

SHEFFIELD HALLAM STUDENTS UNION

STUDENT

VOICE

REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

As Chris Husband's said in his blog on 15th of March, 2021, *"I'm sure that no-one would have believed you if you had said as we left the university very late in the evening of 16 March that we would still be working remotely a year later."* Yet, here we are, one year later. Our students have experienced this academic year in a way that no-one had anticipated. The Coronavirus pandemic has touched every individual in our society and has further highlighted societal inequalities that have long entrenched our communities. There are areas where the pandemic has impacted others much more substantially: individuals in service, rather than office, jobs; individuals working on the frontlines and in key roles that kept the country going; our minority ethnic neighbours and friends, who were significantly more likely to contract the virus due to our inequitable society; and young adults, many of whom are also our students.

Headlines and statistics nationally have shown that young adults and university students were more likely to have lost their employment during the pandemic. Others were sequestered in accommodation that they very likely did not need had we knowledge of what the future would hold. Our students have joined together throughout the pandemic, demanding a safety net to protect the grades they worked hard to achieve up to that point, course fee refunds, or accommodation and housing discounts or rebates. At the start of the 2020/21 academic year, we all knew it was going to be different from any other but likely did not realise the extent to which it would be.

This year's Student Voice Report utilises data from our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey in November 2020, the 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey from January 2021, and our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey. Each of these surveys were analysed either in Excel or SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) and comments were analysed thematically. This report also utilises student feedback received directly from our Course and Department Reps, which are shared monthly with the Students' Union. This, alongside our Students' Union Monthly Feedback Reports, meant that we were able to quickly react and respond to student issues as they arose throughout the year.

Throughout the year, our research, alongside that of the University, has found that student opinion of learning during the pandemic was mixed. There were some students that especially enjoyed learning remotely, citing various reasons. There were many others, however, that struggled to engage with their course remotely and felt that there should have been more support offered, more synchronous teaching, or information about the changes to their assessments and exams communicated. In all, 43 percent of respondents to our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey stated that they did not enjoy how teaching and

learning was delivered this year. Despite this, students that normally commute into university were more likely to indicate their enjoyment of remote learning. Furthermore, these students would like blended learning embedded into their respective courses in the future. This is an important finding considering the high percentages of commuter students that attend Sheffield Hallam University. When asked what they would like to see continued in future teaching methods, students were much more likely to prefer and want to see the following: learning materials available digitally, recorded lectures, and/or extended deadlines. Students were less interested in virtual labs, online seminars and/or virtual placements or internships.

Specifically for this academic year, our students struggled to connect and feel like a community of students. This was evident from numerous comments that we received this academic year, but also through our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey. Only 43 percent of respondents to our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey strongly agreed or agreed that they felt like a community of staff and students and were less likely, compared to this same survey in 2017/18, to agree that most of their lecturers or tutors know who they are. This was especially the case for those within their foundation, first or second year of their undergraduate course. Overall, only 22 percent of respondents to our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey in April 2021 strongly agreed or agreed that this year has been what they expected it to be.

1. Vice Chancellors Blog (15 March 2021). A Year. Accessed on 23 April 2021, from: <https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/vc/2021/03/15/a-year/>

2. Office for National Statistics (April 2021). Earning and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, UK. Accessed on 22 April 2021, from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/>



LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Section	Recommendation Number	Recommendation	SHU	SHSU
Teaching & Learning	1	The University to continue to review and monitor students' digital needs, in line with future planning regarding blended learning, and to continue to provide support for students' with the highest needs.	●	
	2	The University and the Students' Union enter into an improved data sharing agreement that will allow for joint understanding and sharing of relevant research and insight information.	●	●
	3	The University to review what has worked this academic year, in line with student opinion, to make informed decisions about delivery for any future blended learning.	●	
	4	The College of Business, Technology & Engineering to build assessment support sessions into student timetables, to ensure that students are given ample opportunity to understand and ask questions.	●	
	5	The College of Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences to improve process and communication of placement allocation in Health and Social Care, and to broaden placement opportunities for the Academy of Sport & Physical Activity and the Department of Biosciences & Chemistry.	●	

Section	Recommendation Number	Recommendation	SHU	SHSU
Teaching & Learning	6	The College of Social Sciences & Arts to review and reflect on the impact COVID19 has had on access to learning materials, equipment, and/or learning spaces, and to take lessons from this in terms of student experience going forwards.	●	
Wellbeing	7	The University and the Students' Union to work together to provide targeted mental wellbeing initiatives to enhance LGBTQ+ student mental health.	●	●
	8	The University to ensure that, at a course level, students are provided opportunities to collaborate, whilst future learning allocates this for sense of community to build	●	
	9	The University and the Students' Union to work together, during Welcome Back Week and beyond, to re-introduce and publicise the Hallam support offer to ensure that students are always aware of and know how to access support should they need it.	●	●
	10	The University to ensure that students are provided with information about ways to look after their wellbeing directly from academic staff that they are in regular contact with.	●	

Section	Recommendation Number	Recommendation	SHU	SHSU
Being a student in 2021	11	The University and the Students' Union continue to monitor student financial needs to ensure that those that need help the most are aware of hardship funding.	●	●
	12	The Students' Union to launch a University-wide campaign on student housing rights, sharing information about their rights and where to access support if they need it.		●
	13	The Students' Union to continue to work on its new strategy and ambition to deliver outstanding representation, working with the University to further develop the representation system and ensure that accountable personnel are allocated within Colleges and Departments.		●



TEACHING & LEARNING

SECTION ONE

The following section primarily draws from data collected at two points this academic year: the Students' Union's 'Hallam, How Are You' survey from November 2020 and the Students' Union 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey from April 2021. Each of these surveys asked questions about course expectations and learning during the pandemic, as well as some related to finances, accommodation, and wellbeing which will be explored in Sections 2 and 3.

This section focuses on our teaching and learning research findings. The first part will discuss learning in the pandemic at a University-wide level, and the second part will explore data within each College. As a Union, the 2020/21 academic year was the first that our new College Officer model was in place. We also recognise that this approach provides an opportunity to discover the nuances within each of the Colleges.

TEACHING & LEARNING ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

Our research has shown that student opinion of online learning and teaching during the 2020/21 academic year has been mixed: there are some students that especially enjoy learning from home without the commute and large gaps of time in their schedules between lectures waiting on campus.³ Yet, there are many others that have struggled this year to engage with their learning, to receive support from their tutors, to have appropriate exams or assessments, and are unhappy with the academic year in its entirety. Research from the Office for Students (OfS)⁴ found that 29 percent of respondents to their survey on digital teaching and learning were not pleased with what they experienced on their course this academic year. Similarly, but more drastically, our 'Hallam How Are We Doing?' survey found that 43 percent of respondents did not enjoy how teaching and learning was delivered this year.

Furthermore, 30% of student respondents to the OfS survey did not have adequate study space and/or good enough internet access. From our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey in November 2020, we heard similarly that where students struggled navigating this new digital learning environment was the lack of proper study space or inability to connect due to poor internet. We know from comments in our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey that some of our students live with family and that this has inhibited them from having the space, sometimes both physically and mentally, to commit to digital learning. Due to the urgency of the shift in learning because of the pandemic, there were many temporary solutions to problems found, such as: one-off bursaries available for more students or payments for laptops or other supplies. But, perhaps most relevant now, is what we continue to provide in the future. We know that, in 2017/18 academic year for example, 21 percent of Sheffield Hallam new entrants were from the most disadvantaged backgrounds (POLAR1).⁵ Furthermore, recent data also showed that Sheffield Hallam has more students from under-represented backgrounds than any other university in the United Kingdom, with 23 percent of our students from the lowest higher education participation background.⁶ Despite getting these students into university, it is important to remember that students from more disadvantaged backgrounds might be less likely to have reliable internet access, good spaces to study, or have less discretionary income to spend on supplies they need for university. Within Sheffield Hallam's Access and Participation Plan⁷, students from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to be priority group, and we want to transform lives, together.

As the OfS⁸ encourages in their report, students' needs should be assessed on a one-to-one basis. Whilst this concept is explored more in Section 2 in relation to student communities, we should be aware of the implications that encouraging more digital learning might have on some of our most disadvantaged students. The pandemic has only further widened the digital divide within the higher education sector. As Jisc, GuildHE, Universities UK, and UCISA, stated, 'half of higher education students are digitally disadvantaged'⁹. Although many students likely do have access to smart phones, engaging in learning through a smart phone, rather than a laptop or proper computer, can be a more difficult experience. When thinking about digital poverty or those at a digital disadvantage, consider the type of technology that these students have access to, rather than having access at all.

3. Sheffield Hallam University. (15-22 October 2020). Pulse survey results.

4. Barber, M. (2021). Gravity assist: Propelling higher education into a bright future. Office for Students. Accessed on 13 May 2021, from: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/gravity-assist-propelling-higher-education-towards-a-brighter-future/>

5. Office for Students (2021). Young participation by area. Accessed on 13 May, from: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/>

6. Sheffield Hallam University (15 February 2021). Educating more students from under-represented backgrounds than any other UK university. Accessed on 13 May, from: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/news/all-articles/latest-news/widening-participation-statistics>

7. Sheffield Hallam University (5 February 2021). Spotlight On: Access and Participation: an overview of Hallam's 5-year plan to address student inequalities; and there to find data and insight about your course. Accessed on 13 May, from: <https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/cle/2021/02/05/spotlight-on-access-and-participation-an-overview-of-hallams-5-year-plan-to-address-student-inequalities-and-where-to-find-data-and-insight-about-your-course/>

8. Barber, M. (2021). Gravity assist: Propelling higher education into a bright future. Office for Students. Accessed on 13 May 2021, from: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/gravity-assist-propelling-higher-education-towards-a-brighter-future/>

9. Jisc (18 January 2021). Government action called for to lift HE students out of digital poverty. Accessed on 13 May, from <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/news/government-action-called-for-to-lift-he-students-out-of-digital-poverty-18-jan-2021>

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The University to continue to review and monitor students' digital needs, in line with future planning regarding blended learning, and to continue to provide support for students' with the highest needs.

In addition, the Students' Union recognises the importance of understanding the needs and experiences of students identified in the SHU's Access & Participation plan. We know that this type of collaborative approach to supporting students is valuable and necessary, yet some of the Students' Union's services are hindered by the inability to correctly identify these students. For example, we know that our research could help to identify differences in students' experiences much more broadly. We could also identify and work together to target students within the Access & Participation plan to participate in student communities, become a student representative or leader, and in general widen our reach. The Students' Union is unable to support or provide insights at this level because we do not have the data.

Access to data about specific student cohorts was flagged in April as a barrier and risk to the Students' Union being able to deliver the 'Building Partnerships' Action Area that it is the lead for under the Student Wellbeing Programme. We believe that the University and the Students' Union should work together on equality and diversity initiatives even more and having the right data will help us to do that.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The University and the Students' Union enter into an improved data sharing agreement that will allow for joint understanding and sharing of relevant research and insight information.

Our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey found that 8 percent more students that commute into university would want blended learning in the future, compared to those that do not commute. In addition, of these same students, there was a 16 percent rise in the percentage of commuter students that enjoyed the way that teaching and learning was delivered this year (see Figure 1). When considering options for future learning, it appears that commuter students are more likely than non-commuter students to be interested in blended learning, and responded more positively to teaching and learning this year, on the whole.

As mentioned previously, due to the pandemic, these students were less likely to spend time coming to campus, which meant that they might have had more time to dedicate to asynchronous learning. Our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey in November 2020 also found that, where students identified themselves as being a parent or carer, many commented that learning remotely was preferred. Considering, again, Sheffield Hallam's Access & Participation Plan, parents have been identified as a priority group in the 2020-25 plan. Whilst there are likely many students that do prefer on-campus learning, and though we think that on-campus learning will ultimately help students to feel more course cohesion and be happier with their course overall, we should listen to the students that have found virtual learning beneficial. As many organisations look to the lessons learnt during this pandemic and embedding them in future practices, so should we for our students.

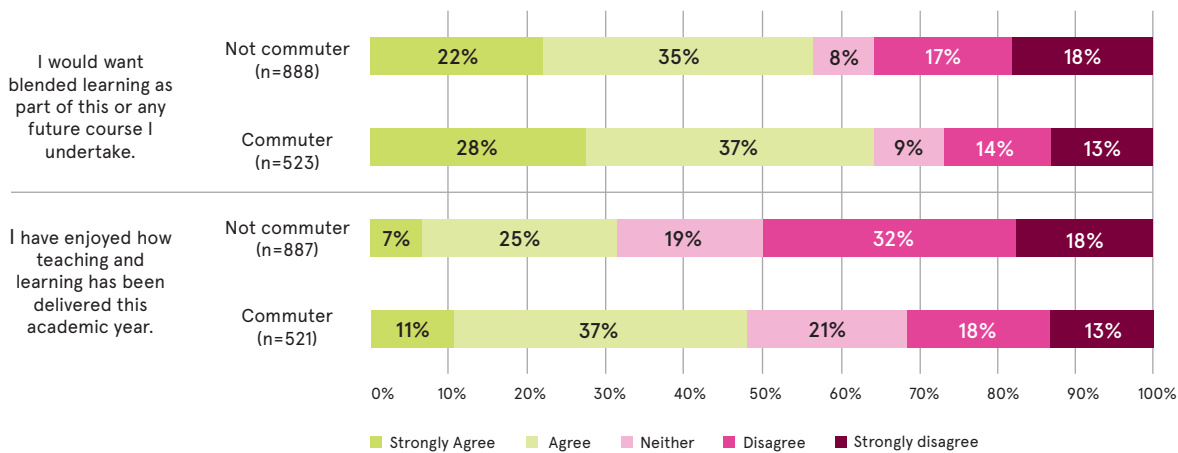


Figure 1: Extent of agreement to each corresponding statement, by commuter status. NB: not applicable responses have been removed from analysis.

Similarly, there are different types of learners' needs that we should take into consideration when planning for the next and foreseeable academic years. As the OfS states, universities should approach digital teaching and learning with nuance.¹⁰ We believe this to be true for students at Sheffield Hallam as well. Our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey found that students on practical based courses (i.e. those in healthcare, arts, engineering, etc.) would prefer a blended learning approach that does not inhibit their ability to learn the practical skills they need for future employment. When asked to reflect on the previous year and what they want to see changed going forward, these students were much more likely to discuss the importance of practicing skills learnt on their course – not through virtual labs or further reading about their subject.

Furthermore, we conducted a qualitative research project with students on 'top up' courses (a course where students can top up previous qualifications to a full degree). Some of these courses are at Sheffield Hallam and some are with our international partner institutions. Whilst these students represent approximately 5 percent of our student population, slightly more students on top up courses are outside of the UK, very little is known about their experience. They come into Sheffield Hallam and, because of the nature of their course, are enveloped in the bubble of a traditional undergraduate student experience, though their experience is not traditional. Our research identified that these students struggled to feel that they belonged with their course mates, most of whom had already established a group of friends and were unable to make connections with others. These students also shared with us that, whilst they benefited from online delivery, particularly the availability of recorded lectures to help them revise, this also meant that they felt less belonging to their new course. Some of these students, after having taken a break in study and returning to the university, meant that their academic skills or knowledge of specific subjects needed additional support. This was especially pronounced for international students that moved to a new country, with a new language, and were expected to have the same or similar knowledge to those students that had been studying this course for the past one to two years. As some of these students mentioned, had they not received direct support from course leaders or other students, they would have dropped out of their course entirely.

10. Barber, M. (2021). Gravity assist: Propelling higher education into a bright future. Office for Students. Accessed on 13 May 2021, from: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/gravity-assist-propelling-higher-education-towards-a-brighter-future/>

"I think we were not supposed to be merged with regular students. We should have our own different class where we're not supposed to be merged because the original students who have already started from year one are already moving at a faster pace while we still here yet to find our ground."

In addition, our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey found that 92 percent of respondents (n=1258) said that they had online lectures this academic year. A further 88 percent said that their learning materials were available digitally. When asked what they would like to see continued, the majority want their learning materials available digitally and/or to have their lectures recorded. Fifty-nine percent of those that had an online discussion boards or forum as part of their course or a module want to see it continued.

Table 1: The teaching methods used during the past academic year.

"Of the measures your course did, what would you like to see continue?"			
Method	Count (had)	Count (wants to continue)	% (want to continue, based on who had)
All of my learning materials available digitally	1204	1017	84%
Recorded lectures	1129	879	78%
Extended deadlines	591	443	75%
Online, open book exams	534	361	68%
Online discussion boards or forums on your course	633	372	59%
Virtual meetings or check-ins with lecturers or tutors	737	410	56%
Online lectures	1258	543	43%
Virtual placements or internships	146	47	32%
Online seminars	1107	351	32%
Virtual labs	202	56	28%

As the table opposite displays, respondents were less interested in the continuation of practical elements delivered virtually, such as labs, seminars, or placements. Interestingly, less than half of the respondents that had online lectures want to see these continue. In thinking about students lack of community or course cohesion throughout this academic year, these findings are unsurprising (discussed in Section 2). Our students want to see a continuation of digital enhancements that add value to their experience: digital learning materials, recorded lectures, discussion boards. They seem less interested in practical learning elements that are not easily replicated virtually, like labs or seminars that require group discussion.

In the 2019/20 academic year, and in our 2019/20 Student Voice Report, we advocated for the use of recorded lectures and our then Education Officer felt strongly that this should be offered for students. Although opinions about the ways in which teaching was delivered this year vary, our research has found that students across the University are interested in many of the benefits that came from virtual learning, such as recorded lectures and digital materials being more readily available through Blackboard. In addition, for those students with registered disabilities at Sheffield Hallam, their lecturer or course tutors, prior to the pandemic, were encouraged to share material with them before they attended a lecture or seminar. Our research shows that this practice is also beneficial and wanted from all students. As Table 1 displays and as previously stated, 84 percent of respondents that had their material available digitally and 78 percent of respondents that had their lectures recorded want to see this continued.

As our Wellbeing Section highlights, students have struggled to feel part of a community of staff and students on their course this year, with a significant drop in the percentages that agreed to this statement in our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey on student mental health. Ensuring that this element of the student experience is rekindled is a key component of students' overall happiness and satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

The University to review what has worked this academic year, in line with student opinion and need, to make informed decisions about delivery for any future blended learning.

With the change in the Officer Model at Sheffield Hallam Students' Union (to be explored more in Section 3 of this report), the remainder of Section 1 displays research findings by College. The three College Officer's correspond directly to the three Colleges at Sheffield Hallam: Business, Technology & Engineering; Health, Wellbeing & Life Sciences; and Social Sciences & Arts. As a Union, we recognise the importance that data at a College level, rather than across the University, helps to make more nuanced decisions.



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THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ENGINEERING

At the beginning of the year, there were a lot of expectations as to what the year would bring as the new Officer's structure was reviewed and implemented. It gives me so much pleasure to say that I am the first College Officer in Business, Technology and Engineering (BTE) in Sheffield Hallam University at the Students' Union. It would not be an overstatement that the covid-19 pandemic has significantly challenged all aspects of our world. This worldwide pandemic may be the first real crisis that many students have experienced. Elected to this role as a Sabbatical Officer seems like such an impossible task to narrow it down to a page of content, but we were able to win for our students. These unanticipated events have had significant consequences for higher education, students' academic experiences, and university academic delivery. Moreover, I am grateful for the chance to share my story and my genuine feelings regarding my position as BTE College Officer. I was told at the beginning that I have a lot of manifesto points and doubted if I would be able to achieve all, today I am happy and proud to say I was able to achieve 95% of them all and more this academic year as BTE College Officer. This year's events have thrown the University and the Students' Union a lot more than they bargained for. As we explore the new normal, it is also up to us, as a student movement, to improve education delivery. Despite all the challenges, I am happy with what I have achieved representing your academic interest. These achievements have absolutely been a teamwork with all the support from the Officer Team, the Student Rep team, Department Reps, Course Reps, staff at the Students' Union and all students at Hallam. I also need to add that I have enjoyed the working relationship I have with BTE College, College Leadership Team and staff.

Together we have achieved so much, I'm delighted to say work still continues even now more digitally as COVID has thought us to be more proactive and digitally focused, this you will see in the 5 years strategy of the Student Union. I am thrilled to announce that I will continue to advocate for and support Hallam students as president during the 2021/22 academic year. My primary goal of putting students first has not changed. 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. The university needs to do more on decolonizing the curriculum and to reduce the BAME degree awarding 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 prioritize reducing the gap from the College level. On a final note, I want to express my gratitude to the Students' Union staff for their invaluable contributions to the effective completion of this report. Thank you to the Sabbatical Officers' team, who cheered and supported me on my accomplishments, encouraged me amid a difficult academic year, and a big thank you to the 5 Department Reps in BTE College who stood by my side throughout the year. Thank you to everyone at the University and the Students' Union for all of your help and advice this year. Thank you to the students who have put their faith in me and elected me to serve your interests as your BTE College Officer and now as your President in 2021/22 academic year.



Praise Ishola

Business, Technology &
Engineering College Officer

As referenced above, the Students’ Union launched a survey in November 2020 (‘Hallam, How Are You’) which asked students to comment about their experiences throughout the academic year so far. We had a total of 285 students from the College of Business, Technology and Engineering (BTE) fill out this survey, 26 percent of the total respondents. In November 2020, 38 percent of BTE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had considered dropping out of university at some point during the academic year. Thirty-seven percent indicated that their course was not what they expected it to be, even given the circumstances of the Coronavirus pandemic. Whilst this data is not dissimilar to all respondents of the survey (36% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed they considered dropping out of university and 35% of all respondents thought that their course was not what they expected it to be given the circumstances), it is still notable that over a quarter of respondents from BTE felt this about their course at the time.

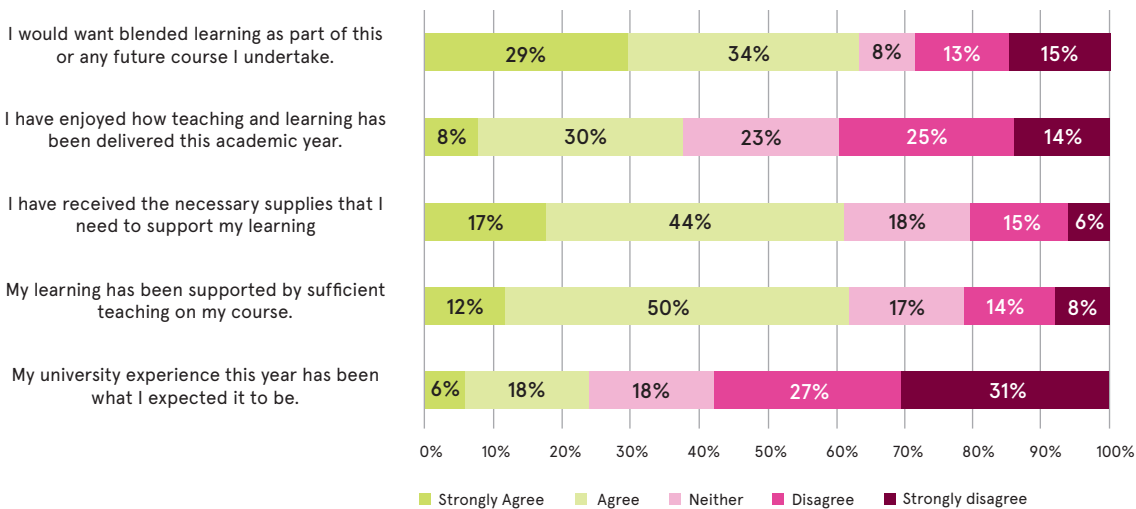


Figure 2: Extent of agreement to statements from ‘Hallam, How Are We Doing?’ survey in April 2021, from College of BTE (n=485). NB: not applicable responses have been removed from analysis.

Furthermore, our ‘Hallam, How Are We Doing’ survey in April 2021 found that, of the 441 respondents from the College of BTE, 58 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that their university experience this year has been what they expected it to be (see Figure 2). Only a quarter of respondents agreed that this past academic year was what they expected. Certainly, the way in which the year has unfolded for our students has been unexpected, even for staff across the University. Similarly, as we found in November 2020, there are mixed opinions about the way that teaching has been delivered this academic year. For BTE students, 38 percent agreed or strongly agreed they enjoyed this year, and 40 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

EMPLOYABILITY

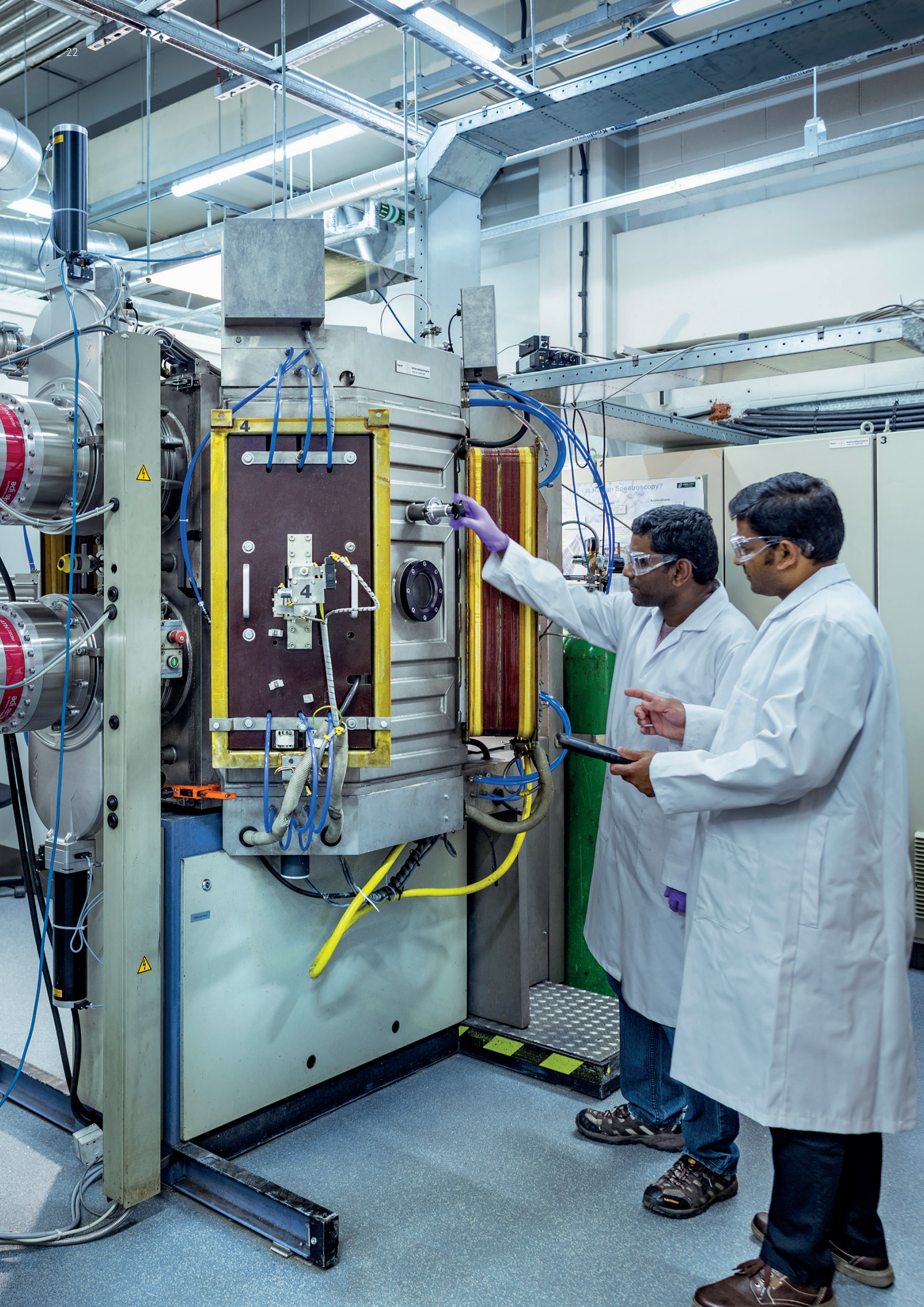
Our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey in November 2020 asked students that were currently undertaking a placement to provide feedback about this experience. Despite only a small number of respondents from the College of BTE on a placement completing the survey (n=37), comments from students suggest that they would benefit from additional support in securing a placement opportunity. As one respondent from the Department of Management said:

"Prior to covid many students were left to their own devices which is understandable, however, that constant lack of support during the pandemic is a little unhelpful in that, as individuals across the country are struggling in their career field so for Hallam to not offer guidance or knowledge of placements still running has been very unhelpful."

- Management student

There were comments from other students that their placements had been cancelled or put on hold because of the pandemic. Despite the negative comments of some students, there were others that commented that their experience had been relatively positive and 20 of the 37 BTE respondents agreed that they felt supported to find a placement opportunity.





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ASSESSMENTS & EXAMS

With the changes in teaching and learning this academic year, assessments and exams for students were, or needed to be, adapted to reflect the current learning environment. Our Department Reps in BTE identified, through communication with Course Reps, the need for additional assessment support. The Departments of Management, Engineering & Maths, and Service Sector Management all worked with the University and the Students' Union to make assessments clearer and more comprehensible for our students.

"My course has adapted their assessments to reflect my current learning environment"

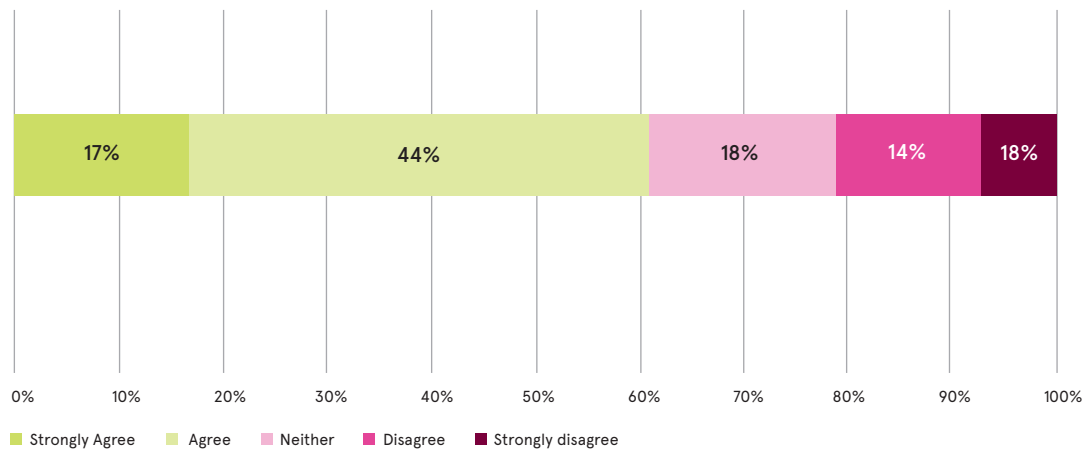


Figure 3: Extent of agreement that course has adapted assessments to reflect current learning environment, of BTE respondents where known (n=408).

Our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey also identified that over half of respondents (61%) in BTE strongly agreed or agreed that their course adapted their assessments to reflect current learning. There were, however, 21 percent of respondents that disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. As mentioned, this academic year was particularly difficult for students and the, at times, lack of support meant that when students needed clarification or support, this was more difficult to access. In thinking about the ways that we approach assessment and feedback for students, the addition of support built in to student timetables means that staff and students are able to communicate and clarify areas of concern. This also provides students an additional opportunity to ask questions specifically about their assessment, should they need it.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The College of Business, Technology & Engineering to build assessment support sessions into student timetables, to ensure that students are given ample opportunity to understand and ask questions.

THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH, WELLBEING & LIFE SCIENCES

As the first sabbatical officer to represent the College of Health Wellbeing and Life Sciences, I have thoroughly enjoyed my year in office. Earning the opportunity to represent such a hard-working cohort of students with all the challenges they have faced, had a profound impact on my dedication to the role. This year more than ever we have seen the importance of health wellbeing and life sciences in every aspect of our lives. I have seen this impact when speaking to students and staff across the college and supported them where I can; whether helping them in their academic needs or feeding back on their placement experiences, I have loved every second.

I took a personable approach to the role, which was especially important in a remote working environment. This way of working proved vital in lobbying and producing the Fairer Outcomes Policy with the university to support students throughout the pandemic. As a result, student engagement also increased during my time in office, improving on last year's college NSS response rate and increasing election voting numbers from 968 to 2745, the largest increase in voter turnout across the university. The integration of the new representation system and employment of department reps has created better avenues for student voice to be heard, ensuring it is at the heart of university plans and decision making.

Finally, I am extremely proud to be a part of a team of sabbatical officers that have worked so cohesively to achieve the very best for students and I hope we have left a positive legacy for future teams.



George Alvey

Health, Wellbeing & Life Sciences
College Officer

For the College of Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences (HWLS), 299 students filled out the Students' Union's 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey, which launched in November 2020. At that time, 34 percent of respondents from HWLS agreed or strongly agreed that they had seriously considered dropping out of university this academic year. Comparably, this was the lowest percentage of respondents to agree to this statement across the three Colleges. Within Departments, respondents from Social Work & Social Care and Sport & Physical Activity had higher percentages of respondents agree that they had seriously considered dropping out of university this academic year. In addition, half of HWLS respondents (51%) agreed or strongly agreed that this year was what they expected it to be given the circumstances, and 37 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. By Department, respondents from Sport & Physical Activity had the lowest percent of respondents that agreed that this year was what they expected it to be.

We also found from our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey in April 2021, that only 23 percent of respondents (n=103) agreed or strongly agreed that their university experience this year has been what they expected it to be. Sixty-five percent of respondents in HWLS disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (see Figure 4). Additionally, 35 percent indicated that they enjoyed how teaching and learning was delivered this academic year and this was the lowest percent across the three Colleges (38% agreed in BTE and SSA).

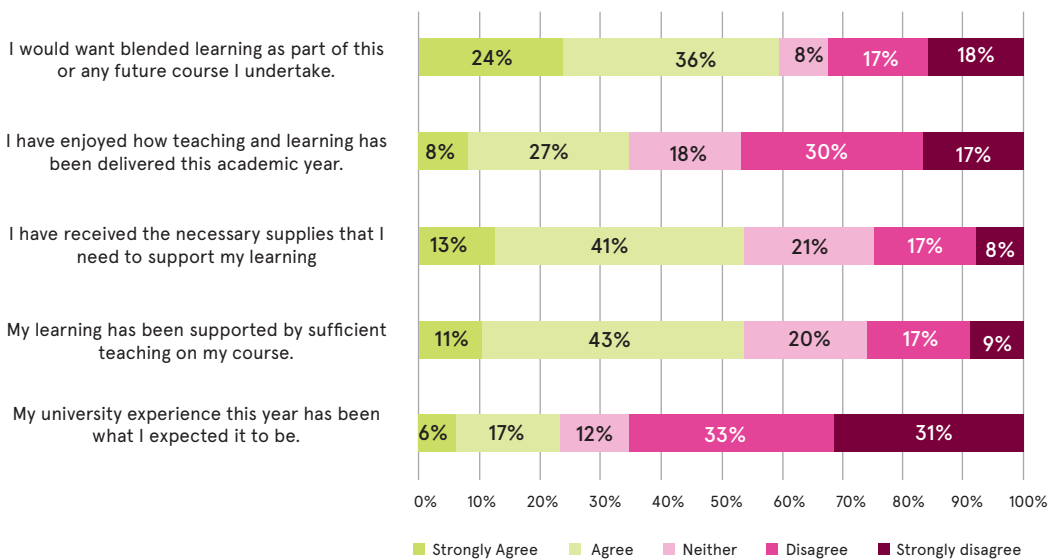


Figure 4: Extent of agreement to statements from 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey in April 2021, from College of HWLS (n=326). NB: not applicable responses have been removed from analysis.

PLACEMENTS AND SUPPORT

Our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey in November 2020 also asked respondents to share their experience with placements, if they were going to be or currently undertaking one. Just over half (55%, n=78) of respondents from HWLS agreed that their placement opportunity felt safe and secure. There were 61 students from HWLS that left comments about their thoughts and concerns with their placement; 13 of these comments were from students unable to start a placement due to the pandemic, whilst the remainder were largely from those who felt that the support, information, or safety of their placement was lacking.

Unsurprisingly, healthcare students had concerns about safety with regards to the pandemic, or felt that, because of the pandemic, they would not have the time to practice skills, but rather would be expected to work similarly to any other member of staff. Our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey identified differences by Department: for respondents from 56 percent and 48 percent of respondents from Allied Health Professions and Nursing & Midwifery, respectively, strongly agreed or agreed that their placement opportunity has felt safe and secure. Comparing these Departments to others in Health, Wellbeing & Life Sciences (Biosciences & Chemistry and Social Work, Social Care & Community Services) where 63 to 82 percent of respondents agreed that their placement felt safe and secure.

As one Nursing & Midwifery student commented, they felt that the support, from both the University and their placement provider, was not adequate.

"I feel like the university and placement are two completely separate worlds that do not talk to each other. The learning we do in university rarely supports what we do in practice. Most of the modules that aren't practical, or feel like a complete waste of time. Since covid happened I've really missed the practical sessions in university where we practice our medical skills in a safe controlled environment. It seems ridiculous that it's 'not safe' for us to do this and yet it is 'safe' for us to be out working in the hospitals completely out of our depth. I could go on and on but to summarise, I have felt entirely let down when it comes to support from the university on placement and have not felt safe and secure physically or mentally."

– Nursing & Midwifery student

As the above comment suggests, students are worried about the lack of skills necessary for their future employment due to the inability to practice in an appropriate environment. From our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey, we found that HWLS students were some of the least likely to want virtual labs or virtual placements to continue. They were also less likely to agree that course and module leaders have been responsive to requests for help this academic year, compared to other Colleges (73% agree in BTE, 72% agree in SSA, and 64% agree in HWLS). Furthermore, our College of Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences Officer has anecdotally heard from students, particularly those from health and social care courses, that the communication and allocation of placements throughout this academic year was haphazard.



RECOMMENDATION 5:

The College of Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences to improve process and communication of placement allocation in Health and Social Care, and to broaden placement opportunities for the Academy of Sport & Physical Activity and the Department of Biosciences & Chemistry.

PRACTICAL SKILLS

In our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey, we also asked respondents to reflect on teaching and learning this academic year and share one thing that could have been improved. Of the 302 respondents from Health, Wellbeing & Life Sciences, 27 students commented specifically about the lack practical elements of their course. These comments ranged from those wanting labs to happen in-person, to the inability to practice skills prior to placement, and/or having to compromise on their education.

"The fact that marked assessments and coursework was done relating to labs which we hadn't physically experienced was a major detriment."

– Biosciences & Chemistry student

"As a nursing student, most of my learning of practical skills have been compromised. Skills like administering injections would usually be practiced on a dummy. same with learning about different types of feeding tubes. instead, we just watch videos then do it in clinical practice. I think it's extremely unfair that my friends who study nursing at different universities have been into uni many, many more times than I have. They have been learning much more practical skills."

– Nursing & Midwifery student

THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & ARTS

This academic year has challenged us in ways that were unimaginable pre-COVID-19. Through meticulous trial and error, and effective collaboration with staff, we were successfully able to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the student experience at Sheffield Hallam University.

Although, I envisioned this role to be entirely different to what it has been, advocating on behalf of students housed within the College of Social Sciences and Arts has been an absolute pleasure. It certainly came with its obstacles, working remotely and being physically away from the students being the major one. Initially, I thought I would be running back and forth between our two campuses to meet students in person, instead, my days consisted of hopping from one online meeting to another. Despite this, what I think helped us the most was that all parties, academic staff, students, and the professional services were able to empathise with one another.

A true highlight for me was when I wrote and submitted a policy on Sexual Violence, NDAs, and Relationship Abuse on behalf of Sheffield Hallam Students' Union to the National NUS Conference. We need to ensure all students are adequately safeguarded across the UK. That policy was written in collaboration with the University of York Students' Union and Strathclyde Students' Association. It was discussed and voted for at the conference, and now officially forming part of the strategic direction of the NUS.

Reflecting on some work that I have started this year, one message I want to walk away leaving is that decarbonisation and environmental sustainability is now critical. I believe students from all disciplines should be educated and empowered to champion decarbonisation. To give students a space to discuss this matter officially, I have written to the Students' Union Council, which have ratified a Sustainability Committee. One which I hope will thrive in the years to come. It is our duty to protect our planet and if we continue to mistreat it, it shall cease to exist. Live to make a difference.

Wishing you all the best returning to campus after such a complicated year of service,



Laith Jaafar

Deputy President &
Social Sciences and Arts
College Officer

In November 2020, the Students’ Union launched a survey (‘Hallam, How Are You’) which asked students to comment about their experiences throughout the academic year so far. We had a total of 494 students from the College of Social Sciences & Arts (SSA) fill out this survey, 46 percent of the total. Of these respondents, 35 percent indicated that they considered dropping out of university during this academic year. Just over half (53%) agreed that this academic year has been what they expected it to be, given the circumstances, which is the highest percent of agreement compared to the two other Colleges (46% in BTE and 51% in HWLS).

In April 2021, we asked students to share their thoughts with us again in our ‘Hallam, How Are We Doing?’ survey. Only 19 percent of respondents (n=74) agreed or strongly agree that their university experience this year has been what they expected it to be (see Figure 5), the lowest percent to agree across the three Colleges (24% in BTE, 23% in HWLS). Thirty-eight percent, however, indicated that they enjoyed how teaching and learning was delivered this year. Like the other Colleges, respondents in SSA were also interested in the continuation of all learning materials being available digitally and to have their lectures recorded.

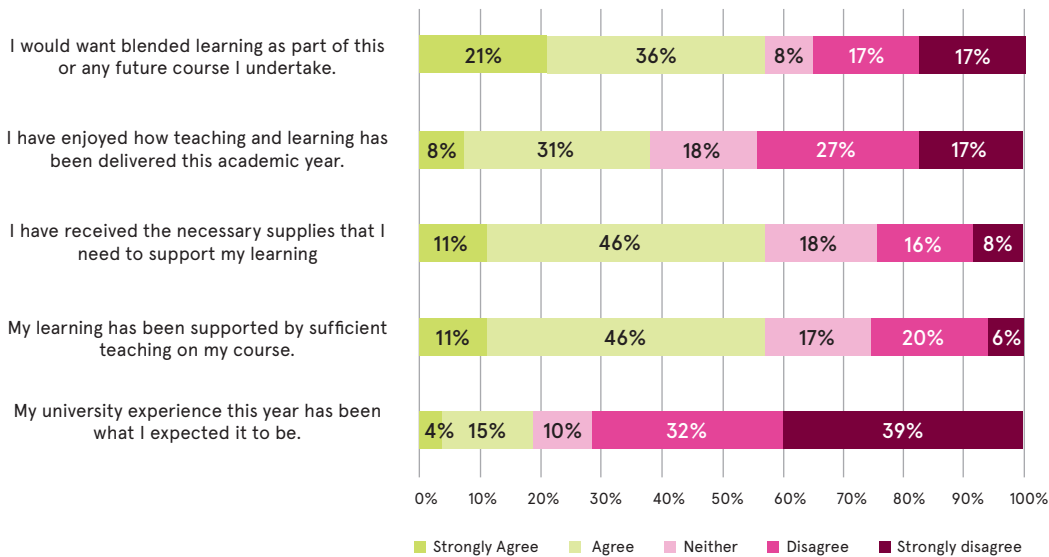


Figure 5: Extent of agreement to statements from ‘Hallam, How Are We Doing?’ survey in April 2021, from College of SSA (n+598). NB: not applicable responses have been removed from analysis.

ACCESS TO SPECIALIST FACILITIES

As Figure 5 displays, 57 percent of respondents in SSA agreed that they received the necessary supplies needed to support their learning. Anecdotally, our SSA College Officer has heard from students on specific courses that they lack access to specialist facilities necessary for their course (such as software or studio space). Comments from our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey also suggest that SSA students want more one-to-one support, more support learning rather than just with assignments, and more opportunity to put their learning into practice through interactive seminars or spaces in the university. These issues were particularly prominent amongst Art & Design and Media Arts & Communication students. Many left comments indicating their disappointment in being unable to have suitable enough time in studios or utilising software that is available on SHU computers. As these students suggest, more time on-campus would have substantially improved their experiences this academic year.

"As I am on a creative course this has dramatically changed the way I have learnt. It has been difficult not having all of the resources available such as printing, lighting and white back drops."

– Art & Design student

"More support with computer software (eg. Vectorworks, photoshop etc). The slots were 15minutes long and many would book several of these which meant I struggled to access this support some weeks."

– Art & Design student

"The availability of equipment for practical courses. It was a shambles."

– Media Arts & Communication student

"More library access/books need to be moved online. As photography is a visual course, being online is not the best approach"

– Media Arts & Communication student

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The College of Social Sciences & Arts to review and reflect on the impact COVID19 has had on access to learning materials, equipment, and/or learning spaces, and to take lessons from this in terms of student experience going forwards.

As the above sections highlight, access to specialist equipment and/or wanting more practical elements linked to learning is not unique to just one Department or one College. Students from across the University – Nursing & Midwifery students wanting to practice skills prior to placement, Biosciences & Chemistry students wanting labs in-person, Art & Design and Media Arts & Communication students needing access to studios or specialist software, or Management students seeking necessary skill development for future employment prospects – need this level of teaching and support. Across all these Departments was the desire for more support from staff and to be together in person for the practical elements of their course. Without this expert guidance from staff, students might feel ill-equipped and unprepared for placements and/or future employment.

SECTION TWO

WELLBEING

The following section shares findings from our most recent 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey with 1307 respondents. Sheffield Hallam Students' Union also took part in this same survey in the 2017/18 academic year and are now able to make comparisons between the two survey years. This has allowed a direct contrast in a time before Coronavirus was part of our daily lives and to evaluate mental wellbeing and mental health outcomes. Thus, the majority of this section utilises findings from this survey as evidence for recommendations made.

National research with university students has found that student mental wellbeing has declined during the Coronavirus pandemic¹¹ compared to prior to the pandemic. Data from our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey on student mental health and mental wellbeing found an increase of 13 percent of Sheffield Hallam students indicating low overall life satisfaction (from 22 percent low levels of life satisfaction in 2018 to 35 percent low levels of life satisfaction in 2021). Previous research has also found that the Coronavirus pandemic has drastically shifted student behaviours: students are more sedentary, with higher levels of perceived stress and lower levels of mental wellbeing.¹²

The past five Student Voice Reports have all included a section on mental health, with recommendations made to continually provide opportunities for our students to improve their wellbeing. This year, in particular, was a key moment to understand student mental wellbeing which has been impacted by the pandemic, to recognise the University's inherent role in students' lives and livelihoods, and to work together to make things better for our students as we transition together into the next academic year.

LIFE SATISFACTION

Our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey found that, for the majority of respondents (74%, or n=969), the Coronavirus pandemic has had a negative effect on their mental health and wellbeing at university this academic year. Our Officers, Part-Time Reps, and Department Reps have all shared at points throughout the academic year, anecdotally, that they felt student mental wellbeing was declining. In November 2020, we asked our students to share with us their life satisfaction in our regular 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey. We found that 31% of respondents (n=334) had low levels of life satisfaction (indicated 0 to 4 on a 10-point scale), but that these levels had improved from our May 2020 pulse survey (46% indicated low levels of life satisfaction at the start of the pandemic).

As a Students' Union, we have been tracking overall student life satisfaction in different surveys over the past three academic years. As Table 2 displays, overall student life satisfaction has drastically changed at the start of the Coronavirus pandemic from the 'Hallam, How Are You Doing?' survey in May 2020, with slight changes in November 2020 and in January 2021.

11. Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI). (December 2020). In Rachel Hewitt (Ed.), *Students' views on the impact of coronavirus on their higher education experience in 2020/21* (HEPI Policy Note 27 ed.). Accessed on 26 April 2021, from: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2020/12/03/new-poll-finds-a-decline-in-student-mental-health-but-growing-satisfaction-with-online-learning/>

12. Savage, M.J., James, R., Magistro, D., Donaldson, J., Healy L.C., Nevill, M., Hennis, P.J. (2020). Mental health and movement behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in UK university students: Prospective cohort study. *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, 19, 1-6. Accessed from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2020.100357>

Table 2: Overall life satisfaction on a scale of 0 (extremely unsatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied), from November 2017 to January 2021

Survey Name and Date	Very High 9-10	High 7-8	Medium 5-6	Low 0-4
'Being Well, Doing Well' Survey, November 2017 (n=551)	7%	44%	28%	22%
Sport & Physical Activity Survey, January 2019 (n=1538)	14%	47%	19%	20%
'Hallam, How Are You Doing?' Survey, May 2020 (n=390)	3%	19%	31%	46%
'Hallam, How Are You Doing?' Survey, November 2020 (n=1078)	9%	32%	29%	31%
'Being Well, Doing Well', January 2021 (n=1307)	7%	24%	34%	35%

We also know from 2017/18 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey that Sheffield Hallam students' already report lower levels of overall mental wellbeing compared to other students nationally (of those that responded to the 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey). There are also groups of our student body that are experiencing lower levels of overall mental wellbeing compared to others. Our students that identify as LGBT+ indicated lower levels of overall life satisfaction compared to students that identify as heterosexual (see Figure 6). We want to note that LGBT+ will be used throughout this report as a way to group students that helps us to analyse data easier; this type of grouping does not aim to alienate any student, but rather helps us to aggregate students together where numbers of respondents are very small, so that we can have a better understanding of experiences.

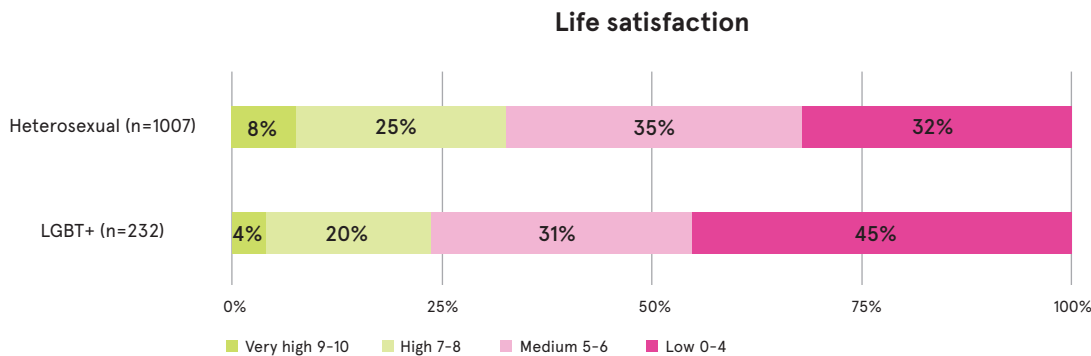


Figure 6: Overall life satisfaction on a scale of 0 (extremely unsatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied), from the 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey in 2021, by sexual orientation.

For many of these students, they are coming into a new environment, some without the influence of family or friends, and are finding their true, authentic voice. For LGBT+ students, previous research has shown that university is often the first point in their lives where they can truly be themselves, because some LGBT+ individuals cannot be open with family.¹³ Our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey also found that LGBT+ respondents were more likely to have had a mental health issue at any point in their life and were also more likely to have had suicidal thoughts during their life. As stated above, LGBT+ students had lower levels of life satisfaction in 2017/18 research and little has changed in 2020/21.

As research from Cybil and Accenture Research¹⁴ have identified, LGBQ and Trans students are one of the most likely groups of students to experience mental health difficulties, with Trans students in particular feeling the most isolated. As the report highlights, targeted support for certain groups is important because of the drastic differences in student mental health and overall wellbeing. Although LGBQ students are some of the most likely to experience mental health difficulties and to then seek out support, they might lack the safe spaces or language to explain how and why they are feeling the way that they are. As we consider the ways the Sheffield Hallam can help this group of students, more work could be done to provide initiatives that are just for students that identify as LGBTQ+. At the Students' Union, we have a designated LGBTQ+ Rep as well as a committee for students to come together; outside of these opportunities, both organisations could do more. Examples of possible initiatives, as identified by Cybil and Accenture, include targeted resilience training to give students the tools to look after their mental health, identifying these students upon admission and ensuring that they received enhanced support, or to encourage academic staff to be aware of signs and to report to a nominated individual should they become worried (as the University of Bristol has).

13. Bachman, C. L., & Gooch, B. (2018). *LGBT in Britain: University report*. Stonewall. Accessed on 27 April 2021, from: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/lgbt-britain-university-report>

14. Cybil; Accenture Research. (2021). *University: The best time of our lives? Accenture*. Accessed n 25 June 2021, from: <https://cibyl.com/cibyl-insights/university-best-time-our-lives>.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

The University and the Students' Union to work together to provide targeted mental wellbeing initiatives to enhance LGBTQ+ student mental health.

STUDENT COMMUNITIES

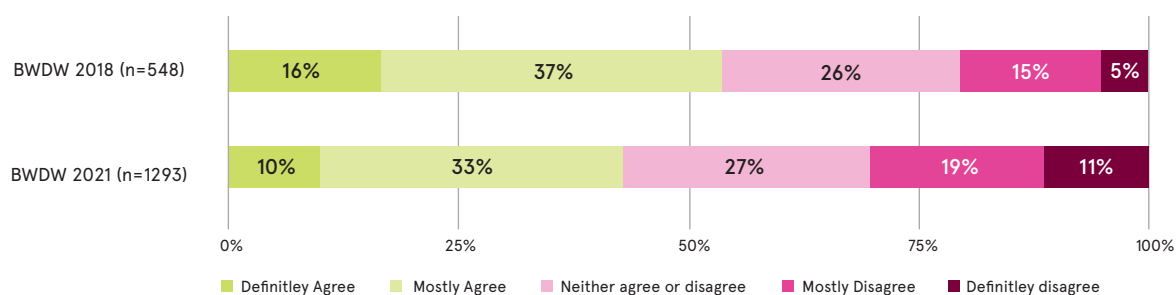
We know that the University and the Students' Union are continuing to work together to provide opportunities to groups of students that are especially impacted by poor mental wellbeing. As mentioned previously, mental wellbeing has declined in the past year due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and, as evidenced above, our sample of students at various points throughout the last three years indicates that low levels of life satisfaction saw a peak May and November 2020. Previous research has also found that an individual's social capital (i.e. the networks and relationships of individuals) has a significant impact on their mental health.¹⁵ As Backhaus (2020)¹⁶ found, an individual low social capital is significantly associated with depression in university students. Opportunities for students to come together in groups where they feel safe, and can be themselves, are important for their overall happiness.

Furthermore, our Officers, Department and Course Reps have all, at one point, found that our students have felt less connected this academic year compared to others. Unsurprisingly, the Coronavirus pandemic has drastically impacted on this and, as discussed above, students that have positive social capital are less likely to have poor mental wellbeing. Figure 7 displays 2018 and the 2021 'Being Well, Doing Well' results; respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree that they feel like a community of staff and students. When looking comparatively at the two years, there was an 11 percent decrease in the percentage of respondents that agreed to this statement in 2021.

15. Rothon, C., Goodwin, L., & Stansfeld, S. (2012). Family social support, community "social capital" and adolescents' mental health and educational outcomes: A longitudinal study in England. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 47, 697-709. doi:DOI 10.1007/s00127-011-0391-7.

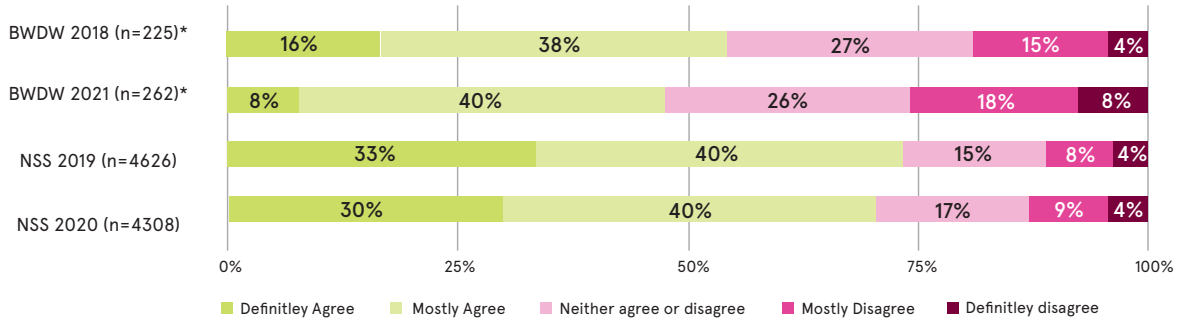
16. Backhaus Insa, Varela Andrea Ramirez, Khoo Selina, Siefken Katja, Crozier Alyson, Begotaraj Edvaldo, Fischer Florian, Wiehn Jascha, Lanning Beth A., Lin Po-Hsiu, Jang Soong-nang, Monteiro Luciana Zaranza, Al-Shamli Ali, La Torre Giuseppe, Kawachi Ichiro. (2020). Associations between social capital and depressive symptoms among college students in 12 countries: Results of a cross-national study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 644. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00644.

Figure 7: Extent of agreement to "I feel like a community of staff and students" from the 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey, by survey year.



Furthermore, data segmented by academic level and year of study from the 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey allows for a more appropriate comparison to the National Student Survey (NSS). This shows a 22 percent decrease between the 2020 NSS and the 2021 'Being Well, Doing Well' results (Figure 8). Whilst comparing populations is undeniably difficult and recognising that the 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey was a self-selected group of students, there are clear indications that students are feeling less like a community than in previous years. Specifically, comparing the 2020 and 2019 NSS results, there is a 3 percent decrease in the percentages of final-year, undergraduate students that felt like a community of staff and students.

Figure 8: Extent of agreement to "I feel like a community of staff and students" comparing responses from the 2021 and 2018 'Being Well, Doing Well' (BWDW) survey and 2020 and 2019 National Student Survey (NSS).
 *Respondents to 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey that indicated they were a 3rd, 4th or 5th year and above undergraduate student.



In addition, our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey also asked various measures related to students' academic experiences and one was the extent to which respondents felt that their lecturers or tutors know who they are. Whilst there were certainly some respondents that indicated they did not know (and these have been removed from analysis), there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents that agreed comparing 2018 and 2021 'Being Well, Doing Well' results (see Figure 9). As a Students' Union, we are worried about the residual impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and any continued reliance on virtual learning for many of our students.

"Most of my lecturers/tutors know who I am"

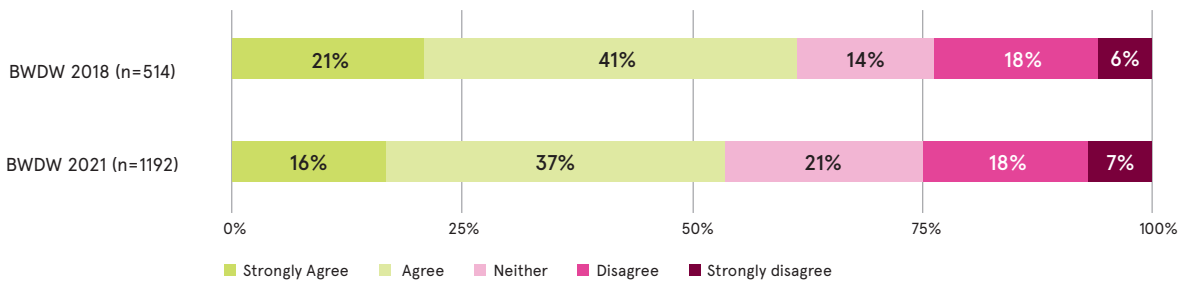


Figure 9: Extent of agreement to statement 'Most of my lecturers/tutors know who I am', by survey year.
 NB: respondents that indicated 'I don't know' have been removed from analysis.

As Jim Dickinson¹⁷ considered, the upcoming academic year is an opportunity for universities to deliver courses that work well for all students. As discussed in Section 1, for students that commute into university, virtual learning has the added benefit of giving these students more time for asynchronous study. For many other students, though, the increased use of virtual learning has meant that the feeling of community and knowing lecturers, tutors, and fellow students is declining. The percentages of respondents by academic level and year of study (see Table 3) shows that current first year, and indeed some second year, undergraduate students feel less like a community of staff and students and/or that their lecturers or tutors know who they are compared to students at higher academic levels.

17. Dickinson, Jim (21 April 2021). Students wants more teaching online. Or do they? WonkHE, Wonk Corner. Accessed on 26 April 2021, from <https://wonkhe.com/wonk-corner/students-want-more-teaching-online-or-do-they>.

Table 3: Percentage of respondents from the 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey, by academic level and year of study, that agree or strongly agree with each statement.

Academic level & year of study	I feel part of a community of staff and students	Most of my lecturers/ tutors know who I am
Foundation year (n=38)	32%	55%
Undergraduate, 1st year (n=365)	33%	41%
Undergraduate, 2nd year (n=267)	39%	46%
Undergraduate, 3rd year (n=209)	49%	54%
Undergraduate, 4th year (n=51)	45%	75%
Postgraduate Taught (n=321)	53%	50%
Postgraduate Research (n=52)	48%	60%

Any courses which encourage continued online learning as the primary way in which students engage with their course, or courses that do not provide opportunities for students to come together, might be detrimental for building relationships. As our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey has shown, the Coronavirus has significantly impacted students' connections with one another, with their course, and with the academic staff that teach them. Whilst a vision for future provisions might be to continue some of the virtual activities, the University should be aware that continued reliance on these methods might have a negative impact. As highlighted in Section 1, blended learning should be considered at a local level – those with practical courses should be provided with those opportunities in-person, safely. This is especially true for first-year, undergraduate students, many of whom might not know their course mates outside of a name on their screen. It is these students, in particular, that need additional support and activities built into the curriculum which will help them to build lasting relationships moving forward.

The University's Future Strategy Programme ambitiously plans for the future sustainability of the University and includes immediate proposals for blended learning for many of our students. As discussed in Section 1, our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey found, 60 percent of all respondents would want blended learning as part of their current or future courses that they are a part of; 32 percent of all students disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. There were also slight differences by College, with 32 percent of respondents from the College of HWLS, 34 percent of respondents from College of SSA, and 28 percent of respondents from the College of BTE disagreeing. With one-third of respondents disagreeing that they would want blended learning on their current or future courses, ensuring that the way that blended learning is delivered and communicated is crucial. For some of these respondents, it could be that a lack of preparation or support on their course this year has tainted their opinion of what blended learning can and should look like. Nonetheless, ensuring that all students, even in a blended learning scenario, are given ample opportunity and time with course mates is crucial to the overall enjoyment and fulfilment of what it means to be a University student.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

The University to ensure that, at a course level, students are provided opportunities to collaborate, whilst future learning allocates this for sense of community to build.

SUPPORT

Our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey also asked students to share their knowledge of various support services available to them. When asked if they would know where to go in the university if they needed mental health support, 37 percent of respondents (n=486) said that they would not know. This is a 10 percent increase from 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey in 2017/18, when only about a quarter (27%) would not know where to go. Segmented by student groups, some of the students that were more likely to know where to go for support were: 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students and students that have a disability. Presumably, this is because these students will have prior knowledge from having accessed or having seen more regular communication from the University or the Students' Union about support available. Sixty percent of first-year undergraduates students said that they would know where to go for support and 67 and 69 percent of third and fourth-year undergraduates, respectively, would know where to go. Furthermore, just over half (55%) agreed that the university has well publicised information about support services available and 46 percent agreed that the Students' Union did.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents that agree (strongly agree and agree) with each corresponding statement, by academic level and year of study.

	My university has well publicised information about mental health support available at my institution	My students' union has well publicised information about mental health support available at my institution	Would you say you know where to go to get mental health support at your university if you needed it?
All Respondents	55%	46%	63%
Foundation year (n=38)	58%	55%	58%
Undergraduate, 1st year (n=365)	55%	41%	60%
Undergraduate, 2nd year (n=267)	47%	46%	66%
Undergraduate, 3rd year (n=209)	53%	54%	67%
Undergraduate, 4th year (n=51)	57%	75%	69%
Postgraduate Taught (n=321)	67%	50%	62%
Postgraduate Research (n=52)	54%	60%	54%



This year, students have had an enormous amount of communications sent to them. This was, unfortunately, one of the only ways that the Students' Union and the University could keep in contact with our students due to a lack of in-person and on campus messaging for many students. Ninety-one percent of respondents to our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey in November 2020 agreed that the University had kept them up-to-date with the latest news and developments. There was, however, a strong theme related to communications which came through the qualitative data; these respondents felt that there was too much communication received, with the majority coming through email. Whilst it is certainly better to receive too much information, rather than not enough, especially when it comes to changes on courses and government guidance with Coronavirus, it could be that students have been missing key messages from the University on support available. Particularly with the focus of the past academic year placed on mitigating problems and an overall more reactive approach, it would be beneficial for many students to receive a more proactive message about support available to them so they know that someone, whether in the Students' Union or University, is available should they need it.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

The University and the Students' Union to work together, during Welcome Back Week and beyond, to re-introduce and publicise the Hallam support offer to ensure that students are always aware of and know how to access support should they need it.

In addition, our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey in April 2021 found that 57 percent of respondents knew and had been in contact with their Academic Advisers. Anecdotally, our Officers have heard from students that when the support triangle is working well, it works extremely well, and this was especially the case for Academic Advisers. When Advisers are dedicated and informed, it provides a safe space for students to share their concerns, to get helpful advice and to be appropriately sign-posted when needed. In addition, our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey found that there was a 10 percent increase in respondents who have never had a mental health issue that would be willing to tell a course lecturer or tutor about their mental health problems, if they had one in the future (39% would be willing in 2021 and 29% would be willing in 2018).

Although there are ample opportunities for students to receive help or self-guided support at the University for their mental health issues or other concerns, students are regularly in contact with academic staff on their course. It is these members of staff that speak to and engage with our students on a day-to-day basis, and it is these individuals that are best placed to understand how our students are doing on an on-going basis. As our research has identified, of respondents that have experienced mental health issue(s) at university, the same percentage of students told their course lecturer or tutors as have told their housemates about their mental

health issue(s) (20% for each). As discussed previously, research from Cybil and Accenture¹⁸ highlighted that the University of Bristol¹⁹ requires students to nominate an individual of their choosing whom the university can contact should there be any concerns for the students' mental health. As an example, the policy at the University of Bristol ensures that the University has students' best interests at heart.

The Wellbeing, Sport & Physical Activity Officer this year worked with the University to ensure that wellbeing links are included on student's Blackboard sites, but we believe that regular contact with course leaders, course tutors, and academic advisers can help to identify students that are especially struggling. Whilst signposting is a fantastic way to ensure that many students are receiving information about services or how to support their own wellbeing, individual contact can and should not be replaced, especially when more students would be willing to share mental health concerns with their tutors.

18. Cybil; Accenture Research. (2021). University: The best time of our lives? Accenture. Accessed on 25 June 2021 from: <https://cibyl.com/cibyl-insights/university-best-time-our-lives>.

19. The University of Bristol. (2021) Allow us to contact your parent or supporter. Accessed on 25 June 2021 from: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/support/wellbeing/policies/emergency-contact/>.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

The University to ensure that students are provided with information about ways to look after their wellbeing directly from academic staff that they are in regular contact with.



BEING A STUDENT IN 2021

SECTION THREE

As highlighted throughout this report, the Coronavirus has substantially impacted young people and students. Whilst student finances prior to the pandemic were unstable for some, the pandemic has created a rift between people with strong financial and social capital and those without. As a National Union of Students (NUS) survey on accommodation and finances has found, just over a quarter of respondents said that the Coronavirus has had a major impact on their income.

We have seen our students come together during a time where connectedness and community on campus were at their lowest. In April 2020, our students' demanded a safety net to ensure that the grades they worked so hard for in the 2019/20 academic year were protected after the initial impact of the pandemic. Then, our students' worked with the Students' Union to implement the Fairer Outcomes Policy, which took into consideration the difficulties of learning during this time and found measures that provided assistance where students might need it. In addition, the experience that many of our students thought they were going to have this academic year has also meant that, for our students' that moved to Sheffield with the expectation of on-campus learning, some students participated in a rent strike campaign. Therefore, the following section explores student finances, student accommodation, and how the Students' Union can continue to improve the representation system. This section utilises data collected from our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey in November 2020, as well as from the 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey. We also briefly discuss the Students' Union's role in representation and what the results from our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey reveal.

FINANCES

As the NUS survey²¹ on finances and accommodation found, around 40 percent of respondents sought financial support from family and 15 percent found respite in their institution's hardship fund. Similar, at the onset of the pandemic and throughout the 2020/21 academic year, Sheffield Hallam adjusted the eligibility criteria for the Hallam Hardship Fund and increased the number of students that received help through the Student Success Scholarship (where most received a minimum bursary and this more than doubled). Sheffield Hallam also provided food parcels for self-isolating students throughout the pandemic and offered Emergency Vouchers for students that needed food, toiletries, or other personal items.²²

Furthermore, only 38 percent of respondents to our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey in November 2020 agreed or strongly agreed that they would be able to afford additional costs associated with their course if they needed to pay for it. We also found that respondents from the UK, compared to International and EU students, were much more likely to indicate that they are stressed or worried about finances (18% difference between the percentages that agree they are rarely stressed or worried about finances). Our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey found, however, that there was a slight decrease in the percentages of students that felt that managing money caused stress while at university comparing 2017/18 results to 2020/21. As Figure 10 displays, 23 percent of respondents in 2020/21 said that managing money causes stress rarely or none of the time (and 21 percent of respondents in 2017/18 said this).

21. The National Unions of Students (NUS). Coronavirus student survey phase 4: March 2020. student finance and employment. (2021). The National Unions of Students (NUS) Insight. Accessed on 24 May 2021, from: <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/nus-uk/coronavirus-covid-19-hub/our-research/phase-4-reports>

22. Sheffield Hallam University. (2021). Financial Difficulties. Accessed on 2 June, from: <https://students.shu.ac.uk/shuspacecontent/finance/financial-difficulties>

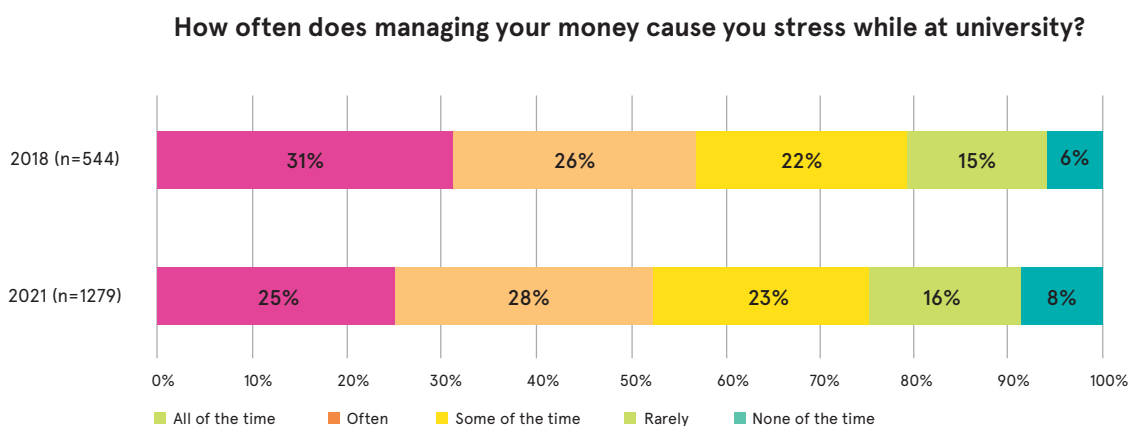


Figure 10: Difference between stress levels from managing money in 2018 and 2021 Alterline 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey respondents.

The reactive initiatives put in place due to the pandemic has undoubtedly helped many students. Qualitative comments from students received throughout the pandemic indicate that the some of this funding helped our students pay for a laptop so they could continue learning from home or other supplies. As we transition out of this pandemic, we should continue to monitor how our students are managing their finances to ensure that individuals that are struggling understand where and how to access financial help and support.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

The University and the Students' Union continue to monitor student financial needs to ensure that those that need help the most are aware of hardship funding.



ACCOMMODATION

Our 'Hallam, How Are You?' survey in November 2020 found that students were feeling isolated and that their university accommodation was not what they expected it to be. As was discussed in Section 1, the university experience this year has not been what many students expected it to be. As our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey in April 2021 found, only 22 percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that it was what they expected. Furthermore, our research found that, for those in student accommodation, this has been a major issue. Furthermore, our 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey found that, in comparison to respondents in 2018, there was a rise in the percentages that are sometimes or always stressed due to their living conditions (see Figure 11).



How often do the living conditions in your accommodation or home cause you stress while at university?

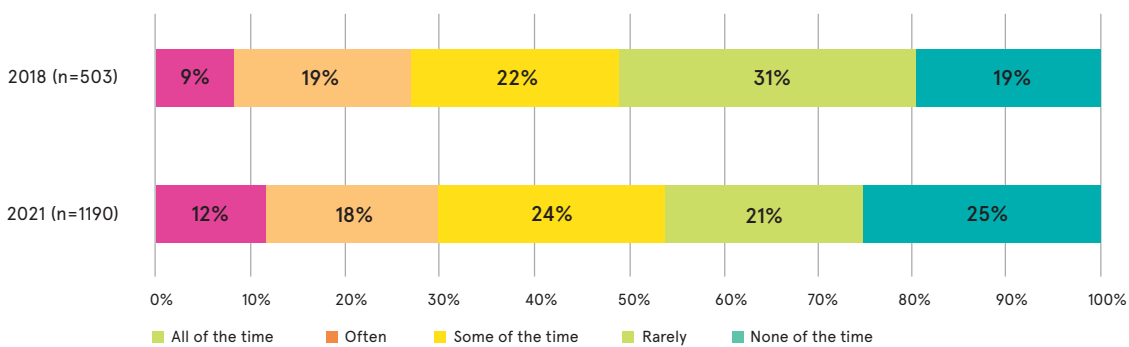


Figure 11: Difference between stress levels from living conditions in 2018 and 2021 Alterline 'Being Well, Doing Well' survey respondents.

“I have been living at home for weeks now at first due to the covid levels in Sheffield and now due to the national lockdown. I think that the university should speak with their accommodation providers about some money back for the first term. Many students including myself are paying for accommodation that we aren’t using and due to the job market at the moment many of us are finding it hard to find part time work. I found that my loan doesn’t cover my accommodation costs and due to covid I can’t get a job so have no way of getting out of my overdraft currently.”

In December 2020 and January 2021, some of our students worked together to create their own SHU Rent Strike – a local collective petition to support the reduction in rent costs and refund of fees from this academic year.²³ Our students felt that the compounded effect of lack of or no on-campus teaching, alongside the expensive student accommodation costs, has meant that many are generally unsatisfied with their experience this year. The continued national lockdowns imposed by the UK government has meant that, for students that returned home during the December breaks to stay with family or friends, moving back into accommodation was not allowed under government law. This also meant that these students were paying for their accommodation when they might not have needed to, had they known what the future would entail. Our Union Council passed a policy in support of the rent strike which resolved to stand in solidarity with those students withholding or for those unable to pay their rent and to lobby the University to meet demands. Particularly where issues might continue into the next academic year, such as students who have experienced harassment or assault within their accommodation, the Students’ Union will continue to work to ensure that our students no longer experience this.

“There are too many parties and flat sharing going on which is going unreported or nothing is being done about it so I have ended up moving home, so I am paying rent for somewhere which is unsafe to live in”

As the NUS & Unipol (2018) found that students are paying 73% on average of their maximum available cash from grants and loans on rent each month, a rise of 15% from 2012/13.²⁴ Furthermore, this same survey found that rent rises have increased by at least 5 percent each year since the survey introduction in 2012, which is faster than RPI (retail price index). Students living in private provided, rather than institutionally provided, accommodation paid more on average across the UK. Whilst these rises in accommodation costs are significant, the way in which the university experience was promoted to students meant that what they expected from this year – including their course, their finances and accommodation, and their socialising opportunities – were not anticipated. With planning the 2021/22 and future academic years, the information communicated to students about what they can expect from their course is crucial for overall satisfaction.

23. Rent Strike. Accessed on 2 June 2021, from: <https://www.rent-strike.org>

24. Unipol Student Homes & National Union of Students (2018). Accommodation Costs Survey. Accessed on 2 June 2021, from: <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/nus-and-unipol-accommodation-cost-survey-2018-full-report>

The SNUG scheme, which works to ensure that students get high quality, properly managed accommodation, so that their time in Sheffield is both safe and enjoyable. In thinking about accommodation issues that might occur in future academic years, we believe that this scheme should be promoted by both the University and the Students' Union and that students are made aware of what options they have when their accommodation is not what they expected. Furthermore, the Students' Union can work to improve general student knowledge about accommodation and how they can get involved to improve their and other students' experiences.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

The Students' Union to launch a University-wide campaign on student housing rights, sharing information about their rights and where to access support if they need it.

STUDENTS' UNION

This past academic year has seen the Students' Union transition into a new Officer model including: President; International Students' Officer; College of Business, Technology & Engineering Officer; College of Health, Wellbeing & Life Sciences Officer; College of Social Sciences & Arts Officer; and Wellbeing, Sport & Physical Activity Officer. The creation of 3 College Officers has also meant that the Students' Union can represent and act on issues that arise within each College, rather than the previous remit of the whole University under the Education Officer. Our 'Hallam, How Are We Doing?' survey found that 52 percent of respondents were aware of the Officer Team, though only 8 percent had accessed support directly from them.

Positively, 71 percent of respondents indicated that they are aware the Students' Union is responsible for student representation. Yet, just over a third (37%) strongly agreed or agreed that the Students' Union effectively represents students' views to the university, though only 9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In addition, 42 percent of respondents to this same survey agreed or strongly agreed that the Students' Union understands the needs of Hallam students.

Whilst there have been some benefits that the pandemic has brought to the ways in which students' from different groups (e.g. those that commute) have been able to effectively engage with their studies, the Officer Team, namely the College Officers, have all felt that they have been less able to connect with students. Casual campus drop-ins and seeing a student that you represent whilst walking around has been replaced with Zoom meetings and scheduled discussions with groups of students. This is not indifferent to how many of our students, and indeed staff, are feeling generally about the pandemic – it has enabled work to be done more efficiently, but it has also dampened our ability to connect with one another in more natural ways. Instead of seeing a friend or colleague on campus, we now schedule times to meet via Zoom or on other video calls.

A Union is a place for individuals to collectively come together, to share their experiences, and to feel that their opinions are represented. At the local level, this type of representation has certainly been happening this academic year through Course and Department Reps. As with the introduction of the new Officer Model, the Students' Union has employed 17 students as Department Reps to ensure that issues are heard and acted upon at Department level. The feedback pyramid, where students speak to Course Reps, who then speak with Department Reps, and so on, appears to be improving. As the 2021 Course Rep Survey has found, 81 percent of respondents were aware of who their Department Rep was (compared to 52 percent of respondents who were aware of who their College Officer was).

Where the representation system is less effective might be in the areas where staff are less invested or interested in involving students in their work. Though there are numerous benefits of co-creating work with students and Student Reps, there might be some University staff that are unaware of these benefits. Initial feedback from University staff have found that, where staff embrace their Department Reps or other student representatives, the benefits reverberate throughout the College. As one member of staff mentioned about the Department Rep in their area, "[They] approached the role with dedication, integrity and has shown how students and staff can work together towards a common goal. [Their] approach has convinced staff that having an effective Dept Rep is essential to the smooth and effective running of the department."

We know that by continuing to build these relationships – between staff, students, and Officers – student representation and student voice work will only further improve. Data, however, tells us that there is still work that needs to happen to ensure that the student body understand, are involved in, and contribute to their Union, even in small ways. Not every student will be interested in consistent engagement with their Students' Union, our 2025 Strategic Plan places outstanding representation at the heart of our organisational goals. Every student cares about their education and we're here to make sure that their voices continue to be heard.

RECOMMENDATION 13:

The Students' Union to continue to work on its new strategy and ambition to deliver outstanding representation, working with the University to further develop the representation system and ensure that accountable personnel are allocated within Colleges and Departments.

CONCLUSION

As we move into the next academic year, the University and the Students' Union should consider what has worked for our students: the availability of digital learning materials, the satisfaction levels of commuter students, continuing to provide funding for students that need it most; and to rebuild aspects of the student experience that have been impacted due to the pandemic: the relationships between students and academic staff, the course community, and the practical aspects of certain courses.

As evidenced throughout this report, most damaging perhaps was the lack of course cohesion and sense of community across staff and students. The impact that this lack has had on many aspects of the student experience was unexpected and has likely influenced student mental wellbeing and overall happiness more than we had anticipated. Our research has also found that student opinions and preference for virtual learning is different dependent on student circumstances. Some of our commuter students, for example, preferred the way that teaching was delivered this year, likely due to their ability to connect with education at times that were suitable for them without difficult timetables or rush of traffic. There were students, however, for whom connecting digitally was difficult, such as students from disadvantaged backgrounds who might have struggled to access technology.

Whilst the upcoming academic year does have unknowns, we have learnt that there are teaching methods and ways of interacting with students that do work well. We hope that any blended learning approaches moving forward provide opportunities for these positive benefits to continue. As with any learning opportunity, we should remember what our Course and Department Representatives and our Officers said worked well this year, and work to improve or drastically change any that which has not. We also hope that students are provided with many more occasions at the course level, and of course through Students' Union social and extracurricular activities and opportunities, to get to know other students. The Coronavirus pandemic has meant that some aspects of this year were reactive, rather than proactive, and that the good practice which has previously been adopted as means for student engagement have disappeared. We know that offering these opportunities organised for students, in the University and the Students' Union, will help to foster these relationships again.

For all the benefits that digital enhancement has to offer us and our students, there is no replication that individual contact and personalised approach can replace. Our hope is that any blended approach to delivery and work in future takes a balanced approach to this – for our staff and, most importantly, for our students.

APPENDIX A: DATA SOURCES

Source	Date(s)	No. of responses
<p>Being Well, Doing Well' Survey (2020/21)</p> <p>This survey asked students questions related to their mental health and mental wellbeing, including life satisfaction, participation in extracurricular activities, and awareness of university services. This survey is externally run by Alterline.</p>	<p>25 January to 8 March 2021</p>	<p>1307</p>
<p>Being Well, Doing Well' Survey (2017/18)</p> <p>This survey asked students questions related to their mental health and mental wellbeing, including life satisfaction, participation in extracurricular activities, and awareness of university services. This survey is externally run by Alterline.</p>	<p>23 October to 20 November 2017</p>	<p>551</p>
<p>SHU Pulse Survey</p> <p>This survey was administered by SETL and asks about students' experiences of teaching and learning in October 2020.</p>	<p>15 to 22 October 2020</p>	<p>2599</p>
<p>Hallam, How Are You Doing?' Survey (May 2020)</p> <p>This survey asked students about their teaching and learning experiences at the start of the Coronavirus pandemic.</p>	<p>13 to 31 May 2020</p>	<p>1160</p>
<p>Hallam, How Are You Doing?' Survey (November 2020)</p> <p>This survey asked students about their teaching and learning, finances, placements, and opinions of SHU/SHSU communication due to the Coronavirus pandemic.</p>	<p>9 to 21 November 2020</p>	<p>1123</p>

Source	Date(s)	No. of responses
<p>Hallam, How Are We Doing? Survey (April 2021)</p> <p>This survey was split into 2 sections: the first asked students to reflect on teaching and learning in the 2020/21 academic year and the second asked students their opinions and thoughts on the Students' Union's services and offers.</p>	<p>12 to 9 May 2021</p>	<p>1160</p>
<p>SHSU Sport & Physical Activity Survey</p> <p>This survey from 2019 asked students about their level of physical activity and sport involvement, as well as a general life satisfaction measure. This survey was used as evidence in Section 2 of this report on Wellbeing.</p>	<p>26 to 21 February 2019</p>	<p>1538</p>
<p>2021 Course Rep Survey</p> <p>This short survey asked 2020/21 Course Reps to provide feedback about how they found their role, including what went well and what could have been improved. The 2021 version had additional questions about opinions related to Department Reps.</p>	<p>18 May to 20 June 2021</p>	<p>209</p>
<p>Listening to the experiences of students on top up courses at SHU</p> <p>This qualitative research sought to explore feelings of belonging, level of support, and overall experiences of students on top up courses. This research was approved by SHU ethics, Converis number ER31010691.</p>	<p>20 April to 15 May 2021</p>	<p>11</p>

APPENDIX B: UPDATES FROM 2019/20 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following shares the recommendations made in the 2019/20 Student Voice Report and the progress updates from the University and/or the Students' Union, dependent on who is responsible. Whilst the shortened paragraphs provide a snapshot of the progress, if you would like to read the full progress, please go the hallamstudentsunion.com for full updates.

Recommendation	Responsibility		Response	Progress
	SHU	SHSU		
The Student's 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.	●	●	As part of changes to the Officer roles implemented in Sheffield Hallam Students' Union for the 2020/21 academic year, each College has a Sabbatical Officer. The role and remit of Department Reps was amended to reflect the change from this being a voluntary role to a paid one, funded by the Students' Union. Membership of the Student Rep Steering Group (SRSG) has been changed accordingly, and new Department and College Student Boards have been established. The Students' Union and University are continuing to collaborate on delivering the changes made to the Department Representative role, the new Officer Structure, and the newly introduced Student Board. In particular, the Students' Union and the University, through the SRSG, are reviewing activities with major stakeholders of the system to make recommendations and changes for the next academic year.	Completed, ongoing
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	●	●	SHU's Estates and Facilities Teams continue to engage with the Students' Union to develop suitable spaces for the SU to use within college areas where there is high footfall. Plans were underway to provide this for students, but the pandemic has meant that this work stream is slightly delayed. Areas have now been identified and plans progressing for being able to implement this approach from Semester 1 2021/22.	Completed, ongoing

Recommendation	Responsibility		Response	Progress
	SHU	SHSU		
The Student's 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.	●	●	University (through DTS) have implemented MS Teams as a platform to support student feedback processes. All students on courses with more than 4 people are enrolled on MS Teams with their cohort, and each Team has a channel labelled Student Voice. The SU is about to embed its new 5-year strategy, which has "outstanding representation" as a central objective and is implementing a major staffing structure to complement this and its new Officer structure. The SU is using this opportunity to look holistically at the resources and digital technology it will need to invest in to enable them to achieve this, whilst remaining mindful of the current Representation and student voice activity that this ongoing. Data sharing still remains an issue that the University and the Students' Union are working on improving and has been recommended in the 2020/21 Student Voice Report.	Some progress, ongoing
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.	●	●	The SU officers worked with the Wellbeing Service Early Interventions and Wellbeing Promotion lead in Student Wellbeing to coordinate an annual calendar of awareness raising event. A Student Wellbeing Working Group was re-instated to look at issues relevant to this area on a regular basis, this included responding to feedback from student reps in Colleges. Work is still underway to embed wellbeing throughout the University, rather than this as solely the remit of the University's Wellbeing Team. There is also potential for a working group to be set up to consider the issues and activities. There has been a joint approach to campaigns and awareness events throughout the academic year.	Some progress, ongoing

Recommendation	Responsibility		Response	Progress
	SHU	SHSU		
The Students' Union to work with local charities to increase volunteering, internships, and placement opportunities within the third sector across the Sheffield City Region.		●	An important part of the Students' Union 2025 Strategic Plan is generating student learning and employment through engaging with the regional community. This will include: establishing the SU as a broker between the charity sector in Sheffield for student work placements, job, or volunteering and to create a Charity Development Board to identify the key social issues and social action projects for students to get involved in. Though this recommendation is for the Students' Union, the Directorate of Business, Enterprise Skills and Employability (BESE) continued to work with the Student Union to support voluntary work experience which compliments in-curriculum work experience. They continued collaboration for the Hallam Award, providing flexibility in response to COVID-19. The implementation of the Highly Skilled Employment commitment had huge impacts on the accessibility for all students to work experience in all its forms.	Some progress, ongoing
The University and the Students' Union to improve the promotion of opportunities for mature or postgraduate research student groups.	●	●	The Student Services and the Student Union have worked more closely to ensure that Mature students receive a positive experience during their time at SHU. They ran a joint a virtual 'Mature Students Welcome' happened in September. This was broken down by Colleges, and they had representation from Student Support Advisers and the College Officers. In addition to 'welcoming' the students, one of the main focuses promoted the opportunities and services available to students. From January 2021, an improved and updated our mature students' website, which is now fully up and running. This has links to a wide range of University services. Success has been made within the Students' Union's Union Council was made ensuring that mature students are properly represented within discussions around the awarding of the Student Success Scholarship.	Completed, ongoing

Recommendation	Responsibility		Response	Progress
	SHU	SHSU		
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.	●		Team Hallam remain committed to reviewing its membership costs and payment plans to ensure cost is not a prohibitive factor to participation. Team Hallam membership is already subsidised heavily by the University to allow students to take part, so a payment plan adds additional complication and needs more time to be scoped and worked through.	No progress, ongoing
The University and the Students' Union to review the speed and accessibility of the University's Wellbeing Services and to make improvements where needed to ensure that students are able to access support.	●	●	Student Wellbeing streamlined their registration and appointment processes. A minimum daily number of contact telephone appointments were available to all students who register with the service. A daily online drop-in for self-isolating students was piloted and, if successful, to be rolled out to all students. The University and the Students Union have worked together to host a number of high profile 'speaker events' to increase interest and engagement with proactive wellbeing information and to raise awareness of key messages, these have been well attended and positively received. The Wellbeing and Student Services Team are currently reviewing student feedback about accessibility and speed of service and are continuing to work on this.	Some progress, ongoing
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.	●		The increase of online learning resulted in the development of a number of resources for students supporting their skills development to support their digital engagement. A number of student experience enhancement projects are also exploring student co-design, partnership and feedback, and the outcomes of these projects. College-level consultation has been happening throughout the year on an ad-hoc basis, as well as a number of institution wide surveys conducted by SETL or the Students' Union's research team. The findings of this can be found in the 2020/21 Student Voice Report.	Completed, ongoing

Recommendation	Responsibility		Response	Progress
	SHU	SHSU		
The Students' Union to conduct a larger-scale research project which explores course non-attendance factors which affect Hallam students.		●	Due to the ongoing pandemic and the unknown impact that this might have had on student attendance in comparison to pre-COVID teaching and learning, the Students' Union has decided to put this research project on hold and move this recommendation into the upcoming academic year. There might likely be factors which impact on student attendance throughout the pandemic that are out of the student and the university control. We do look forward to conducting this research project as soon as it is appropriate to do so.	Not completed, ongoing
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.	●	●	Sport Hallam remained committed to providing some free and low-cost sport and physical activity provision to our student population. The Union and sports department are still committed to supporting an element of free and low cost sporting activities. The current climate has disrupted our ability to do so for the majority of this academic year, but it remains something they plan to do. They have further been supporting a range of online initiatives to encourage students to be active whether that has been walking routes, activity challenges or fitness classes.	Some progress, ongoing

Recommendation	Responsibility		Response	Progress
	SHU	SHSU		
<p>The University to implement the use of lecture capture in the 2020/21 academic year to enhance the quality of online provision.</p>	●		<p>Lecture Capture was implemented across the University for the start of teaching in 20/21. Panopto software was installed and is available to staff through AppsAnywhere and Blackboard, bringing features such as automatic generation of subtitles. Integration with Zoom has been completed. Students are now able to access Panopto through Blackboard to create their own content, providing a seamless submission process. A Code of Practice has been developed and webcams and microphones installed in appropriate teaching spaces.</p>	Completed, ongoing
<p>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.</p>	●	●	<p>In 19/20 the university worked closely with officers to target funding during the early pandemic response. This resulted in our strong offers around shopping/ food support (2,000 instances), digital poverty support (£800k spent) and targeted hardship funding. Over the summer they continued to work with the SU on a new range of targeted funding measures for 20/21 with new bursaries designed for disabled students, estranged students, carers, pre-entry students from disadvantaged backgrounds (SHU progress) and BAME students. From January 2021, the university has worked with the SU officers to distribute £3.8m of funding so far this year and have committed to working in partnership with them to agree priority distribution of any further monies.</p>	Completed, ongoing

TO SHEFFIELD HALLAM STUDENTS,

We know that this academic year has been difficult. As your Students' Union, we want all student voices at Hallam to be heard. This report is a snapshot in time and allows us space to reflect on how the year has gone. Perhaps this year more than ever you were asked to provide feedback, or fill in a survey, or join a focus group, because that is how much student opinion matters. If you took time to share with us how you were feeling this year through one of our surveys, or encouraged your friends to tell us, thank you. Without your responses, we wouldn't be able to represent you the way that we have this year or to compile this report. We really couldn't have done it without you. Every student has an opinion – no matter how big or small – and we want you to share it with us.

We hope that this report and the recommendations enclosed provide some necessary changes that you, your friends, your course mates at Hallam, have all been wanting to see.

As your Students' Union, we will be here for years to come to listen to what you have to say and to work with the University to make beneficial changes happen. If you want to tell us what you think, visit us at hallamstudentsunion.com, keep an eye out for our monthly Student Voice Newsletter for updates, or contact your Students' Union Officers, Department Rep, or Course Rep.

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