

Hull University Union's Annual Student Written Submission 2011



Foreword



The 2010/11 academic year has been an extremely successful one for Hull University Union. We have committed to working in partnership with the University of Hull and we are starting to see the fruits of our collaborative efforts. I guess the overall successes of the year have been epitomised by our recent Students' Union Evaluation Initiative Gold Award. I am extremely proud of everything that the HUU Education Zone has achieved this year, particularly given the pressures being placed on Higher Education at the moment as well as various other challenges we've needed to overcome.

The advancement in the quality of education and academic welfare of our members is the fundamental object of Hull University Union and is becoming increasingly important within our strategy and our internal objectives. Our annual Student Written Submission recognises this commitment and is used to coordinate and summarise what students believe to be the key issues at the institution over the past year. Within this document, we have added recommendations as to how Hull University Union believes such issues should be addressed. It is hoped that the University of Hull will proactively engage with this document and work with Hull University Union to collectively tackle the issues that we have raised.

For the purpose of this foreword, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on what a year it's been, what we've achieved and the challenges that we have faced.

Student engagement is becoming increasingly important in the Higher Education sector. Hull University Union is committed to working in partnership with the University of Hull to improve the modes and systems of student engagement that we believe will ultimately improve the student experience at this institution.

Our key mode of student engagement is through our Course Representation system. In 2010/11 we managed to successfully elect 449 Course Reps, of which 271 received training and at our first Academic Council we had over 120 students attending, advocating academic issues, feeding into campaigns and feeding back on University policies. The minutes of our Academic Councils have regularly been sent to the University Learning Teaching and Assessment Committees and have been used as a feedback mechanism on various academic issues.

This year, we have seen significant increase in awareness of the Course Rep system, with now over 91% of students knowing what the system is and over 66% of students knowing who their individual departmental Course Rep is. This is most likely through our extensive promotion of the opportunities available. We worked tirelessly throughout the first 4 weeks of Semester 1 to promote the system. We gave out over 2,000 Course Rep flyers at the Welcome Bazaars, I personally gave over 30 lecture shouts and we had posters in every single department in both Hull and Scarborough. We also led follow up publicity campaigns urging students to speak to their Course Reps. We had A0 posters in places like the library and the lawns centre with Course Reps' contact details on. Finally, we have seen the adoption of initiatives such as our Course Rep wristbands and hoodies – these have been great in helping students to feel part of a community and to be recognised on and off campus.

Next year, we are hoping to gain access to the University's academic information system. This centralised system would make the delivery of the Course Rep system much smoother enabling departments to instantaneously upload Course Reps on to a joint system. We would then be able to monitor attendance of Course Reps and differentiate between who our 'good' reps are and who our 'bad' reps are (linking in well to the HEAR project). Finally, we can gain access to student's photographs and potentially have photos of Course Reps, along with contact details, in every department.

Last year, we were involved with creating a new code of practice on our student representation system. Following the changes we have made to the system, I now firmly believe that we can take student representation into the new era of higher education and the challenges and uncertainty that awaits us. This is illustrated by my manifesto pledge to have 'the best student representation system with the highest levels of student engagement in the world.' This will be benchmarked by the NUS/HEA student representation benchmarking tool.

Our campaigns this year were entirely based on the wants and needs of our membership. Through research and evidence gathering, our library campaign engaged over 4,000 students studying at the University of Hull. Nearly all of our research on students pointed us towards an underlying dissatisfaction regarding the aesthetics and functionality of the Brynmor Jones Library. We visited other institutions from the sector, to see what services their libraries offered to their students. We compiled all of this into a campaign video, which I unveiled at the University's Annual Learning and Teaching Conference. This video is available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkvgGiWvqsU>. We then created a paper which comprehensively illustrated all of our research on students related to the Library and made a number of both short term and long term recommendations. Ultimately, the University welcomed our campaign and it has resulted in a £20 Million investment. I am very much looking forward to the planning and design of the redeveloped library in the coming months.

Our second annual student conference was a big success. The title of the event was 'the future of higher education and the growing importance of student engagement.' Over 70 students were in attendance and speakers included our Vice-Chancellor, our University Senior Management Team, Derfel Owen from the QAA, Usman Ali and Alex Bols from the NUS and Aidan Mersh HUU President. It was an opportunity for students to debate issues, ask questions and take part in interactive workshops. Our feedback in running this event was highly positive and we are already thinking about how we can improve for next year.

Hull University Union took an active role in the promotion of the National Student Survey this year. We had balloons all around the University House building with pop-up banners, posters, flyers, stickers and pens all being used to urge students to fill in the survey. I also sporadically ventured out of my office with an ipad, asking students to spare 10 minutes of their time. I even delivered inspirational speeches to the slumberous students queuing over-night for End of Year Ball Tickets. The NSS is definitely something that HUU sees as increasingly important in the future given the introduction of the KIS and our new found stake in its validity.



Next year, we have had ideas of creating NSS barometers and employing students to promote in our lobby with laptops. HEFCE and NUS have recently appointed me as an NSS ambassador for the North East region and I am hoping that we can lead the sector in the use of the NSS and its publicity.

Quality assurance has been an area of growing student participation over the last few years. This year, student officers were involved on the panel of periodic reviews of departments and the feedback that we have received so far is that our participation has been highly useful. Myself and the ERC were also highly involved in this year's QAA Collaborative Provision Audit. We somehow managed to find time to visit 5 out of the 6 local FE Colleges and held focus groups with their University of Hull HE students. We found this experience highly useful and we have made the commitment to visit the colleges annually to keep a check on issues. Our SWS for the audit was well researched and instrumental in providing a student voice to a cohort of students which can easily be overlooked.

Our Education Survey this year managed to attract 620 respondents. This is a much larger sample than the 245 respondents last year. HUU feels that this is statistically significant and should be seen as a true and accurate representation of students at the University of Hull. However, next year, we are taking measures to pool resources into a reduced number of surveys spaced out over a longer period of time throughout the year. The Education Survey will be given a much larger focus next year and our KPI is for it to receive at least 1,200 respondents.

HUU also had some rather big wins in terms of Assessment Feedback. Feeding in to the working group, we were able to ensure that feedback should take no longer than four semester weeks; it must be legible, students must be entitled to further guidance upon request and it must be linked to learning outcomes of the module. We have also been pushing the University to commit to a universal policy for late submission and we are hopeful that this will be implemented in time for the coming academic year.

I am very proud to have been re-elected to the role of VP Education and I personally look forward to taking the Education Zone above and beyond what we have already achieved. I have the same passion and desire as I had 12 months ago and I look forward to a challenging but highly successful year.

Finally, special thanks must go to Lee Fallin, whose work this year has been nothing short of outstanding. His passion in improving all aspects of the Education Zone has been fundamental to our successes. I very much look forward to another year of working together and hope we can build on what is already a brilliant Students' Union.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Barrow'.

Matthew Barrow
VP Education.

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PLEASE NOTE! Use of the statistics, data and information provided in this document does not amount to full student consultation for any project.

HUU should be consulted on any use of this document and the data herein.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

As part of our commitment to enhancing our members' student experience and education Hull University Union (HUU), your union, has pledged to produce an annual written submission. This submission will stand as summary of the issues you have experienced across a whole range of services, resources and means of academic support, as well as departmental issues, teaching quality and feedback. Each section contains recommendations which will be put to the University and we will work with them to draft an action plan to deliver change.



This submission is only possible due to the thousands of students who have supported HUU research throughout the last year and to our Course Representatives who have worked tirelessly all year to represent your views to both the Union and the University. This chapter will provide a comprehensive introduction to the purpose of the submission, as well as a full overview of our research, methods and resources.

Purpose

The content and structure of this submission draw on the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) institutional audit process. These audits scrutinise the management of quality and standards at Higher Education (HE) institutions and include a student written submission to provide the student perspective on these issues.

HUU's pledge to produce an annual student written submission means that student issues will be raised with the University each year rather than forming part of an audit which is only produced approximately every five years. These audits are carried out by a team of academics who review the institution's quality and standards, using their knowledge of higher education and reference points in the Academic Infrastructure. After each audit, QAA publishes a report on the audit team's findings.

We hope the University will continue to work with us to address the key issues arising from this report. Improving the student experience forms a fundamental part of HUU's work and this has never been more pressing than during this period of rising tuition fees and student expectations. The submission includes 109 recommendations. These are clearly marked in the bubbles and are badged as either short-term [ST] or long-term [LT] actions. HUU suggests these recommendations be used as the starting points for effecting change and we look forward to working with both service and academic departments to address these issues.

Research Methodology

Broad research bases were used to identify key issues and then more focused studies were conducted on those areas. This approach ensures that the report is founded on research made in real problem areas rather than in areas where we assume there are problems. Consideration has also been given to the QAA's guidelines on the accuracy of published information, student experience, student voice/representation and academic expectations of students (QAA, 2009). This report has been structured using headings that relate to specific service areas or policies and themes. It should be noted however that the research undertaken did not always follow these rigid headings but was far more open and organic.

Evidence used to write the SWS

This submission has been produced using extensive qualitative and quantitative data. We have predominantly used Primary Sources. In these cases this data has been collected by HUU but we have also made use of secondary data collected by key stakeholders in the University such as Library and Learning Innovation (LLI), Learning and Teaching Support Unit (LTSU) and academic departments. All primary quantitative data has been inputted and analysed using PASW Statistics (formerly SPSS) and or Microsoft Office Excel. The majority of qualitative data has been coded and analysed using a mixture of Nvivo and traditional methods.

Unless otherwise specified, all graphs within this submission are from the Education Survey 2011

- **Academic Council minutes**

Academic Council is a forum for Course Representatives to discuss academic issues. Over the 2010-11 academic year three Academic Councils took place on the Hull campus (HUU, 2010; HUU, 2011; HUU, 2011) and two in Scarborough (HUU, 2010; HUU, 2011).

- **Collaborative Provision SWS and focus groups**

This academic year included a QAA institutional audit for collaborative provision. The QAA welcomes a student written submission (SWS) from the Students' Union (SU) as a contribution to the audit process (QAA, 2007). For the first time, HUU produced a SWS for a collaborative provision audit (HUU, 2010) and it was welcomed by both the university and the audit team. An action plan has been drafted from this.

- **Direct student comments, emails, issues and eBridge discussions.**

The VPE and many HUU staff, particularly the ERC and Advice Centre team, deal with education issues of students on a daily basis. This group used its extensive experience in dealing with academic queries to contribute to this document.

- **Education Survey**

The Education Survey was completed by a total of 620 respondents across both campuses. The survey and questions were constructed using standard social science qualitative and quantitative methods (Flowerdew & Martin, 2005; Valentine & Clifford, 2010) and care was taken in the construction of these questions to ensure they were specific, purposeful and targeted. HUU published an interim report, including the qualitative details of the Education Survey and this submission will address (for the first time) the qualitative data from this survey (HUU, 2011).

- **End of Year Staff-Student Committee (SSC) reports**

All departmental SSCs are required to produce an End of Year Report summarizing the issues they have dealt with over the year.

- **Feedback and assessment focus groups**

HUU helped facilitate focus groups on feedback and assessment.

- **HUU Advice Centre statistics and surveys**

The HUU Advice Centre specializes in providing help and support to students across a wide range of issues. A large proportion of this work is made up of providing academic advice and helping with academic appeals and complaints. The Advice Centre has statistical data on the number of clients they deal with on such issues and this is useful for longitudinal trends on such complaints (HUU Advice Centre, 2011).

- **HUU Students' Conference 2011**

HUU held its Annual Students' Conference on 17th of February in Hull and the 18th in Scarborough. This year the title was "The future of Higher Education and the growing importance of the University of Hull's ability to engage with students in a time of change". HUU was pleased to welcome national delegates from the QAA and NUS as well as senior management from UoH and HUU. The event was well attended by students and included a number of workshops and parallel sessions. There was also a panel debate that was minuted were with the workshops.

- **Interim Course Rep surveys**

HUU conducted several interim and targeted surveys with Course Representatives over the last academic year. These took the form of email surveys, immediate feedback and discussions on the eBridge site.

- **Library Campaign and the "Developing a vision" paper**

HUU ran a campaign over the 2010-11 academic year to highlight the need for the redevelopment of the Brynmor Jones Library. The campaign included a video piece and a full report based on a series of qualitative, quantitative, literary and observational data.

- **Redbrick Research**

HUU commissioned a significant commercial research project on our services to students and key academic issues. This involved the publication of two key resource sets, the first based on a membership survey (Redbrick, 2010) and the second from an 'ideas café' with drop in participants (Redbrick, 2010).

- **SSC minutes**

HUU holds a limited archive of SSC meeting minutes. The details and issues raised in some of these have been used in this document.

- **Student participation across University committees, projects and working groups**

HUU has helped match Sabbatical Officers, Course Representatives, Faculty Representatives, Senate Representatives and other students to provide student input and representation across a number of committees, projects and working groups. By partnering with the university across this range of projects we have been able to conduct *ad hoc* research across a range of issues e.g. PDP, ePortfolios, assessment, feedback, examinations, induction etc.

- **Training for Course Representatives**

An integral part of training involves building on the experiences the Course Reps have from being a student at the University. From the training sessions (of which 273 students attended) a sizable amount of data was collected on student issues.

- **Other Secondary sources**

- National Union of Students (NUS) papers, reports and conferences
- NUS Workers in Democracy and Representation (WIDAR) meetings
- National Students Survey (NSS)
- UoH committee meetings, minutes, conferences and working groups.
- UoH publications, reports and Codes of Practice
- Strategic Development Unit (SDU)
- Information and Communications Technology
- Academic, governmental and research sources

CHAPTER TWO: Learning and Teaching Experience in departments

Learning and teaching is a fundamental part of the student experience at university. This section will address student concerns raised throughout the research, particularly related to departments, teaching quality, lectures, lecture rooms and timetabling

Teaching Quality

It is clear from the evidence in the Education Survey that the UoH has a large number of dedicated, friendly and approachable academic staff that are a credit to the institution. Students rate staff highly as part of their student experience, making them one of the largest influences on a student's rating of their department. In the 2011 NSS, the University scored favourably with an average score of 89 from the "teaching on my course" subsection. This was reflected within the Education Survey where the vast majority of positive answers about departments were based on its staff.



The department of [...] has a really good community atmosphere which I think is key to my university experience. As a student within the department I feel I know where to go for help and advice and know where all the resources that I may need are.

Lecturers are interested to support students in their studies. Overall the staff [are] very nice.

The amount of support from the department for dealing with personal issues is outstanding; they are all as a whole very caring and understanding people who have helped me cope with important events in my life outside of my degree.

(Education Survey 2011)

However, there are a number of cases where a minority of academic staff have negatively impacted on the quality of the student experience. The quality and standard of the teaching by certain lecturers is often an issue raised by students, particularly due to the disparity between excellent lecturers and poor ones.

Some staff are not the same quality as others when lecturing - unorganized, lack of clear lecture notes etc.

Some of the lecturers in the department have no idea how to teach and do not know how to pace their lectures.

Teaching quality; there are a few lecturers who need to improve their skills at presenting material in an accessible way.

Some of the lecturers are very poor at public speaking and thus you learn very little

(Education Survey 2011)

Teaching quality aside, there are occasional issues concerning the personability and behaviour of some academic staff. For many students such an occurrence can sour the whole student experience for them. Undoubtedly there will be occasions where the student is at fault, but there are certainly a growing number of cases where certain members of staff constantly generate the same issues, yet nothing seems to be done about it.

The attitude of some lecturers is very rude and makes it difficult to ask questions without being talked down to.

(Education Survey 2011)

This needs to be tackled. While the complaints procedure has been updated for implementation this coming academic year, the university is yet to implement a mechanism to easily deal with such complaints as they are human resources issues. In the absence of this students are without a means to tackle such staff behaviour, especially due to concerns that the existing complaints mechanisms may worsen the situation. Teaching quality is of paramount importance to the institution and it will be increasingly important to keep benchmarking high on this in the NSS to compete effectively with other institutions. Tackling poor lecturers and unreasonable staff behaviour will be crucial in achieving this.

Recommendation:

[ST] The lecturing peer review system operated by the University should be reviewed as departmental colleagues should not be expected to provide an unbiased review.
[ST] Departments need to have clear procedures to address issues with staff behaviour.

Departmental communication

Throughout this academic year's research, a common theme has been communication issues between academic staff, office staff, students, university services and university support staff, as well as within these groupings. This led to "Poor at communication" being the most common term students used to describe any downside to their department(s). This was closely followed by "disorganized"; but even then this was usually attributed to communication issues.

Communication. Often we are not informed until the last minute about things. Also lecturers tell you one thing while the office tells you another and quite often both are wrong!

Organization! Module organization and timetabling is pretty poor. There seems to be a lack of communication between staff within the department.

Dissemination of administrative information - emails are rarely responded to, eBridge is not updated with ANY important dates or room changes...

Communication- but this has been improving recently with communication by txt with students

(Education Survey 2011)

The issues with communication are clearly down to several operational problems within departments and the university. At the simplest level, it is a case of either miscommunication or complete lack of communication leading to information being relayed incorrectly or not at all. This is often seen within departments, particularly between academic staff and administrative/support staff, but also between departmental senior management and university services. This can lead to a great deal of confusion and gives rise to the opinion that things are disorganised. In many cases, it is also apparent that departments are not properly following guidelines and codes of practices, leading to sloppy and improper practices in informing students of more serious issues such as unfair means and plagiarism.



Another serious problem with communication is the lack of a single medium to get in touch with students. A number of methods are used including emails, postal letters, tweets, eBridge messages, text messages, notice boards and memos. This means that checking for an update or change takes a significant amount of time as it may require checking several different systems for new messages. This gets particularly confusing when the system

of communication further varies between departments but also on occasion between modules. If students are expected to check for messages departments must ensure the lines of communication are clear, specifying exactly where a student is expected to check.

Students are particularly concerned about communication and coordination between departments that are running joint and with programmes. The general consensus is that departments are operating as independent units to the detriment of students studying on such programmes. This has an especially adverse effect on the student experience as well as making representation more difficult as there is generally little inter-departmental communication.



Better collaboration with other departments so that joint honours students can enjoy the benefits of a department with so many excellent work experience and exchange programmes

More communication is needed between departments for joint honours degrees. In the politics department more notice needs to be given to students about certain information, for example I have had to hand in my module options for next year, only finding out three days before the hand in deadline that I have them available to choose; whereas in the Law department the module option booklet is available a good two weeks before you are available to apply for your options for the next academic year and there is plenty of repeated notice about deadlines.

(Education Survey 2011)

A lot of issues have simply arisen due to poor communication. Either messages need to be the same across all platforms or a single platform needs to be chosen. Departmental staff need to keep more up-to-date and ensure they are networking effectively with their colleagues on student issues such as deadlines.

Recommendation:

- [ST] Operationally, departments need better systems to communicate internally and between each other.
- [ST] The University and/or individual departments should communicate the same message across ALL platforms to avoid confusion.
- [ST] Deadlines and other timescales need to be better coordinated and communicated internally and to students.
- [LT] The University should implement a communication strategy.

Learning and teaching spaces

Lecture theatres, seminar rooms, laboratories and other teaching spaces are an important part of the student experience. Students on Hull campus commented favourably on the new Wilberforce and Robert Blackburn lecture theatres and the Business School as a whole. However other areas were sharply criticised, especially Larkin, the BJL teaching rooms, Applied Science and the Cohen building.

Refurbishment of Cohen lecture rooms, they are comparatively an uncomfortable place to spend several hours a week - especially the smaller ones.

Better classrooms. Severe lack of heating in the Larkin building in winter, too hot in the summer. Seats are very uncomfortable too.

(Education Survey 2011)

Applied Science - Hate it, too steep and not enough legroom. Also rather echoey and terrible wireless internet connection.

Library (East Wing, 1st/2nd floor). Quite poor, in need of refurbishment. Something as simple as fixing blinds! Better WiFi coverage in these rooms would be appreciated.

(Education Survey 2011)



Scarborough campus rooms were generally rated more favourably following the refurbishment. Some rooms however need some tweaking as there are still a few teething problems with heating, blinds, lighting and the IT. Some operational issues were noted by students, such as late clearing of catering disturbing a lecture and one particular room smelling so strongly of white spirit it was causing respiratory issues for some students. The only rooms that came in for particular criticism were Mobile 1 and 2 which are very outdated and need replacing.

While most students appreciate the new rooms, the desk-chairs are still a constant issue for many. Stouter students find it difficult to take notes using them and as none of the lecture theatres have a slanted floor it becomes incredibly difficult to see the front of the room from the back as more people fill the rows in front.

C252 - Awful room, constant issues with the IT (various lecturers have problems with the screens going to sleep) in there and whilst the new tables look very nice, they are too small for me (and I am not off a large build) and they are uncomfortable. I have abandoned taking notes in that room.

C16-C18 - All of the rooms along that corridor are very cramped and hot, the light comes through the blinds and makes it hard to see anything on the board.

Most lectures are in mobile 1 or 2 - they are hideous rooms. Private study I try to do in W6T because it is away from noise.

Quad 3 but blinds need fixing and often we go in to find there has been a lunch and we have to sit looking at plates of old food, we then get interrupted by a catering staff member coming to clear up.

We have had the pleasure of being moved to one which stunk of white spirit and had to be moved as some of us suffer respiratory problems.

(Education Survey 2011)

Issues with out-dated lecture theatres have been a recurring theme over the last few years and the recent refurbishments on both campuses have done much to address these issues. However, the rooms that have yet to be renovated are damaging to the learning process. Outdated audio-visual (AV) and IT equipment is hampering lectures and some of the seating is now so worn it is not conducive to the learning.

Recommendation:

[ST] Refurbish the remaining lecture theatres on Hull campus that have yet to be addressed.

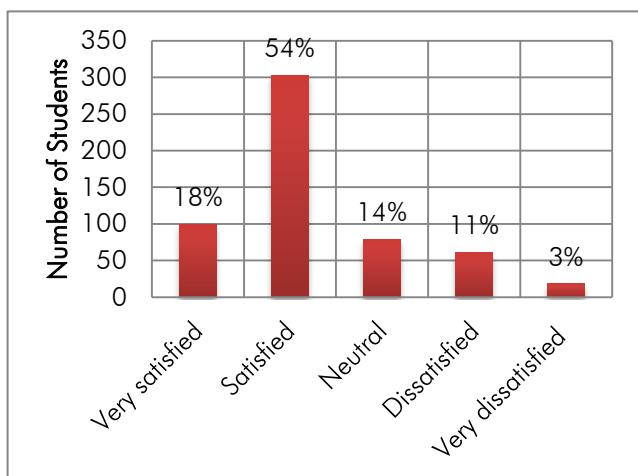
[ST] Correct the remaining issues with the new lecture theatres on Scarborough campus.

[LT] Address the seating issues on the Scarborough campus. Consideration needs to be given for the use of slanted floors in the larger lecture theatres to increase visibility for students seated at the back of lecture theatres.

Timetable

Timetabling has been a growing issue over the past few years and the same issues keep coming up, despite assurances from the University year-on-year that these problems are being addressed. This has led to dissatisfaction regarding timetabling (see –Graph 1 - Are you satisfied with your current timetable?).

Graph 1 - Are you satisfied with your current timetable?



Students are still receiving their timetables too late. This causes significant issues for those with jobs and other commitments as without a confirmed timetable no other firm arrangements can be made. Furthermore, timetables are often in flux for the first 3 weeks and subject to change so any plans that are made may clash regardless.

There have been frequent last minute changes to the timetable. Also, on some days too many lectures were placed on one day, which can be draining especially if a long, important test is also on the same day.

(Education Survey 2011)

The timetable is always an issue - they never have it ready on time and there are always clashes. Sometimes these clashes involve one module clashing with itself.

(Education Survey 2011)

I have a part-time job and it is the only way I can afford my studies. I always find it difficult to set my work hours as the timetable is always changing and is never released early.

(Course Rep Training, 2011)

There is an increasing number of situations where rooms have also been of an inappropriate size or configuration. This can lead to minor problems such as a small group in a large lecture theatre where a seminar room may have suited better. However, in more serious cases rooms have been too small to physically fit all the students in a particular module. In many cases these are rescheduled, but there have been occasions where students have been crammed in or they have had to sit on the steps. Clearly this is not a suitable learning environment and violates health and safety procedures.

It's perhaps not an issue with the department but our timetables have been consistently bad since year 1, lots of pointless 5 hour gaps in the middle of the day and in addition to that we're the only people I know who've had lectures/labs monday-friday every semester since Y1S1.

(Education Survey 2011)

My first ever lecture at university and we didn't even fit into the room... not impressed.

(Course Rep Training, 2011)

Some students find there is an issue with the weighting of lecture times on one particular day. It can be particularly tiring if a single day has 6 hours of lectures, leaving the rest of the week relatively empty. Lastly, while only a small issue, some students have the same hourly lecture in a different room every week, making it extremely difficult to track where they need to be week on week. This is a particularly poor situation for freshers as it makes orientation that little bit more difficult.

The rooms are always changing places. It's confusing [and] needs to be more organized.

Timetable is often confusing because of the amount of room changes especially at the start of term.

(Education Survey 2011)

Timetable trouble also extends to exams. Students are particularly concerned about exams falling within a day or so of one another. This puts pressure on revision time.

*The exam timetables! This year we have two exams within a day of each other, and the department thinks this is acceptable. It's not. Major exams should not be closer than three days apart so students have time to prepare properly for each. Not to mention when we contacted the department and asked if it could be fixed, they said "nope, tough [s***]". Considering we pay over £3000 a year for the pleasure of taking the exams, we should have more bloody say!*

(Education Survey 2011)

Due to the vast combination of modules, free electives and programmes it is going to be impossible to cater for everyone, but there needs to be some consideration for students who have solid blocks of exams with no space between.

Recommendation:

[ST] Timetabling needs to be finalised earlier and revisions should be limited. Students should preferably get their semester timetables at least two weeks before the start of semester.

[ST] The University should strive to ensure all teaching is in an appropriate room.

[ST] If possible, lengthy spaces between teaching should be avoided.

CHAPTER THREE: Learning Spaces and Resources

Learning spaces and resources is a vast category, including all the rooms where students engage with learning (from lecture theatres and seminar rooms to computer suites and laboratories). Most importantly this includes fundamental learning resources such as I.T. and the libraries.

Earlier this year HUU undertook a substantial piece of research into the University's libraries, leading to a campaign for the redevelopment of the BJL on the Hull campus. This led to the publication of HUU's research paper "Developing a vision for the future of the library" (HUU, 2011). Since the publication of this paper, UoH has committed to a series of short-term fixes to the library and is currently planning a full redevelopment of the library (UoH, 2011). Due to the recent redevelopment of the Keith Donaldson Library (KDL) on Scarborough campus the paper did not discuss the Scarborough campus, though the Academic Councils in Scarborough have helped address issues arising from the new development (HUU, 2010). HUU is happy to now be able to publish further research into both the BJL and KDL. It is hoped this new information will be beneficial to the future of both libraries.



Brynmor Jones Library

This section will address issues and concerns in the BJL. This section contains only a single recommendation as this section is seen as support for the earlier library paper. HUU welcomes the developments undertaken in the BJL this summer to bring short-term improvements. These changes directly follow the HUU library campaign and include a suite of new computers, a new circulation desk/access point and a new social study space. These changes will be of a great benefit to students until the full redevelopment of the BJL can be undertaken. HUU continues to support the University in any such developments and will be willing to facilitate student engagement and focus groups on any future plans.

Opening hours

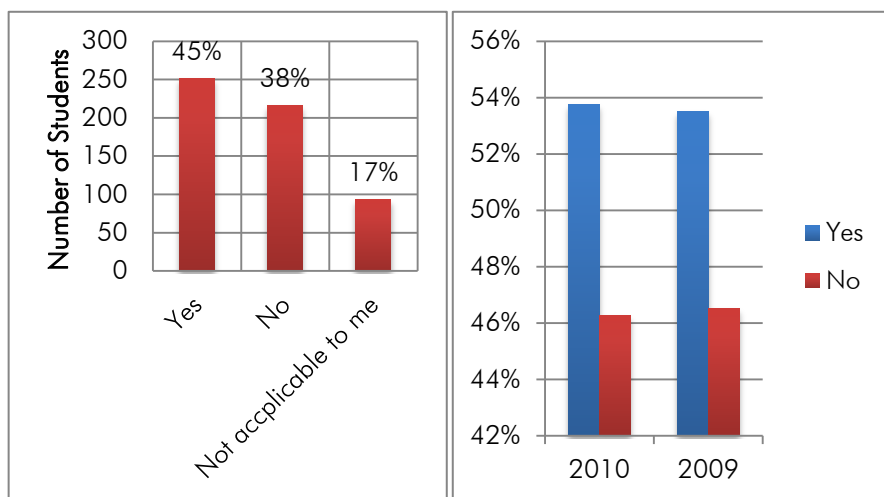
Over the last four to five academic years, HUU Officers have run numerous campaigns to extend the opening hours of the BJL, including a petition held on February 2nd 2010 which gained 203 signatures. While the extended opening hours in examination periods have been greatly beneficial to students, there is still a strong case for a 24hr facility.

I believe students should be able to go to the library 24/7.

(Education Survey 2011)

The results of the Education Survey this year once again showed strong support for a 24hr library with 45% of students wanting this compared to 38% who didn't (see - Graph 2 - Do you think the Library should be open 24 hours a day?). To compare this to the Education Survey 2009, we need to remove the 'not applicable option'. The results are statistically the same, showing there is consistent demand for a 24hr library. The research conducted as part of the library campaign also showed that 24hr libraries are a growing trend in HE institutions leaving UoH behind their competitors (HUU, 2011).

Graph 2 - Do you think the Library should be open 24 hours a day?

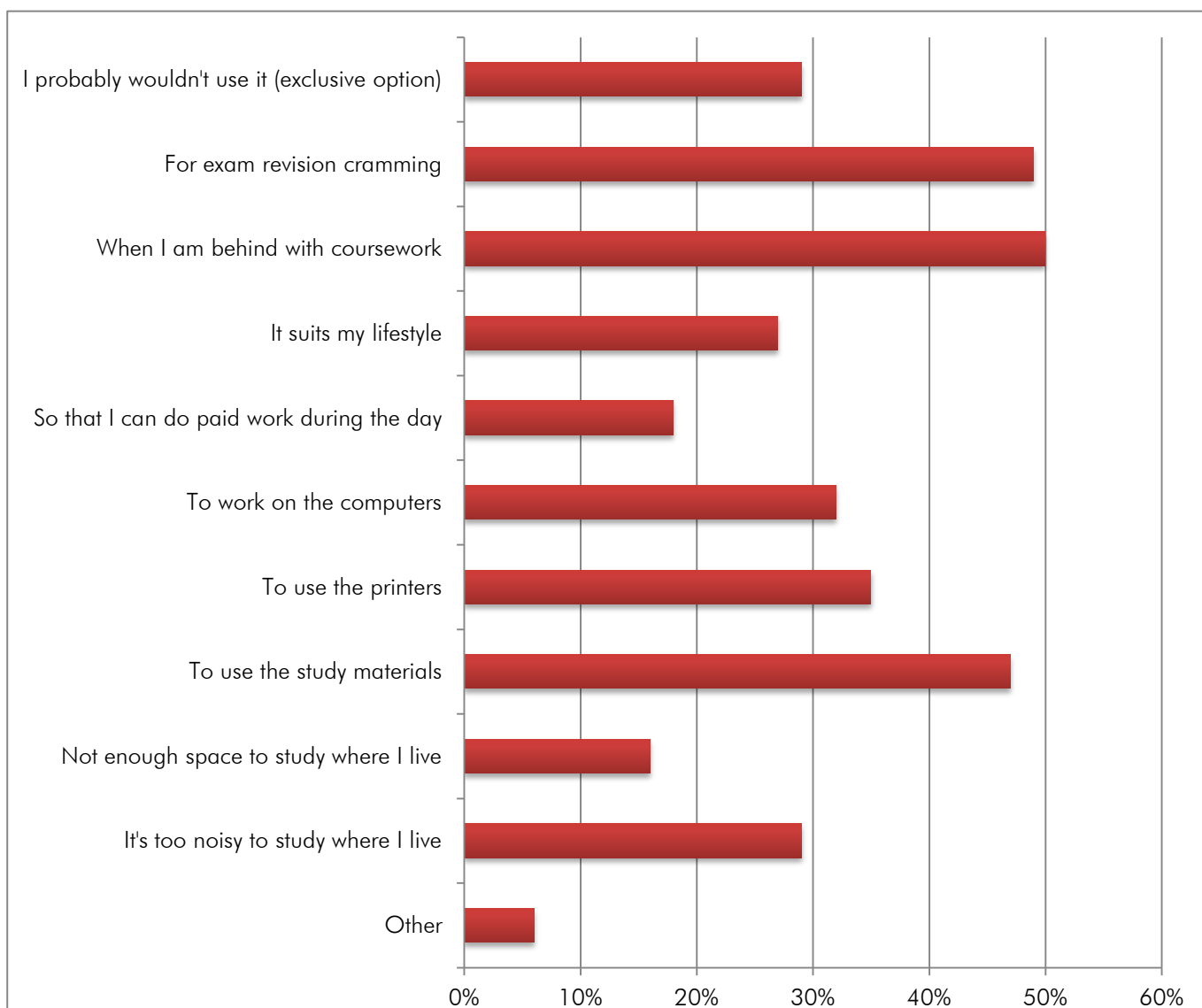


The Redbrick research looked at the benefits of a 24hr library (see - Graph 3 – Benefits of 24hr library access). The most popular answers were for exam revision cramming, when behind with coursework and use study materials.

Over 30% of students would use a 24hr library for computer and printing access. This is interesting as these facilities are available in the 24hr computer centres. This raises the question once again surrounding 24hr centres compared

to the concept of a 24hr library. This is discussed later (see – Hull Campus 24hr centres)

Graph 3 – Benefits of 24hr library access



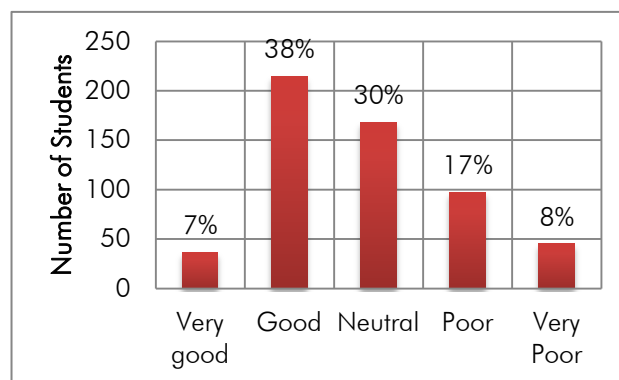
(Redbrick, 2010)

Study environment – Noise and behaviour

Noise levels within the BJL have been a constant cause of concern for students over the last academic year and this has been widely documented at Academic Council (HUU, 2010; HUU, 2011). The seventh floor always comes in for criticism with the noise at its worst described as “unworkable” and “intolerable”.

In the Education Survey, students were asked about this issue (see - Graph 4 - How do you rate the noise levels within the library?). A quarter of students rate the noise levels as poor or very poor and some of the comments left as part of this question highlight the problems.

Graph 4 - How do you rate the noise levels within the library?



People laughing and screaming at 11:30pm is intolerable

It comes down to inconsiderate students who just don't care and use the space as more of a social area than a study area between lectures. I suppose that if some sort of relaxed study area was provided for students that wish to do work with a group of noisy people, then this would attract people away from the library and allow students who wish to work quietly to go undisturbed

(Education Survey 2011)



Noise issues are a problem in the library, but there are no obvious solutions. When asked in the Education Survey, the majority of students advocated more patrols and staffing to tackle the issue. A lot of comments also supported the use of fines, sanctions and other consequences of breaking the rules, suggesting there is a belief that breaking the rules carries no penalty and therefore there is no reason to abide by them.

I should be able to complain easily and effectively and something should be done about the problem swiftly. In the past this has not been the case.

Actual enforcement of library rules- with real consequences may help. Greater awareness and usage of group study rooms, which are underutilized

Introduce sanctions for repeat offenders, and an effective complaints procedure.

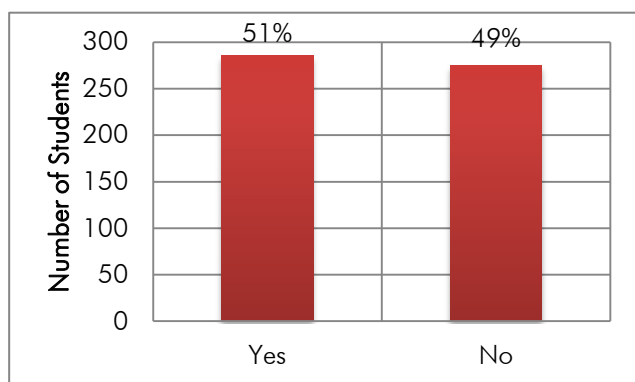
(Education Survey)

It is hoped that a fully redeveloped library can use modern techniques and environments to tackle noise within the library, but until such a facility is launched, new solutions to the noise have to be found.

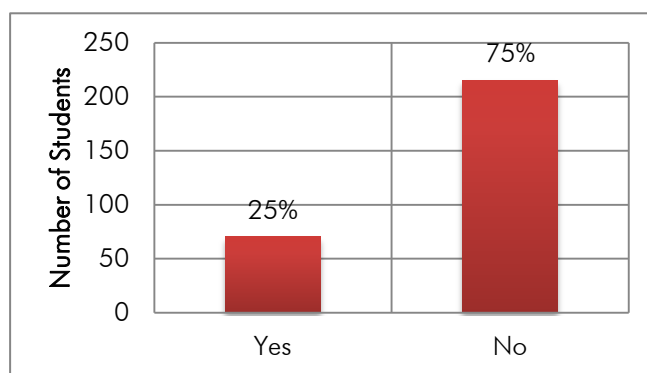
Electronic devices

Portable consumer electronics have revolutionized how people experience and engage with the world around them, leading to a rapid growth and expansion in their distribution (In-stat, 2008; EDN, 2010). These kinds of devices include laptops, ultra-mobile personal computers, MP3 players, smart phones, e-readers and tablets (such as the iPad). This range of devices has a big implication for learning (Bates, 2010), from podcast lectures, e-books and e-journals to more mobile versions of existing technology like Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) and email. As uptake of these devices and the associated learning applications for them increase, so will student uptake. It is here that the BJL has a significant problem as it does not have sufficient electrical sockets to enable such devices. Laptops in particular are still heavily reliant on mains power. When students were asked if they used such devices, 51% of them answered yes, but of these 75% of them found the BJL does not have adequate electrical sockets to power their devices (see - Graph 6 - Do you often use your laptop or any other electronic study devices within the library?; Graph 5 - Is there usually adequate access to power points?). This is unacceptable.

Graph 6 - Do you often use your laptop or any other electronic study devices within the library?



Graph 5 - Is there usually adequate access to power points?



This has led to students not using their own electronic devices as there is no guarantee they can find a study space with power. This puts further pressure on fixed terminal computers which are a valuable resource. More crucially it does not enable staff and students to fully take advantage of the new technologies available to them.

Because I can never get a plug for it. If there were more plugs I would use it daily.

I would definitely bring my laptop to the library if there were more power outlets, but at the moment there is simply no point carrying in a heavy laptop to not be able to use it.

(Education Survey 2011)

On the other hand, another set of commenters did not use their own electronic devices in the library because they preferred fixed terminal PCs. This continues to support HUU's conclusion that fixed terminal computers are an important resource for students and their provision should be increased. This is further supported by the level of use of computers at peak hours as demand for outstrips supply.

Because the terminal PC's are good enough

Can use a computer

Don't want to carry around with me. Prefer to use fixed computer.

(Education Survey 2011)

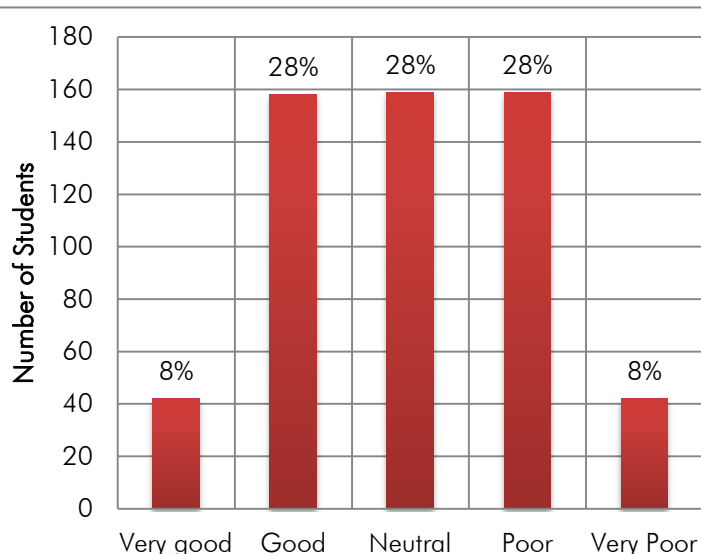
This confirms the two important conclusions from the HUU library campaign: that there are not enough power sockets for students to use and that fixed terminal PCs are still considered an important resource.

Computers and printers

When looking specifically at the fixed terminal computers in the library, only 36% of students rated the provision as good or very good, indicating some issues, with a further 36% of students rating the provision as poor or very poor (see Graph 7 - How do you rate the current provision of fixed terminal PCs within the library?). The pressure on these resources is abundantly clear during assessment periods when the library often does not have a single PC unit available as all are in use.



Graph 7 - How do you rate the current provision of fixed terminal PCs within the library?



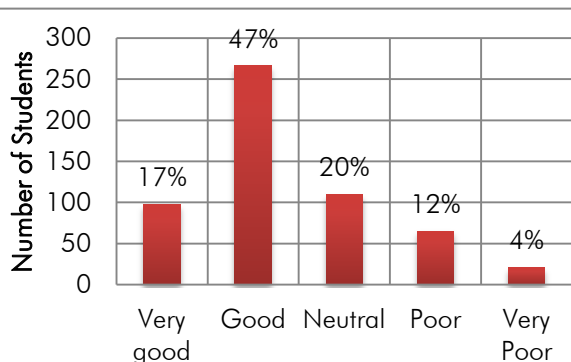
Student dissatisfaction with the number of available PCs has further been evidenced within all of this year's Academic Councils where it has been a constant issue. While there is a large number of PCs available across campus, the vast majority of these are locked in departmental or open access suites which cannot be utilised outside of office hours. This is not a sensible use of the University's computer resources when they would be much better placed within the library where they could be utilised outside of teaching.

Students were happy of the distribution of printers. There were however issues with costs and availability of PCs for the sole purpose of printing.

Books

Poor quantity of books in the library especially key text books and journal articles is a constant issue for students. There are many cases where it is clear that more copies of certain materials are needed, or that existing stock needs moving onto shorter loan periods.

Graph 8 - How do you rate the availability and range of books in the library?



More copies of core text books as they are very expensive to buy

(Education Survey 2011)

Once again, transparency is needed from the University regarding book stock and availability, but also communication between the library and departments to ensure that key texts are not in over use. Departments and lecturers also need to ensure their recommended and required reading is actually available for students in the library. The availability of texts in relation to assignment deadlines must be considered as part of this process.

Recommendation:

[ST] The University should purchase Talis Aspire and require staff to use it for all their reading lists

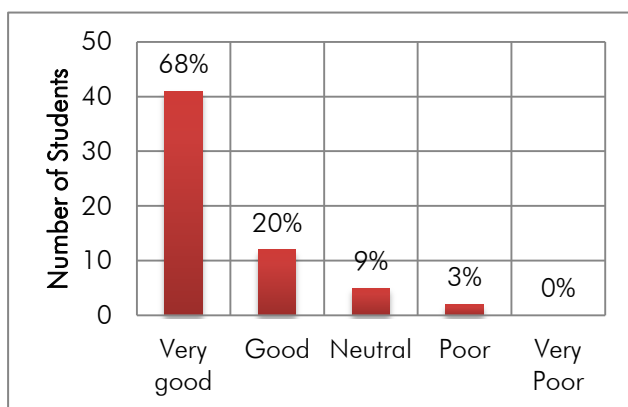
Keith Donaldson Library

The KDL Library on Scarborough campus was part of the recent campus redevelopment which saw significant investment in Scarborough. While students have largely appreciated the new library development, it has not been without teething problems. On the whole, Scarborough campus has been very responsive to initial student concerns, addressing many of the minor problems presented in Academic Council. There are still some issues though and this section will provide an overview of student concerns.

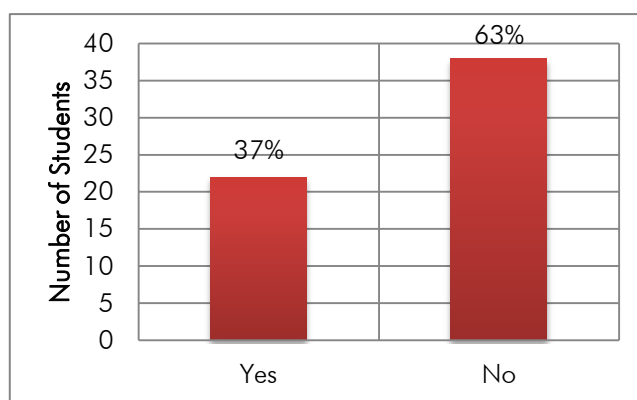
Opening hours

Students rated the opening hours of the KDL favourably with 88% of students rating the hours as good or very good (see Graph 10 – How do you rate the library opening hours across semester time, exam period and vacation?). When asked if they think the library should be open 24hr, 37% of students did want this facility. This is still lower demand than that seen for the BJL where over half of students wanted a 24hr facility (see Graph 9 – Do you think the Library should be open 24 hours a day?).

Graph 10 - How do you rate the library opening hours across semester time, exam period and vacation?



Graph 9 - Do you think the Library should be open 24 hours a day?



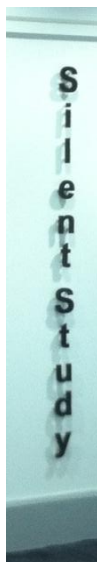
Library opening hours need to be carefully considered in the future. If the redeveloped BJL library finally operates 24hrs a day, there needs to be consideration for giving parity to the Scarborough campus, especially when course fees are the same on both campuses.

Recommendation:

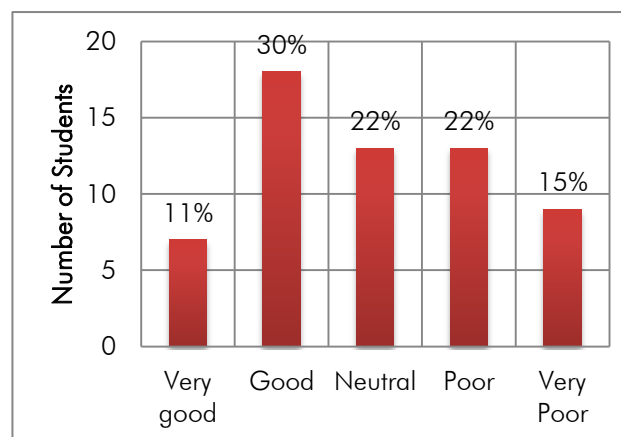
[ST] Investigate viability of extended opening hours for the KDL library.

Study environment

With the KDL standing as the primary academic work space on the Scarborough campus, it is a valuable study environment to students. There is however an overwhelming number of complaints about noise levels. These complaints were particularly numerous in the early weeks of semester one before the new signs were put in place, but these have only ensured the computer area stays quiet. The remaining complaints largely centre on the thoroughfare nature of the library, the large service desk and open social working area. This is because when combined, these make it more of a social and service area, not conducive to a quiet working space. This has been reflected in many of the comments HUU has received.



Graph 11 - How do you rate the noise levels within the library?



Its a social space now, not an academic space. Bit of a depressing thing to say about a university, really.

(Education Survey 2011)

I like the new library, but with that big desk and that huge open area next to it people just think it means they can talk as loud as they want. I cannot work downstairs anymore, but even when I move upstairs the noise carries up.

(Course Rep Training 2011)

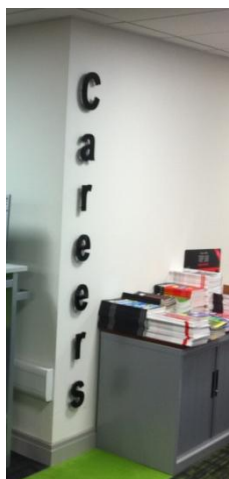


This has led to only 41% of students rating the noise levels within the library as very good or good, with 59% rating it as neutral or below (see Graph 11 – How do you rate the noise levels within the library?). This is not reflective of a suitable working environment and there needs to be consideration on how this will be addressed.

Recommendation:

[ST] Installation of glass doors or panels to section off the silent study area

Careers Service



There is a great deal of concern surrounding privacy in the Careers Service, which is integrated within the library. Careers can be an incredibly sensitive topic, particularly as unemployment rises and it is becoming increasingly difficult to get a graduate job. In this frustrating economic environment, students would benefit from some level of privacy especially as at times, career issues can be stressful and upsetting.

The careers office is not in a great place, or rather, it should have a door of its own as talks in that 'office' are supposed to be confidential.

(Education Survey 2011)

I don't understand what the deal is with Careers. Why is it in the library? It just does not make sense...

(Course Rep Training 2011)

Situating careers in the library shows a lack of parity with the BJL and Hull campus, possibly diluting the academic nature of the area. The former location of Careers was a more suitable location as it offered privacy, a work area for staff and the ability of offer drop-in or booked sessions with students. It was a much more efficient space as the whole service could be accommodated without the need for separate offices.

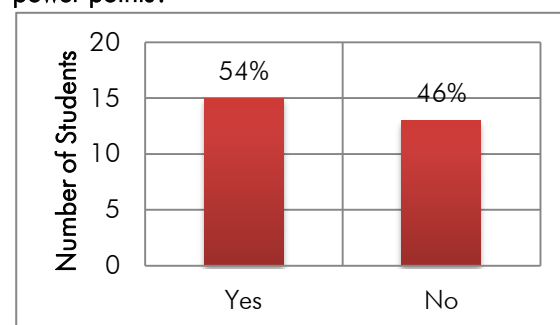
Recommendation:

[ST] Reconsider the situ of the Careers Service OR increase privacy.

Electronic devices

When compared to the BJL, the KDL is rated much higher by students for adequate power access (see Graph 12 – Is there usually adequate access to power points). In the KDL, 54% of students rated the power socket access as adequate, compared to a mere 25% in Hull. This shows the redeveloped KDL compared favourably to the BJL on this criteria. However, 54% is still not brilliant, and further research is needed to see if power access in the KDL is meeting demand, or if it just needs more promotion.

Graph 12 - Is there usually adequate access to power points?



Computers and printers

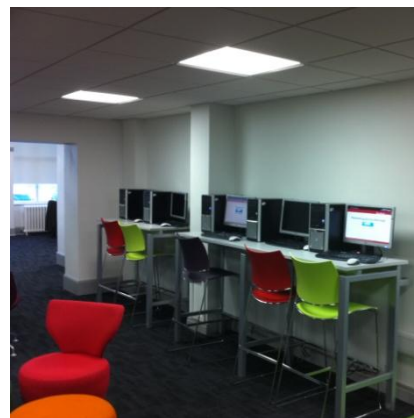
Access to computers and printers is one of the most common issues students raise regarding the KDL. The perception is that the redeveloped KDL has fewer computers than before the refurbishment. Even though there have been assurances this is not the case, the perception with students is that there are fewer.

The library needs more computers. Sometimes there are none around when I really need to do work.

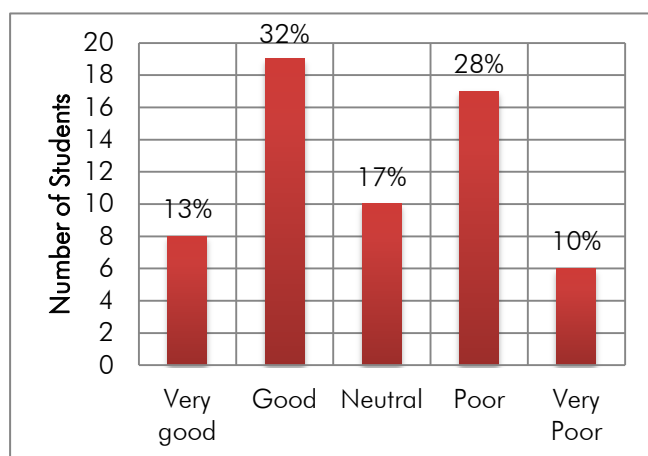
(Education Survey 2011)

Thirty-seven per cent of students rate the current PC provision in the KDL as poor or very poor, rising to 54% when you include those who rated it neutral.

In a redeveloped library, PC access should be scoring better and consideration needs to be given to installing more computers to meet current and future demand (see Graph 13 – How do you rate the current provision of fixed terminal PCs in the library).



Graph 13 - How do you rate the current provision of fixed terminal PCs within the library?



There have also been a lot of complaints about PC availability due to broken and out of use computers. Many students commented that as many as five of the computers within the library can be out at any one time, acutely reducing PC availability.

It is a good library, however there tends to be quite a lot of pc's out of use at various times.

(Education Survey 2011)

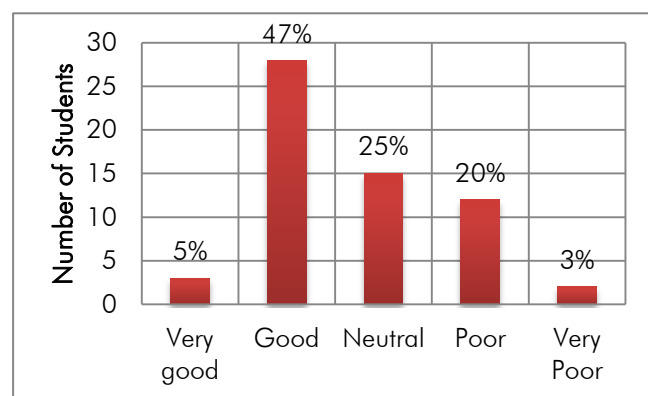
If disrepair is an issue within the library, then maintenance and equipment quality need to be improved. It is particularly frustrating for students when all available PCs are taken and they are unable to get one as so many are out of order.

One smaller issue that was raised concerned the catalogue PCs. There were a few students who commented on the lack of these PCs upstairs, which would aid in studying when looking for books.

Maybe it should have a catalogue computer upstairs like in the Hull library

(Education Survey 2011)

Graph 14 - How do you rate the quality and availability of printers in the library?



Students complained bitterly about printer access and quality, especially the print quality of one particular printer. This was a particularly contentious issue due to the high cost of printing and the unusable prints from that machine. As prints are priced so highly, customer service needs to be considered and the machines need to be better maintained.

There was also a need for quality, affordable colour A3 printing for many of the students who need these prints for their course.

Recommendation:

[ST] Ensure broken PCs are replaced or fixed expediently.

[ST] Ensure there is a functional A3 colour printer in the library that dispatches prints to a consistently high standard.

[LT] Install more computers in the KDL library

[LT] Investigate providing a hire-laptop service for use within the library to combat the PC shortage while providing a space-efficient solution.

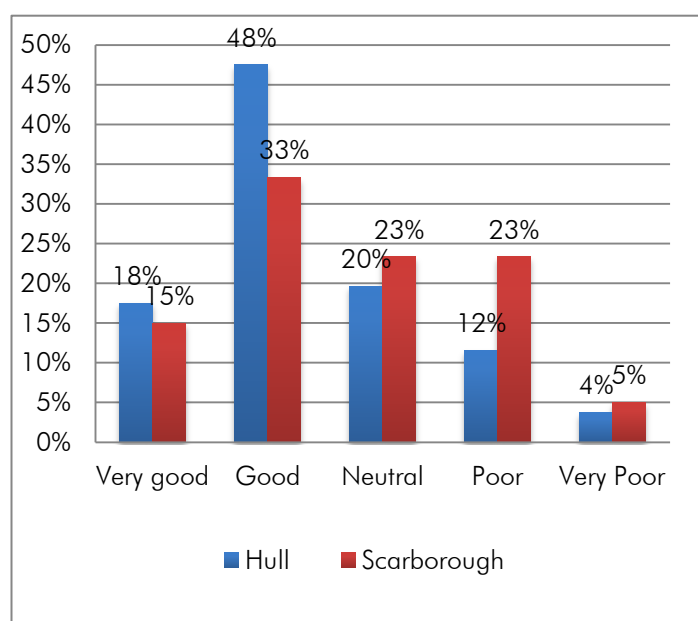
Books

Access to books has always been a big issue for the KDL as it does not have the same size of collection as the BJL. This is clear from the 66% of students in Hull rating book access as good or very good compared to just 48% of students in Scarborough (see Graph 15 – How do you rate the availability and range of books in the library?). There are quite a number of complaints regarding book transfers and it may be the case that with increased fees on both campuses, there needs to be daily transfers to maintain service quality across both campuses.

Many books that i have needed for my course have been on the hull campus. The waiting time to get books has been to long and on more than one occasion my requests have been overlooked making the completion of assignments difficult. Fortunately I have a car therefore have been able to come to hull campus myself to get the appropriate books and resources, however this requires petrol and ultimately costs a lot of money which could be avoided if the university sorted themselves out!

(Education Survey 2011)

Graph 15 - How do you rate the availability and range of books in the library?



The only other solution of course is to increase the size of the collection at the KDL, or to consider more eResources that can be used by students and staff on both campuses. Addressing the book stock issues within the KDL is important, especially as more students in Scarborough prefer books to digital texts.

The newly redressed shelving in the KDL has worked particularly well, there were however issues with a lack of signage on each row to indicate which books were shelved where. This has now been solved and aside from the lack of a catalogue computer on the first floor, books can be found with relative ease. There are some issues with the lighting down each row as it is not triggering properly.

Also need to sort sensor for lights above books. At the moment our digital books is not covered so we have to walk down another isle to get the light on.

Recommendation:

[ST] Ensure the frequency of campus book transfers is increased.

[ST] Ensure all non-persistent lighting in the library properly triggers.

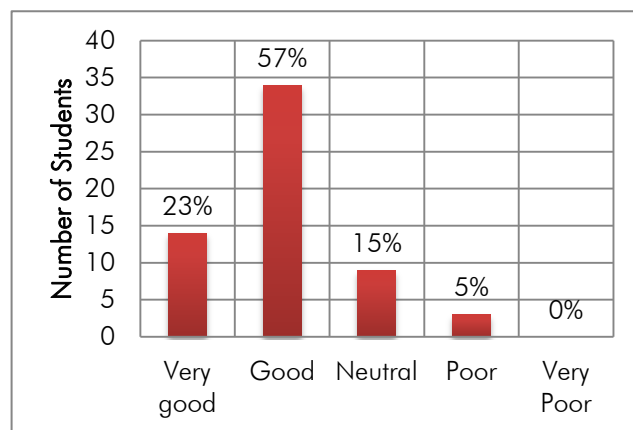
[ST] Continue to develop eResources for the benefit of both campuses.

[LT] Research if there is a need for an increase in the KDL book collection.

KDL library – overview

As a whole, the redevelopment of the KDL and the Scarborough campus has brought many benefits to students. While it has not been without problem, many of the issues have been tackled swiftly. However, the blending of a large service area with a learning environment with both social and silent learning spaces has not worked entirely. The social learning area does lend itself more to casual socialising rather than group work as it occupies such a prominent space. The combining of many services into a single desk works well from a theoretical customer-services perspective but the staff are not yet able to deal with enquiries outside their area, in effect making them separate service areas. Even more perplexing is the location of Careers. This area could be much better occupied by study spaces, Study Advice or more computers than a service that is not traditionally associated with a learning space.

Graph 16 - Overall, how do you rate the Keith Donaldson Library?



the library was far more efficient when it was a library. It is now a communal laughing ground, very noisy, usually with at least 5 computers out of action, not enough space around each computer to actually work and not secure to leave your things by a computer that is downstairs in order to go upstairs to find a book....just not very practical at all.

(Education Survey 2011)

Nevertheless, the library still scored an 80% rating of good or very good in the Education Survey. 15% of students rated it neutral, only 5% rated it poor and no one rated it very poor. This is an exceptional score for a refurbished service that opened in Freshers' week. The opening of the library has had an admirable start and has scored well. It is now crucial to now correct the remaining problems with the KDL services.



CHAPTER FOUR: IT, computing, online resources and eLearning

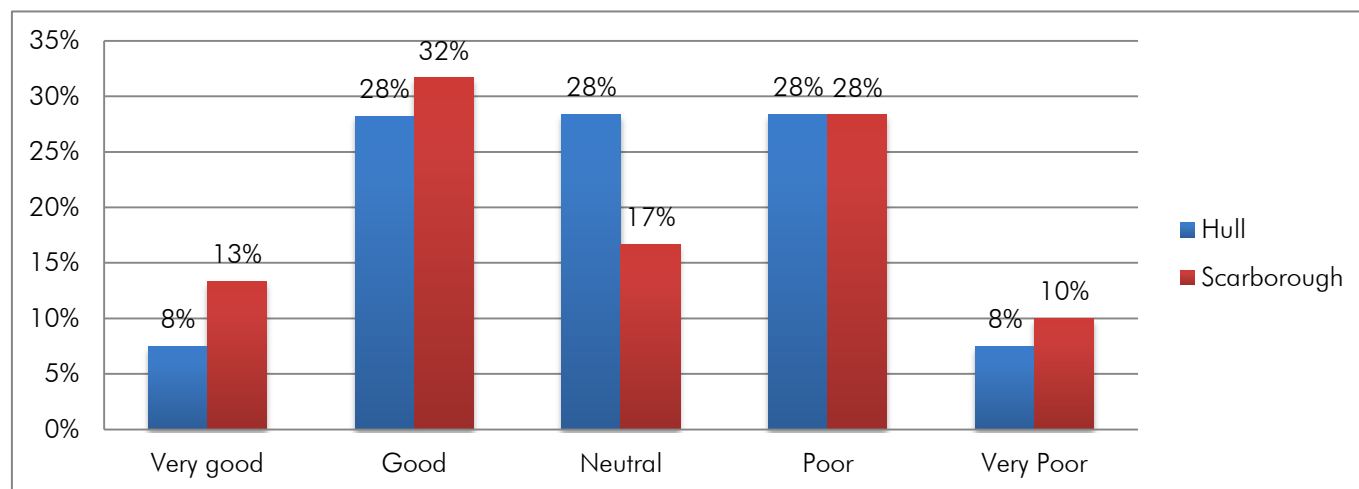
Information Technology in Universities is of the utmost importance, particularly with the growing importance of and pressure placed upon computing resources, e.g. virtual learning environments (VLE), e-resources (such as e-journals and e-books) for research or learning resources and software packages. HUU welcomed the formation of the Information and Communications Technology Department to focus on addressing the infrastructure and computing resources for the campus. This section will address student concerns and review progress on computing at the University, including the network, Wi-Fi, online tools, websites and computing facilities.



Computers and the network

At the heart of the University's I.T. are the network and the computers themselves. One of the biggest student concerns is always the provision of open access computers and those available with the library (see Graph 17 - How do you rate the current provision of fixed terminal PCs within the library?). Scarborough students rate the provision of computers higher than Hull with 45% of students rating the provision as good or very good. In Hull this is only 36% meaning almost two thirds of all students do not rate computer provision in the library favourably. It is hoped both the short and long term redevelopment plans for the BJL will address this problem (see section: CHAPTER 3 / Brynmor Jones Library).

Graph 17 - How do you rate the current provision of fixed terminal PCs within the library?



Disk Storage

PC availability is not the only student concern. There is a growing number of complaints surrounding storage space for both emails (100MB) and the student G drive (500MB). When considering email, free solutions from Microsoft, Google and Yahoo have storage of 500GB, 7.6GB and unlimited GB respectively. The University simply is not competing with these free solutions and while these huge size limits may seem unmaintainable, it is safe to say that 100MB is simply not good enough. It is also incredibly confusing as to why Hull and Scarborough campuses have separate mailbox networks, hampering cross-campus communication.

I am sick of having to delete emails! My free hotmail account has loads of space, yet this 'university' barely gives us any storage. Makes you wonder where your fees go...

(Course Rep Training 2011)

Storage space of 500MB is not enough for a three year degree, especially subjects such as Computer Science and Geography which require large amounts of storage for programming purposes. In Geography for example, a single ARC GIS project can easily use the whole 500MB student allowance.

More allocated University hard drive (G drive) space to more computer related courses.

(Education Survey 2011)

As most University departments have a policy to not give mitigating circumstances for lost or corrupted data, it is unfair that the University forces students to use external storage as opposed to the advanced secure storage system at the University.

Recommendation:

[ST] More storage for emails and personal documents or explore the use of cloud services to provide accessible online storage and services.

Software

There are frequent issues also with access to software. A lot of specialist software has limited licences, but often these are not installed where they could be most effectively accessed. One of the biggest problems arises when a single computer suite has different software on each machine as they are all not licensed. At the very least all computers within a given area should have parity with regards to the software installed on them.

The availability of software around the university campus is a big problem for me

(Education Survey 2011)



Where software cannot be licensed further or sufficiently moved to other PCs, this should be made clear. If students were more aware of licensing restrictions it would make decisions by the University on this matter seem reasonable.

Recommendation:

[ST] Where possible, increase the distribution of specialist software on open access PCs.
[ST] All computers in a given area should, where possible have the same available software. This should include installing Microsoft Outlook on all computers as it provides valuable experience to students ready for the work place.

Network

The availability of Wi-Fi on campus and in halls of residence is a growing concern. HUU has seen growing enquiries from freshers and prospective students regarding the provision of Wi-Fi at the Lawns, Needler Hall and Thwaite Hall. With 73% of UK households having broadband (most of which will have free Wi-Fi routers provided by ISP), Wi-Fi at home is fast becoming a norm, as well as an expectation (ONS, 2010). While on-campus provision has grown over the last few years, it is still not to the same standard as other universities. There are still many departmental issues being raised in SSC meetings regarding Wi-Fi provision, (e.g. the Map Library in the Cohen building).

Recommendation:

[ST] Further expansion of on-campus Wi-Fi networks.
[ST] Installation of accessible electrical sockets in hotspots for mobile computers.

[LT] Installation of Wi-Fi access points to cover all Halls of Residence.
[LT] Consideration of installing printers in Halls of Residence for use with remote printing.

Printers and printing

Access to printing, quality of prints and cost of the service is one of the frequent student concerns with IT. This is a particular problem during assessment period where they only need access to printing yet cannot access a PC. Online/mobile printing and quick-access printing-only PCs have improved the situation somewhat, but the issue should be monitored over the year.

You spend half an hour, an hour and then end having to go home as you have not been able to find anything

(Education Survey 2011)



A great deal of complaints are made regarding printing, especially as many students come from schools and colleges where they can print for free, yet when they pay to come to university it is an additional cost.

We are expected to pay to print out reading materials, which seems unfair as we are already paying tuition fees.

(Education Survey 2011)

It is certainly questionable if printing at the University is as cost effective as it could be, especially with bulk purchase power and the use of new efficient printers. These complaints have grown steadily over the years, not only just against printing costs altogether, but against the high costs of 20pence for a single A4 colour printout. This is not competitive. As tuition fees rise, the student perception that the university will have an increase in funding will certainly bring into question the cost of printing.

The cost of printing aside, there have been many complaints surrounding the quality of prints. As many assignments rely on print-submission, the quality of the print could affect marks, especially when diagrams are necessary. This is wholly unacceptable, especially given students are paying a high cost for sub-standard print quality.

he criticised the print quality of my assignment and down graded due to the library printers!!!

[On discussing feedback/grades]

(Education Survey 2011)

As first introduced in the HUU Library paper (HUU, 2011), due to the volume of printing in some areas, many prints are lost and discarded. This is both a waste of paper and a waste of money for the students who lose these prints. A mechanism should be introduced to stop this happening. The ideal system would ensure prints were only released when a student arrives at the printer through the use of their student card or number.

Recommendation:

[ST] Lower printing costs or bring transparency to the price point.

[LT] Develop a long-term strategy for printers. Cost should be incorporated into this.

[LT] Make more A3 colour printers available in major communal computer suites/libraries.

[LT] Prints should only be released when a student reaches the printer through use of code or swipe card.

[LT] Move all assignments to online submission to save print costs and save the environment (See CHAPTER 5).

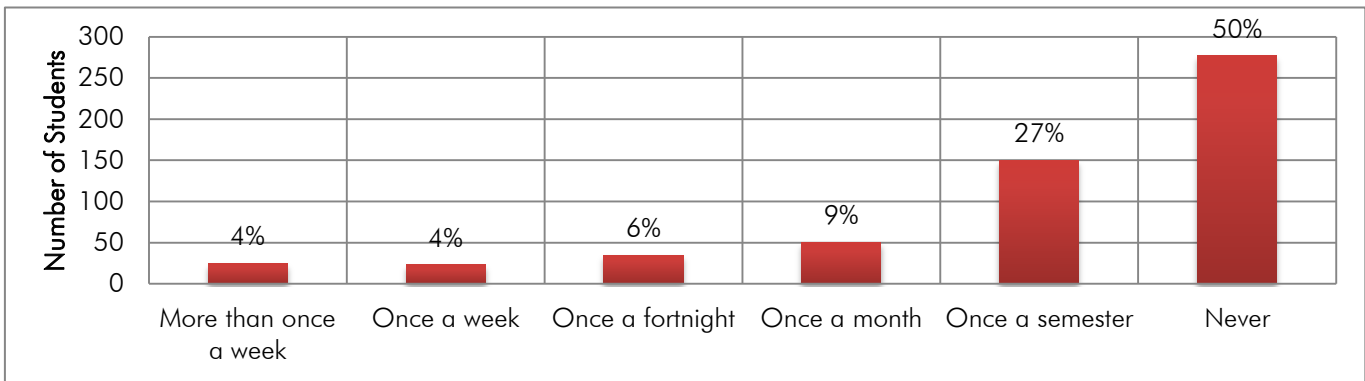
Hull Campus 24hr Centres

The Hull campus has two 24h computing centres which provide important ‘round the clock’ access to computers and other I.T. facilities. While the centres are a vital resource for some students, only 50% of students have ever used them, with a further 27% only using them once a semester (Graph 18 - How regularly do you use the Foss or Larkin 24 hour centres?).



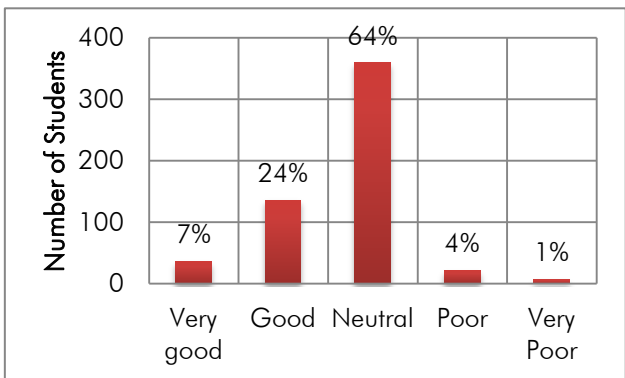
Nevertheless, for the students that rely on them they are an important resource. This was clear from a student led petition following the announcement in summer 2011 which stated that the Foss 24hr centre would be closed between 4th July and the 23rd of September (Murphy, 2011). A total of 63 signatories were gained on the petition to show concern over this. This was a considerable number given that it was during the vacation period. The University rapidly responded to reallocate resources and ensure the centre remained open apart from a single week of essential maintenance (Murphy, 2011).

Graph 18 - How regularly do you use the Foss or Larkin 24 hour centres?

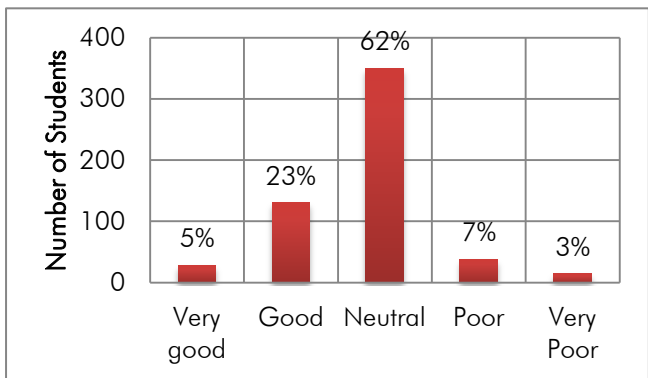


While some students clearly value the 24hr centres, these are somewhat a minority in comparison to the ratings given to other services areas. There needs to be further research done regarding the future of these facilities, particularly when considering the redevelopment of the BJL. This is supported by the graphs below (Graph 19 - How do you rate the Foss 24 hour centre?; Graph 20 - How do you rate the Larkin 24 hour centre?) which demonstrate low student ratings towards the 24hr centres, perhaps demonstrating the relative lack of use of these facilities.

Graph 19 - How do you rate the Foss 24 hour centre?



Graph 20 - How do you rate the Larkin 24 hour centre?



Recommendation:

[ST] Research into the provision of 24hr computing facilities for Scarborough campus.

[LT] If there is demand, provide 24hr computer access to Scarborough campus.

[LT] Further research into the 24hr provision on Hull campus. Consideration needs to be given over the possibility of a 24hr library and how this will affect demand for the 24hr centres.

Online resources

The University operates a whole suite of online tools and applications for students. These are increasingly important as they are the main forms of communication between the University and all students. As these tools are further expanded for uses in learning, teaching and assessment, their significance will increase. This is especially the case for distance students as these resources may be their only interaction with the University.

VLE / eBridge

In 2009 the UoH adopted the Sakai platform, branded as eBridge to be the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This move saw the retirement of Blackboard and Merlin, moving the University to single platform. As part of this process, all existing resources had to be transferred to eBridge and all departments would be required to use eBridge from then on.

As part of the Education Survey (HUU, 2011), students were asked if they used eBridge in their modules, with 95% of students asked answering yes. Students were also asked to rate several aspects of eBridge as a tool. The VLE scored favourably, with 93% of students rating it as either good or very good. Only 7% of students rated it poorly.

I think ebridge is really good. no idea to make it better!

(Education Survey 2011)

This is an incredibly good score for the system, but students also suggested many improvements for the system some of which are highlighted here:

A document viewer, so PowerPoint etc. can be seen without downloading them.

a link between ebridge and my G drive workspace would be nice.

A 'back function' should be coded into the website. Also a more appealing layout.

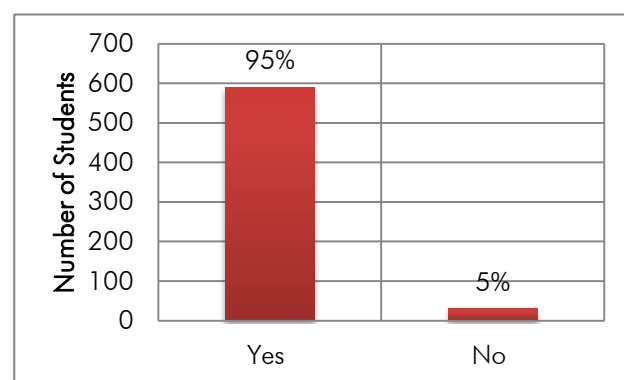
Mobile version for iPhone/iPad, Android, Blackberry etc... — Ability to rename modules from their numbers to names, when the lectures don't do it. i.e. custom aliases for eBridge groups

be able to add more things ourselves such as adding exam dates to the calendar

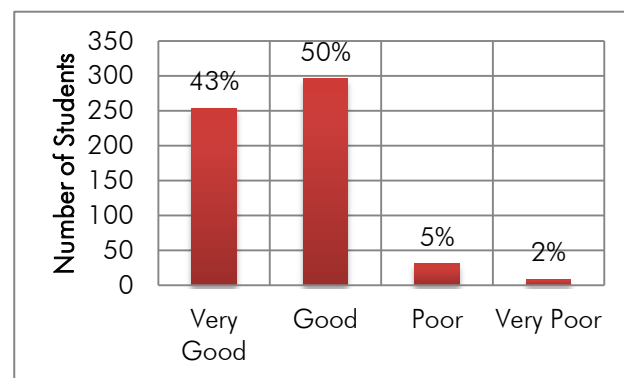
Better design/layout. More concise.

Change design so that it looks like hull.ac.uk and myAdmin websites.

Graph 21 – Do you use eBridge in any of your modules?



Graph 22 - How would you rate eBridge as a tool?



include a back option as it is frustrating when you have to reset the page to get back to the root menu or page you require,

Less Iframes - There awful to navigate!

less emails about stuff going up cluttering your email, only important notifications should get emails the rest wait for people to check, have something like facebook notifications that tell you what has changed since you were last on the site

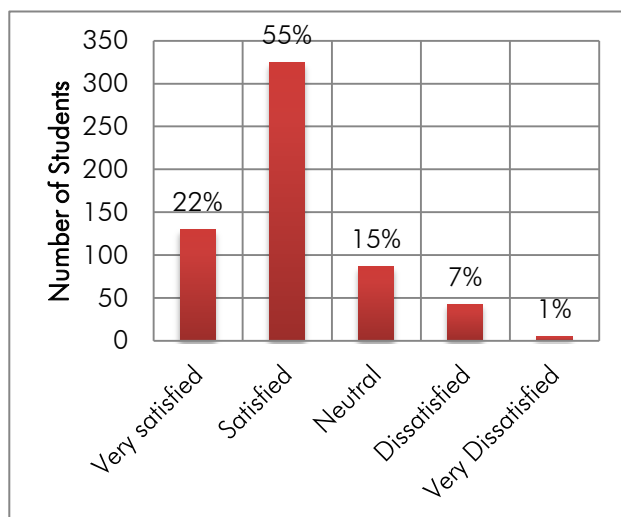
Make it possible for students to communicate and share work with each other (for group work) this is not applicable to my CS modules we have our own SharePoint, but for things like business free elective we had to use other software such as dropbox.

(Education Survey 2011)

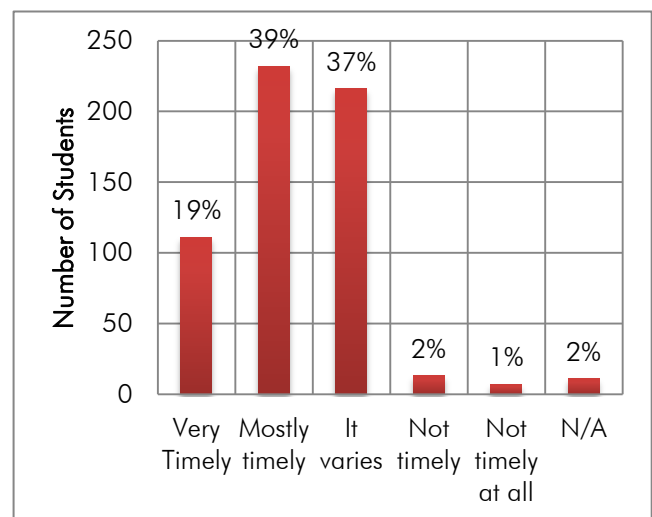
These were some of the best ideas for eBridge, all of which should be considered. There were over 300 comments on this question and the following themes quickly emerged: design, navigation, reliability, using module names – not codes and lecturers' use of eBridge. These are not problems with the system itself, but with the UoH's implementation of it. There clearly needs to be a better theme/navigation/design for the site and this should align with the design elements of portal for consistency. As for reliability, this is clearly an issue with the University's installation/setup of sakai as many other (larger) institutions use sakai without the same reliability issues as Hull.

While the number of issues with eBridge as a tool was relatively low aside from the issues discussed above, the largest problem with eBridge is simply to do with the lecturers' use of the tool. Many students, while praising eBridge, were quick to highlight that their lecturer's use of it was poor. This was clear from the Education Survey where 93% of students rated the tool highly, only 77% were able to give this rating to their lecturers' use of it in (See – Graph 24 – How satisfied are you with your lectures' use of eBridge). Unsurprisingly the largest problem is the uploading of resources. Only 19% of students were able to say their lecturers were very timely when uploading resources. While 39% did say it was mostly timely, a further 37% rated it as variable which is not good enough (See – Graph 23 – How timely are your tutors at uploading resources to eBridge?). This shows that the VLE as a tool is performing and that there are no fundamental problems with it other than staff use. It is therefore crucial that efforts are made to encourage staff to fully utilise eBridge as well as updating their resources.

Graph 24 – How satisfied are you with your lectures' use of eBridge?



Graph 23 – How timely are your tutors at uploading resources on to eBridge?



This need was also reflected in many of the comments that students left:

Some lecturers do not fully utilize eBridge, and others don't use it at all. This is an issue because eBridge is a brilliant learning aid and highly appreciated by the majority of students. The failure to put any presentations or readings used in lectures on eBridge could be detrimental to a student's learning.

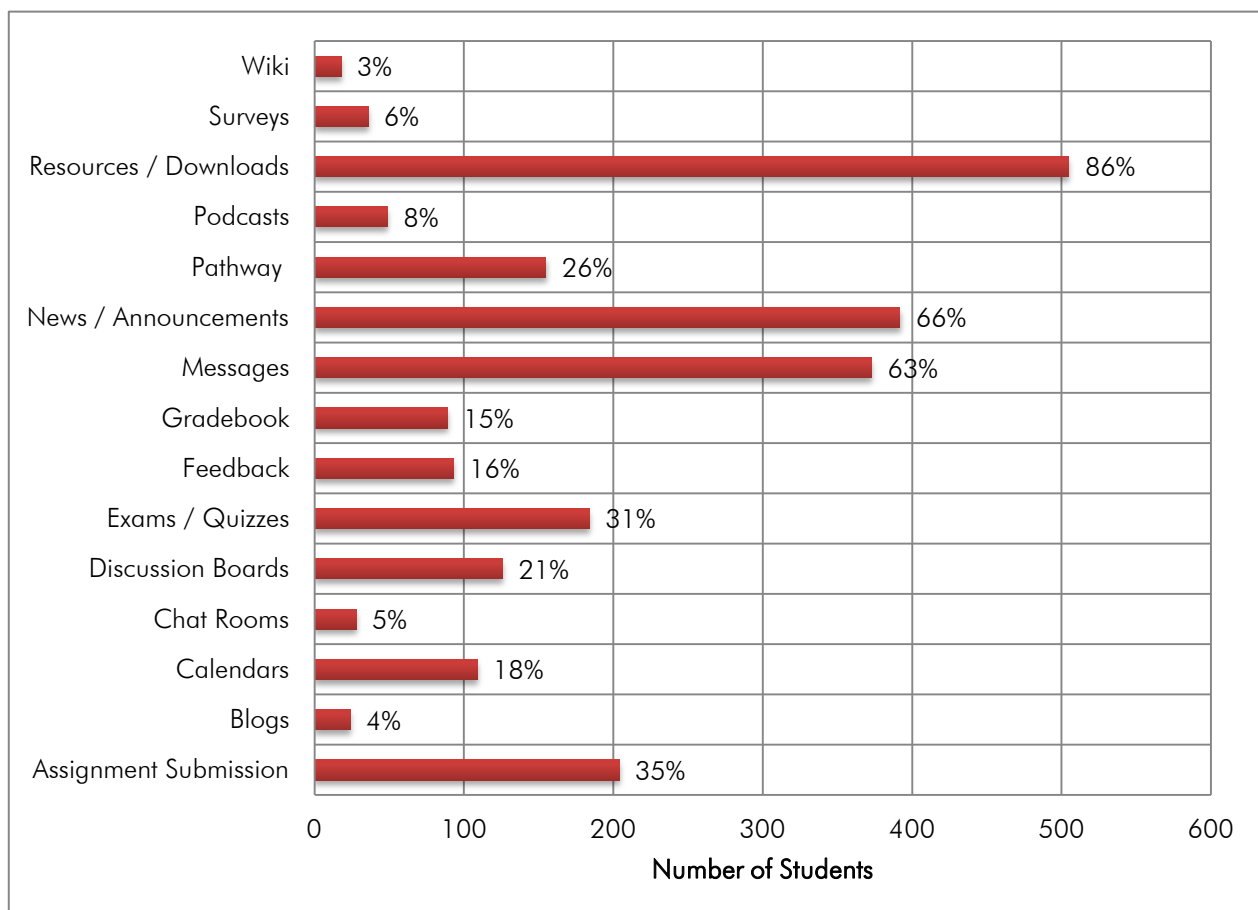
The only negative is more about lecturers not putting material up until 10 mins before the lecture - but that's not eBridge at fault.

It could simply be made better use of, I do not know how much training staff receive to use ebridge but it seems to me like they could do with a day where they are taught how to use all the aspects of ebridge and are given suggestions about how to incorporate this into their teaching. Just through answering question 1a.4 I have seen many features of ebridge which I had no idea were there because the lecturers simply don't make use of the site to its full potential.

(Education Survey 2011)

One final question students were asked was what tools their lecturers made use of on eBridge. It is once again abundantly clear that eBridge is not being used to its full potential. Greater effort needs to be made in encouraging staff to use these tools for the benefit of students where they could be integrated within a module. For example, 34% of staff are not using news announcements and a further 82% are not using the calendar – these could be used in every module for the benefit of students and it is on these areas that eBridge is falling down, just because the staff are not using it properly (See – Graph 25 – What tools within eBridge do your lecturers utilise?).

Graph 25 – What tools within eBridge do your lectures utilise?



Recommendation:

[ST] Redesigned interface for eBridge with enhanced navigation.
[ST] All eBridge sites should be named and not numbered.
[ST] Require lecturers to provide resources online where relevant.

[LT] Long-term staff development program to increase eBridge use.
[LT] Further development of the eBridge platform, considering suggestions above.
[LT] Further investment in the backed and servers powering eBridge to increase reliability.

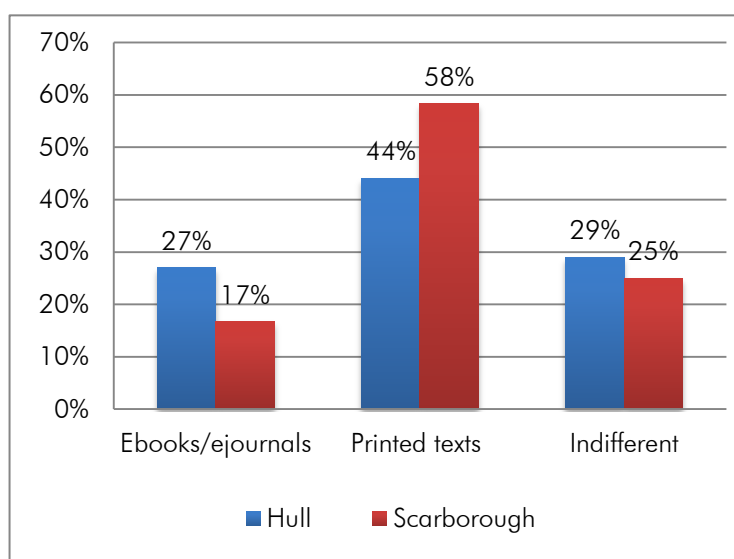
eBooks and electronic resources

Electronic resources, particularly eBooks and eJournals, are becoming increasingly important for access to resources. Such online resources can increase the circulation of materials, enabling multiple accesses to a single resource at any one time – which is not possible with printed materials.

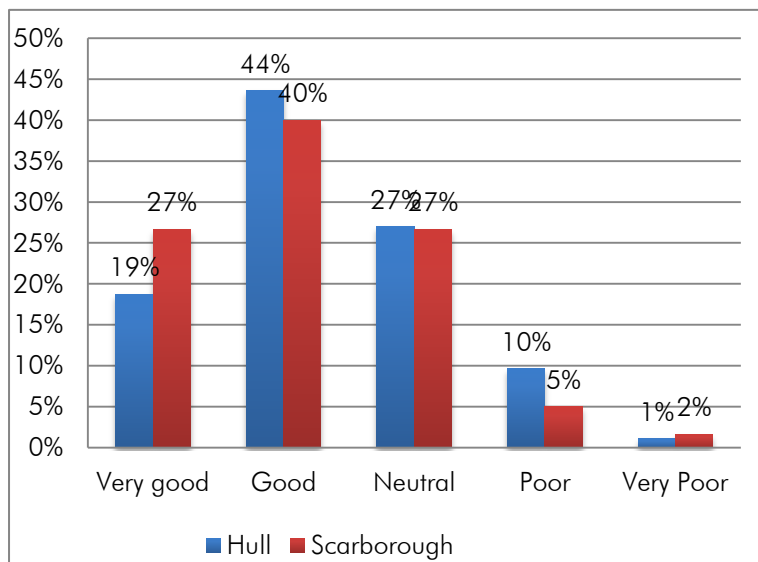
However, while it increases access, students prefer the printed texts with 44% in Hull and 58% in Scarborough favouring them. However a third of students across both campuses are indifferent and a similar amount prefer online resources (See – Graph 26 – Do you prefer eBooks and eJournals to traditional printed books and paper journals?).

HUU will always support the student view and paper materials are the current preference. At the same time however, if students were asked if they would rather have a digital copy or no copy, then digital would win. Therefore, where they increase access to vital resources, eBooks and eJournals would be accepted by students where it is not viable to purchase enough paper copies to meet demand.

Graph 26 – Do you prefer eBooks and eJournals to traditional printed books and paper journals



Graph 27 – How do you rate your access to electronic resources such as eBooks?



“you ask for a preference and people will always choose a paper copy, but if the other choice is to not have the resource at all then people would learn to like digital!” (Course Rep Training 2011)

Just as important as the resources is the access to them. When asked, students did favourably rate their access to such resources, with 63% of students in Hull and 67% of students in Scarborough rating their access as good or very good. There are however a further 27% of students on both campuses who rate the access neutrally and a few more who rate it poorly. It is still clear that there is a lot more that needs to be done to ensure

easier access to online resources. The University is not yet at the stage where resources can be easily accessed direct from the library catalogue without additional steps. There are also further problems as digital resources are often located in different areas from departmental repositories, eBridge sites, the library catalogue and through external access providers.

Recommendation:

[ST] Continue to support paper materials.
[ST] Continue to expand the number of collections available online.

[LT] Increase the ease of access for online resources, particularly off campus.

Portal/MyAdmin

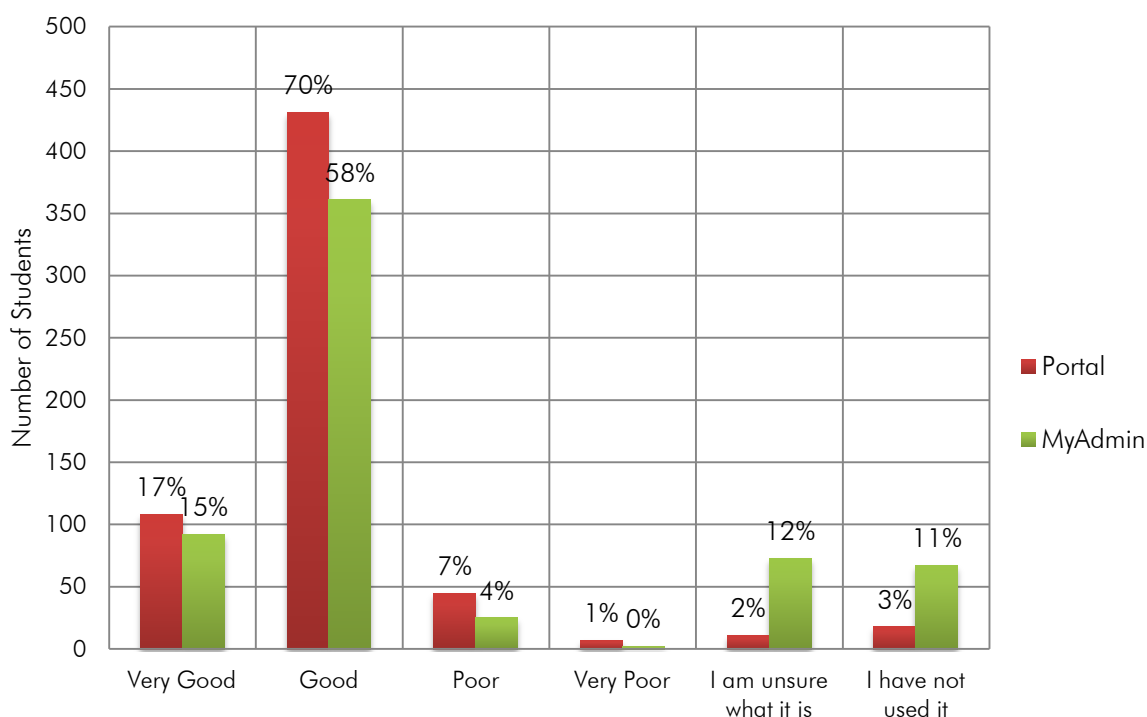
MyAdmin and portal are generally rated favourably by students. There is however a growing number of comments regarding the need for a separate student portal, admin area, library catalogue, email system and VLE.

All university sites need to be organised into one. At the moment we use ebridge for online submission, portal for checking exams and intra.net for resources. Unnecessarily complicated and impossibly hard to find things like timetables.

(Education Survey 2011)

An integrated solution would not only be easier to access and use, but would also make the services look more coherent and professional. If all the above could be integrated along with service department online tools such as the careers talk/presentation signup facility and study advisor tutor booking it would enhance student access and cause a lot less confusion over the different services.

Graph 28 – How would you rate the University's online services?



Recommendation:

[LT] Integrate all of the university's online tools and services into a single platform, or seamlessly integrate existing solutions and use a coherent theme/design across all existing platforms.

CHAPTER FIVE: Assessment and Feedback

Assessment and feedback are a crucial part of the learning process. Atherton (2011) argues “Mere presentation—without assessment of what the learners have made of what you have offered them—is not teaching”, indicating the significance of assessment. Yet without feedback on assessment, students are unable to improve, making it just as crucial an element of learning and teaching. This section will first look at issues regarding assessments and exams, before moving on to look at feedback. The research into feedback presents the most extensive research of this submission and is based on the coded analysis of thousands of comments.

Assessment

Assessments stand as the formal way for the University to grade students, ultimately designating the classification of their degree. While informal assessments exist and are an important part of many courses, this section is only concentrating on assessments that count towards the credits of a given module/course.

Assignments

The largest issue students experience with their assignments concerns the timescales they are set in and expected to be handed in. The most frequent problem is multiple deadlines on the same day, where as many as five assignments are due on the same day.

Lecture organisation. Collaborate with each other so essay deadlines aren't within 3 days of each other. This year my lecturers have been extremely unorganised and particularly for 3rd year. One in particular realised that she didn't give us enough time to complete some group work, so gave us an extension (Huzza!) However, she put the presentations THE DAY AFTER a deadline for a 3000 word essay for THE SAME module, and 3 days before a 10,000 word dissertation was due in. I realise we are to effectively manage time, but this takes the biscuit.

I think that no two essay deadlines should have the same hand in date, it makes it extremely stressful because it takes a lot of checking to make sure you have got everything right on an essay. But, it would be even better if the essay deadlines for each module were spread out better so you could spread your work out more. So the departments should organise themselves so that doesn't happen

Deadlines should be negotiated between module leaders, I know we should be able to manage our time appropriately but it is still a bit stupid to have final semester assignments hand ins on consecutive days in May

(Education Survey 2011)

It is important to note that most students recognise the need to plan ahead and manage their time effectively, yet they still struggle due to all the conflicting deadlines. It is without doubt that setting multiple essays the same due date does damage the quality of the work. It also increases resource demand (PCs, books, etc.) at certain times.

There are often circumstances where deadlines have not been clearly publicised, which has led to confusion amongst students. There have even been cases where academics and office/hand-in are displaying different hand-in dates which can be both confusing and distressing for students.

In regards to dissertation preparation, I found that it was not always clear when deadlines for certain things were (choosing dissertation supervisor, 200 word summary etc.) and found that I got different information off different staff, so maybe better communication between everyone.

(Education Survey 2011)

Recommendation:

- [ST] Deadlines need to be spaced out at different intervals throughout the semester to avoid heavy workloads.
- [ST] Introduce a universal policy for late submission and over-length work.
- [ST] Explore using online submission for all assignments as it is much more eco-friendly and cost effective for students.

Group Assignments

Group work forms an important part of many modules, even whole programmes. Students were invited to comment on group work (if they had it). While most students found the experience stressful, it was also seen as rewarding and an important skill to build. Having said that, there were two common problems that many students commented on regarding group work. The first issue involved language barriers and this was most commonly associated with HUBS. Students described several scenarios where they felt language barriers had led to conversational issues throughout their whole work process. This led to either an inequality in workload within the group, or disjointed work through lack of communication. This naturally affected marks, even when all group members had provided work to a high standard. The second issue involved inequality in group marking, specifically where peer-assessment is not included as part of the group work. This of course leads to all students in a group getting the same mark, even if their contribution was unequal.



Group work entails working with foreign students, while I appreciate the fact that they do the work to a high standard, the fact that they can't hold a conversation within group meetings results in them not contributing to discussion and a few students are the ones that contribute to discussion meaning that they do the majority of the work. Groups should be organised to help with this, particularly as this has an effect on the overall mark of my degree.

Group marking; there should be some sort of student feedback to ensure that those who haven't contributed at all don't receive the same mark as those who have worked hard.

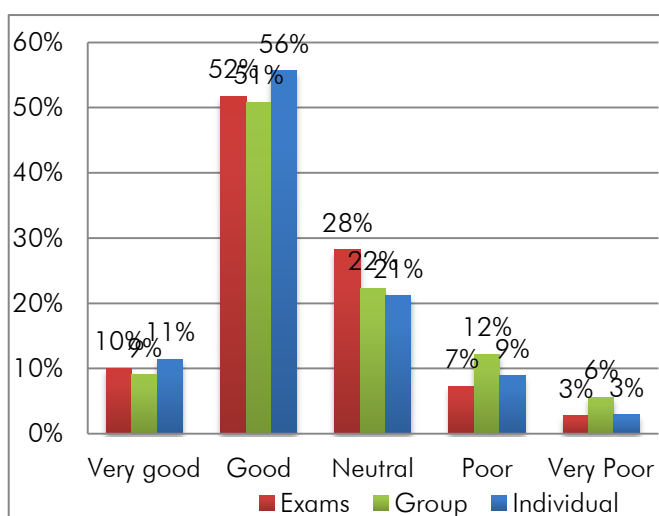
(Education Survey 2011)

There is no easy solution to the first problem, other than to further support students in their group work and ensure there are no communication problems. As for tackling group marking, peer assessment would allow groups to rate each other's contribution and marks could be weighted accordingly. This however can lead to unfair reviews and other issues – though many departments do operate this successfully.

Recommendation: [ST] Conduct further research into group work and the associated problems.

Assessment criteria

Graph 29 – How would you rate the clarity of the assessment criteria?



One of the most important aspects of assessment is the clarity of criteria set for it. This area did not score too badly, with under 20% of all students rating it unfavourably. There were however a few who rated it neutrally and from this it is evident that it may very well not be as clear as it should be. One of the common issues raised in this area, was a lack of synergy with learning outcomes which needs to be addressed.

I don't understand how some assessments link to the learning outcomes... surely it should be testing me to ensure I fulfilled the outcomes?

(Course Rep Training 2011)

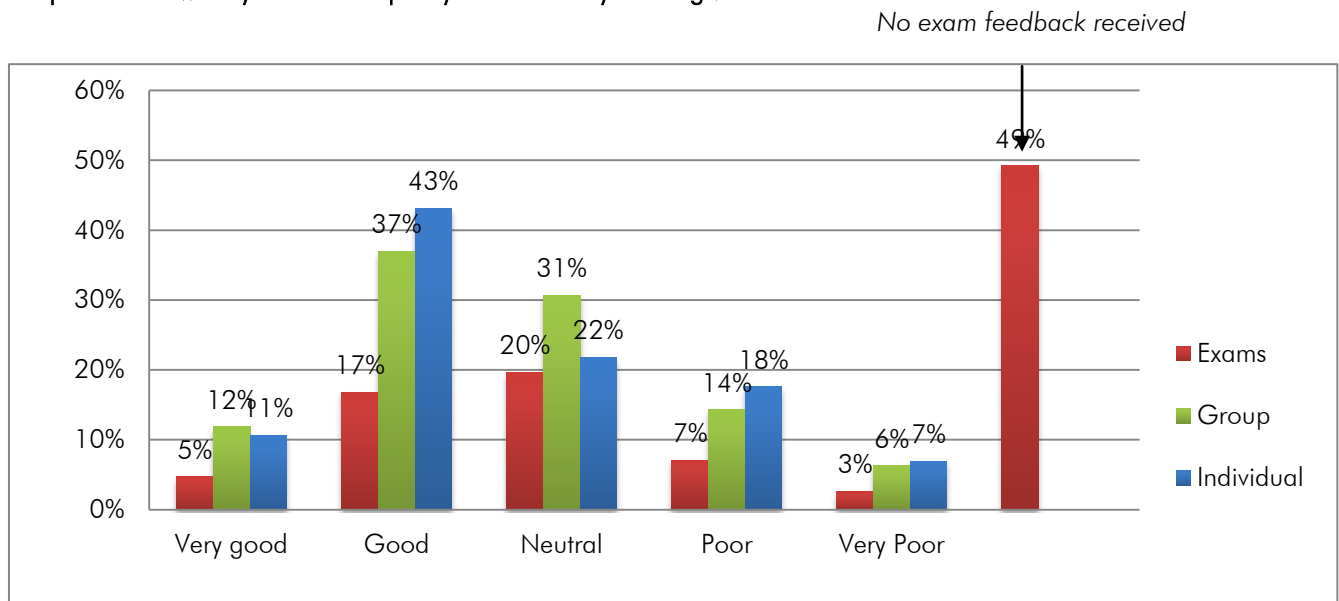
Recommendation

[ST] Introduce standards for assessment criteria and ensure they suitably assess the desired learning outcomes of a module.

Feedback

As with the whole HE sector, feedback is an underperforming area within the 2011 NSS at UoH. Out of all the departments at the University, only Geography, American Studies, History, English and Centre for Environmental & Marine Sciences scored favourably with averages over 80 for NSS questions on assessment and feedback. HUU research has shown that feedback is one of the largest student concerns, and is something that affects students in every department. In the Education Survey (HUU, 2011), there was almost a 50/50 split between good feedback and neutral or poor feedback when students were asked about their group and individual assessments. Exam feedback significantly underperformed as 49% of students asked did not receive any.

Graph 30 – How do you rate the quality of feedback you are given?

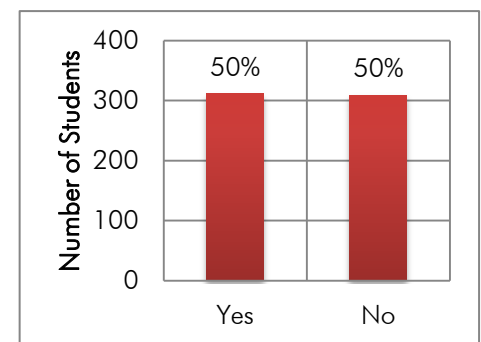


As part of the Education Survey, students were asked to rate the quality of feedback they received for group assignments, exams and for individual work. Please note – only the 46% of students who undertook group work were asked about group work. For individual assessments 54% of students rated feedback as good or very good, but this dropped to only 49% for group assessments and to 22% for exams. Exams scored so unfavourably as 49% of students claimed to receive no feedback from exams at all, in effect rating feedback at its lowest level as they get none (See Graph 30 – How do you rate the quality of feedback you are given). When asking all students, only 50% were even aware that they are entitled to exam feedback (See Graph 31 – How Are you aware that you are entitled to exam feedback?).

This means that in all categories of assessment, around half of the students are not happy with their feedback quality. This is simply not acceptable and was reflected in the NSS as the whole institution scores a mere 69 in assessment and feedback which is actually relatively poor.

When focusing on the ninth NSS question (which relates to feedback helping clarify things students did not understand), some departments really under performed. This question is crucial as if anything, feedback should help students improve by explaining where they went wrong and clarifying mistakes. For such a critical element an unacceptable number of departments and academic areas failing in this: Philosophy & Theology (45), Organisational Behaviour & HR Management (35), Economics (49), Law (47) and Psychology (39). The latter three have been in the bottom departments for question nine for two years.

Graph 31 – Are you aware that you are entitled to exam feedback?



HUU has done extensive research on what makes feedback good or bad. Through qualitative analysis of hundreds of comments, key themes quickly emerged. Using SPSS, comments were clustered under thematic nodes and then turned into tree maps to pick out the key themes. These are presented in the following two diagrams which show the tree maps concerted into wordle diagrams.

Feedback is good if:



(Education Survey 2011)

Feedback is poor if:



(Education Survey 2011)

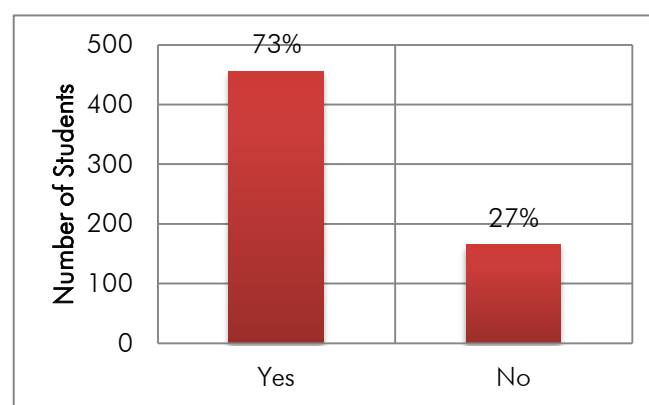
From this extensive research, key themes have quickly emerged. Students deemed feedback good if it was clear, detailed, personalised, constructive and concise. Just as important however, was the availability of lecturers to discuss feedback individually. While it was important for feedback to be quick, it scored lower than the other aspects, indicating that quality is somewhat more important than speed. One key element of good feedback is that it informs students how to improve and gives explanation of how/where they gained or lost marks.

It is not surprising that many aspects of poor feedback that emerged in our research were the opposites of the good feedback in that they were classed as brief, generic and unhelpful. There was however a larger set of complaints from students who have rarely received written feedback or claim to have not received any at all. This was followed by the second biggest issue being legibility. While some other issues were only commented on a few times, some of the comments were worrying such as lecturers adverse to helping or discussing feedback, feedback being so poor students opt not to collect it and cases where departments have lost both work and feedback.

With legibility being such a key issue, the Education Survey (HUU, 2011) asked two key questions about feedback. In the first, students were asked to rate feedback legibility. While 55% of students rated it favourably as good or very good, this did mean that 45% of students rated feedback legibility poorly. This reflects in the following question where students were asked if they believed feedback should be typed to improve legibility. Almost three quarters (73%) of students favoured typed feedback.

The only concern over typed feedback was raised in Academic Council as there was concern that typed feedback would enable lecturers to 'copy and paste' feedback, use standard phrases or just tweak templates. If typed feedback is introduced, guidelines should ensure that no shortcuts are taken in providing students with personal, individual feedback.

Graph 32 – Do you think feedback should be typed in order to improve legibility?



One barrier lecturers often quote against provision of quality, written feedback is that students do not want it or do not collect it. On the other hand, with some of the issues described above, some students simply choose not collected it as it is so poor it is not worth it. Furthermore, an even larger number of students are not aware of what they are entitled to with feedback or receive none at all. HUU is committed to improving feedback in the University and as part of this we have launched a campaign to make students aware of what feedback is, what they are entitled to and why they should collect it. It is hoped this will further pressure lecturers into addressing feedback, giving students what they deserve.



Feedback – Good Practice

As part of the Education Survey, a lot of cases of good practise were discussed in student comments. This section will overview some of these cases, which may be appropriate for implementation in other departments.

[...] gave our group audio feedback via an .mp3 file on eBridge for our IT group assignment and this was by far one of the best ways of delivering feedback in my experience.

(Education Survey 2011)

Audio feedback is extremely personal, but also negates the need to write or type – so in effect it can be much quicker than traditional written feedback. There are a number of students who favour this, especially when delivered through a VLE where they can access the recording any time. It also enables them to play the feedback recording while they read through the work.

Students like feedback that explains their grading and process across specific areas such as structure, grammar and content. This enables them to focus on their areas for improvement.

Feedback is clear and detailed, organised effectively into areas such as Content, Organisation/Structure, Grammar, Punctuation etc

(Education Survey 2011)



Feedback that is descriptive and focused in this manner can help students improve where they need it the most. This should be standard across all marking. Some departments achieve this through a proforma, but comments should never be limited to such a rigid format.

Each exam/ assignment has a marking proforma which we are allowed to see before hand and which is written on by the assessor outlying which bits are good and what requires further improvement in the future

(Education Survey 2011)

Using a proforma ensures feedback is given across all relevant areas, but it does risk lecturers sticking too rigidly to the form and not given the level of detail that good feedback requires.

As discussed with audio feedback, online feedback enables student to access their feedback anytime and avoids it getting lost between assignments. Archiving feedback in this way allows students to reflect more on feedback and readily access it wherever they are on a range of devices. This is particularly useful for students who often have to travel home between semesters and over holidays.

most lecturers the feedback will be available online so you can't lose it

(Education Survey 2011)

No matter the form of feedback, online storing of it would be a vast improvement to the current paper system. This should help avoid lost scripts and make archiving much easier and cost effective than large paper stores.

The single most important element of good feedback is that it goes beyond a single document or process, actually running as a dialogue between lecturers and students. Providing feedback in this personal way enables students to discuss their areas for improvements and to seek clarification on any issues.

Often lecturers offer one-on-one feedback sessions for students.

Not only is it prompt, lecturers analyse the results with you personally, it remains discrete/confidential and a focus weighs equally upon strengths and weaknesses. Emphasising improvement but also not knocking confidence by a list of improvements.

(Education Survey 2011)

Staff should always make themselves available to discuss feedback with students. While this may seem obvious, there are cases where some staff are not at all welcoming in providing enhanced feedback. Staff should always be encouraged to offer feedback sessions or office slots, and both time management models and HR processes should account for this.

Feedback that is good helps students improve. It should be a given for feedback in general as if anything, that is its purpose. However, some poorer feedback does not help students improve as it does not fully explain how or why they went wrong. As such, all feedback should really target areas for improvement, but also give students advice on how they can achieve this.

Advice for future assignments and common mistakes that were made that could be easily avoided in future.

Also when the lecturers handwriting is legible

(Education Survey 2011)

As discussed previously, legibility is the most important aspect of feedback because even if you have the best feedback in the world, it is absolutely useless if you cannot read it.

Feedback is good when written in clear handwriting that you can read clearly. Not scribble.

(Education Survey 2011)

It should be a requirement that all feedback is legibly written, typed or provided in any other clear format (conversation, audio, interactive).

Recommendation:

[ST] Feedback uses a proforma, or gives breakdowns and personalised comments on key areas

[ST] Assignments and feedback links to the learning outcomes of a module.

[ST] Innovative practises such as online and audio feedback should be explored and used where appropriate.

[ST] Feedback sessions should be offered 1:1 between students and lecturers.

[ST] Feedback should help improve by highlighting weak areas and giving advice.

[ST] All feedback MUST be legible and where possible, typed.

[ST] Feedback on exams should be sent electronically to all students

[LT] Students should have a right to complain about offices if they receive bad service.

Feedback – Areas for improvement

As part of the Education Survey, there were a lot of issues with poorer feedback discussed in student comments. These cases of poor feedback are certainly areas for targeted improvement. This section will overview some of these cases.

There are some large issues regarding the behaviour of certain lecturers and their view of feedback. In the most extreme cases these lecturers have made it clear that students are not welcome in either seeking clarification of feedback or asking for further feedback. As students are paying large sums of money to study here, it is not acceptable that for some modules students are treated as an inconvenience.

I know that there is meant to be an option to receive individual feedback but I have found often that some lecturers are so adverse to using their time giving individual feedback that it can be better off not wasting your own time chasing it up.

Supporting HUU's research, there was a great deal of comments regarding legibility. As discussed above, feedback that cannot be read cannot be of use.

Illegible and takes forever to come back! No exam feedback whatsoever.

It is very hard to read the comments, sometimes I don't (and my student friends) understand what lecture mean, because the words are too hard to read.

The most passionate comments of course were from students who have not received any feedback at all. There were a lot of comments about feedback where the only 'feedback' was a mark. In the worse cases this included a whole feedback sheet being returned incomplete and only stating a mark.

Last year from [module title] I didn't get any feedback at all! I got just blank sheet with my mark (no comments) lecturer gave it in class so can't discuss with him.

These issues need to be addressed at a departmental level. It is particularly important to help introduce equality and fairness into the University. As all students are paying equal tuition fees, it is certainly not fair that many departments provide a much better service than others. Even without considering finances, it is unacceptable that some students get world class, personalised, in-depth feedback where others get nothing at all.

Recommendation:

[ST] A working group should be created to research and rewrite the annexe on good practice for feedback. HUU should be proactively involved.

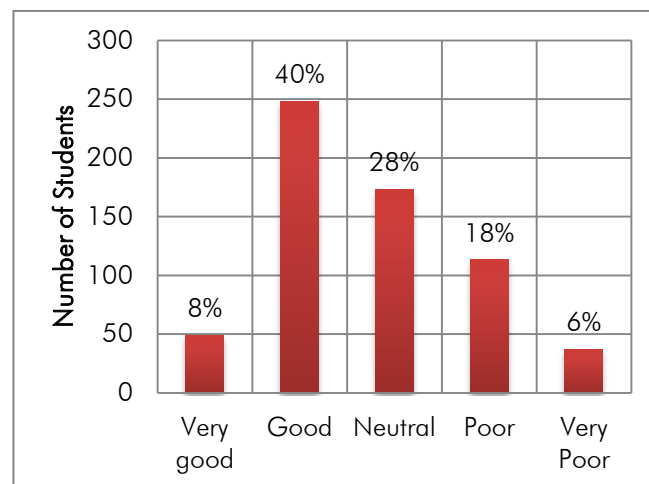
Feedback return time

Under half of students asked in the Education Survey rated the time feedback takes to come back as either good or very good. This leaves a majority of students unfavourably rating the time for feedback to be returned. With 24% of students rating this return time as poor or very poor, it does mean that at least a quarter of students are not satisfied with this turnaround time (See – Graph 33 – How do you rate the time it takes for your feedback to be received). There is definitely a lot of room for improvement in this rating, though it may not be entirely down to the time it takes for feedback to be delivered.

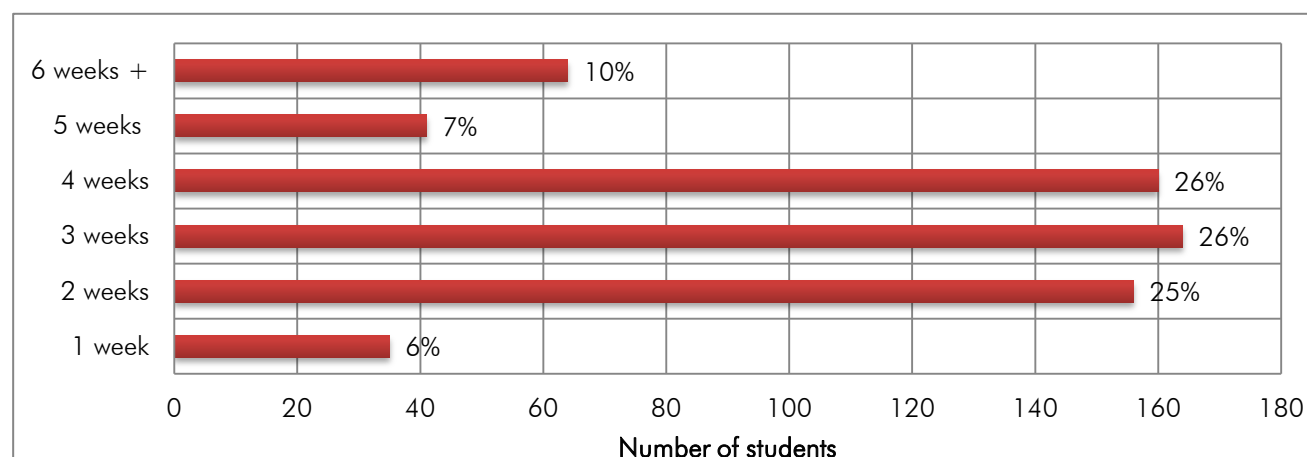
Communication regarding the number of scripts to mark and lecturers' workload would go a long way to helping students understand the time constraints involved in marking. Further information about external examiners and examination boards would also help in some cases. As turnaround time definitely depends on the department and module sizes it is important to reinforce that it will not be possible to ensure parity across the University departments in turnaround time. Only communication and transparency about this will help manage student expectations on feedback.

While HUU and our research support the quickest possible turnaround time, this must not impinge on feedback quality. Our research (above) shows that quality is an important factor in feedback, significantly more than time taken for it to be returned. It is clear however that a balance must be struck with this.

Graph 33 – How do you rate the time it takes for your feedback to be received?



Graph 34 – How long do you expect to wait for feedback?



In asking students on how long they expect to wait for feedback, there was a great division of answers, reflecting the diversity across the University departments. It is because of this that departments must ensure they tackle this issue themselves and not at University or faculty level. There has been a great deal of success in providing transparency to the marking process to enable students to understand the time demand it takes.

Recommendation:

[ST] Feedback should be within three weeks and must not take longer than four.

[ST] Departments must be honest and clear about turnaround time.

[ST] HUU Academic Council supports an inter-semester week to help shorten turnaround.

CHAPTER SIX: Student Support

A large number of student support services are offered by both the University and HUU available to students. These services range from the Study Advice Service and Careers, to student advisors, pastoral support in accommodation, personal supervisors and disability services.

Departmental student support

While there are university wide support mechanisms, departments are responsible for a great deal of student support, particularly academic support and subject related matters. These departmental support mechanisms vary from personal supervisors, office/support staff, departmental officers (disabilities, exams, progress, etc.) and module leaders. This section will highlight issues that have been raised as themes in some of these support mechanisms.



Personal supervisors

Personal supervisors are an important departmental support mechanism and form an important contact for students, especially for references following graduation. The University has a strong set of requirements for supervisors {QH:K6} and departments are actively encouraged to expand on this. However, some tutors do fail to meet the minimum standards. For this support to work, a student's ability to contact their supervisor is crucial, yet many students find they are difficult to reach, even ignoring emails.

Getting a response from your personal supervisor. I only get a reply 50% of the time and trying to get her to get back to me regarding booking some time for a tutorial is like pulling out teeth. On one occasion I ended up emailing the head of department, who passed it onto the director of research, who didn't respond. This resulted in me ringing up admin staff and bursting into tears. It took me 2 months to get to this stage and only then did my supervisor get back to me. I am back to square one now. I have emailed her 3 times so far to organise a tutorial and she hasn't once replied. What on earth am I paying tuition fees for if I am expected to do this all by myself without any guidance?

(Education Survey 2011)

Cases such as these hardly meet the requirement "to respond to any request for an appointment/advice and be available as promised" as set out in {QH:K6:6}, let alone actually tackling the areas of support supervisors are supposed to. Clearly, there needs to be some mechanism to tackle unresponsive supervisors other than just changing to someone else. Even so, it needs to be clearer to students that they are eligible to request a change of supervisor if it is not working.

Recommendation:

- [ST] Personal Supervision needs monitoring more closely and staff need training on the role.
- [ST] Staff should not be forced to supervise – if they are the students get a poorer service.
- [ST] University should review and strengthen {QH:K6} with new standards and guidelines with input from students and HUU.
- [ST] Students should be able to report poor supervisors

Support for part-time students

This has been included as a separate section as it clear from our research that some departments are not properly supporting their part-time students.

Being part-time we sometimes feel 2nd best or as an afterthought.

Part time students do not get the same level of assistance and almost no feedback as projects are not marked properly. If problems occur staff member in charge of part time study is very unhelpful and forgetful

(Education Survey 2011)

Part-time students deserve the same level of support as other students, particularly as they may have other responsibilities and commitments in life. Departments need to ensure these students are fully supported, especially as 35% of the University's students (by headcount) are either part-time or undertaking a short course. If there are campus-based part-time students, it is vital that they have access to their lecturers in their designated times in university and this is currently just not the case. As part-time students tend to have other work or family commitments, they are quite often unable to get into University on any other day than those they are designated to be in. This means that if their staff are unavailable at these times they won't be able to access them at any other time.

Recommendation:

- [ST] Departments that offer PT courses must adequately support these students.
- [ST] PT programme approval should set more stringent support controls.
- [ST] Staff should have office hours while PT students are on campus – if relevant.

Support for disabled students

There are all too many cases where disabled students are failed by their departments. As 10.5 % of the University's students are classed as having a disability and the support for these students needs to be considered. Further evidence that disabled students are being failed by the University is the dramatic drop in NSS scores for question 18, "I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities or rooms when I needed to" when filtered by disabled students (excluding dyslexia). The score for this area was 72, but demonstrated a 17 point drop from 2009 to 2010 which is unacceptable.

The problems however are far more extensive than access to specialist equipment and resources. It is clear that there are accessibility, academic resource and support issues throughout university departments that are hampering the ability of disabled students.

The HUU Disabled Students Committee ran many campaigns throughout the last academic year. Their end of year report concluded that many University buildings, including University House still have many access problems for disabled students. The unreliable lifts in University House and Scarborough campus are a constant issue for disabled students and the lifts in the library are too small, especially in the east wing for use by wheelchair users comfortably, especially if they have a carer. There are further problems with disabled students not getting the full support they are entitled to such as notes ahead of lectures or having lectures in poorly equipped lecture theatres. The final comment of their report is a lack of awareness among staff about the range of disabilities, hampering support for many such students, particularly those with unseen conditions.

Resources for disabled students. A lot of reading packs etc are only available in photocopy form rather than as scanned text, which is very difficult to read, especially for those with dyslexia/ irlen syndrome/ other difficulties

Disabled facilities needs major improvement, proper working lifts and enough room for a decent size wheelchair

Lecturers to understand more about the needs of students with disabilities i.e. what different medical conditions are. Whilst Disability Tutors are a good idea, PG Course Directors also need an understanding of the impact that medical conditions have on students/student ability to study The Disability Tutor may be someone that the PG student has very little contact with/not see. Course Directors should have greater awareness of health problems.

(Education Survey 2011)

Recommendation:

- [ST] Greater awareness of disabilities through staff training
- [ST] Release of study materials digitally before lectures for use by disabled students.

[LT] Long-term access strategies for both campuses.
[LT] Installation of new elevators for BJL, Scarborough and University House.
[LT] Increased visibility of all student support services in Scarborough. This should be done through providing a branded, accessible and central service similar to the 3rd floor of University House in Hull

Academic staff office hours

Many academic staff advertise office hours which are designated times during a week that students can 'drop-in' to their office regarding any queries. Office hours are a valuable resource for students; however there are many occasions where staff have not met their office hours. Even when the office hours are observed by staff, students feel they are not long enough, especially when they only consist of a single hour or two a week. When times are so short and infrequent, they can clash with lectures, leaving students with no access to these designated times.

More office hours... Considering we only have 6 hours of lectures a week, I don't understand what they are doing with their time

Office hours could be extended, a lot of staff have hours during lectures and therefore are unable to be contacted any other way than by email, which is sometimes not very useful.

I'd like to see more lecturers sticking to their office times stated on their door as well.

(Education Survey 2011)

If office hours are offered to students, staff need to ensure they stick to them or provide advance notice of their inability to do so. When staff set their office hours, they need to consider lecture times and ensure they do not set such hours solely within lecture slots. If staff are regularly not meeting their office hours, then students should be entitled to complain and such complaints should be dealt with.

Recommendation:

[ST] Departments should police staff office hours and ensure they are fulfilled.
[ST] Office hours should not be during a student's teaching.

Departmental offices

Departmental offices are often a student's first port of call for any issues in their department or for any queries they have. The vast majority of office staff are a credit to the University and are a great source of support for students. There are however some cases where the behaviour of office staff has been seen as offensive, unhelpful or upsetting to students. This kind of behaviour is not acceptable, but it is very difficult to address this issue or complain. Nevertheless, which this is still the case it means many issues that need to be tackled are left.

The administrative staff can be like mini Nazi's. This is especially true with regards [Departmental Secretary] who is rude, nasty, and shows no empathy with students. She clearly doesn't want to work with students so she should leave.

One particular member of staff in the office is very rude and unhelpful.

(Education Survey 2011)

It is only a few minor incidents, however these have grown in number of the previous years and are often concentrated within the same departments, causing great concern at HUU. This situation will be continually monitored by Course Representatives and through the use of surveys.

Another big issue for students with departmental offices are the opening hours. Many departmental offices have 2hr lunch breaks or very limited hours with which to deal with students. As departmental offices are such a key

resource for students, these limited opening hours is unhelpful, especially when student need to deal with upsetting or stressful matters such as mitigating circumstances and essay hand-in.

The office is closed too long in the afternoon 12:30 till 14:00 is a really long time. (Education Survey 2011)

The final issue students raised with offices were relating to errors and mistakes.

Office have messed things up on several occasions in past e.g. with releasing exam timetables, exam results, loosing scripts/feedback etc. (Education Survey 2011)

While it is inevitable that mistakes will happen, offices are very slow to respond to these issues and fix the problems. Quite often mistakes are met with an absolute refusal to admit any mistake. It is simply not good enough that documents such as marked scripts with feedback are lost by the staff. Considering the number of penalties associated with late hand in, module choices, or missing a deadline to submit a form for a trip, it is not acceptable that offices are not held accountable. Students should have some way to tackle poor service within their offices.

Recommendation: [ST] The University needs to better recognise the good departmental staff.

[LT] Students should have a right to complain about offices if they receive bad service.

[LT] The University need to better develop HR policy to tackle these issues.

Departmental freshers week and induction support

HUU, accommodation pastoral support, commercial businesses and university service departments all run induction activities in the freshers period. Just as important however is the induction support offered by academic departments. Such departmental inductions are the most fundamental induction academic life at University, setting the tone and instructions for the remaining years. It is often this induction that establishes departmental regulations and references, as well as provides instructions for library use as well as the location of key facilities.

I also believe that the department needs to work on their reception skills with first years. I found it very scary coming to university, having never stayed in a city before and I feel like I lost out. Information was not passed on or explained to students, about all services in the uni, eg library and pcs. I felt lost and confused when using the emailing system and eBridge it just wasn't explained at all! I have worked my way through now and get on fine with these problems but I believe that for next year's students it should be sorted out. I also found that in labs it was very hard to complete work without previous knowledge and experience with lab equipment and this was not taught to us very well.

(Education Survey 2011)

It is clear that some departments need to further their support for first year students in the freshers period. There definitely needs to be consistency amongst departmental inductions to ensure students are given the best introduction to University. A successful introduction to University is of the utmost importance for retention, ensuring that students get the best start they need to University life. Departments should therefore be bound in policy to provide a minimum standard of induction to their students.

Recommendation: [ST] The University needs to better recognise the good departmental staff.

[ST] The University should support HUU's Learning and Teaching Awards.

[LT] HUU to monitor retention rates in departments and continue freshers surveys.

Student Support Services

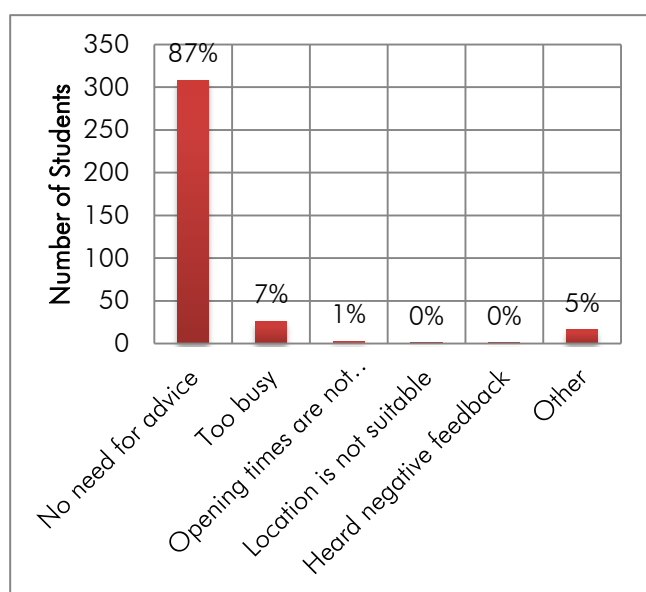
While departmental support mechanisms form a large amount of the available student support, there is also the HUU Advice Centre and the University Careers Service, Study Advice Service and Student Support Service. This section will review the former three services as insufficient data is available surrounding Student Support Services at the University.

HUU Advice Centre

Hull University Union runs an Advice Centre based on the third floor of University House in Hull and near Student Support Services on Scarborough. The Advice Centre offers free, independent, confidential, impartial advice to both current and prospective students at the University of Hull on a whole range of issues from academic and housing problems to benefits, budgeting, funding and health. For 2010-11 the service opens four days a week in Hull and one day a week in Scarborough during term time, dropping down to once a week in Hull and once a fortnight in Scarborough during vacation. Exit surveys reveal that over half of students using the service had considered leaving University until



Graph 35 – Why have you not used the Advice Centre?



seeking advice. In the Education Survey, 70% of students asked were aware of the advice centre and 18% had used it. The Advice Centre offers a very valuable service with over half of the clients surveyed in their evaluation saying they considered leaving university before seeking advice. Clearly the Advice Centre is an important service for student retention. Students who didn't use the Advice Centre were asked why, with 87% of students saying it was because they were not in need of advice. 7% did not use the service as it was too busy and a further 5% selected other reasons. As such an important student retention service, it is disappointing that 7% of students surveyed were unable to use the service as it was too busy (See – Graph 35 – Why have you not used the Advice Centre).

The advice centre was the only place that could help me with my problems; I had gone to almost every other place first but none offered any real or useful advice, the Advice Centre however knew exactly how to help me. I only wish I'd visited sooner. I don't know what I would have done without the Advice Centre, I don't think I would have been able to continue my course without it and in my life in general I would have been much worse off than I am now. They were very friendly and helpful and I would advise anyone that has any type of problem whilst at university to go to them first.

I would honestly say that without the help of the Advice Centre I would have left university

(Education Survey 2011)

Recommendation:

[ST] The Advice Centre needs either more staffing or longer opening hours.

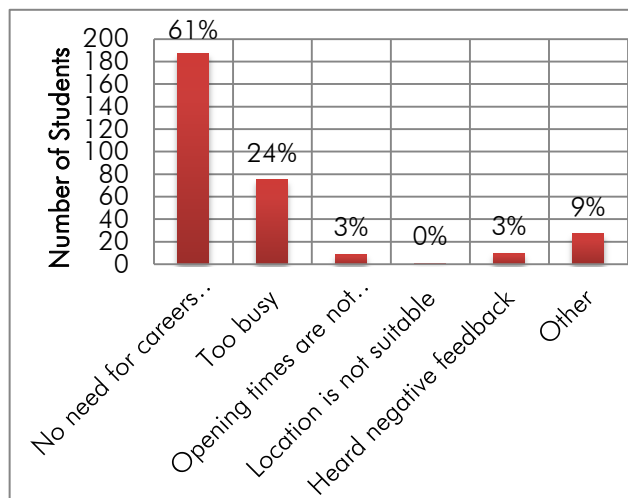
[LT] HUU to run a campaign looking into retention rates and support available for students at UoH.

[LT] Introduction of a new adviser in Hull and increased service hours in Scarborough.

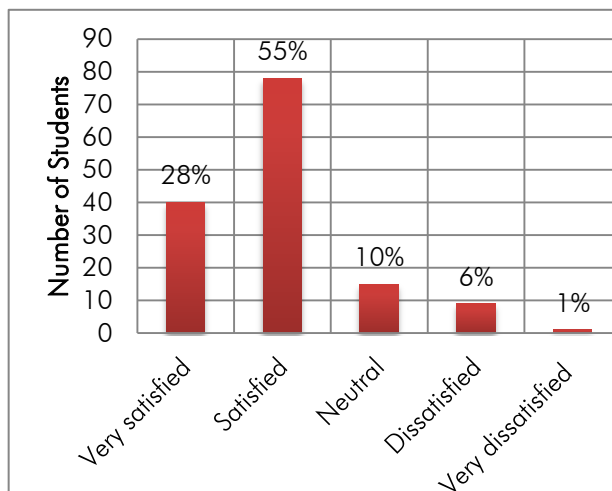
Careers Services

The University Careers Service provides help and support to students and graduates in finding jobs and starting their career path. In the Education Survey, 73% of students asked were aware of the Careers Service, with 32% of them having used the service. The vast majority of those using the Careers were satisfied with the service (See – Graph 36 – How satisfied are you with the service).

Graph 37 – Why have you not used the service?



Graph 36 – How satisfied are you with the service?



As for the 68% of students who did not use the service, they were asked why. The majority of these students (61%) claimed it was because they had no need for careers advice, however this may well be as they were first year students, or students on direct entry from work. There were however a further 24% of students who did not use the service as it is too busy.

A lot of careers issues were raised by students, but not regarding the Careers Service. The data from the Education survey indicates that students prefer more careers advice at the departmental level.

The department has quite a poor attitude towards life after university. Few career opportunities are advertised on the English eBridge site and when they are it is usually the day the deadline expires for applications, which means people either miss out on the opportunity or rush a poor application.

Also I think the careers service within the department could be better with more high profile law firms etc visiting the university, and more workshops with different firms would make a massive difference.

(Education Survey 2011)

While the Careers Service has a good provision with its two campus based facilities, there is clearly a need for more careers advice at the departmental level. While the Careers Service actively engages with academic departments, it is clear some academic departments are not as receptive as they should be. However, with a strong student demand for careers advice in academic departments, departments need to liaise more closely with the Careers Service.

It is also important to note the student concerns with the Careers Service on Scarborough campus, currently based within the KDL library. Please see the KDL section above.

Recommendation:

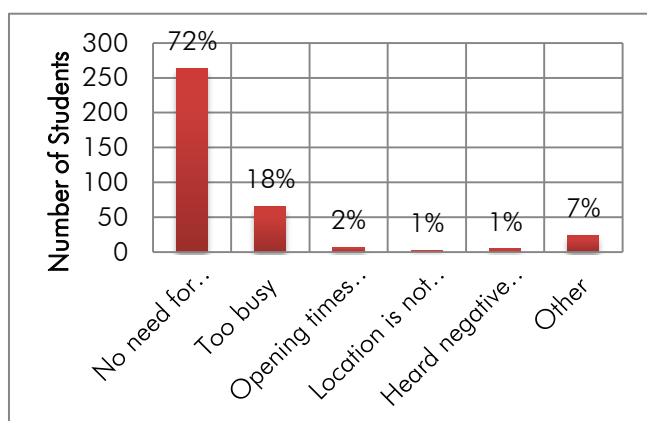
- [ST] More careers advice in Academic Departments
- [ST] More department/subject area careers events.
- [ST] Move the Careers Service out of the KDL

Study Advice

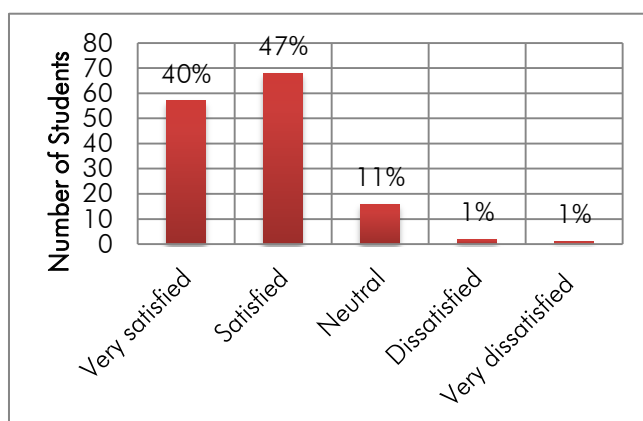
The Study Advice Service is a free, impartial and confidential advice service for students at UoH. The service helps students with their maths, writing and study skills. In the Education Survey, 83% of students asked knew about the Study Advice Service, and of them, 28% had used the service. The vast majority of the 72% who had not used the service did not need study advice, however a concerning number of students (18%) did not use the service as it was too busy (See – Graph 39 – Why have you not used the service?). This is clearly a case for introducing new advisers, as it is not acceptable that around 20% of students could not access the service due to it being too busy. As Study Advice Service forms an important part of the University's retention network, it is dangerous and unwise to underfund the service. Even with raised tariffs, there will still be a demand for the service, especially as students struggle on the step up to HE and getting to grips with referencing.



Graph 38 – Why have you not used the service?



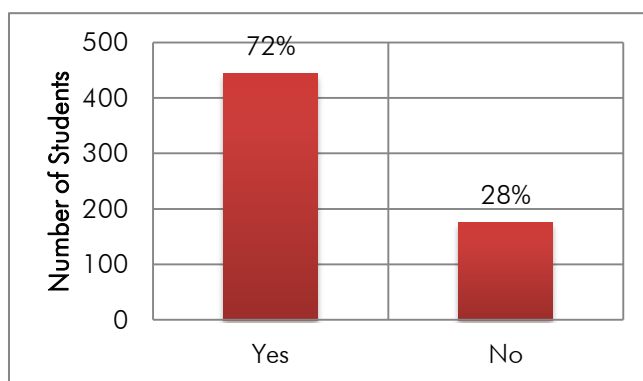
Graph 39 – How satisfied are you with the service?



For those students who had use the Study Advice, the vast majority of them were satisfied or very satisfied with the service, and while 11% of students rated it neutrally, only 2% rated it as dissatisfactory (See – Graph 40 – How satisfied are you with the service?).

While 83% of students were aware of the Study Advice Service, 72% of all students believed the service needed more visibility. This is interesting as a fair sum of the students who knew about the service still believed it needs more visibility (See – Graph 38 – Do you think the Study Advice Service needs more visibility?). This can be achieved with further funding for promotion and further embedding of the service within the University. However, the most important consideration is that it has prime locations that students can easily access. The Study Advice Service has a fairly good location in the BJL library in Hull, however it is not the most accessible location and is somewhat out of the way. In Scarborough the situation is much worse with the service running from an obscure location, nowhere near the library unlike in Hull.

Graph 40 – Do you think the Study Advice Service needs more visibility?



Quite hidden away, needs to be in a more prominent place.

(Education Survey 2011)

Many of the students who valued the service felt that appointments were not long enough to fully help them. The service needs to consider offering optional double sessions

I think this is a fantastic facility provided by the University. Everything I have needed or wanted advice on, it has been provided. Maybe, more time for 121's as I know this is restricted but for me this has been a vital support.

Improve the time of advice provided, currently its only 20 mins, which is not enough to get things explained, so you have to book another appointment

(Education Survey 2011)

Impartiality is a concern for some students using the Study Advice Service. While it is supposed to be running independently, some students worry that it is not truly independent while being run as a University service.

It should be integrated into the Union Advice Centre

(Education Survey 2011)

While a valuable service, there was a great demand for more advanced workshops. Some students found the advice too basic for them, or even 'patronising'. Naturally, this is because a lot of the material is aimed to help the students most at need, there is however a need to cater for more advanced queries and this must be considered to help enhance the best students as well as support those in need.

It was a bit basic (exam/essay stuff). This probably helps the most people but would have been nice if there was something for more experienced students who want to improve as opposed to those who are new to it all.

Their advice seems to be quite basic and did not help that much. Perhaps advice that is more department based would be more useful. For example the system of referencing essays is specific to each department.

(Education Survey 2011)

Access to the service was also a key issue for students. Part-time and placement students wanted increased opening hours in the evenings as it is the only times they can make it. Some students also requested the introduction of drop-in sessions so students could go there to handle study quick enquiries. Access and time restrictions also left a lot of students further suggesting online access solutions. While some of these are already provided, the service clearly needs to advertise them better.

Better access for part timers who can only go in the evenings

Drop in sessions for little problems for maybe an hour each day Courses on study skills to be used as lectures in departments...encourage links with department

Maybe an email service would be useful? As i am often very busy with my work load and it would help hugely if i could just email my work over and they could email me back with tips and pointers.

(Education Survey 2011)

Recommendation:

[ST] Introduce more advisers and open the service longer. Develop advanced resources.

[ST] Better promote the service, especially online resources

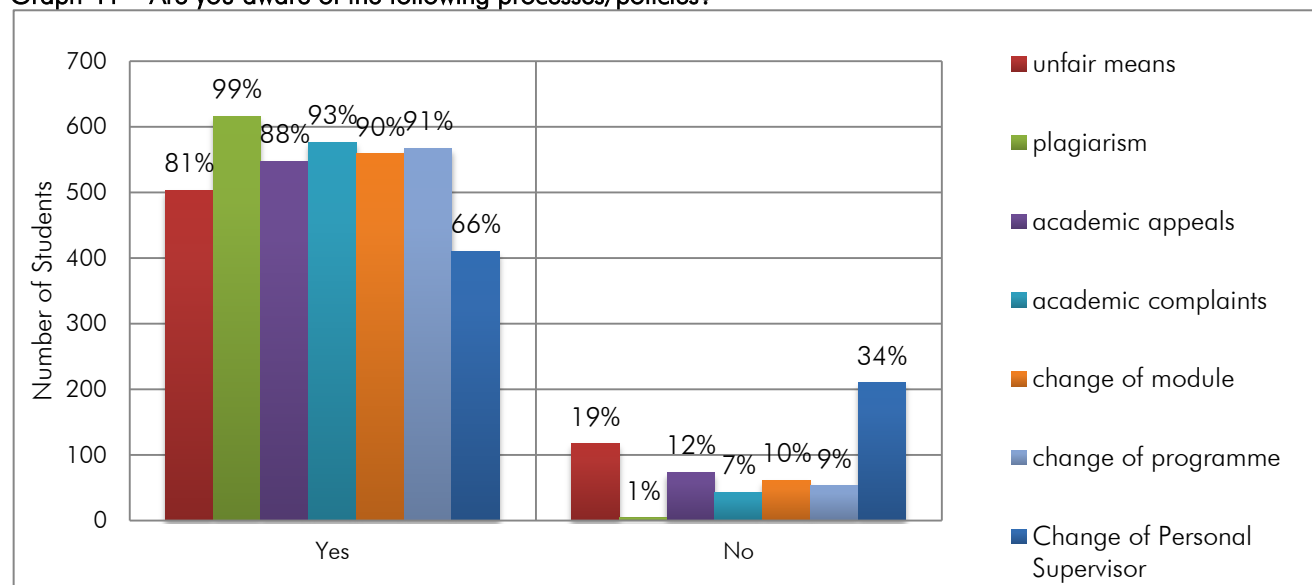
[LT] Relocate the service in Scarborough to a more prominent and convenient location.

[LT] Ensure the BJL redevelopment incorporates the service or integrate it into University House with the other student support services.

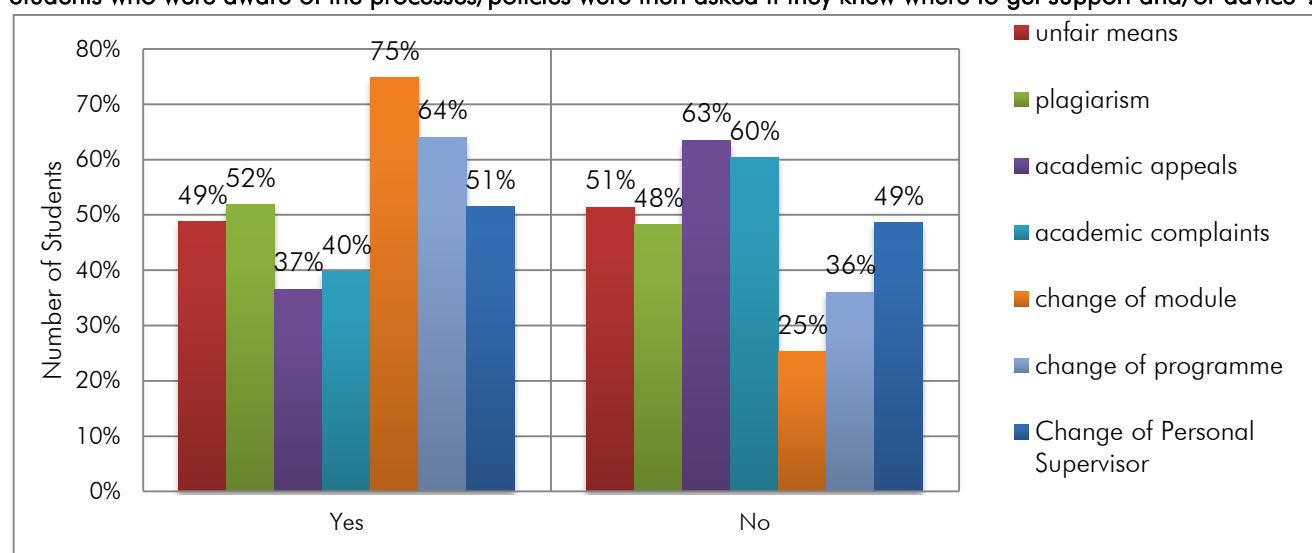
CHAPTER SEVEN: University Policies and Regulations

In the Education Survey (2011), students were asked if they were aware of the regulations and policies governing a range of important academic circumstances. If a student was aware of the regulation or policy, they were then asked if they were aware of support and/or advice mechanisms for that circumstance. For example, 616 (99%) people were aware of what plagiarism was, but of those, only 52% were aware of where to get help and support regarding it. With academic appeals and complains, similar levels of awareness were demonstrated with 88% and 93% of students being aware of what they are respectively. However, less than 50% of those students knew where to get help or advice regarding them. As important procedures that can affect a students' progress or enable them to contest a decision, there clearly needs to be greater awareness of the help and support that is available to students. From these results, it is clear more awareness is needed of the student support available to students.

Graph 41 – Are you aware of the following processes/policies?



Students who were aware of the processes/policies were then asked if they knew where to get support and/or advice ?



Recommendation:

[ST] There needs to be an improvement in the awareness of services that offer support around unfair means, plagiarism, academic appeals and complains. Both the University and HUU need to consider this.

Complaints procedure

Over the last few academic years, HUU research showed concern amongst students that the Academic Complaints policy was not working for them. After pressure from HUU, the complaints procedure was reviewed earlier than planned, in the hopes of implementing the new system ahead of the coming academic year. This new policy was developed by UoH with HUU representatives and was approved for implementation. HUU hopes this new procedure will help to tackle the issues found under the old system. The comments on these page were given by some of the 64 students in the Education Survey who wished to make a complaint but chose not to. It is hoped this brief section will overview some of the previous issues in hopes that they are now solved.

Complaints are not given full attention (this comments relates to informal complaints)

All members of the class including me, made a complaint about [lecturer] and it was clear there was no interest in the matter and just talked it down, could tell nothing would be done.

Students feared their departmental standing would be affected if they complained

I spoke to the course leader and she supported the tutor. Our course is too small to take something further without it going against our future career

Seemed likely that it would create more problems than it solved - though that other department staff would not respond favourably to a complaint being made by a student.

Because the people I would complain about are involved in awarding my marks.

Students were discouraged or pre-empted from complaining

We were all told in our class that everyone had did poorly and not to bother submitting mitigating circumstances and they would be not considered and ignored

When an undergrad in [department] i was informed it was not possible as it effectively questioned the academic standards of the department

They felt complaints wouldn't make a difference.

Because i felt that it will not change anything

Because I felt that nothing would come of it.

HUU hopes the new complaints procedure will help encourage students with a case to make complaints where they would not have previously. Hopefully the new procedures will also help departments follow the policy more fully too.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Collaborative provision

This academic year HUU produced a SWS as part of the process for the QAA collaborative provision audit. In the process of writing the submission, HUU engaged with our affiliated colleges, running focus groups with students on UoH affiliated programmes. The SWS contained a series of recommendations that have been addressed by UoH in a set of action plans.

HUU Affiliated colleges strategy

HUU's affiliated colleges strategy has several objectives involving our work with affiliated colleges, delegating several responsibilities to HUU Sabbatical Officers to ensure HUU maintains involvement with them. The President of HUU is tasked with keeping up-to-date contact lists for staff at the affiliated colleges while the VP Education is tasked with visiting each college and speaking at their annual conferences. The ACS aims to help us support the affiliated colleges, share best practise and help advise their SU's through recommendations based on our own experiences.

The ACS is written around four key principles to help HUU achieve this:

- 1) Sharing best practice with affiliated colleges Student's Unions
- 2) Provide an annual visit to each affiliate and the joint Conference between all affiliate colleges HUU must visit each affiliate college once per year.
- 3) Demonstrate to UoH that HUU is committed to supporting affiliated colleges
- 4) Supporting the growth of the Union movement as a sector in our region Strong SU's deliver better services for their members.

Conclusions from HUU Collaborative Provision SWS 2011

While not a conclusion in itself, the largest theme across all the focus groups was that the partnerships that UoH has formed to provide HE qualifications is the value of this provision as it is making HE accessible. This is allowing a great deal of students' access to HE where they would not have had such an opportunity in the past due to their other commitments in life or a poor educational background. The value of this cannot be underestimated as it is giving them the opportunity they need to gain the qualifications or foundations they need to progress with their career.

Holistically, all students were happy with the provision they were receiving, and while there were minor local operational issues based at colleges, these small problems are not serious issues and all problems raised are best dealt with locally by Course Representatives. These issues consider things such as the evenings that lessons are run, timetabling and student services at the colleges - all small issues that dint the student experience yet do not constitute problems.

While the current arrangements are sufficient, there is room to make improvements on three key aspects. Addressing these three issues will make a big impact on the student experience and it is hoped that these issues can be built upon by all involved parties.

- 1) The resources and support from the UoH that students in partner colleges are entitled to need to be better communicated so they are aware of their access rights.
- 2) The student experience could be improved through the expansion of extra-curricular opportunities and social activities.
- 3) Course Representation could be further marketed and pushed, to ensure students have an effective and will resources voice.

Recommendation:

[LT] HUU does not have the resources to support and network with our affiliated colleges as much as could be possible if resourced properly.
[LT] HUU to support affiliates by providing representation guides and online support.

CHAPTER NINE: The Student Voice

The ethos of a University, as well as the processes, regulations and governance of the institution make the student voice very important. It is one of the areas a QAA institutional audit also focuses on. HUU has longitudinal data now for two years regarding the student voice, showing some promising improvements. While a third of students, 66% felt they had a voice at UoH, this has grown to 71% this year – an increase of 5%. The biggest improvement however comes from the question, “So you feel your voice is listened to”, where 88% of students felt it was last year, a 35% increase on the previous year’s figure.

These are some impressive numbers. It is no surprise however following the growing successes of the Course Representation system which is now properly administered by HUU and is now more successful than ever before. Chapter ten will fully overview the Course Representation system for 2010-11 and the successes we have achieved.

The student voice is much more important than involvement in University governance and representation. It is without doubt that governance and representation are geared, at least in part, towards the student voice. It is however much bigger than this. The student

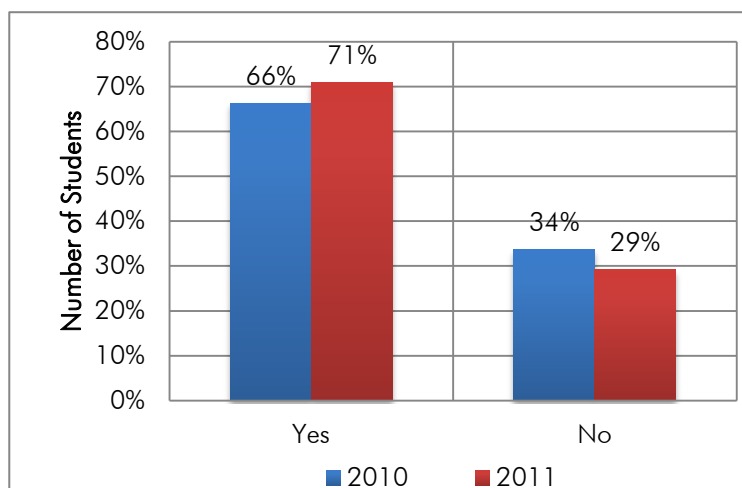
voice is so well received at the UoH due to the many receptive, passionate staff working at UoH. For most students, ‘having a voice’ means both academic and support staff are there to help, support and listen as necessary. However, as discussed earlier, some staff behave poorly when dealing with students and this not only sours the scores of this survey, but the student experience as a whole.

Because as an undergraduate I am a second class citizen, here only to blindly give the uni money. Any other business that stood to make tens of thousands of pounds from me would be concerned if I told them I was unhappy with the equality of service.

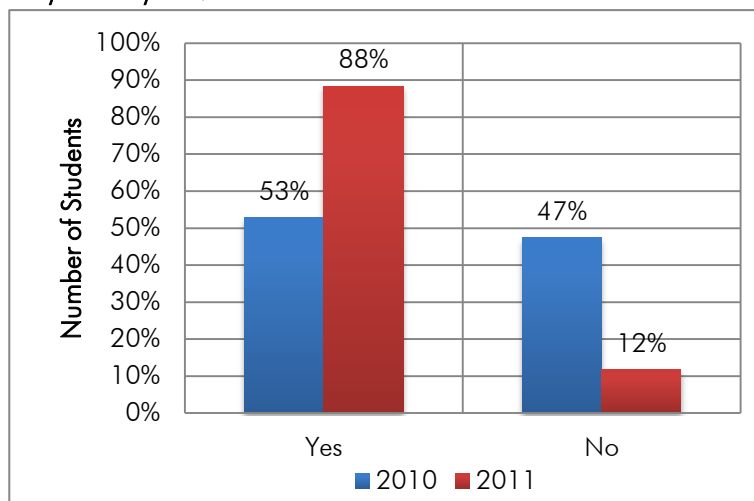
The largest fall in scores for the student voice comes from students not based on the main campus. Those studying at a distance feel they do not have a voice as they cannot regularly engage with the campus. This also applies to the UoH collaborative partners where students are indirectly funded. To some extent this will be a continual problem, but it is important for UoH to engage with these students actively and give them the support they need. HUU resources are too tight to be able to fully support these students, particularly those which are our members. While HUU actively tries to engage with distance and other remote students, there is only so much that can be done with limited resources.

Because we are taught in Bahrain and all communication goes through the local company who administer the module. We seem to be communicated with less and have less involvement in the University. It is clear just from this survey that many things listed, we are not told about.

Graph 42 – Do you feel you have a voice at the University of Hull



Do you feel your voice is listened to?



There is however a larger problem than distance students. The Scarborough campus may only be a 'satellite campus' of the main University, but it is a substantial part of the University's provision and needs to be more central to strategic decisions of the University. Constantly the students at the Scarborough Campus feel disenfranchised, 'forgotten' and misrepresented.

I am at the Scarborough campus, and it feels like we are routinely ignored.

I pay the same tuition fees as those in Hull, but because I study at Scarborough I get a second hand experience to those in Hull and that is not fair

There are, to some extent, similar problems with engaging with HYMS students as they are stuck somewhere in-between UoH/York University and HYMS. This often leaves these students with inadequate support as they often do not fully engage with their respective unions. Further transparency and engagement is needed with HYMS as a Faculty/University.

Do not feel much a part of Hull University, but as am part of the Medical School

The final set of comments raised in relation to the student voice were from those concerned that their voice and opinion makes no difference to the institution due to its size.

Because it's a thousand voices screaming at once... No one would listen to them... However it is a tad ironic I'm filling a questionnaire about it if i don't think people will response to it

I am one of many students, a cog in the system, even if I have things to raise with tutors / admin staff / representatives, the communication between departments and the other administrative strata of the University are poor.

This however is why we have Course and Faculty Representatives. Yes, it is a thousand voices, but the representation system and elected student sabbatical officers are there to filter those issues and coherently put them to the University. Indeed, that is the very purpose of this document. Yes the system works, but it needs further resources to reach all students and to keep the student voice active and resolved.

Recommendation:

[ST] New digital platforms to further integration of students on distance courses.

[ST] More inclusion and consideration of students on the Scarborough campus.

[LT] Expansion of representative system to be more inclusive of distance students directly taught by UoH.

[LT] Increased subvention for the Education Zone to improve and expand student engagement . See Ch10.

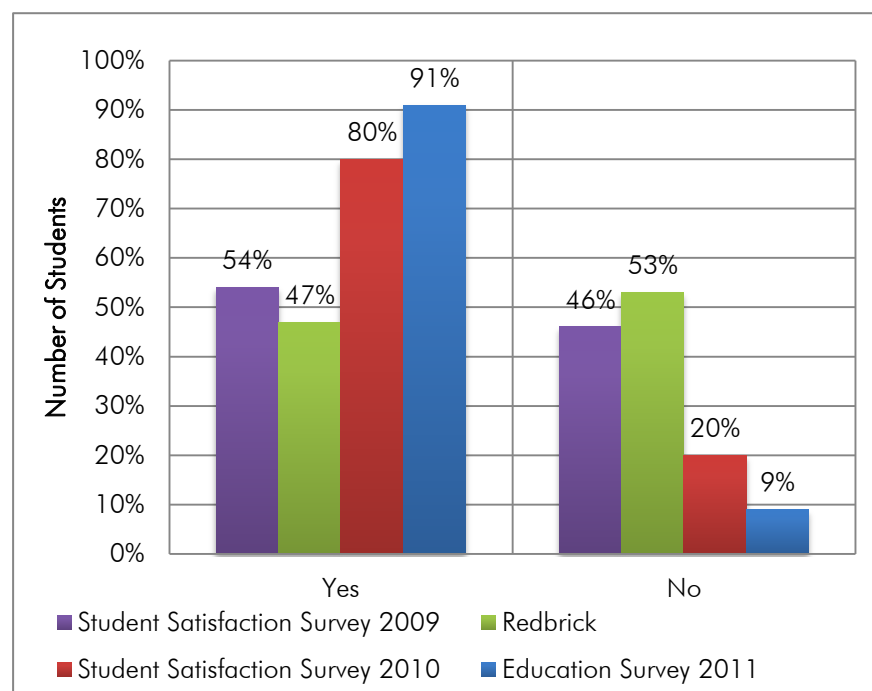
CHAPTER TEN: Course Representation

UoH and HUU have made significant improvements to the Course Representative system through partnership. Since 2009, awareness of the representative system has dramatically improved; from 54% of students knowing what a Course Representative is to 91% in 2011. An improvement of 37%.

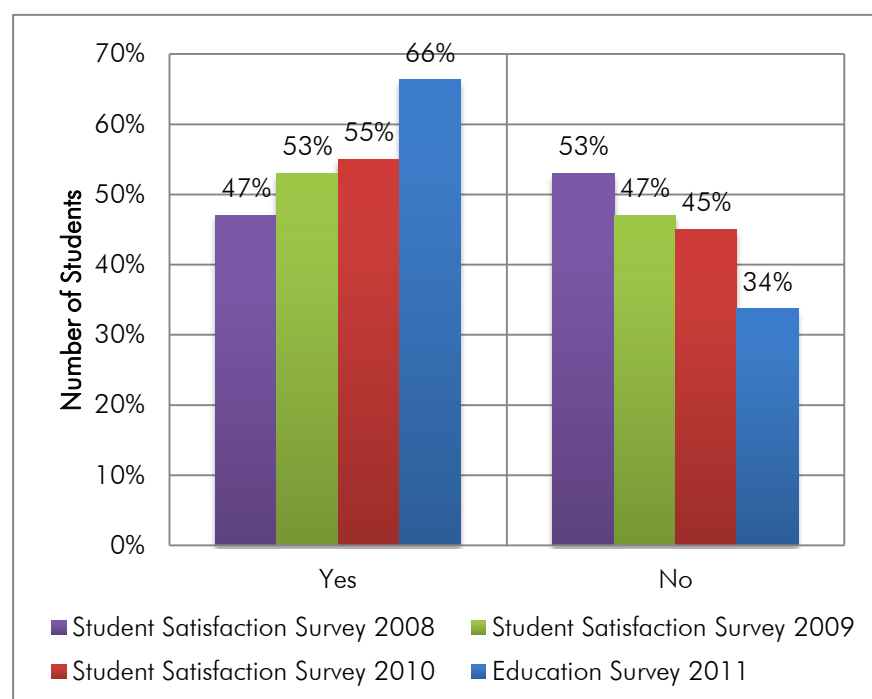
Similarly, a big improvement has been made in the awareness of individual representatives. In 2009 only 47% of students knew who their Course Representative is, but this has risen to 66% in 2011, an increase of 19%. While it is a major improvement, it is not as significant as the awareness of the system as a whole. It is not generally important to know who your Course Representative is, it is however important to know where to find out. This means that while a student many not necessarily know who their representative is, they will know how to find out when they need them.

These improvements are the result of an increase in resources towards Education within the union, particularly from the creation of the Education and Representation Co-ordinator in 2009. Improving on these scores will however require further resourcing, especially as the representation system as a whole grows almost exponentially. While this growth will eventually plateau, this stage cannot be reached without the required resourcing.

Graph 43 – Do you know what a Course Representative is?

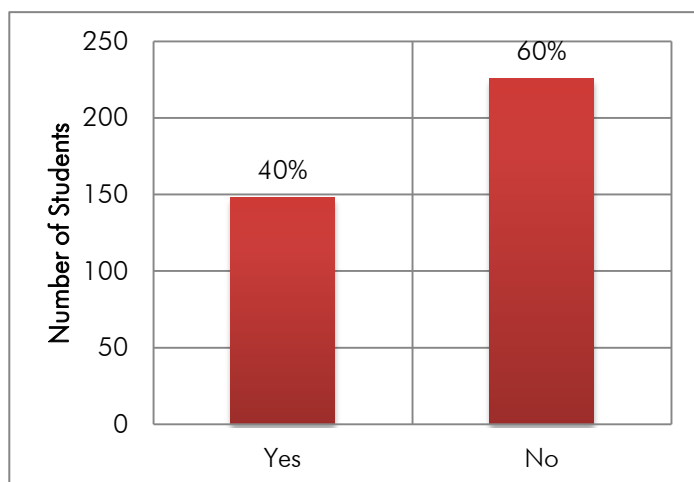


Graph 44 - Do you know who your Course Representative is?

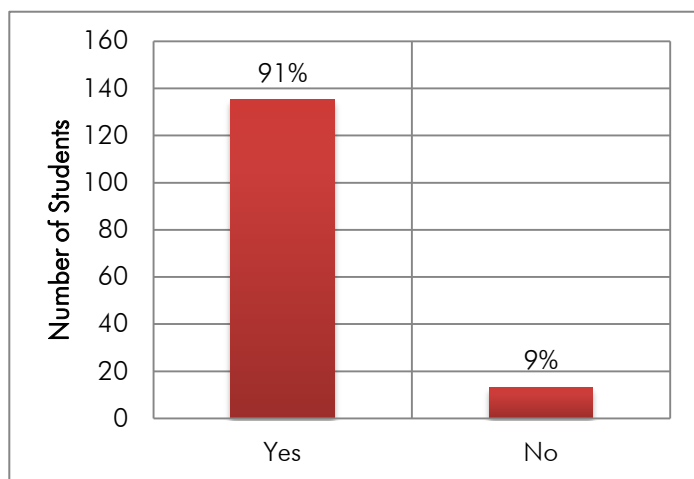


Course Representation System 2010/11 – Evaluation

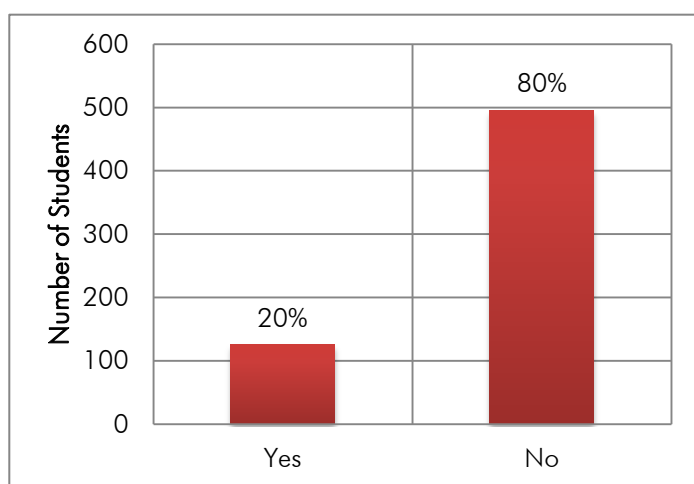
Graph 45 – Have you used your Course Representative



Graph 46 - Were they able to help you?



Graph 47 - Do you know what a Senate Representative is?



Of the students asked in the Education Survey, 40% of them had used their Course Representative and 91% of the time the Course Representative was able to help. This is a promising result, reflecting the improved training given to Course Representatives. It may be that the 60% of students who had not used their Course Representative did so as they had no issue, however further promotion is needed of Course Representatives to enable them to expand their utilisation. Further training is needed for Course Representatives to support this.

With the 91% of students who used their Course Representative satisfied with the help they received there is still room for improvement. There are definitely cases where poor representatives are bringing down the system. Such representatives need to be held to account, particularly for non attendance. There are more serious offences that a low minority of Representatives have made and these cases clearly need to be tackled by HUU and UoH

She was also asked about finding out about reading lists, she then found a reading list for our module but kept it to herself rather than share it with the others after so many complaints about this.

Dealing with issues like this at the departmental level however is currently out of the current resources of HUU, as is the provision of full support of Faculty and Senate level representatives. This is clearly reflected in student awareness of (former) Senate Representatives, with only 20% of students know what they were as HUU does not have the resources to fully support the whole representative system. One improvement of the upcoming regulation changes is the renaming of Senate Representatives to Faculty Co-ordinators, in hopes that students will relate more to them, as

well as the introduction of a Faculty Representative per department/academic area sitting under them. This will streamline the representation system and hopefully tie departments and academic areas more fully to their Faculties on student issues were relevant. More details of these changes will be provided later in this chapter.

Recruitment of Course Representatives

As with 2009-10, HUU spearheaded the recruitment of Course Representatives in 2010-11 across the whole University. This involved the production of 5,000 flyers, over 100 posters of favour sizes and 2 pop-up banners. Course Representation was also embedded into HUU welcome guides and other literature, as well as online through hullstudent.com and scarboroughstudent.com. Special versions of printed promotion were used for Scarborough, depicting images of Scarborough campus as opposed to University House.



The VP Education and Education and Education and Representation Co-ordinator directly promoted the opportunity to be a Course Representative to students throughout welcome week and week two. This involved attending four freshers fairs throughout welcome week, as well as attending over 40 departmental lecture shouts. While HUU received further requests for lecture shouts, there were not the resources to meet all the requests, even with the use of other sabbatical officers.

As well as traditional promotional means, social media was also extensively used, including twitter and Facebook to increase student awareness and interest in the system.

Election of Course Representative

University departments are fully responsible for the election of Course Representatives within the third week from the start of study. HUU actively supported departments in this process, directly liaising with all departments to support his process, offering held and advice to academic and support staff where necessary. HUU also collected over 70 nomination forms from students and these were hand-delivered to academic departments. All in all this led to a total of 482 Course Representatives being elected, 417 in Hull and 65 in Scarborough. This was an increase of 81 from the last academic year's total of 401. Unfortunately, there were not resources to track nomination levels in comparison to elections.

After the elections of Course Representatives it is the responsibility of the University to provide these details to HUU. This is a vital part of the process as only by knowing who the Course Representative are, are we able to facilitate support, training and communication. While the vast majority of departments responded to HUU promptly or liaised with use to make rearrangements, Social Sciences (Sociology, Criminology, Anthropology), Chemistry, Psychology and Modern Languages failed to make the deadline. Modern Languages was ultimately due to miscommunications and was fixed expediently by the Head of Department (HoD). Psychology eventually complied and while they were responsive, they were still very slow in getting details to HUU. Chemistry were extremely delayed due to staff turn around, the HoD was very responsive, but it still led to a significant delay in details. As for the department of Social Science, the situation was more complicated as they seemed unaware of HUU's involvement in the Course Representation system, as well as of the Student Representation policy as a whole. While HUU did eventually receive all the details of Course Representatives, it was a tricky process. It is hoped that with continued years of support from HUU, we will be able to grow these departmental relations for effective representation. There is still however an issue with data return from departments as whole. HUBS and Scarborough produced detailed and complete excel databases, and Biological



Sciences, History and Politics also produced accurate tables. The quality of return however varied significantly with other departments, in some cases only returning nomination forms to ourselves. This led to an incomplete Course Representative database, meaning we were unable to contact some Course Representatives or tell students about them. Due to partial data being provided by departments and due to resource constraints, it is currently not possible to fully track Course Representative activity. Only prompt, electronic data return as with HUBS or access to AIS, including checkboxes for Course Representatives and their attendance can fix this problem.

University Staff – Support and Training

Staff Handbook

HUU produced a staff handbook to assist them in running their parts of the representation system. This was colourful and clearer version of the code of practice and set out their obligations. The handbook also covered the responsibilities of HUU with the system to provide an overview of the system as a whole. The handbooks were incredibly popular and over 70 were printed and distributed by HUU to departments.

Staff Training

Over summer HUU ran a staff drop-in session regarding the representation system in both Hull and Scarborough. The session in Hull was attended by 15 staff members and the session in Scarborough was attended by a single member of staff. These sessions were used as an opportunity to discuss the changes in the system and to answer any questions. At least a further 5 academic departments arranged individual sessions with HUU.

Staff support

As well as running staff training sessions and producing a handbook, HUU has provided constant, year round support to staff in relation to the Course Representative system. Following the increased interest in the system, this involved supporting six academic departments in running their first ever elections. HUU welcomes the new position it has in the system as it is now the first port of call for departments regarding any issues they have.

Course Representatives – Support and Training

Course Representative Handbook

Similar to the staff handbook, all Course Representatives were provided with a handbook as an overview of the representative system, their responsibilities and the responsibilities of HUU and departments.

Course Representative Training

All Course Representatives are required to attend a mandatory training session with HUU. This academic year, 208 of the 417 Hull Course Representative attended this training. For Scarborough it was 22 of their 65 Scarborough Course Representatives. With a total of 230 trained, this means that only half of representatives attended these sessions. While this is an improvement on previous years, more resources are needed to run further sessions and track attendance. Training sessions were run both during the week as well as evenings and weekends to maximise student opportunity to attend, no matter their other commitments.

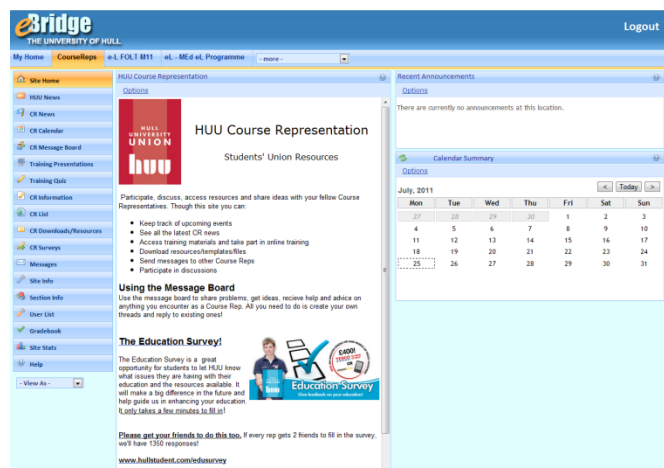


It is a concern that if Course Representative numbers continue to grow (as they indeed should if we are to reach a full complement), there will not even be the resources to fully run all mandatory training sessions. Nevertheless, HUU has ambitious plans to increase our training output to include separate mandatory sessions for Course representatives, Senate Representatives and Faculty Co-ordinators, as well as an additional suite of optional

sessions. This year, only a single optional session ran – Meeting Skills training which had attendance from 43 Representatives, bringing total training attendance to 273.

Online Training

This year HUU trailed online training to help further engage Course Representatives who are part-time, distance, on placement or otherwise unable to engage with the traditional sessions. This has been very successful and resources permitting will launch once again to these groups of students in the next academic year. The course was run through eBridge to save resources and to also engage students on a platform for which they are familiar. It also enabled all Course Representatives to be added to the site, as, as students, they all have their own logins. The site has been successful in enabling ongoing engagement with Representatives, no longer limiting it to only meetings and forums.



Academic Council



This year HUU ran three Academic Councils in Hull and three in Scarborough. These were very successfully attended, with the first Academic Council in Hull breaking all records with over 120 Course Representatives in attendance. Throughout the year Academic Council has been highly successful in collating student issues and problem solving. The minutes have all be submitted to ULTAC and where relevant, other committees.

On several occasions across the year, UoH staff engaged with Academic Council in Hull. This enabled unprecedented student engagement and research on several projects. It is hoped this can be also implemented in Scarborough. Through using Academic Council as a sounding board, both UoH and HUU have successfully and jointly engaged with students. It is hoped this can grow over future years.

Academic Conference

On the 17th February HUU ran a successful Academic Conference on the Hull campus. The event was attended by key figures from the University Senior Management Team (SMT) and HUU as well as external guests from the NUS and QAA. The event was well attended by students with a total of 50-60 students engaging throughout the day. The event was rated highly and can be built upon in future years.

HUU Course Rep Recognition



As part of the HUU Volunteer Awards, three awards were given in the Education Zone, with an additional award for Scarborough. Unfortunately there were not the resources to fully administer the Course Representation Recognition award as with 2009-10. Similarly, there were fewer socials and rewards for Course Representatives as a whole due to tight resources. It is only hoped this can be improved in the future to help maintain volunteer retention.

Working Group to rewrite the Code of Practice on Student Representation

In the 2010-11 session, a working group was formed to rewrite the Code of Practice on Student Representation {QH:K2}. The working group was a partnership between HUU and UoH, who redrafted the policy to arc all student representation at UoH. This ultimately led to the policy being renamed “Partnerships with students in the management of quality and standards”. This bold new title reflects the institutional change in representation. No longer is student representation limited to the course and faculty level through Course, Faculty and Senate Representatives. It now encompasses whole new forms such as student involvement in periodic reviews and working groups. This is in addition to a whole new Faculty and Senate representation structure that introduces a Faculty Representative to every department and rebrands Senate Representatives as Faculty Co-ordinators. It also introduces new responsibilities to Course Representatives such as reviewing external examiners reports and NSS scores. This section will quickly overview the *main changes* and what we are going to achieve.

- **Brand new introduction and scope.** The policy now starts with a new introduction which sets out the collaborative nature of this policy as well as the positions of the UoH and HUU.
- **Departmental Responsibility.** Two contacts must be designated within each department and made responsible for the Course Representative system. One will act as Returning Officer for election. HUU will appoint Assistant Returning Officers and will support/training staff in departments as necessary. It is now firm that departments are responsible for notifying candidates and HUU of election results, as well as returning the data to HUU as well as completed nomination forms.
- **Course Representatives.** The nomenclature of Course Representatives is firmed in this document, as is the fact they must not be remunerated. HUU is designated as responsible for promotion of Course Representatives and is given authority to display relevant materials within the University. New guidelines have been introduced on the number of Representatives each area requires based on student numbers.
- **Membership of SSC.** New regulations and procedures will bring clarity and regulation to the formation of Staff-Student Committees. The composition of SSC meetings must be approved at the faculty level and HUU and the Quality Office must be notified. This will enable HUU to have a clear picture of how many Course Representatives there *should* be. It will also help to ensure staff engagement with SSC meetings.
- **Periodic Reviews.** Students must now be involved in the Periodic Review process.
- **Faculty Board.** Every department must have a representative at Faculty. This will significantly increase the number of Faculty Reps.
- **Senate.** Faculty Co-ordinators site on senate. There is one for each Faculty. Faculty Co-ordinators will be elected from the pool of Faculty Reps.

It is hoped this new policy will form a groundbreaking new partnership between a Union and a University, fulfilling the strategic goal of HUU to have the best representation system in the country. The implementation of this new Code of Practice, and the new requirements of it will be a significant demand on resources. This is reflected in the change of name of the policy. No longer it this just about Course Representation, it is about all student involvement in the management of quality and standards. This is a huge remit and pressure on an already pressured department within HUU. While looking forward to the challenge of this new policy, it will be a significant demand on resources that we may not have.

Recommendations:

- [ST] Launch the inclusion of students on Periodic Reviews
- [ST] Launch the new Code of Practice and associated representation system to staff and students.
- [ST] Gain access to the AIS system to log Course Representatives and their activity/attendance.
- [ST] Use the AIS to create a complete Course Representative database.
- [ST] All departments must increase response times to HUU Representation requests.

- [LT] Explore the provision of an extra member of staff in the Education Zone.

CHAPTER 11: Conclusion

Overall, HUU finds the quality of the academic provision at the University of Hull of a high standard. This is a testament to the quality and standards processes at the institution and this is reflected within the high NSS scores achieved in 2011, bringing the institution to joint 8th out of the mainstream Universities in England.

The accreditation of HUU with a Gold Award by the Students' Union Evaluation Initiative (SUEI) shows our commitment to the advancement of the education of students at the University of Hull. This has achieved our vision of being one of the best Student Unions in the country. We have been able to achieve this prestigious award through an increase in resources and through further partnership with the University of Hull. The work between HUU and the University is a testament to what can be achieved through true collaboration and a working partnership.

It is becoming clear that within the sector there is a growing importance in student engagement. This can be seen from the recent government white paper on HE and the University's new strategic plan. While HUU may be one of the best student unions in the country in terms of providing representation and recognising the student voice, our recent SUEI final report raised concerns over the sustainability of our current provision as we are relatively under resourced. Whilst we have appreciated the University's support over the last few years, we believe that moving forwards the University should further recognise us as a key stakeholder in providing an excellent student experience at the institution. If HUU is to increase our levels of student engagement in the future, consideration should be given towards additional subvention to support this. This will help us in undertaking our objectives:

1. Promoting the interests and welfare of students at the University of Hull during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising Members.
2. Being the recognised representative channel between students and the University and any other external bodies.
3. Providing cultural, social, sporting and recreational activities, opportunities to volunteer in the community and forums for discussion and debate for the personal development of its members.

Thematic Issues

While each section has its own recommendations and to some extent conclusions, there are a number of thematic issues that are spread across the different sections of this submission.

Fees

Hull University Union is disappointed in the level of tuition fees the University has set for 2012/13 academic year. Last year our students voted in a referendum, stating they wanted their Union to campaign to keep the cap on tuition fees and so over the last six months we have campaigned against the Government's plans to raise tuition.

We recognise this level of tuition fee is coupled with a draconian cut to the University teaching funding from the Government. The University must prioritise the continued improvement of teaching quality under this new fee level, as student expectations will correctly grow as their burden of payment is substantially increased.

We will continue to challenge the University to have an ambitious policy to ensure access to this University is available to all students from all backgrounds. In addition, we will push for a retention plan to improve the ability of all students to stay in HE and to continue to improve the student experience.

Student Support and Retention

Student support at the University is highly variable between academic departments and is under-resourced in a number of key service departments. In addition, the differing levels of support offered by academic departments has created inequality between students as some departments provide substantially above the requirements while others under perform. This will be unacceptable as student expectations continue to grow in the climate of higher fees.

The University's retention rates are in need of significant improvement and HUU believe this can be achieved through investment in student support. This is particularly important for services that help students in need such as the HUU Advice Centre and the UoH Study Advice Service.

Organisation and Communication

The University is still without a clear communications strategy, leaving no single approach with how to communicate with students. Not only does this cause a great deal of confusion, but in addition, departments are inefficient with internal communications between staff as well. Collectively, this often leads to misinforming students which can have a severe impact on progress when it concerns issues such as deadlines, rules and regulations. A large cause of these problems is due to the number of websites and services run by the University including MyAdmin, Portal, eBridge, Library website, hull.ac.uk and departmental websites. Further confusion comes from mixed messages between these sites as well as communication on notice boards and memos. Some departments also use text messaging, twitter feeds and facebook pages providing even further communication outlets. It is without doubt that attempts to engage with students across all media are good practice, but this needs to be co-ordinated to provide a consistent message.

In addition to this, many University departments (both academic and service) are too insular. Inter-department communication is incredibly important, particularly between academic departments and central services like admissions, student finance, LLI and IT. We believe the strategy should also pay attention to other requests of students such as surveys and emails. The growing number of these requests is a continual frustration of students. Good practise with communication needs to be identified and along with the use of research a communications strategy needs to be developed to combat these problems.

Complaints

The process of dealing with student complaints was reviewed this academic year and a new policy has been developed to improve the current system. HUU still has a concern this will not sufficiently address the marginal cases of poor behaviour from staff. HUU will continue to monitor the situation, but the University needs an easier and more transparent HR route of dealing with the most severe of cases.

Representation

It is crucial for the University to remain responsive to changing student demands, but to also recognise problems as they arise and deal with them both expediently and effectively. To this end, it is crucial for the University to have an effective and well resourced representation system that operates at departmental, Faculty and Senate level. Without effective Representation, student issues can go unrecognised, severely impacting benchmarks, retention and NSS results.

Through our working partnership HUU and The University have a ground-breaking representation system. The new policy on representation introduces new realms of student Representation such as Periodic Reviews as well as increasing the current compliment of Course and Faculty Reps. It must be recognised that if HUU is to sustain and improve upon its current levels of representation support the University will have to provide additional resources.

Academic Advice and Support

In addition to student support, academic support needs to be increased for students. Study advice will be crucial for this, but it needs taking beyond supporting the students in need of help the most towards also supporting the very best students to achieve higher grades. While the current Study Advice Service offers this, it is clearly not marketed towards such students, nor does it have the higher level of tailored help and guidance to achieve this. The University needs to consider developing the Study Advice Service and HUU will be researching this area of the coming academic year.

Feedback

Once again, feedback on assignments has been an area of student concern. As with last year feedback received the lowest scores on the NSS survey and is still in need of improvement. This year HUU has worked with the University on the Working Group on Assessment, External Examining and Boards of Examiners. This has led to the creation of new and revised policies on feedback. As part of this process, HUU developed a new Feedback Charter (See - CHAPTER FIVE) which was launched at the end of the 2010-11 academic year. It is now hoped that over the next academic year the University will look into how we can work together to improve feedback. HUU would like a working group to be created to look into good practice on feedback, using this research to rewrite Annexe 10 (Strategies for Feedback Mechanisms) of {QH:F1}.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BJL – Brynmor Jones Library

HoD – Head of Department

HUU – Hull University Union

KDL – Keith Donaldson Library

LLI – Library and Learning Innovation

LTSU – Learning and Teaching Support

NSS – National Student Survey

NUS – National Union of Students

QAA – Quality Assurance Agency

SMT – Senior Management Team

SUEI – Students' Union Evaluation Initiative

UoH – University of Hull

VP – Vice President

VPE – Vice President Education

WIDAR – Workers in Democracy and Representation

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Hull University Union (HUU)



Our Values: Safety & Security • Equality • Fun • Democracy • Representation • Quality



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