

STUDENT VOICE REPORT

SHEFFIELD HALLAM
STUDENTS UNION

CONTENTS

04	Education Officer Forward
06	Introduction
07	Methodology
08	Impact
09	Recommendations
13	Section 1: By students, for students
13	Representation
16	Student Voice
17	Student Wellbeing, Information & Support
20	Section 2: Wellbeing in the university
20	Physical Activity & Wellbeing
22	Supporting students
23	Attendance
27	Section 3: Looking towards a post-COVID student experience
27	Remote Learning
29	Resources
31	Section 4: Closing statement
32	Appendix A: Definitions and Nomenclature
33	Appendix B: Data Sources
36	Appendix C: Progress from 2018/19 Student Voice Report Recommendations

EDUCATION OFFICER'S

Foreward

Time has flown by so fast! Just like yesterday, I was elected to represent the academic interests of 32,000 plus Sheffield Hallam University students. At the beginning of the year, I was told that some of my manifesto points were unachievable. I was told changing some of the existing academic systems was impossible. I am happy and proud to say we had a lot of wins in this academic year.

The events of this year have thrown a lot more than expected at the University, the Students' Union, and our students. We have been faced with unforeseen challenges, with curveballs such as the two UCU industrial strikes action, an unexpected general election and the current COVID 19 pandemics being thrown at us. These unforeseen developments have had serious impacts on the HE education and students' academic experience, and the University academic delivery. You will agree with me that the next academic year will not be anything close to normal. There are still challenges and uncertainties around the future of HE academic delivery and student experience. Though we face these unique times, we can be bold to seek the opportunities this presents for us as a university and indeed other universities the way we have approached teaching and learning in the past. It is also up to us, as a student movement, to change education delivery for the better as we explore the new normal. Despite all the challenges, I am happy with what I have achieved as your Education Officer, representing your academic interest. These achievements have certainly been a teamwork with all the support from my fellow officers, the student rep team, and all our dear students. We have worked to enhance students' academic experience during the year.

This report is a key document that represents and highlights the areas of student views and feedback on their academic experiences over the last academic year, making recommendations aimed at addressing the issues raised to the University and Students' Union. We want to ensure that students' voices are heard whenever they give feedback to the Students' Union Reps, Officers, staff or when our students complete surveys.

Reflecting on my massive wins over the year as your Education Officer, I do hope that Hallam students, the University, and our Union are proud of these accomplishments. I started my first week as your Education Officer lobbying with the University's Leadership Team for lecture capture and I successfully secured lecture capture (recorded lecture) in our classes and lecture theatres, which will commence in Autumn 2020/21 academic year. Some other highlights for me this year have been: I held an informative and inclusive training and welcome event for our Course

and Department Reps; I facilitated a conversation and conference with the sector leaders, national student representatives, and MPs on post-Brexit implications for UK universities and students; I lobbied to reduce Black and Minority Ethnic Group degree awarding gap by working with the University on their five year plan to reduce BAME degree awarding gap and also joined the Narrowing The Gap forum; I lobbied for better academic support for disabled student, as well as better learning contracts; I supported mental health campaigns and I successfully organised 'De-stress your academic life' event during the Officer's Mental Health Week; I helped in the allocation of hardship fund support of £3 million for student's wellbeing; I created an drop-in session to support student academic experience and signpost students to academic support within the university; I lobbied to reduce student workload; I worked with the University committee on dealing with timetable issues, so students are not left with long gaps in between lectures and seminars. I also supported SHSU 2019-20 President, Sheriff Muhammed, on his work to reduce printing cost for student by ensuring more submission are online. I lobbied for extra support and hardship fund for students during COVID19 pandemic, such as laptops and Tesco vouchers, and have pushed to ensure greater availability of learning materials online for students especially during the lockdown. I worked with the university to develop the No Detriment Policy in light of the pandemic and supported the safety net policy campaign to ensure no student suffers academic disadvantages and allows students leave Hallam with the grades they deserve. I worked on gathering student feedback for better academic representation and successfully lobbied for and won a referendum, so students now have dedicated College Officers. I helped to create access and participation plan for international students at Hallam, the first of its kind in the UK.

We have achieved so much together, but our work is not over. I am delighted to say I am still here to continue lobbying for and supporting Hallam students in 2020/21 academic year as the President of Sheffield Hallam Students' Union. My core drive to have students at the centre still remains.

Some key issues which I hope to accomplish in the next academic year: continue work on the timetabling issue, an ongoing conversation between the University and the Students' Union, and it is especially important that the University and the Union continue to work together due to the pandemic and social distancing measures. Timetabling should be prioritized to support our commuting and caregiver students. Thus, the Officers and the University need to work together on ensuring that teaching and learning deliver to students' best

interest. There should be a robust policy that would be sensible and resilient to enhance students' experience in the next academic year and for years to come.

Globally, all sectors are currently making efforts to be more diverse and inclusive following the ongoing Black Lives Matter campaign. Therefore, the University and the Students' Union need to increase their campaigns and support for inclusivity and diversity within the University and its environment. We need to do more on decolonising the curriculum and to reduce the BAME attainment gap further for non-white students. We, both University and Union, should review our approach to the BAME degree awarding gap and other anti-racism campaigns and to prioritise reducing the gap from the College level.

Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to the Students' Union staff that have contributed immensely to the successful compilation of this report. Thank you to the Sabbatical Officers' team, who cheered successes, who supported me during the challenging academic year and who had my back throughout the year. Thank you to all the University and Students' Union staff for your invaluable support and advice throughout the year. Thank you to all the students for trusting me and electing me first as your Education Officer and now as your President to represent your interest in the 2020/21 academic year. Together, we will step things up.

Andrew Adegbola
SHSU Education Officer, 2019/20



INTRODUCTION

The Student Voice Report at Sheffield Hallam has become one of the most powerful tools through which we enact change for our students; it allows us, Sheffield Hallam Students' Union, to represent the most important issues students have told us about in one, succinct report. This year's Student Voice Report provides space for us to reflect on where we as an organisation can improve for our students. The 2019/20 academic year has been different from any year we can recall – we've spent a considerable amount of time consulting with students so that they can tell us what they want from their Union; our students have experienced not one, but two disruptions to their normal teaching from strike action; and, of course, the world has experienced a collective disruption and drastic shift in our normal lives due to the Coronavirus, or COVID-19.

Therefore, this report is split into three sections. The first section presents data from our 2025 Strategy Survey and other student consultation work, which received over 5000 responses. As an organisation, we want to drastically improve our representation work to ensure that our Reps and Officers are representing all students at Hallam. We are also reviewing our wellbeing offer and considering the ways that we can support students which is unique to a Students' Union. The second section focuses on both student mental wellbeing, including findings from our Healthy Hallam Survey alongside the Hallam Help & Student Support evaluative work, and also sheds light on factors affecting student attendance and engagement. The third and final section looks to the future of Sheffield Hallam and ponders what a post-COVID landscape will look like; this section delves into what our students will need from both the Students' Union and the University, including a stronger digital approach to delivery of services.

As always, the aim of this report is to make recommendations which will be useful for our students. This year's report includes many recommendations for us, the Students' Union, to work towards, but also highlights necessary improvements within the University to enrich the student experience.



METHODOLOGY

This report includes findings from many different research projects conducted throughout the academic year and draws on evidence from previous research. Appendix B includes a list of all primary research data sources referenced throughout this report. For all surveys, data has been analysed in Excel and, at times, using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to ensure statistical validity. Notably, our Strategy Survey was completely analysed in SPSS to weight responses in a way that represents our student body. Qualitative data has been thematically analysed and, where themes have emerged as the most prominent, these have been discussed in the report.

Some research highlights from this academic year include:

- Our Strategy Survey asked students questions about how they want to be represented, the way they want to give their feedback, what rights they want to know more about, what types of services they would like to engage with, the type of community that is most important to them, their likelihood of taking part in leadership opportunities, and what they think the Students' Union should be prioritising. This survey received 2545 responses.
- The Hallam Help and Student Support Services Survey was a joint project between Sheffield Hallam Students' Union and Sheffield Hallam Student Support Services. The findings from this research have been used to inform business planning for Hallam Help and Student Support Services in the University. This research also helped to explore what students' experiences have been like in utilising these support services, to also highlight what is going well and what could be improved. This survey received 515 responses.
- Our Strategy Consultation work was the initial phase to inform SHSU 2020-2025 Strategy. This was done through short questionnaires with students at our Welcome Week events. The findings from this helped to shape the 2025 Strategy Survey and subsequent focus groups. This first round of consultation received 2042 responses.
- We have gathered and collated student feedback into weekly reports which highlighted the issues students faced during the initial few months of the Coronavirus, or COVID-19, pandemic. These weekly reports used data collected from our Student Reps, our Officers, from queries received by our Helpdesk and Advice Centre, our Hallam How Are You Survey and in the over 1500 comments received in our Safety Net Petition. At the publication of this report, the Students' Union has written ten of these reports in total.

Throughout this report, we have also referenced trends from the types of queries received by our Advice Centre, our Officers, and our Reps.

IMPACT

Last year's Student Voice Report had 11 recommendations spanning students' academic lives, as well as their wellbeing and finances. The majority of these recommendations were to be completed in partnership and, despite some of the abnormal circumstances this academic year, there have been some helpful changes for our students. A full list of the 2018/19 Student Voice Report recommendations, as well as the University's response to this, is included in Appendix C. Some of the major changes, which we would like to highlight, are below:

- The University's Narrowing the Gap Team ran 11 workshops focused on narrowing the awarding gap between White and BAME students. These workshops were with university staff and included decolonizing the curriculum and developing an inclusive curriculum.
- Student Wellbeing actively worked with Sheffield Hallam's Human Resources and Organisational Development to recruit more diverse counsellors and practitioners to ensure the service is accessible for more students. There is now a named Wellbeing Practitioner for students that are care leavers or estranged from their family.
- The University, with influence from SHSU 2019/20 President, has reduced printing costs substantially as a result of changing the supply contract and these savings have been passed on to students.
- The Doctoral School have revamped their Postgraduate Research (PGR) handbook to provide key information for new students and the Research Degrees Committee have approved a policy which clarifies the holiday entitlement for PGR students, highlighting the importance of taking breaks for their wellbeing. The Doctoral School are also working on: online resources for PGR's (e.g. what to expect from a doctoral viva voce examination); increased support to identify gaps in knowledge for supervisors in terms of providing wellbeing support; and increased visibility of student societies and communities for PGR students.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following lists the recommendations made throughout this report, split by section. The table also highlights who is responsible for the recommendation and, where both SHU and SHSU are responsible, the organisations should work together.

Section	Recommendation Number	Recommendation	SHU	SHSU
By students, for students	1	The Students' Union and the University to work together to deliver a new representation system that strengthens the advocacy role of the Students' Union and allows students to feel listened to, representatives to feel empowered, and students and staff can work in partnership to resolve issues.	●	●
	2	The University to work with the Students' Union to ensure the Students' Union has physical space in University buildings with high student footfall within their Colleges.	●	●
	3	The Students' Union and the University to explore and invest in platforms to gather student feedback, allowing for joint gathering and sharing of the student voice, and improved data sharing.	●	●
	4	The Students' Union and the University to review the Wellbeing offer at Hallam to understand where gaps or duplication in service might be and to work together to determine how best to deliver these areas.	●	●
	5	The Students' Union to work with local charities to increase volunteering, internships, and placement opportunities within the third sector across the Sheffield City Region.		●

Section	Recommendation Number	Recommendation	SHU	SHSU
Wellbeing in the University	6	Team Hallam to offer a payment plan for members, whereby fees can be paid at points throughout the academic year, rather than at the start of the academic year.	●	
	7	The University and the Students' Union to review the speed and accessibility of the University's Wellbeing Service and to make improvements where needed to ensure that students are able to access support.	●	●
	8	The University to enhance its digital offer for students in the 2020/21 academic year, and ensure students are able to contribute to shaping their online learning experience through regular consultation and feedback opportunities.	●	
	9	The Students' Union to conduct a larger-scale research project which explores course non-attendance factors which affect Hallam students.		●
Looking towards a post - COVID student experience	10	The University to implement the use of lecture capture in the 2020/21 academic year to enhance the quality of online provision.	●	
	11	The University to continue to work with the Students' Union to identify areas of financial stress within students' lives and work together to lessen this, especially for students from access and participation groups.	●	●

We note that the University has made, and continues to make, improvements for Sheffield Hallam students. This report makes reference to some of the positive work that the University has contributed to, whether as a result of previous Student Voice Report recommendations or from working alongside the Students' Union to enact change. Where we believe that this work has been beneficial and should continue, to address re-occurring issues within this report, we have indicated this by 'Recommended Action to Continue'. There are two actions which should continue, referenced below.

Section	Recommended Action to Continue	SHU	SHSU
By students, for students	The University and the Students' Union to improve the promotion of opportunities for mature or postgraduate research student groups.	●	●
Wellbeing in the University	The University and the Students' Union continue to offer free and low cost sport and physical activity opportunities, with an increased promotion of these opportunities for students.	●	●





SECTION ONE

By students, for students

At the heart of all unions is the organisation's ability to represent the rights of the individuals that it stands for; in the case of Students' Union's, these representative roles are done by students, for students. This has also led to the "students as partners" movement, in which students help in the development and co-creation of their curriculum, recognising that students should have a say in their learning and that what they say is valuable and needed.

As Day & Dickinson (2018)¹ note, Students' Union should be able to move 'faster than any university governance system ever will' by helping students to feel more connected, valued, and a part of their wider student community. As a Union, our 2025 Strategic Plan highlights our commitment to producing rapid insight into student voice issues, something we know we can work to improve upon. In October 2019, we began consulting with Sheffield Hallam students asking them about how they want to be represented, what advice about their rights and wellbeing they might need, the role we should play in the Sheffield community, what skills and training they need for their current and future employment, and what we should focus on going forward. All of this consultation work has helped to develop Sheffield Hallam Students' Union 2025 Strategic Plan. This section outlines some of the most prominent findings and makes recommendations for future work, both for the Students' Union and for the University.

Representation

One of the most significant findings from our student consultation, through our Strategy Survey, was that the majority of our students want us to focus our representation efforts on issues linked to their academic experience. For many students, they come to University to learn and the help received from their Students' Union can make this experience valuable and worthwhile, leading to higher quality teaching and increased accountability.

"I believe that academic issues should always be addressed first due to the fact that they are the sole reason you are at university."

At the heart of this work are our student representation systems, including both our Elected Officers and Student Reps, a force of nearly 1500 students from courses across the university. Many of these Student Reps are a part of cross-institutional boards. Our 2019 Student Rep Survey (which had a response rate of 14%) found that, for some Reps, they feel that their role has become largely symbolic, a token symbol for that course, subject area, or Department, helping the university feel that they are doing representation well, following guidelines as outlined by the Quality Assurance Agency, Chapter B5². What has become clear through our consultation is that students do not just want their university to appear to be doing representation, but to actually practice this through utilising their Students' Union as facilitators of the student voice and change makers for instances that need it. As Lizzio & Wilson³ state, "while conscious efforts are routinely made to protect students' rights in university policy and procedures, the often hierarchical structures of educational institutions can, perhaps inadvertently, privilege 'staff discourse' and marginalise student views." As our 2019 Student Rep Survey identified, only 66 percent (n=162) of respondents agreed that they felt their feedback was acted upon.

1. Day, M & Dickinson, J. (2018) David versus goliath: The past, present, and future of students' unions in the UK. Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI). doi:978-1-908240-43-9 Retrieved on 5 May 2020 from www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/HEPI-Students-Unions-Report-111-FINAL-EMBARGOED1-1.pdf

2. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. (2018). UK quality code for higher education. part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality. chapter B5: Student engagement. Gloucester, UK: The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

3. Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. (2009). Student participation in university governance: The role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental committees. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(1), 69-84. doi:10.1080/03075070802602000

"Each tutor just wanted to argue as to why they were right. I'm not here to talk about why you do what you do I'm here to give feedback from the students about how it is coming across." – Student Rep

Staff should consider that, inherently, their role within the Rep system means that, whilst the intentions are there to include students as partners, working with them to improve their course or Department, for some the balance between student and tutor, and all the relational-positioning that results from that, still remains.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The Students' Union and the University to work together to deliver a new representation system that strengthens the advocacy role of the Students' Union and allows students to feel listened to, representatives to feel empowered, and students and staff can work in partnership to resolve issues

We do recognise that representation of traditionally and historically unrepresented groups within our society is important, so too is returning back to the core of our identity as a union of students. When asked to rank different forms of representation (representation linked to academic experience; representation linked to personal interests; or representation linked to personal identity) 62 percent of our surveyed students put representation linked to academic experience as their number one choice. Conversely, 58 percent of surveyed students put representation linked to personal identity as their bottom choice..

"The union is already doing a fantastic job at ensuring people of different backgrounds are accepted. However I see little evidence of course-based issues being represented."

As a Union, we have been working to improve academic representation through our recent referendum and subsequent election. This referendum resulted in changing the structure of our officer model and created three Officer roles aligned to each College at Sheffield Hallam. In our Strategy Survey there were differences of opinion about our ability to represent certain student groups. Respondents that are young (aged 18–26) are significantly more satisfied with how the Students' Union represents their views, compared with mature students (aged over 26). In addition, undergraduate students, in comparison to students at higher levels of study (i.e. postgraduate taught and above), were more satisfied as well. This has indicated to us that, whilst we do work well for some students, there are gaps within our own representation systems that could be improved: providing stronger forums for mature students, students at the postgraduate taught or research level, amongst other groups. We also recognise that, as a union, more could be done to ensure that we are able to provide supportive opportunities for all students. At the moment, we have established forums and committees for mature and postgraduate students, which students can access if they were aware of and wanted to, but more needs to be done to get them established and to generate significant levels of engagement.

The 2018/19 Student Voice Report recommended that "The Students' Union and the University provide opportunities and events which increase the sense of community amongst PGR students and academic staff across the university" (Recommendation 2.4) and, as discussed in Appendix C, the improvements made by the Doctoral School for PGR students has been, and will continue to be, beneficial for that group of students. Additionally, our Mature Students' Rep from 2019/20 organised events which brought mature students together, to make friends and support one-another. Despite this work, it is clear from our research that there needs to be an improvement in the engagement of these students and to continue our collective efforts from the 2019/20 academic year.

RECOMMENDED ACTION TO CONTINUE:

Recommended Action to Continue: The University and the Students' Union to improve the promotion of opportunities for mature or postgraduate research student groups.

The relationship of a union and a university should, firstly, be student-centred, and the partnership should be mutually supportive. Our Strategy Survey found that 86 percent of respondents think the Students' Union and the University should work together, though some students feel quite disheartened that, when changes do occur with help from their Students' Union, are then undermined by their University.

"Whatever does get affected is changed soon after by the university anyway."

"Student's voice would not even affect much in the long term since decisions are based on the board."

By committing to a respectful and understanding relationship, the groundwork can be laid for a mutually beneficial partnership. At the moment, only 53 percent of respondents to our Strategy Survey agree that we have a strong presence on campus, yet 73 percent agree that we should have a physical location where they are – within their buildings, their Departments, Colleges and Research Centres. This would allow us to reach more students, to provide on-the-spot support, and give quicker feedback to Sheffield Hallam University when required. Therefore, more should be done to support us, which would in-turn allow more students to access our services and opportunities, to become and feel part of their Hallam community, and to understand the role that Sheffield Hallam Students' Union can and should have during their time at SHU.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The University to work with the Students' Union to ensure the Students' Union has physical space in University buildings with high student footfall within their Colleges.

Student Voice

As a direct link to students, the strength of all Students' Unions is their ability to provide useful insights about what their members want and need to ensure that they are having an equitable student experience. At the moment, our ability to contact our students relies on our data sharing agreement and continual partnership working. As noted above, 86 percent of respondents to our Strategy Survey indicated that it is important that their University and their Students' Union work together. As such, more should be done to work together to compile and understand the Hallam student voice, but to also consider the logistics by which gathering that data is best done. In this digital age, as two separate, but very much interlinked and interconnected organisations with the same student body, our fundamental ability to gather reliable student opinion is incumbent on our ability to have reliable student data. Without this basic function, we, as a Students' Union, will continually be playing catch-up in terms of reaching our students, engaging with our students, and finding out what they want.

Furthermore, when asked how they would like to feed back to us about their time at Hallam, 66 percent of students indicated that they would like to use blackboard or MyHallam. Only 39 percent of students would use a permanent online feedback form on our website. In focus groups with students, we also found that, perhaps unsurprisingly, students do not want to have to access many different sources to share their thoughts; our students want this to be easily accessible, functional, and, most importantly, work well. As an organisation, we need to be more digitally agile. We recognise that students want and expect there to be certain digital capabilities from a service that is provided for and with them. Without up-to-date and relevant data, and working together to help us capture the student voice in digitally innovative ways, our capabilities to reach and engage with our students is limited.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

The Students' Union and the University to explore and invest in platforms to gather student feedback, allowing for joint gathering and sharing of the student voice, and improved data sharing.



Student Wellbeing, Information & Support

Wellbeing, and looking after your mental wellbeing, has seen a dramatic increase of interest across society and the same is true within the higher education sector. We know, from our Officers and previous research on mental health, that some of our students feel stressed, that for some their wellbeing since starting University has decreased, and students are increasingly interested in wellbeing-related support and information. There has also been previous research which found that students have a higher prevalence of mental health problems compared to the wider population.⁴ Indeed, Sheffield Hallam students have lower satisfaction with life compared to the UK population generally and to individuals of the same age bracket not in higher education.⁵

Knowing that our students might want additional support, our Strategy Survey asked students what type of wellbeing support they would most be interested in receiving from their Students' Union. We found that 72 percent of respondents are interested in receiving digital information about how to manage their wellbeing and look after their mental health. Of these same students, 76 percent would also be likely to seek help from an independent, expert, one-to-one professional wellbeing support adviser, if this were provided. Through focus groups with students that regularly engage with us (e.g. society members, volunteers, student reps) and students that do not, we found that, for some students, offering additional wellbeing through the Students' Union could negate fears that disclosing mental health issues impacts on their academic achievement.

Furthermore, some unengaged students were unaware that Sheffield Hallam University and Sheffield Hallam Students' Union are separate organisations and, thus, a wellbeing service offered by either is sufficient. Despite a wellbeing service currently offered by the university, some unengaged students were unaware that this service was available to them at all, including any of the online self-help resources offered. If some students do feel that disclosing a mental health problem would negatively impact on their education, providing additional services through the students' union could help to support these students. More about the University's Wellbeing Service will be highlighted in Section 2, but we believe that the Students' Union should have a role in supporting our students with their mental wellbeing as well.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The Students' Union and the University to review the Wellbeing offer at Hallam to understand where gaps or duplication in service might be and to work together to determine how best to deliver these areas.

Community Engagement

There is a considerable amount of research which has found that community volunteering has a positive correlation with an individual's wellbeing and that, especially for younger people, volunteering can lead to increased involvement in their family and community.⁶ In some instances, such as within the first year of volunteering, it could also lead to increased life satisfaction and

4. Giusta, M. D., Fernandez, A., & Jewell, S. (2017). Happy at university? Student well-being and the value of higher education. (No. 131). Reading, UK: Department of Economics, University of Reading; Hewitt, R. (2019). Measuring well-being in higher education (HEPI Policy Note 13). Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute.

5. Sheffield Hallam Students' Union (SHSU). (2018). Being well, doing well: Results from Sheffield Hallam University. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Hallam Students' Union. Retrieved from www.hallamstudentsunion.com/pageassets/representation/research/reports/SHSU-Student-Mental-Health-Being-Well-Doing-Well-Report.pdf; Sheffield Hallam Students' Union (SHSU). (2019). Sheffield Hallam University: Sport, physical activity, and wellbeing. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Hallam Students' Union. Retrieved from www.hallamstudentsunion.com/pageassets/representation/research/reports/SHSU-Sport-Physical-Activity-Report-Comparison-Demographics.pdf

longer-term protective measures against certain mental health issues (e.g. depression, anxiety). For students, or any individual looking to enhance their career prospects, volunteering can and sometimes is a way that leads to employment after graduation.⁷ Sheffield Hallam also actively promotes and encourages students to engage with the Five Ways to Wellbeing. One of the five ways, "Give", highlights the positive benefits that giving back within the local community and social networks leads to improved mental wellbeing. To better understand what Sheffield Hallam students think about volunteering, whether for future benefits or for personal gain, our Strategy Survey asked students to indicate to what extent they would like SHSU to provide additional community-focused opportunities for them.

The majority of respondents to the Strategy Survey strongly agreed or agreed that we should be providing a wide array of opportunities. Many students (85%) agreed that we should provide projects linked to their academic course or research subject or increased opportunities for students to get involved with local businesses or charities. When analysed by level and year of study, 3rd year undergraduate students were significantly more likely to agree that the Students' Union should provide opportunities to volunteer and placements or internships in the local community, compared to 2nd year undergraduate students. Furthermore, students from the Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities (which includes students from the newly formed College of Social Sciences & Arts) were more likely to agree that the Students' Union should provide opportunities to volunteer or work with local charities, compared to all other faculties.

In a study by Baert & Vuji (2018)⁸, individuals that volunteered were "7.3 percentage points more likely to get a positive reaction to their job applications." Volunteering can provide students with skills needed in a competitive market, increase their social capital, helping them to build positive working relationships, as well as generally provide a good impression for future employers. Many students, arguably nearly all students, are concerned with their future employment. Indeed, as students commented throughout our Strategy Survey, coming to university to get a job is one of the reasons they chose to study - to learn necessary skills for their future, to become more employable. If one of the ways that our students can do this is by taking part in volunteering opportunities throughout their time at Sheffield Hallam, we should be actively encouraging and providing these opportunities for all of our students. Eighty-four percent of respondents to our Strategy Survey agreed that volunteering can give them skills to enhance their career prospects. Despite this, only 1555 students volunteered in the 2019/20 academic year through the Students' Union's volunteering offer; on average, each of these students completed 20 hours of volunteering throughout the 2019/20 academic year (equating to 31,386 hours in total). This indicates that a small number of students volunteer regularly, but more could be done to increase the number of students that volunteer across the university.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

The Students' Union to work with local charities to increase volunteering, internships, and placement opportunities within the third sector across the Sheffield City Region.

6. Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė, I. (2015). The role of life satisfaction and volunteering frequency in predicting youth contribution to self, family and community. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 7(1), 51-58.

7. Baert, S., & Vujić, S. (2018). Does it pay to care? volunteering and employment opportunities. *Journal of Population Economics*, 31, 819-836.

8. Ibid



SECTION TWO

Wellbeing in the University

As referenced in Section 1, throughout the past decade, there has been a sharp increase in interest across the higher education sector focused on student mental health and student wellbeing; because of this, there has been a wealth of data and information collected on student wellbeing and their satisfaction. To better understand the Hallam experience, our Sports & Physical Activity Officer ran a survey, the Healthy Hallam Survey, asking students about both their physical and mental wellbeing. Noticing a trend, and also concerned about the wellbeing of their course mates, our Student Reps looked into student non-attendance within their Department. Whilst the student experience at university is about education, how they engage with their education is influenced by their personal mental wellbeing. This section, therefore, reviews key findings from our research and highlights aspects from within the university which could work towards improving this for our students.

Physical Activity and Wellbeing

In a survey led by our Sport & Physical Activity Officer, the Healthy Hallam Survey, we asked students to share with us how physically active they are and compared the mental wellbeing of individuals who are active and those that are not. This same survey was run in 2019, allowing us to make comparisons in the Sheffield Hallam population for two years. Comparing 2019 and 2020 results and the Office for National Statistics UK population data, Sheffield Hallam students are less likely to indicate that they have very high life satisfaction (see Table 1). As discussed in Section 1, we know from previous research that some of our students do struggle with their mental health and mental wellbeing. The percentage of students that have low levels of life satisfaction are higher for Sheffield Hallam students compared to the national average, as is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Two-year life satisfaction of Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) students and national data from Office for National Statistics (ONS) by low, medium, high, and very high satisfaction quartiles.

Satisfaction rating	Office for National Statistics 2018	Office for National Statistics 2019	SHU 2019 (n=1538)	SHU 2020 (n=390)
Low 0-4	4.44%	4.53%	19.68%	9.28%
Medium 5-6	13.60%	13.37%	19.22%	26.80%
High 7-8	51.60%	51.65%	47.29%	53.09%
Very High 9-10	30.35%	30.45%	13.80%	10.82%

In addition, Hallam students that are currently active are more likely to indicate higher levels of overall satisfaction. In our 2019 survey, there was an 11.5 percent difference in low levels of life satisfaction between active and inactive students, with active students less likely to indicate low overall life satisfaction. In our 2020 survey, there was a 9.17 percent difference. Whilst the number of respondents to this year's survey was much lower than previous years (390 responses in 2020 and 1538 responses in 2019), the variation between percentages is minor. Both the 2019 and 2020 surveys found that there is also a significant difference between active and inactive students and feeling a part of their community. When asked to indicate to what extent they feel like a community of friends at university, 88 percent of active students agreed, compared to 68 percent of inactive students, from the 2020 survey.

There is an intrinsic link between physical activity and mental wellbeing, and previous research has found that there is a dose-response effect between the two; that is, the more physical activity you take part in, the happier you are.⁹ Last year's Student Voice Report recommended that, given the impact that being physically active can have on mental wellbeing, the University and the Students' Union work towards creating increased awareness of the benefits that small amounts of activity can have on physical health (for example, taking the stairs). Whilst these small changes in physical activity will undoubtedly have physical health benefits, providing an environment whereby being physically active is not a substantial cost for students can also help. When asked what would increase their activity levels, if they did want to increase, the majority of students indicated that both lack of time and financial cost were a deterrent. The 2018/19 Student Voice Report recommended that "The Students' Union and the University provide additional free or low cost sport and physical fitness opportunities" (Recommendation 3.1) and, whilst Appendix C notes that there has been some progress in this area, our research indicates that offering low cost or free activity should continue.

RECOMMENDED ACTION TO CONTINUE:

The University and the Students' Union continue to offer free and low cost sport and physical activity opportunities, with an increased promotion of these opportunities for students.

Furthermore, this same survey asked current Team Hallam members to feedback what could be improved with their experience. Many of these students commented that the cost of membership, whilst valuable and worthwhile, could be made more accessible. At the moment, these students pay the cost of their membership at the beginning of the academic year. The ability to spread the price across the academic year would allow Team Hallam members to manage their money in a reasonable way, whilst also allowing them to take part in the sport they enjoy, be part of the Team Hallam community, and continue to be physically active.

"Lowering the price/having a monthly pay/broken down pay option. It's a big bulk sum at the start of the year."

⁹ Haase, A., Steptoe, A., Phil, D., Sallis, J., & Wardle, J. (2004). Leisure-time physical activity in university students from 23 countries: Associations with health beliefs, risk awareness, and national economic development. *Preventative Medicine*, 39, 182-190.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Team Hallam to offer a payment plan for members, whereby fees can be paid at points throughout the academic year, rather than at the start of the academic year.

Supporting Students

Due to increased demand for mental wellbeing services, universities across the country are struggling to ensure that their students are able to access the help they want.¹⁰ Should Sheffield Hallam students need support, they can access the Wellbeing Service. In a partnership research project, which reviewed the current Hallam Help and Student Support Services available across the institution, students were, generally, satisfied with the help they received. Of the 515 respondents to this survey, only 14 percent of respondents thought that Student Support Services did not meet their expectations and 34 percent indicated that the service exceeded their expectations. Of the students that had previously used any of the Support Services available at Sheffield Hallam, 88 percent agreed or mostly agreed that the service they used was easy to access and 80 percent thought the service was prompt. Despite this, respondents were less satisfied with the speed of the Wellbeing Service compared to other support services offered, where 61 percent of students agreed that the Wellbeing Service was prompt.

The Wellbeing Service is not expected to provide the same level of support that students might be able to receive from the NHS or another healthcare provider, especially as universities across the nation are experiencing higher numbers of students seeking wellbeing and mental health services.¹¹ In addition, increasing numbers of students are also seeking further support through their university disabled student support, under the Equality Act of 2010. Whilst the university can refer students seeking mental wellbeing support to the appropriate NHS service within the local community, the benefit of seeking support within their university context is just that – the university context. The wellbeing practitioners available to support students have bespoke knowledge about the student journey – the transition to university or into significantly higher levels of education, the funding difficulties and stress that comes from that, and the universal worry during exam and assessment periods. Furthermore, for students new to the city of Sheffield or new to the country, accessing help from their university provides a level of comfort and support that might not be found outside our Hallam community.

Our Officers and Reps have also heard from students about the waiting times for appointments with the Wellbeing Service at Sheffield Hallam. Crucially, for students in distress, obtaining an appointment quickly can provide some immediate and necessary relief. Our partnership research also found that, for the students that were unable to receive an appointment quickly, they thought that their mental health problems were much more severe and were not given an appointment time that reflected that.

10. Campbell, D. (2019,). UK students waiting up to three months for mental health care. *The Guardian* Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/society/2019/sep/16/uk-students-waiting-up-to-three-months-for-mental-health-care

11. Office for Students. (2019). *Mental health: Are all students being properly supported?* (Insight Brief 5) Office for Students.

"I went and asked for help multiple times regarding wellbeing and mental health, and was basically just told to look online. I understand that it's listed on there, but I was starting to struggle with what I think is depression and I felt like I was just being pushed aside. People with mental health issues often struggle to ask for help, so when I showed up, almost in tears, saying I needed help but didn't know what, and was told to just look online... I felt like the university failed me."

Despite the negative experiences of some students, 39 percent of respondents to the Hallam Help and Student Support Services Survey indicated that the Wellbeing Service exceeded their expectations. For some of these students, they received appointments relatively quickly and, for some, connected well to their practitioner.

"I felt as though the staff knew me and my story and weren't judging me. It made me feel more comfortable when opening up and I have now been put on a waiting list for counselling which would not have happened without the student support service."

The Wellbeing Service, for some students, does provide, and at times exceedingly so, the support they need whilst they are here. For other students, especially those obtaining support for the first time, doing so appears to be difficult. As stated above, the Wellbeing Service should not be expected to provide the same level and amount of support that the NHS does, but there are benefits of students receiving this bespoke student support. As Houghton & Anderson (2017)¹² discuss, looking after and providing support for mental wellbeing is not, nor should be, the responsibility of just student services. Nor should the responsibility be on lecturers or tutors, whom are experiencing increased demand on their time and energy. It is the responsibility of the university, as a collective, to look after their students and to provide ample opportunities for continued learning about what being mentally well looks and feels like.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

The University and the Students' Union to review the speed and accessibility of the University's Wellbeing Service and to make improvements where needed to ensure that students are able to access support.

Attendance

The 2018/19 Student Voice Report found that, for many students, there was a reduction in attendance quite quickly after the start of the academic year. For certain courses, those that require more group-work, this decline in student attendance was off-putting; though certainly students were more likely to attend seminars and small classroom settings, larger lectures were left sparse. This was similar to previous research conducted by Kelly (2012)¹³ who found a small linear regression between attendance and course size; that is, as enrolment increased on a course, attendance decreased. In a small-scale, localised survey with Reps from the Department of Law & Criminology, we noticed a similar trend of non-attendance within their own courses. Our Reps surveyed students on their course to better understand what might be affecting this tendency, working with their Heads

12. Houghton, A., & Anderson, J. (2017). *Embedding mental wellbeing in the curriculum: Maximising success in higher education.* (). York, UK: Higher Education Academy. Retrieved from www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/embedding-mental-wellbeing-curriculum-maximising-success-higher-education

13. Kelly, G. E. (2012). *Lecture attendance rates at university and related factors.* *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 36(1), 17-40. doi:10.1080/0309877X.2011.596196.

of Department. In relation to attendance and lectures, this survey found the opposite was true; students were interested in attending lectures which they found interesting and relevant, but thought that smaller seminars were a repeat of some of the lecture material. Of these students, 63 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they find some lectures less engaging than others and this affects their attendance. Therefore, whilst their timetable can, and likely does impact some students (e.g. students that commute), the teaching quality also has a significant impact on student attendance and learning. As Bai & Chang (2016)¹⁴ discuss, class size can also affect the way in which students are taught – smaller classes could lead to a more tailored lesson for those students and their needs, whilst a larger class means that tutors have to prepare more prior to delivery. As will be discussed in Section 3, increased digital learning and use of lecture capture, whilst beneficial for students that are unable to attend, also means that lecturers have to prepare much earlier, to ensure that material is shared prior to the lecture and to ensure that the digital platform is functioning well. For students at Hallam studying Criminology, their non-attendance of lectures was largely due to the delivery of material. As one student commented:

... some purely read from the slides and I find this very unhelpful and it affects my attendance as they can then seem pointless to attend”.

If there is a move as an institution to increase digital learning opportunities, it is important to ensure that whatever methods chosen to engage with students do not try to simply imitate in-person teaching – with 100 slide-long presentations shared on Blackboard and students expected to review in their own time. With any method that is chosen, students should be provided the opportunity to feed into and help shape this new approach.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

The University to enhance its digital offer for students in the 2020/21 academic year, and ensure students are able to contribute to shaping their online learning experience through regular consultation and feedback opportunities.

Non-attendance can also impact student satisfaction, retention, and exam and final assessment performance. As Kelly (2012)¹⁵ notes, there are various factors which can effect a student’s regular engagement with their course and these include: their timetable, where they live, if they have a part-time job, and if they regularly socialize. Interestingly, Kelly (2012) also found that from Monday to Thursday, timing of lectures, such as early morning or late evening, had little effect on attendance; they did find, however, that there was a significant drop-off in attendance on Fridays – there was a 43 percent difference between Mondays (when students were most likely to attend) and Fridays (when students were least likely to attend).

We know from previous research conducted with Hallam students that their timetable, where they live, and if they have a part-time job does impact their attendance. This research project, with Reps and the Department of Law & Criminology, found that students are also impacted by their course material: large amounts of reading could impact on their feelings of preparedness for a seminar or workshop. In addition, personal factors and wellbeing could also impact attendance levels: our research found that

14. Bai, Y., & Chang, T. (2016). Effects of class size and attendance policy on university classroom interaction in Taiwan. *Innovations in Teaching and Education International*, 53(3), 316–328. doi:10.1080/14703297.2014.997776.

15. Kelly, G. E. (2012). Lecture attendance rates at university and related factors. *Journal of further and Higher Education*, 36(1), 17–40. doi:10.1080/0309877X.2011.596196.

over half of respondents (64 to 70 percent) to the Law & Criminology survey were ill more than twice in the last semester.

Therefore, this small research project, which included only 47 students, has begun to shed light on some of the issues our students might face in terms of their inability to attend a lecture, or reasons why they might not want to attend. Additional research, taking into consideration the impact that the Coronavirus and changes of the delivery of material, should aim to understand this issue across the university.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

The Students’ Union to conduct a larger-scale research project which explores course non-attendance factors which affect Hallam students.



SECTION THREE

Looking towards a post-COVID student experience

This academic year, Sheffield Hallam students studied through an extraordinary time: the COVID-19, or Coronavirus, pandemic. Beginning from mid-March and continuing still, the pandemic has drastically changed the way we live our lives, and the way our students are being taught. As with any drastic and unexpected change, there have been some substantial problems that some of our students have faced. Our healthcare students have stepped up to help at the frontlines, our student parents and carers have shifted their normal schedules to be teachers and tutors for their own children, and all our students have had felt underlying stress and anxiety about their course. The pandemic has touched all lives – our own, as well as our students.

As a result of the pandemic, the University has shown a remarkable ability to work quickly, when needed, to deliver for our students what is needed. As the Vice Chancellor, Sir Professor Chris Husbands, reflected, as a result of COVID-19, the inflexibility of the pandemic meant that agility was forced upon organisations: “Small groups, empowered to make decisions around a common purpose, could move at the pace the situation required. Large committees, which feature, still, in so many educational organisations, were cumbersome. Decisions were made quickly...”¹⁶ As noted previously, as a Union, we know that our uniqueness lies in our ability to be agile, to respond quickly, to ensure that our students are being represented and supported in the way only a Union can provide. As our 2025 Strategic Plan states, obtaining rapid insights into our students’ experiences is something we will be working on in the next few years. The positive benefits of the prompt response due to the Coronavirus pandemic, from both the Union and the University, have proven to be beneficial for our students and there is undoubtedly some learning to be had from that.

From the start of the pandemic, our Reps have provided us with helpful insight into what our students were experiencing: overwhelm and uncertainty about the course and future exams; needing access to facilities and equipment not available in their home; needing money to help pay for accommodation and food from having lost their jobs; amongst many other course specific issues. Within the past few months, some of these issues have been solved for our students and we appreciate the way in which swift decisions and changes have been made. In thinking, however, about the lessons learnt from this global shift, the way in which students are taught going forwards is paramount.

Remote learning

Across the sector, universities are beginning to formulate plans of action for what the 2020/21 academic year will look like. Rightly so, returner students are unclear what the next academic year will be like. In any circumstance, it is very clear that the way the university was previously organised will be very different and students will be returning to a slightly altered reality of being taught. In preference to face-to-face interaction, it is likely that a digital heavy offer will enable us to continue to engage students – in both the University context, as well as in the Students’ Union offer.

This academic year, our Officer Team have lobbied for the use of lecture capture, or learning capture, technology to be used more widely. Prior to COVID-19, the benefits of providing lecture capture to our students was a more modern approach to education, whilst also allowing the numbers of students attending university to continue to rise and students able to access

16. FETL (Further Education Trust for Leadership). 2020. Leading, learning and lockdown: First thoughts on lessons for leadership from the coronavirus crisis. FETL.



access recordings to help with revision. Lecture capture technology would also allow for students that work part-time or full-time to review what they have missed, creating a more accessible and efficient environment. Similarly, the benefits of providing lecture capture in light of COVID-19 would mean that especially vulnerable students would still be able to access their lectures as they did before.

In our Lecture Capture Survey, which asked students what they would most use recorded lectures for, 88 percent would use it to improve their understanding of the content (i.e. to slow down or pause a lecture) or for revision purposes. Indeed, as O’Callaghan et al. (2017)¹⁷ found in a systematic review, students used recorded lecture for various reasons: to revise, to help in understanding and foster deep learning, allow them to learn at their own pace, and to review a lecture if missed. Similarly, respondents to our Lecture Capture survey mirrored that of O’Callaghan et al. review. As one student said:

“I know some students would like to pause the recording to allow them time to make the relevant notes before moving on because they struggle to catch everything and process the information at the pace of lectures. I would like it in case I miss what a tutor says or I mishear anything, in the event I am ill it would be useful. I would also find it useful during revision periods to listen back through lectures.”

Though, as highlighted above, non-attendance is a notable concern amongst students and staff, the pandemic and social distancing measures allow time and space to adapt and pilot lecture capture more widely across the institution. For students that are unable to attend, due to space limitations or other restrictions from the government, lecture capture and enhanced digital capability will undoubtedly help. One of the guiding principles in Sheffield Hallam’s transition towards the future is ‘Students First’. As O’Callaghan et al. note, there are no negative effects of providing lecture capture for students and they tend to be more satisfied with their course as a result of having this additional support in place. These recordings, and increased digital support online, help students to review and understand the material at a deeper level, encouraging more engagement. As one study highlights, 67 percent of students thought that recorded lectures helped them to achieve better results.¹⁸ Therefore, whilst teaching in the 2020/21 academic year will likely be heavily reliant on digital technology, it is important, too, to consider the ways in which Sheffield Hallam can boost the experience for our students through an increasingly digital, responsive offer.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

The University to implement the use of lecture capture in the 2020/21 academic year to enhance the quality of online provision.

17. O’Callaghan, F., Neumann, D., Jones, L., & Creed, P. (2017). The use of lecture recordings in higher education: A review of institutional, student, and lecturer issues. *Education and Information Technologies*, 22, 399-415. doi:10.1007/s10639-015-9451-z.

18. Gosper, M., Green, D., McNeill, M., Phillips, R., Preston, G., Woo, K. (2008). The impact of web-based lecture technologies on current and future practices in learning and teaching.

Resources

Thought, too, must be given to how our students will be accessing resources. As mentioned, staying home during COVID-19 has meant that some of our students have been without necessary resources, software, or other supplies needed to complete their final assessments and exams. In feedback we gathered from students about concerns with COVID-19, certain courses, such as those based in the Department of Art & Design, struggled to transition to fully digital. Whilst some of the solutions which were used in Art & Design act as a temporary pacification, providing support for now, we need to consider the sustainability of these shifts.

As we begin to think about the impact that COVID-19 might have on students from the Office for Students Access & Participation Plan groups¹⁹, equitable access to resources is something to consider. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds might not be able to afford their own laptop which, as a basic necessity for virtual learning, will be quite useful during these times. Furthermore, from March to May 2020, our Advice Centre had an increase in students needing help with their accommodation and financial advice, many of these queries due to students losing jobs as part of the pandemic.

“Care leaver and estranged from family, so I have nowhere to go, like many that have gone back to home cities due to pandemic. No social support. No resources from Library, limited to only online resource.”

Throughout COVID-19, we have collected feedback from students at numerous points, from Student Reps when the social isolation initially began, in students coming to our Advice Centre and Helpdesk for assistance, and in the over 1400 comments from over 4300 signatures in our Safety Net Petition. From the beginning of the pandemic, students were concerned about their ability to access resources. We received numerous comments from students about their ability to physically access the library or to access library resources, with some students still struggling to access books, journals and other materials online. We do recognise that the University has provided additional hardship funding for some students, with a few students sharing how appreciative they were of this gesture. The financial impact of COVID-19 will continue to be felt by our students throughout the 2020/21 academic year and we hope that support will continue to be given to students to alleviate stress and pressure from their lives.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

The University to continue to work with the Students’ Union to identify areas of financial stress within students’ lives and work together to lessen this, especially for students from access and participation groups.

19. Office for Students. (2020). Access and participation plans for Sheffield Hallam University. Retrieved from www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/search-for-access-and-participation-plans/#/AccessPlans/accessplans/10005790.



CLOSING STATEMENT

The 2019/20 academic year will be remembered for quite some time. This year has greatly shifted the way in which we, Sheffield Hallam Students' Union, will work with and for our students in the 2020/21 academic year. As Section 1 discusses, Sheffield Hallam Students' Union's 2025 Strategy will see us embarking on new, exciting ways of engaging with our students. Though engaging with our students in the 2020/21 academic year will look drastically different than we ever expected, the prospect that impactful change will come as a result of the pandemic provides us with hope.

Whilst we have undertaken a substantial amount of work in the 2019/20 academic year to better understand our students, we are also looking towards the future to continue to enhance the student voice. Currently, we are conducting supplementary research into representation and exploring how Sheffield Hallam staff understand student voice and the role of students within that. This research, along with the findings from our student consultation for our 2025 SHSU Strategy, will help to develop our representation at Hallam going forwards.

We also recognise that we did not address our own recommendation from the 2019/20 Student Voice Report which states "The SU conducts additional research into the effect of course work-loads on student satisfaction and success." To ensure that we are researching what is currently affecting our students, this recommendation will be reviewed and might form part of Recommendation 9, found in Section 2 of this report, looking at attendance concerns at Hallam.

In addition to attendance, Section 2 also reviews one of the other major challenges faced by universities in recent years: student mental health. Our own research, cross-institutionally, as well as national reports, still recognise that student mental health is a major problem and concern, and this is just as important now as ever. We are also planning to conduct a major research project looking more in-depth at student mental wellbeing; in light of the pandemic, we want to ensure that we, and the University, are understanding the breadth of any mental health problems at Hallam and appropriately addressing these.

Finally, as Section 3 notes, the future for our students at Sheffield Hallam, though unclear at the time of writing this report, will likely and should give-way to some positive changes for our students. Our post-COVID lives will be filled with additional digital offers, but this pandemic also provides space and time for us to adjust quickly, to meet the needs of our students. This report outlines some of the major issues affecting our students and, in working together with Sheffield Hallam University, we hope to address these in the coming months and year.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Definitions and Nomenclature

- **Equality Act of 2010** – The Equality Act of 2010 legally protects workers and individuals in society from discrimination based on their age, disability status, gender and gender reassignment, marriage status, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and pregnancy or maternity status. Under this Act, mental health conditions are protected.
- **Lecture Capture** – the process of recording a lecture and making the recordings available to students after class, normally via the virtual learning environment (VLE). For Hallam, the VLE is Blackboard. SHU have also piloted 'Learning Capture', an enhanced version which provides the traditional recording of lectures, and also allows tutors to create quizzes and have anonymous discussion to promote more active learning.
- **Office for Students Access & Participation Plans** – The Office for Students (OfS) are an independent regulatory body for higher education institutions (HEI's) in England. In an effort to ensure that all students are provided with equal opportunities, universities must provide Access & Participation Plans, which would allow them to charge higher fees if approved by the Director for Fair Access and Participation. These plans must include: the providers ambition for change, what it plans to do to achieve that change, the targets it has set, and the investment it will make to deliver the plan. To read more about this, go to www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities.
- **Quality Assurance Agency** – The QAA, or Quality Assurance Agency, work to safeguard standards to ensure that students are getting the higher education that they are entitled to expect. To read more about this organisation, go to www.qaa.ac.uk.

APPENDICES

Appendix B. Data Sources

Source	No. of Responses/ Participants	Research Method
<p>SHSU 2025 Strategy Survey</p> <p>This survey informed our 2020-2025 Strategy as a Students' Union and asked students questions about how they want to be represented, the way they want to give their feedback, what rights they want to know more about, what types of services they would like to engage with, the type of community that is most important to them, their likelihood of taking part in leadership opportunities, and what they think the Students' Union should be prioritising.</p>	2545	Quantitative
<p>SHSU 2025 Strategy Focus Groups</p> <p>These focus groups were conducted after the Strategy Survey and helped us to explore topics in much greater detail and were on: Employability, Wellbeing, Representation and Student Rights.</p>	77	Qualitative
<p>Lecture Capture Survey</p> <p>This survey was led by our Education Officer and asked students what they thought about lecture capture, including what the benefits would be.</p>	217	Quantitative
<p>Dissertation Printing</p> <p>This survey was led by our President and asked final year and postgraduate taught students about printing their dissertation. The findings of this research helped to inform our President's work to bring about a reduction in cost for students in this area.</p>	116	Quantitative

Source	No. of Responses/ Participants	Research Method
<p>Law & Criminology Attendance Surveys</p> <p>These two surveys were led by our Reps in the Department of Law & Criminology; this collaborate research project helped to inform immediate work within that Department, to understand influences on student attendance, what is going well and what could be improved.</p>	47	Qualitative
<p>Healthy Hallam Survey</p> <p>This survey was led by our Sport & Physical Activity Officer and asked students about their physical activity prior to and after coming to university. This survey also asked students questions about their wellbeing and asked Team Hallam members about their experiences, specifically. This survey was a continuation on previous the 2019 Sport & Physical Activity Survey which asked similar questions.</p>	390	Quantitative
<p>Hallam Help & Student Support</p> <p>This evaluative survey was a joint project between Sheffield Hallam Students' Union and Sheffield Hallam Student Support Services. The findings from this research have been used to inform business planning for Hallam Help and Student Support Services in the University. This research also helped to explore what students' experiences have been in utilising these support services, to highlight what is going well and what could be improved.</p>	515	Quantitative
<p>Hallam, How Are You?</p> <p>This survey was launched in response to COVID-19 with the aim of understanding immediate challenges our students might be facing, but also how the Students' Union can support going forwards.</p>	1150	Quantitative

Source	No. of Responses/ Participants	Research Method
<p>2019 Student Rep Survey</p> <p>This survey, which took place May-June 2019, allows Student Reps to feedback about their experience of being a Rep. The findings from this research are discussed and actions decided at the Student Representation Steering Group, a joint committee between the Students' Union and the University, whom run the Rep System across the institutions.</p>	245	Quantitative
<p>Strategy Consultation</p> <p>The initial consultation for the SHSU 2020-2025 strategy was through short questionnaires with students at our Welcome Week events. The findings from this helped to shape the 2025 Strategy Survey and subsequent focus groups.</p>	2042	Quantitative
<p>COVID-19 Rep Feedback</p> <p>Upon shutdown of the University due to COVID-19, we gathered feedback from Student Reps to understand immediate concerns and issues from the pandemic. This data was collated and shared in a weekly COVID-19 update from 3 April until present.</p>	142	Qualitative
<p>Safety Net Petition Comments</p> <p>Our Reps and Officers launched a campaign and petition that, in light of COVID-19, students should receive a safety net for their grades. This petition had many long, heartfelt stories attached and have been provided as feedback for the university in the weekly COVID-19 updates as referenced above.</p>	4374	Qualitative

APPENDICES

Appendix C. Progress from the 2018/19 Student Voice Report

Academic Experiences

Sub-Section	Recommendation	Comments on Progress	SHU	SHSU	Has this been achieved?
Course Curriculum	1.1 The University to implement a work plan based on sector best practice with proven strategies to create a more culturally diverse curriculum, with the ultimate goal	<p>This work forms part of the University's Student Equity 5-Year Corporate Action Plan and is being developed by both the University and the Students' Union. Throughout this academic year, the Narrowing the Gaps Team reviewed Departmental initiatives aimed at decreasing the gap in attainment between white and BAME students. This work has had some challenges this year, including staff attending workshops provided by the Narrowing the Gaps Team, staff reading additional material provided, and conceptual and personal challenges of staff diversifying their curriculum. Despite these challenges, there have been 9 workshops provided more generally, and 2 larger workshops focussed on decolonising the curriculum (which took place in May 2019) and developing an inclusive curriculum (which took place in June 2019).</p>	●		Some progress, ongoing

Sub-Section	Recommendation	Comments on Progress	SHU	SHSU	Has this been achieved?
Class Size	1.2 The University and the Students' Union research factors that impact student attendance.	<p>The University have developed and approved the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy, which outlines the value and importance of student engagement and attendance with their taught sessions. The policy forms part of the Student Support Framework, which also supports the recording of attendance at taught sessions. If students have missed multiple sessions, proactive action is taken by academic colleagues to ensure that students who have missed are appropriately supported including a face-to-face welfare check. The University also launched an 'Attendance Matters' campaign.</p> <p>Additional research was undertaken by the University looking at attendance from comments received in the NSS and UKES. This aimed at evaluating proactive work which took place under the Student Support Framework. Furthermore, the Students' Union has conducted localised research within the Department of Law & Criminology, with the aim of providing support for Reps and staff in that area to make quick improvements, where needed. This is discussed further in Section 2 of this report.</p>	●	●	Some progress, ongoing

Sub-Section	Recommendation	Comments on Progress	SHU	SHSU	Has this been achieved?
Timetabling	1.3 The University consolidates course timetables, taking into consideration the impact that a fragmented timetable has on commuter students.	The University have established a Teaching Delivery Group and have issued a report with a series of recommendations. The report also notes that Sheffield Hallam is 3-7% below competitors in terms of performance in NSS question 16 ("The timetable works efficiently for me"). Through qualitative comments, the report notes that areas for improvement include: spread of teaching (gaps); late changes and cancellations and communication of this; limited travel time between buildings and campuses; and teaching on Wednesday afternoons. The University recognises that these are reoccurring issues. There are plans for stricter adherence to the timetabling principles, improved planning processes, reviewing the zoning of spaces, and introducing KPI's. Further work is also being developed to improve the commuter student experience more generally; in terms of timetables, the process by which these students can request a change in seminar groups is being reviewed.	●		Some progress, ongoing
Course Workload	1.4 The Student Union conducts additional research into the effect of coursework loads on student satisfaction and success.	The Students' Union began work on this area in September 2019, meeting with the University to discuss working on this research project jointly. After some exploration of NSS and UKES comments with regards to assessment and workloads, the research project has been put on hold. The Students' Union will continue this research project into the 2020/21 academic year.		●	Not achieved

Academic Experiences

Sub-Section	Recommendation	Comments on Progress	SHU	SHSU	Has this been achieved?
Physical Activity & Wellbeing	2.1 The University and the Students' Union launch a campaign which encourages students to take part in different sport and physical activity opportunities throughout the academic year, whilst also educating students on the importance of activity for their physical and mental wellbeing.	The University and the Students' Union have delivered multiple projects throughout the academic year which promotes physical and mental health. Student Support Advisers have been trained in the '5 Ways to Wellbeing', one of which is 'keeping active' and have promoted this with students in Semester 1. In addition, Student Wellbeing have been involved in the vision work for sport and physical activity at Hallam have ran several projects aimed at non-competitive physical activity: yoga, zumba, walking and running groups, as well as the exercise referral scheme. The University also hosts 30+ social sport sessions each week. The promotion of active wellbeing is prominent within the University's publicity material and, jointly with the Students' Union, physical activity is promoted as a way to protect and enhance mental wellbeing.		●	Some progress, ongoing
Student Support	2.2 The University to develop Student Wellbeing to be a more accessible service, and look to increase the number of diverse counsellors and practitioners.	Student Wellbeing have worked closely with the University's HR Team to recruit a more diverse workforce; in the mean time, the University have made connections with organisations specialising in supporting more diverse groups (e.g. BAME, LGBTQ+) to offer in-reach service on our campus. In addition, members of the Student Support Services Leadership Forum have received introductory training on cultural competency; further training for their teams is being planned. There is also, now, a named Wellbeing Practitioner for students that are care leavers or estranged from their families. Postgraduate students have also been provided additional information about the wellbeing support available at Hallam and the International Experience Team have worked with Student Wellbeing to identify how the service can be promoted to international students.	●		Some progress, ongoing

Sub-Section	Recommendation	Comments on Progress	SHU	SHSU	Has this been achieved?
Student Safety	2.3 The Students' Union and the University equip students with skills to stay safe whilst at Sheffield Hallam, navigate difficult relationships and build resiliency.	The University have created new posters of the Report & Support service to make it clearer to students about the range of harassing behaviour and how to seek help. The University is consulting on harassment and bullying following findings from the SHU Staff Experience Survey and recommendations will be relevant to students as well (e.g. greater awareness of codes of conduct, modelling good behaviour, etc). There has also been an uptake in training offers to staff on awareness and disclosure of harassment and on positive intervention strategies for students. In addition, the University have established a good relationship with the South Yorkshire Police, with the potential to increase police presence, where necessary, to help students stay safe.	●	●	Achieved, ongoing

Sub-Section	Recommendation	Comments on Progress	SHU	SHSU	Has this been achieved?
Postgraduate Research Wellbeing	2.4 The Students' Union and the University provide opportunities and events which increase the sense of community amongst PGR students and academic staff across the university.	<p>The University and the Students' Union jointly created a Hallam Guild Group on PGR Wellbeing. This group trialed a number of activities for PGR's including: crafting, lunch with staff, board games, lunchtime walk, and yoga. The group learnt that activities work best when student-led, and the Doctoral School will continue to jointly-run activities with the PGR Students' Society. In addition, the Doctoral School provided financial support for student-led activities including a poster session, conference, networking, and experience sharing sessions. PGR students remained an integral part of the Creating Knowledge Conference, which included the three-minute thesis.</p> <p>In addition, the PGR Handbook has been revamped and provides new students with an overview of key information. The Research Degrees Committee (RDC) has developed a PGR Wellbeing Implementation Plan, which sets out a strategic approach along with clear actions and responsibilities. RDC also approved a new policy which clarifies the holiday entitlement for PGR students, recognising that regular breaks are important for mental wellbeing and performance in their research. Other actions which will be supported by the Students' Union and the University include: online resources for PGR's (e.g. what to expect from a doctoral viva voce examination); increased support to identify gaps in knowledge for supervisors in terms of providing wellbeing support; and increased visibility of student societies and communities for PGR students.</p>	●	●	Some progress, ongoing

Student Finances

Sub-Section	Recommendation	Comments on Progress	SHU	SHSU	Has this been achieved?
Financial Barriers	3.1 The Students' Union and the University provide additional free or low cost sport and physical fitness opportunities.	The University has developed a partnership with SIV, allowing for 4000 students to use access sport and physical activity facilities across the city at a cost of as little as £10.84 per month. The University also delivers 45 social sport sessions at a maximum cost of £2.50 for students and 4 free weekly activities per week on campus, in halls of residence or sport facilities. The Students' Union has also continued to offer Zumba for students through their Give It A Go and, in light of COVID-19, have offered free virtual physical activity for students. In addition, the exercise referral programme, as part of Student Wellbeing, also offers free exercise referral and therapeutic running groups for students in need to help look after both their physical and mental wellbeing.	●	●	Some progress, ongoing
Additional Costs	3.2 The University reduces costs or provides a printing allowance for all students to ensure additional costs at university are mitigated.	The University has reduced printing costs substantially as a result of changing the supply contract and these savings have been passed on to students with the help of the Students' Union. Further work is being undertaken to work out the feasibility of providing an allowance for on-campus printing for disabled students whose printing costs can be very high (e.g. those with SpLD and hearing impairments). Discussions have been held about providing an allowance for final year students requiring hard copy (printing and binding). There is also the potential that the University will move to online submission of dissertations and will discuss at the Assessment and Feedback Task and Finish Group. The change to the College structure has complicated some of the work in this area, and efforts are being made to ensure all students' costs are included in reporting.	●		Achieved

Sub-Section	Recommendation	Comments on Progress	SHU	SHSU	Has this been achieved?
Placement & Employability	3.3 The University to broaden the consultation of the work experience aspect of the Hallam Model with the student body to ensure implementation is done with the student voice in mind.	<p>As part of the Highly Skilled Employment (HSE) offer, students are being included in the curriculum design process for the new mandatory 20-credit placements in L5 and L6. This process took place from September to November 2019; the University still need to report back on student views on the definitions of and plans for delivery of new work placements later this academic year. The University note that some of the concerns raised by the students about mandatory placement were focused on costs; it has been proposed that some funds will be used to support students on sandwich placement, including accommodation and travel expenses, other associated costs such as smart or specialist clothing etc., targeted towards priority student groups. In addition, a small hardship funding pot (£20k) will be made available to low-income students to help with travel costs for the short HSE in-year work placements.</p> <p>In addition, a review of students on sandwich placements, and their employers, as part of the Applied Professional Diploma (APD) in the Business School, has been developed. The APD is a standard 24-wk placement with a synoptic portfolio, 3 structured touch points with the university workplace mentor. Evaluation will take place which looks at student and staff experience of the new structure to sandwich placements. It is being rolled out in SBS in 19/20 and across all sandwich provision from 2020/21.</p>	●		Achieved



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