

HUU Faculty Hubs Referendum Report 2018

Context

A [petition](#) was submitted to HUU on Wednesday 13th April 2018 asking HUU to hold a referendum of its members on whether 'HUU should take every effort to get rid of faculty student hubs and restore our departmental offices'. The petition had 61 valid signatures when first submitted. According to our Memorandum & Articles of the Association, 50 signatures are required to call a referendum. As such the notice of referendum was released on the same day.

The notice outlined the timescales of the referendum including the date for the Referendum Campaign Meeting to elect spokespeople for both campaign teams as well as a date for the Faculty Hubs Referendum Debate.

Lydia Blundell, Head of Voice, Insight and Advice at Huddersfield Students Union, was appointed Chief Returning Officer.

The Referendum Campaign Meeting took place on Thursday 26th April 2018. During this meeting, HUU Referendum Rules and Regulations were highlighted to all attendees. Edward Towers was elected as spokesperson for the "Yes – Bring Back Department Offices" campaign, and on the following day Osaro Otobo was elected as spokesperson for the "No – Improving Hubs Together" campaign.

Publicity and Student Engagement

During the campaign period, students were kept informed through HUU's website and social media channels, the all-student newsletter, and publicity by both campaign teams. However, feedback from a number of students after the close of voting indicated that they were unaware that a referendum had taken place and therefore this is being taken into consideration within the recommendations at the end of this report.

HUU's website included the notice of referendum, frequently asked questions about the referendum, the rules and regulations, statements by both campaign teams sharing their views and neutral information consisting of data from HUU's Pulse survey and the University's Faculty Hubs.

On Tuesday 15th May 2018, a debate was held giving both campaign teams the opportunity to argue their cases. The debate was chaired by Jennie Watts, Welfare and Community Officer who held a neutral stance regarding this referendum to ensure impartiality. Although there was a small audience within the room of just a few students, the event was live-streamed on Facebook and this attracted 914 views.

Campaigning and Complaints

Campaigning opened with the release of the notice of the referendum and ended with the close of voting on Thursday 17th May 2018 at 5pm.

Both campaign teams were entitled to a budget of £200 that was fully reimbursed.

The Rules & Regulations were published on the HUU website on Tuesday 24th April 2018. Both spokespeople were briefed on the election rules during the Campaign Meeting on 26th April were invited to discuss any queries with the Assistant Returning Officer throughout the campaign period.

Student Officers were allowed to participate in the campaign in their function as an elected Officer which included using their Officer Social Media accounts and campaigning during work hours. HUU as a whole remained neutral during the referendum.

Only full members of HUU and registered students at the University of Hull were allowed to campaign which excluded any third parties from campaigning on campus.

No formal complaints were made during this referendum.

Voting and Turnout

Voting opened online on Wednesday 16th May at 9am and closed on Thursday 17th May at 5pm. Students voted on the following question:

Should HUU lobby the University of Hull to abolish Faculty Hubs and restore Departmental Offices or not?

- Yes - abolish Faculty Hubs & restore Dept Offices
- No - keep Faculty Hubs & don't restore Dept Offices
- Spoilt Ballot

Assisted voting booths in Student Central were provided and supported by HUU staff members between the hours of 11am and 2pm during the voting period.

Table 1. Voter turnout

Number of total votes cast	Turnout ¹ (%)	Votes for Yes lobby Uni to abolish Faculty Hubs & restore Dept Offices	Votes for No - keep Faculty Hubs and don't restore Dept Offices	Spoilt Votes
605	4.1	505	95	5

The threshold for this referendum to be binding was 5% of FTE students which equated to 732 votes cast. Therefore quoracy was not reached in this referendum.

Despite quoracy not having been reached, the student officer elect team acknowledges that the referendum has highlighted a number of students' challenges and frustrations with the current Faculty Hub system and have committed to consulting with students throughout the coming academic year to help ensure that the system is effective for all students.

¹ Based on a student population of 14,645 FTE students.

Recommendations

- Improve the clarity and accessibility of detailed information about referenda at HUU so that students have a better understanding of how to call a referendum and the process once one has been called.
- Create a bank of marketing materials and resources to help improve the visibility and general awareness of a referendum taking place.
- Emphasise to campaign spokespeople their responsibility to make the most of the campaign period and budget to ensure that the wider student body know about the referendum and have the opportunity and sufficient information to engage in the voting process.

Appendix

Table 2. Voter turnout by Gender

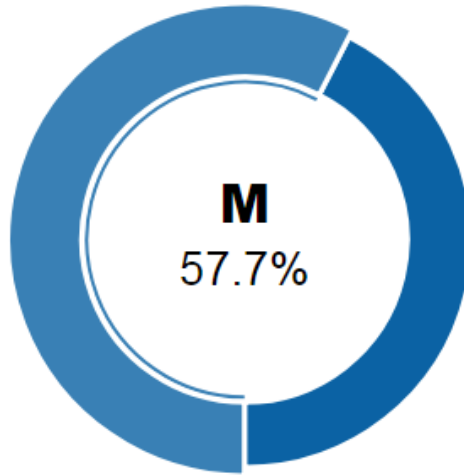


Table 3. Voter turnout by Faculty

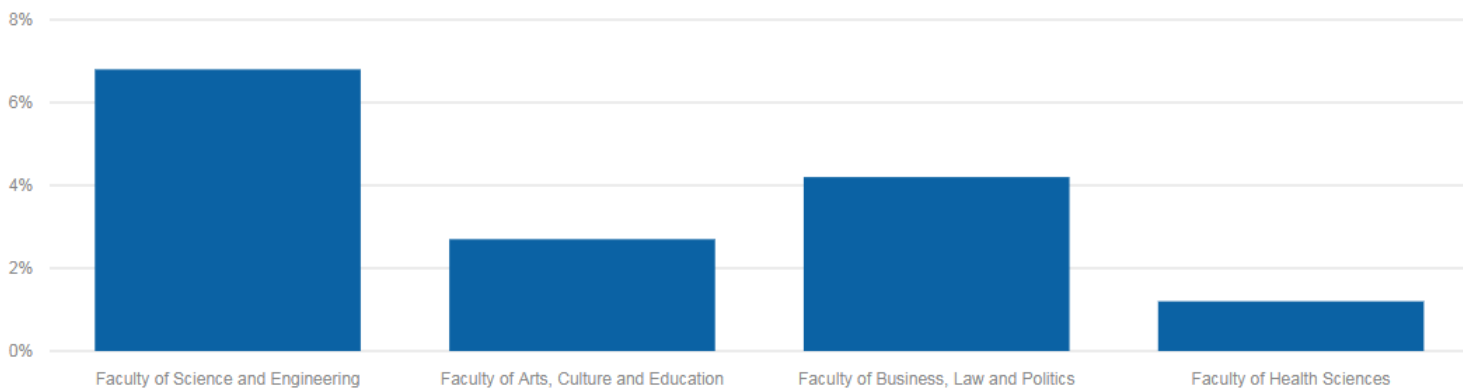


Table 4. Voter turnout by hour

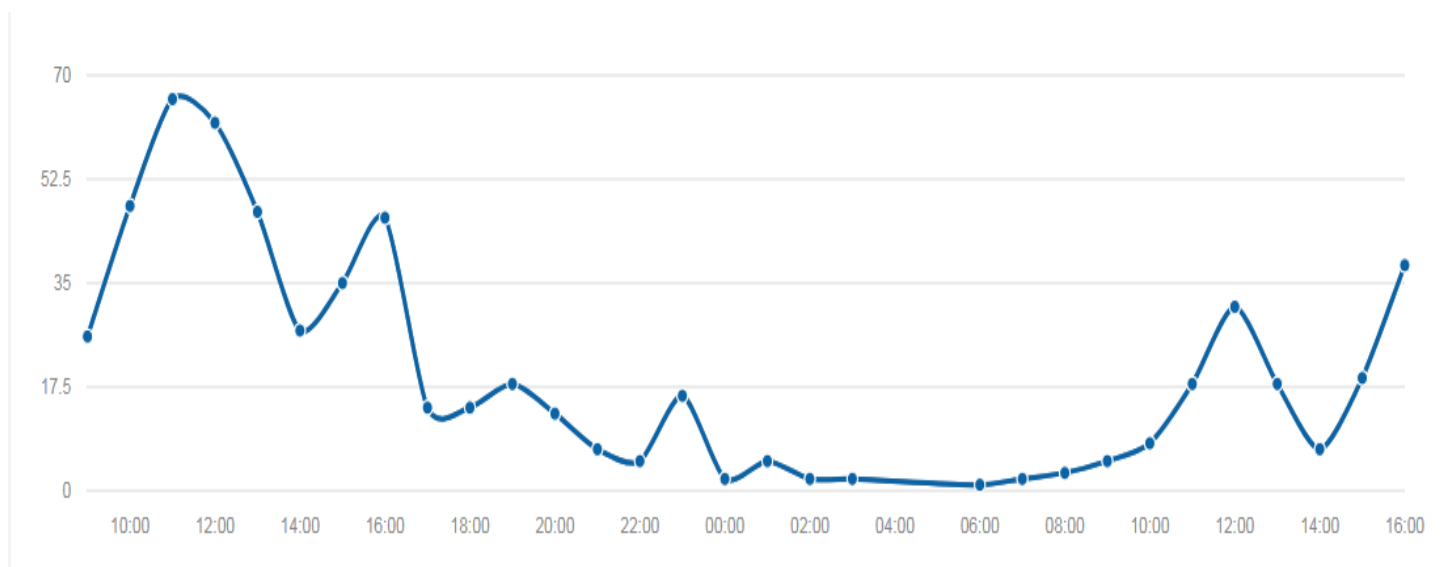


Table 5. Voter turnout by Year of Study

Turnout

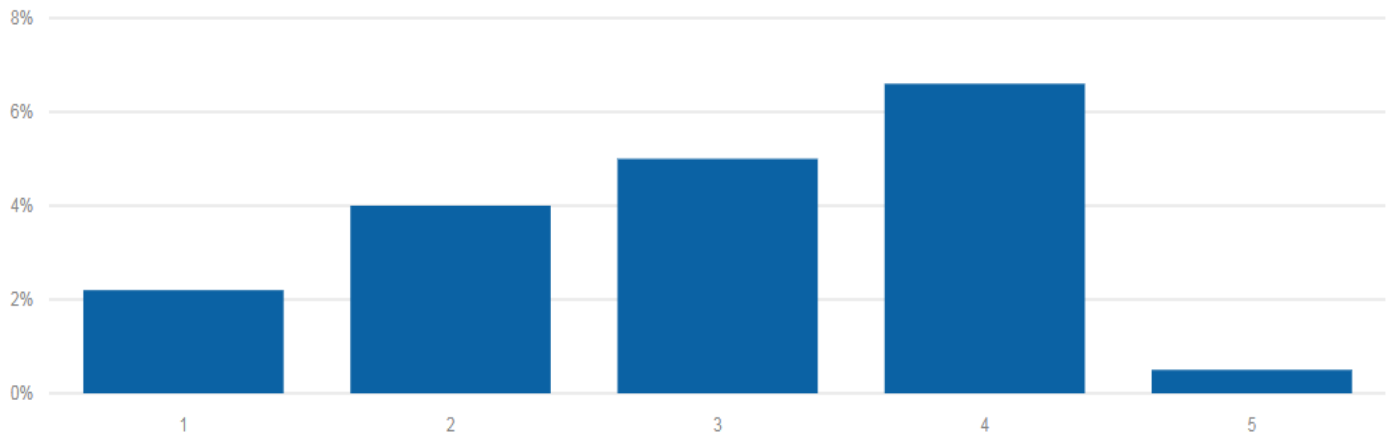
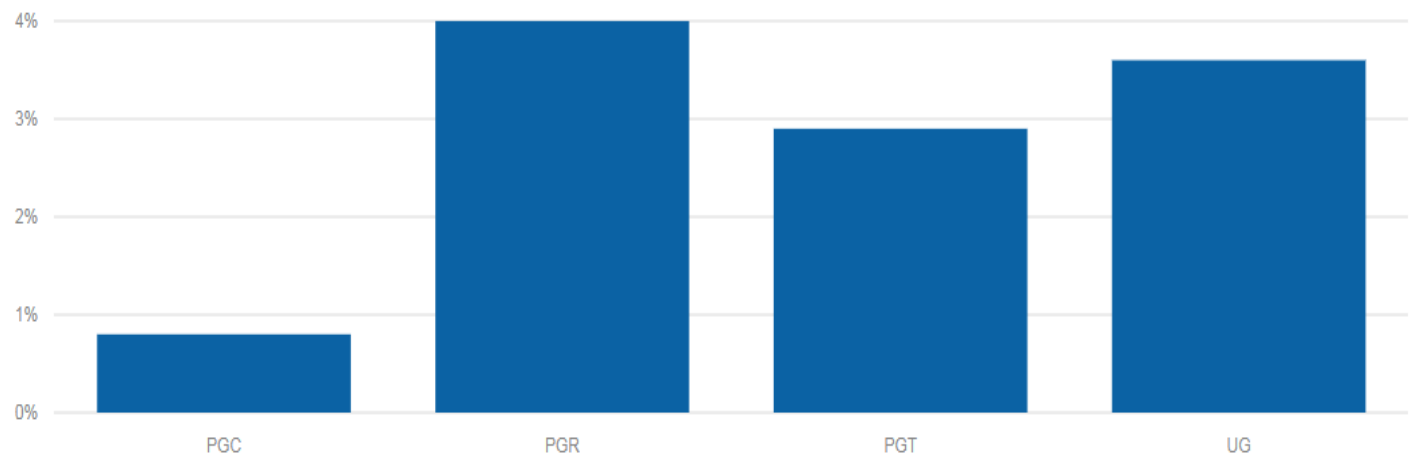


Table 6. Voter turnout by Type of Study



Nicole Steele

Student Voice Manager and Assistant Returning Officer

June 2018