2021/2022 cohort, other cohorts seem to be reasonably unaffected by issues raised. The PLSG (Practice learning steering group) will be meeting in the near future to seek resolution.

Biosciences and Chemistry: Issues have been raised by students surrounding the "favouritism" of courses regarding placements. Complaints by students claim that the vast majority of local placements are tailored to biomedical science students only, and students on other courses, such as human biology, are competing for a few placements located at distance (Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, London etc). Students also think that there isn't enough support for sensitive topics; there are talks for a well-being resources to be introduced to blackboard for students who may be struggling with the content of the modules.

Allied Health Profession: Art Psychotherapy - Informed of official complaint made by one student, who undertook a survey of students (with 26 respondents), on behalf of the course, regarding:

- Communication (lack of)
- Feedback opportunities (no SSCM meetings).
- No delivery of what is advertised for the course.
- Poor support from course team.
- Contact time (reduced vs advertised).
- Value for money.

Student Reps – Social Sciences and Arts

Welcome Week

Art & Design – The Welcome Event was really well attended and very social environment. Heavy involvement from SE lead and head of department, with many central teams also invited. Featured activities about how to engage in best practice which were very well completed.

Culture & Media - Students' Union Representation and Democracy Manager attended; it went very well, had a good turnout and were well supported by University staff.

Education – attended by Students Union Rep Coordinator and Students Group Coordinator, and SE lead. Had a big push for academic societies and there was some interest from students about starting a society but yet to come to fruition. Consisted of more of a stall format.

Law & Criminology - Students' Union Representation and Democracy Manager attended; it went very well, had a good turnout and were well supported by University staff.

Natural & Built Environment – About ten students attended and again had a focus on academic societies.

Psychology, Sociology & Politics – There was no event during Welcome Week, due to staff illness. A Welcome event at the end of October was attended by approximately twenty students.

Speak Week

Students' Union staff experienced a lot of engagement in the Head Post Office. We would recommend going to the Head Post Office regularly between 12-2pm as they have reported that they felt left out from the rest of city campus, although some students do like the community feel of the art and design students having their own building. There was also lots of engagement from education students in Charles Street; many of their issues were with the timetable.

Department Rep Activity/ Catch Up Themes

Art & Design – Wren is working on developing the green space in the Head Post Office courtyard. She is also looking into the mental wellbeing offer within the department, and investigating whether students would benefit from wellbeing drop in sessions and what they would look like.

Culture & Media – Sai is working on increasing the visibility of the new department structure (this department was previously two departments – humanities & media arts and communication) as well as the academic representation system. Komal is interested in putting on events for mental wellbeing in the humanities lounge, which the department are keen for more students to use.

Education – currently does not have a department rep.

Law & Criminology – Wiktoria is heavily involved in the policing campaign and is working on facilitating joint academic society events throughout the department.

Natural & Built Environment – Eve is focusing on putting on events aimed at course reps and those interested in becoming course reps.

Campaigns Updates

The Students' Union has had an initial meeting with key staff in the law and criminology department about improving the student experience of policing students, on both the BA and DA courses. One of the main issues here is the lack of café/food offer in Aspect Court which is where many apprentices are based. To solve this, the college officer, campaigns team and rep team will be lobbying the university for an improved offer, via lecture shoutouts and engaging with students in the Aspect Court café space.

Officer Updates

There has been a pop up shop for swap shop, community fridge and community pantry.

Student Reps – Business, Technology and Engineering

Welcome Week

Feedback has been collated from the Department Reps about the College's Welcome Week events.

Sheffield Business School Welcome Back Fair

Timings – Department Reps believe that events for returning students should be the same week as the first week of teaching as returning students do not check emails or engage with the university much during Freshers' Week because they are going out with friends and getting back into living in Sheffield independently. Department Reps also believe that any sessions in the morning will have low attendance from returning students during Welcome Week. "Student reality is that Freshers' Week tends to be focused on going out and socialising with new friends (L4) or catching up with friends you haven't seen over summer (L5+) meaning that early mornings are unlikely to have high attendance levels. i.e. some Induction Lectures were at 9am or 10am."

Accessibility of information – students reported that the information for this event was hard to find – reporting six clicks and at the bottom of the page to find it. It was also reported that around this time, emails from the university and the Union were going into Spam, so students could not access the correct information. One Department Rep suggested an improvement in promoting the event – i.e. flyers given out in sessions and posters around the university, especially at the school's entrance (Owen and Stoddart).

Location – we found that a lot of students don't know / can't see where Hallam Hall is – an atrium space is preferred as students naturally walk through (i.e. E&M event went really well partly to this)

Names of sessions – “I noticed that in conversation with friends who did see the Welcome Week Schedule, they were put off of our Course Induction session as it was named 'Meet your course mates'. I'm aware that in some cases students may be returning from placement etc and therefore this is the case however I inferred that many returning students assumed this was a L4 session as the wording suggested it was for new students. A suggestion would be to rename this Welcome Week induction sessions eg:

- o "L5/L6 Induction/Information" instead of meet your coursemates
- o “Returning students networking/opportunities event” instead of BTE Fair”

Overall – the event itself was a good layout and the content was good, but there needs to be a focus on getting students there.

Engineering and Maths – was a success! High presence of faculty staff and students, potential employers and academic societies, increased community.

Computing – not well advertised to students. Students did not receive the information at all and when it was sent, it was sent late. The event attendance was sparse, and would have benefitted from more department and course representatives in the planning process. The department should include student mentors in the event.

Department Rep Activity/ Catch Up Themes

The **Computing Autumn Survey** was carried out by Joba, and received **24 responses** from a range of courses. Students felt lecturers are supportive and provide good feedback to help students improve in their work, and they also felt that lecturers care and are passionate about their subject. Students indicated technology issues are a problem which impacts their work – issues include SAS and Visual Studio, Apps Anywhere Platform and computers not working in classrooms or labs. Students also had **timetabling issues**, such as five days a week, a 6pm lecture, four hour gaps. Students would like lectures to be recorded and improved timetabling.

Campaigns Updates – placements and timetabling

The College Officer is working on timetabling issues. MSc Logistics students have asked for a placement deadline extension.

Speak Week, 6 to 10 November

Students' Union staff approached students across both campuses every day during the Speak Week (6-10 November). Students were asked to complete a postcard, telling 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 were talked to, and 3115 postcards were filled in.

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. But the two topics that came up again and again were timetabling and catering.

Timetabling

Over 850 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.

Catering

Students also had lots to say on **catering**! In fact, we received around 1,150 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.

These are just two of the areas that students brought up, and we're still working on the rest of the feedback.

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