



HULL UNIVERSITY UNION'S  
**Annual Student**  
**Written Submission**  
**2014**

## Foreword

Hull University Union is proud to be submitting its sixth annual Student Written Submission. We can take comfort in the knowledge that we are one of the leaders within the Higher Education sector, as many students' unions are in the process of writing their first, and some have even asked Hull University Union for guidance on how to write and structure their first Student Written Submissions.

The Student Written Submission is a fantastic opportunity for the Union, allowing us to collate all the data we have gathered over the previous academic year into one concise document. Within this document, a series of recommendations in order to improve and enhance the student experience. The partnership upon which the Students' Union and the University have built over the previous years, means that the Student Written Submissions previous to this have been treated and regarded as highly important and we hope this year will follow this trend of action being taken.

As a first year sabbatical officer it has been an absolute pleasure writing this year's Student Written Submission. It has been fascinating to look back on the previous year, using data collected from when I was still a student here, to see the issues that have affected all students. Not only to see whether they align with the issues I may have faced as a student, but also to see if the issues are recurring and what recommendations and steps forward can be made in order to improve the student experience from an academic point of view.

Thank you to Steve Ralph for helping to write and construct this submission with me, to Sally Bates for proof reading the whole submission, and to fellow sabbatical officers and staff members for their feedback and support.

I am excited for what the year ahead could bring to us, as a university and as a students' union. This year we have a fantastic opportunity to grow and develop, both as individuals and as a partnership, to deliver an effective and efficient mechanism for an enhanced student experience.

Thank you,

Gareth Ikin  
Vice-President Education



# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1 Research Methodology .....	3
<b>Chapter 2 Learning Environments</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1 Libraries .....	5
2.1.1 Brynmor Jones Library .....	5
2.2 Buildings .....	7
2.2.1 Buildings/Rooms .....	8
2.2.2 Room Allocation .....	8
2.3 Virtual Learning Environments .....	9
<b>Chapter 3 Student Support</b> .....	<b>13</b>
3.1 Personal Supervision .....	13
3.2 Department Support and Communication .....	16
3.2.1 Timetabling .....	16
3.2.2 Communications .....	18
3.3 Employability and Skills .....	21
3.4 Complaints and Academic Appeals .....	24
3.5 Placements .....	26
<b>Chapter 4 Learning and Teaching</b> .....	<b>28</b>
4.1 Assessment .....	28
4.2 Feedback .....	30
4.3 Student-Led Teaching Awards .....	37
<b>Chapter 5 Student Engagement</b> .....	<b>40</b>
5.1 Course Representatives .....	40
5.2 Periodic Reviews .....	45
5.3 HUU's Strategy .....	46
5.4 The Student Engagement Partnership .....	46

## Chapter 1 Introduction

Hull University Union (HUU) is committed to partnership, with its members and the university. One element of this partnership is ensuring the voice of students is heard by both HUU and the University of Hull, which is seen most clearly through documents such as the Student Written Submission. As the preface says, this is the sixth consecutive submission that has been constructed by members of union staff and sabbatical officers. The issues raised within this submission outline the student perspective on their academic experience at the University of Hull; feedback and assessment, learning opportunities, student engagement, quality of teaching and more. This document comes with recommendations and an action plan that HUU and the University of Hull can work together, in partnership, to make it a reality. The abbreviation LT within recommendations means Long Term and ST means Short Term.

### 1.1 Methodology

#### 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 real problem areas rather than in areas where we assume there are problems. This document has been produced using extensive qualitative and quantitative data. All primary quantitative data has been inputted and analysed using Microsoft Office Excel. Qualitative data has been coded and analysed using traditional methods. Unless otherwise specified, all graphs within this submission are from the Education Survey 2014. The sources from which we have drawn our evidence include:

#### **Academic Council and Course Representative Forum minutes**

- Academic Council is a forum for Course Representatives to discuss academic issues. Over the academic year five Academic Councils (Hull) and five Course Representative Forums (Scarborough) took place.

#### **Direct student comments, emails, issues and eBridge discussions**

- HUU staff deal with education issues of students on a daily basis. These staff members used their extensive experience to contribute to this document.

#### **Education Survey**

- The Education Survey was completed by a total of 1503 respondents across both campuses.

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

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

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

- HUU has helped match Sabbatical Officers and students to provide student input and representation across a number of committees, projects and working groups.

### **Training for Course Representatives**

- An integral part of training involves building on the experiences the Course Representatives have from being a student, leading to a sizeable amount of data on student issues.

### **University of Hull Engagement Survey**

- The first year of the engagement survey being launched, HUU has included some results that monitor students' engagement with feedback, careers advice and also personal development in the form of acquiring skills.

### **Referendum data**

- Democratic information based on what HUU's members would like the focus of the coming year to be (new to this submission).

### **Strategy data**

- HUU is undergoing changes to its strategy, with this in mind data has been included from our recent strategy research (new to this submission).

### **Other Secondary Sources**

- National Union of Students (NUS) papers, reports and conferences – including information from the new department The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP)
- NUS Workers in Democracy and Representation (WIDAR) meetings
- National Students Survey (NSS)
- University of Hull committee meetings, conferences, working groups, publications and Codes of Practice
- Academic, governmental and research sources
- Newspapers that report on HE issues such as the Guardian and THE (Times Higher Education)

## Chapter 2 Learning Environments

When referring to “Learning Environments” the areas of interest are: the libraries, buildings and the Virtual Learning Environment.

### 2.1 Libraries

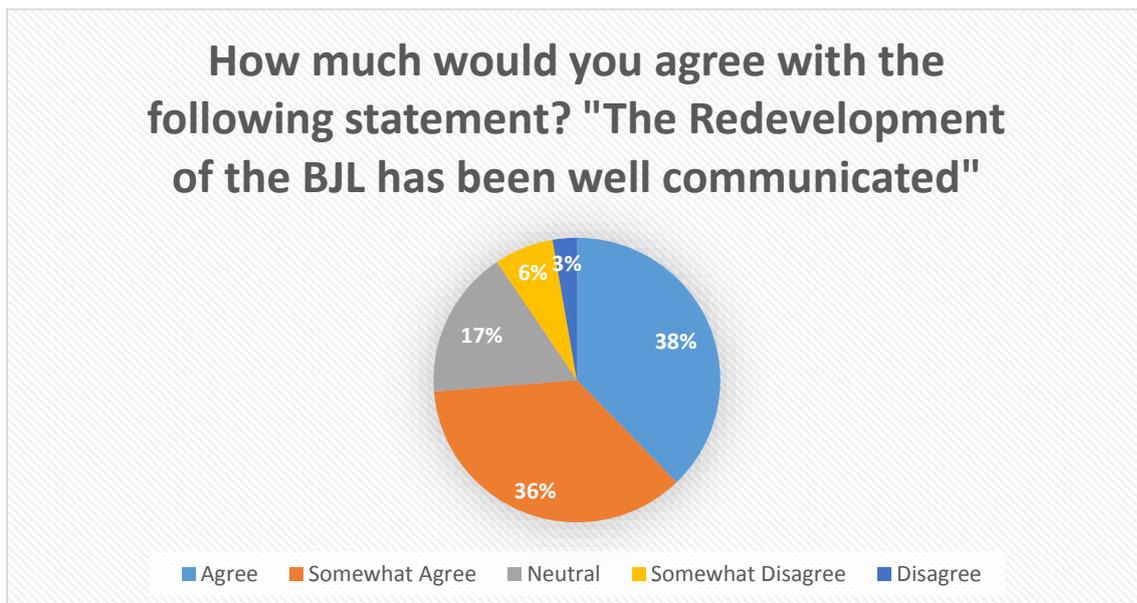
#### 2.1.1 Brynmor Jones Redevelopment

The redevelopment of the Brynmor Jones Library has meant that the University of Hull is investing a sizeable amount into learning opportunities. Within the Education Survey there were two questions about the redevelopment, referencing the communication and management of the project as well as an additional question that allowed students to comment freely on the redevelopment. During the redevelopment the University has been communicating the works directly to students.

Firstly, communications of the redevelopment.

“How much would you agree with the following statement “The Redevelopment of the BJL has been well communicated”?

Agree - 37.77%  
Somewhat Agree - 35.95%  
Neutral - 16.86%  
Somewhat Disagree - 6.69%  
Disagree - 2.73%



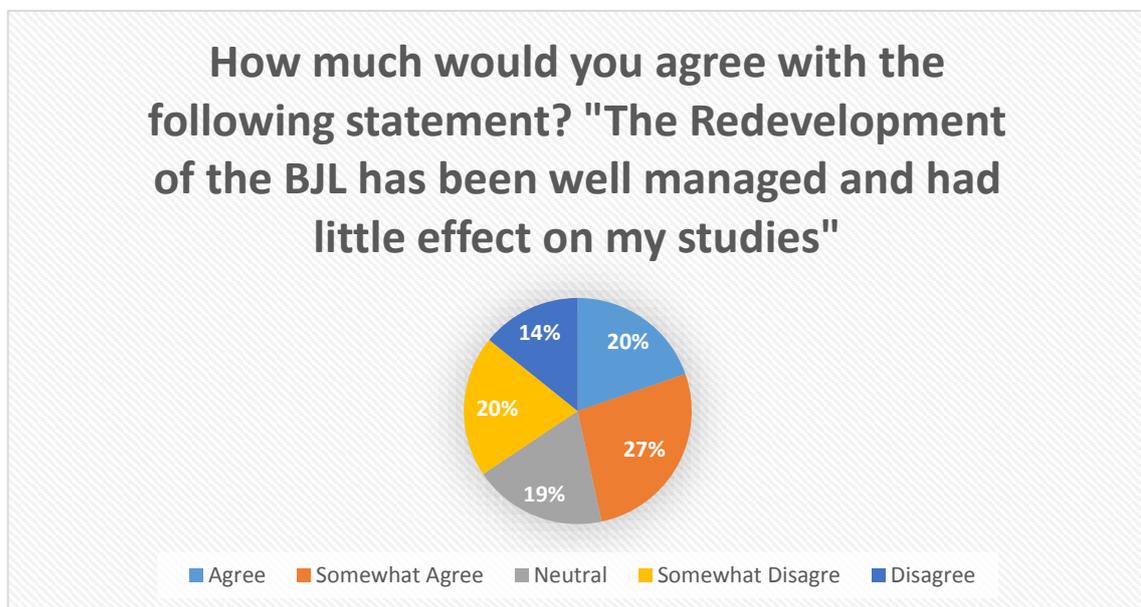
This chart indicate that 74% are satisfied with the communication during the redevelopment of the BJL.

The University is to be praised that such a high-level of students felt that they were being communicated well with, only 9% of students thought that communication could have been better, and 16% of students remaining 'neutral' on the question regarding communication (some of this could have been Scarborough students).

Secondly, management of the redevelopment.

"How much would you agree with the following statement "The Redevelopment of the BJL has been well managed and had little effect on my studies"?"

Agree – 19.69%  
Somewhat Agree – 26.94%  
Neutral – 18.95%  
Somewhat Disagree – 20.26%  
Disagree - 14.17%



46% of respondents agreed (in two varying degrees; Agree and Somewhat Agree) that the library redevelopment had little to no impact on their study, however 34% of respondents said that the redevelopment did have an impact. 34% is a concerning percentage to have had an impact upon students.

The University of Hull dropped by 4% this year in the NSS for Question 16 "The Library Resources and services are good enough for my needs" (the score for 2014 was 80%). It can be implied that the redevelopment led to this drop of 4%.

Both the Education Survey and NSS indicate that a significant percentage of students are unhappy with the impact of the redevelopment. Especially since the redevelopment took place throughout the year and potentially affected assignments and dissertations.

The end goal will provide more for students than ever within the library, however the negative effect it had upon the NSS and students' experiences mean that future redevelopments will have to manage the effects better.

*HUU does note that there are some elements that were out of the University's control. However, HUU has a duty to outline the data and bring it to the attention of the University.*

Free text comments from the NSS:

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

### Recommendations

ST – The library should increase advertisement of new and improved areas

LT – In any future development or re-development, any effect on study is to be minimalised – Middleton Hall and the new Health Hub are two areas of note.

## 2.2 Buildings

HUU did not directly ask questions on buildings this year, instead the methodology was based on timetabling within the Rate Your Union survey and NSS free text comments.

Within this document (in Chapter 3 – section 2.1) we will outline our findings from the Rate Your Union survey, the NSS Free Text comments are based on searching for the word "Buildings".

## Themes for the free text comments

Category	Number of comments within category
Buildings/rooms/lecture theatres (negatively)	348 (13% of the total survey responses from NSS)
Problems with room allocation/timetabling	246 (11% of the total survey responses from NSS)
Building work being disruptive	51 (2% of the total survey responses from NSS)

### 2.2.1 Buildings/Rooms

The majority of comments that mentioned buildings or rooms were negative and about needing improvement. Foss and Larkin were the two buildings mentioned the most, and also about the outside of Wilberforce. It was said that the buildings needed refurbishment, they were referred to as “outdated”, “cold”, “uncomfortable” and a “bad learning environment”. It was also mentioned frequently that the lack of desks in some of the rooms was not ideal and a disadvantage for left handed people. Additionally, there are not enough music practice rooms and that they too need updating.

### 2.2.2 Room Allocation

Room allocation was raised so substantially that these comments are separated from the other responses in the data. Students said they had problems with rooms being too small and students having to sit on the floor, having to change lecture rooms halfway through a lecture, double bookings etc. Free text comments can be found below regarding particular rooms and buildings, room allocation is featured in more detail under ‘timetabling’, additional information on timetabling can be found within Chapter 3 Student Support.

Free text comments from the NSS:

[Redacted text block containing multiple lines of blacked-out content]

### 2.3 Virtual Learning Environments

This year, the University embarked upon a review of the Virtual Learning Environment; (VLE), the University currently uses eBridge (Sakai). Within HUU's Education survey three questions were given to the VLE review project. The review of the project is part of the Virtual Campus project which is part of both the Student Experience Programme and also Curriculum 2016. The review itself has included members of HUU being a part of the steering and working group.

Question 16 of the Education Survey was "What is the one thing that eBridge doesn't do for you at the moment?"

This was a free text comment question, the analysis is as follows:

Category	Number of comments within category
Access, Navigation and Interconnectivity	420
Communication	67
Happy with eBridge currently	175
Works appropriately	34
Aesthetics and organisation	37

Many of the comments centred around the way in which eBridge worked, focusing on remaining logged-in to the site, having the option for students to remove information that was no longer relevant (i.e. certain modules), interconnectivity between emails as well as calendars. Calendars were mentioned multiple times, students would like deadlines within the eBridge calendars as well as reminders or 'alerts'. The module codes being the titles of the pages was also a negative point raised multiple times.

A lot students requested having more communication capabilities such as a 'live chat' with lecturers and the ability to contact other students when group assignments took place. A recurring point was that students wanted the ability to email from eBridge instead of having to use another system. The file path system as well was noted within the 420 comments regarding the accessibility of eBridge. It should also be noted that there were 175 comments that noted that eBridge was sufficient.

Education Survey free text comments:

“Nothing. I think it is fantastic, easily accessible, clear and easy to use. The Turnitin system for assignments is good too, being able to submit PlayPens and submit the final assignment which saves time and money printing off assignments and handing them in by hand.”

“When you log into eBridge you also have to log into the portal if you wish - same for PocketCampus. Once you log into one you should have access to the rest without the need for re-login.”

“Connecting is missing... Should be dynamic with connection to email. Social network. Access to G-drive. Live boardroom forums”

“Slow and clunky to navigate around.”

“The page jumps up and down and the user interface needs to be improved. It is slow and the folder use is made to be quite annoying.”

Question 17 “What do you use eBridge for?”

Category	Number of comments within category
Module Information/handbooks/course information	321
Lecture slides/notes	577
Resources tab	308
Electronic submission	219
Announcements	127
Reading lists	68
I don't use it*	54

*Note: For this question students responded with comments that have been placed into more than one category – meaning the categories will have higher numbers than the others.*

\*some of these comments came from medical students who use Blackboard

As Figure 4 illustrates the vast majority of comments highlighted the use of eBridge for lecture slides and notes. eBridge’s capabilities are more than simply a repository, it is encouraging that students are using eBridge, but there are many other uses that are currently not being utilised.

### Question 18 – What would you like eBridge (or any replacement) to do?

Category	Number of comments within category
Be easier to use and be more user friendly	392
No Response	186
Happy with current usage	182
Include timetables	59
Don't know	46
Improve logging in/timing out	36

The recurring issue within both Question 16 and Question 18 of the Education survey is for the VLE to be more user-friendly. Students also want more interactivity between the platforms the University uses, for example email and timetables to be in one place as well as online learning resources. Primarily the concerns are communication and interactivity and the VLE's workability across several platforms – the data suggests that students would like a more robust, sleeker VLE that contains several platforms within it.

The VLE is still undergoing review as part of Curriculum 2016, HUU's recommendation is to focus on the key areas that students have raised within the Education Survey, as well as paying particular attention to the staff responses to the internal survey.

HUU notes that it did attend several of the vendors' presentations during the review and asked questions directly to the vendors regarding these matters (most were included within the evaluation of the presentations).

Education Survey free text comments:

"Be within the PocketCampus, if it could incorporate timetables and email it would be much easier to navigate between the three."

"List the module names instead of numbers so it is quicker and easier to find the right module"

"Be reliable Work on tablets Have an app Have a better design Make it easier to access other university services in the same place."

"I wish I didn't always have to log in, that you could have the option to make it remember your password and username on your personal computer."

“Be more stylish, more functional, allow the module names to show as apposed to the number system. Sync my calender and perhaps tally grades for students separately from 'my admin' in a spreadsheet, or a system where students might tally their own marks.”

NSS free text comments:

[Redacted text block containing multiple lines of blacked-out content]

Recommendation

LT – For any replacement VLE to focus on interconnectivity of university software and systems as well as communication, between University staff and students.

## Chapter 3 Student Support

Chapter 3 focuses on all aspects of the support structure in place for students to keep up-to-date with the latest news and information from their respective department. Also, it shall look at the effect of the personal supervision system, the quality of timetabling, opportunities for enhancing employability skills and the process of complaints and academic appeals.

This chapter will consider:

B4 – Enabling Student development and achievement - Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

B3 – Assuring and enhancing academic quality - Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

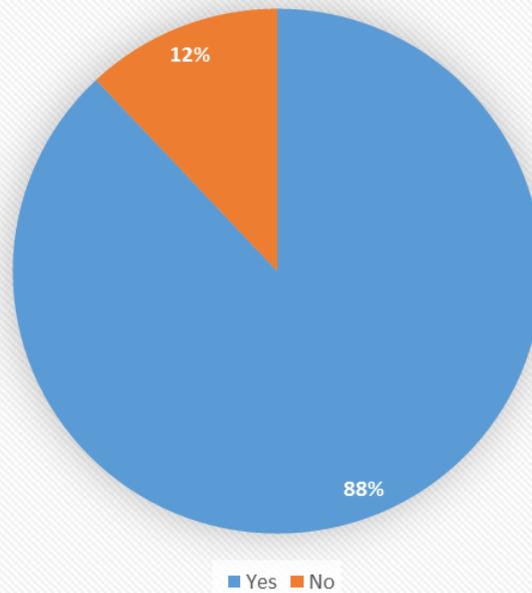
B10 – Managing higher education provision with others - Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.

### 3.1 Personal Supervisors

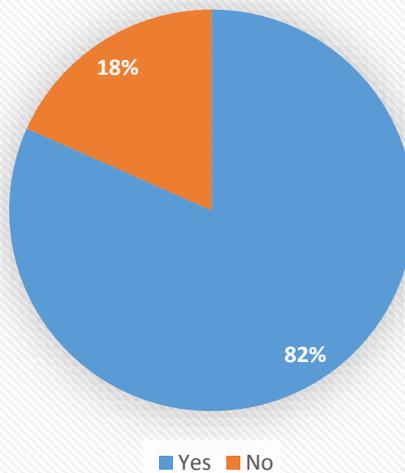
The main one-to-one contact time that all students receive with the University, regarding their course or any other issues they may have, is with their personal supervisor. Therefore making sure students know that they have a personal supervisor and the support they can give students is vital. Below are the results from the Education Survey 2014 for the question “Do you know who your personal supervisor is?” 88% of the 1174 respondents are aware who their personal supervisor is, which is an increase of 1% since last year for the same question. 12% of respondents are still unaware who their personal supervisor is, a figure that still needs to be dealt with.

These 1174 respondents were then asked “Have you met your personal supervisor?” to which the results are below. 82% of respondents had met their personal supervisor. Although this is a relatively high number, this has dropped 7% from last year’s results, which is concerning.

### Do you know who your Personal Supervisor is?



### Have you met them?

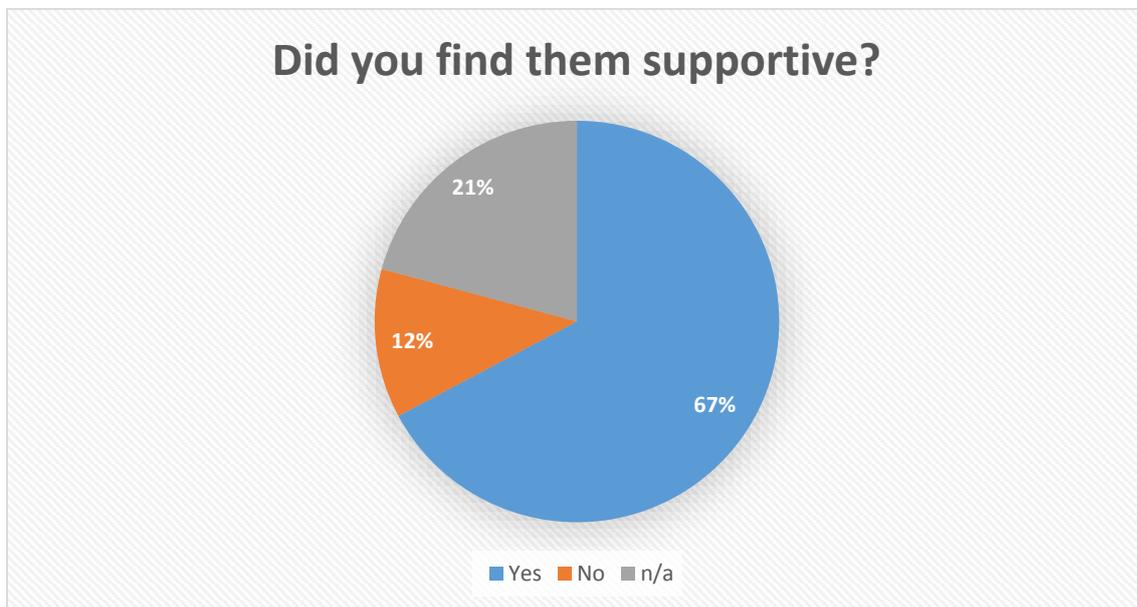


Of the 18% that stated that they didn't meet with their supervisor, they were then asked why they haven't met with their respective personal supervisor. 195 students responded to this question, and a common trend between answers can be drawn up.

Of these 195 respondents, 120 of them (62%) mentioned that their supervisor was too busy, unsupportive or talked about them in a negative way, 30 (15%) mentioned that they didn't need the supervisor or didn't meet them and 18 (9%) didn't know who their supervisor was.

It is worth noting that 1308 respondents skipped on answering this part of the question, so the previous results are not representative of all respondents, however it can be seen that those that did respond to this felt particularly strongly with regard to the concept that their supervisor was always too busy to see them.

A further question relating to personal supervision within the Education Survey 2014 focussed on how supportive their personal supervisor actually was. As can be seen below, 67% of the 1174 respondents to this question found their personal supervisor to be supportive, in comparison to the 83% from the 2013 Education Survey. A true comparison cannot be made to last year's results, however, due to the inclusion of Not Applicable to the answers for this year's survey. For those that answered no, the following comments were made. All of the comments were made in the Education Survey 2014.



"Has no clue who I am, does not respond to emails, take too long to mark work"

"No advice as to how to structure, write or research has been provided. They read off emails and documents."

"They don't know anything about what I study or what type of student I am"

"I have been at the University for 3 years, and have had 3 different personal supervisors. I feel that I have not had time to create a bond with my supervisor due to the consistent changes. Whether this is due to the department or not, I feel that they need to offer support for students that are 'messed around' with constantly changing personal supervisors."

"Had my personal supervisor for a taught module, found then unsupportive and quite rude throughout and therefore did not feel comfortable speaking to them in a personal supervisor capacity about personal problems/goals"

It is clear that the provision of personal supervision is one that students find useful and applicable to their degree, but also employability skills and career progression.

However, a greater publicity of what the personal supervision system is there for and what both staff and students can expect from the system is required. In addition to this, it can be seen that some personal supervisors are not providing an adequate service to their students, which is not acceptable.

Later within the submission there is a section regarding the Student-Led Teaching Awards (Chapter 4), however HUU would like to single out the winner of the “Best Supervisor Award”, Sue Hull. There were multiple nominations for Sue, citing her availability and demeanour.

“...She is always available to help and yet still finds time to produce amazing scientific publications!”

“Friendly and approachable. Always finds time to help out and answer questions.”

HUU and the University already have examples of what students identify as good practice through the Student-Led Teaching Awards, with this and other areas of research and student engagement, the University would be able to create a framework for personal supervision.

“This person has always been supportive to myself and to other students. In a position that demands flexibility with time and attention to the needs to students.” - Nomination for Rowan Oliver from Music

“Helps when you feel lost. Very supportive of work and gives good feedback” – Nomination for Duncan Woodward-Hay from the School of Arts and New Media.

### Recommendations

ST – For the University to look into strengthening the commitment of the staff within the personal supervision programme and the service provided by personal supervisors.

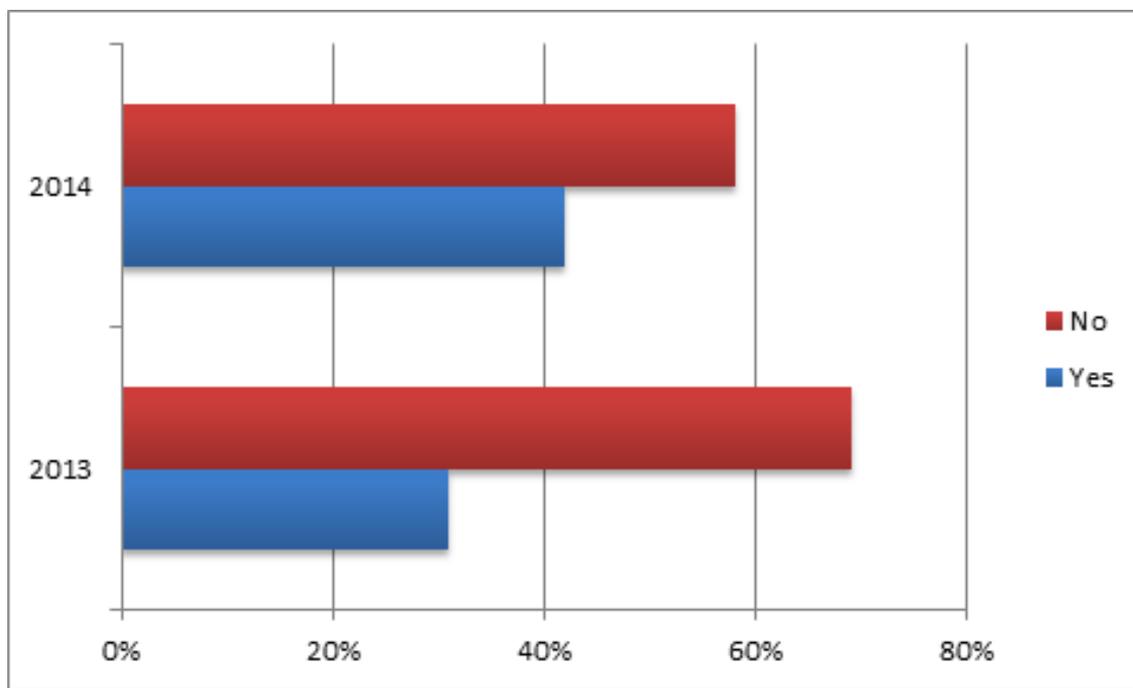
LT – For the University to work in partnership with HUU to create a framework for personal supervision that works pre-existing data and to complement the work of the Student Experience Programme.

## 3.2 Department Support and Communication

### 3.2.1 Timetabling

Timetabling continues to be one of the major priorities for the students. This is because without the release of an early timetable, students with part-time jobs or who need their timetable in order to sort out other arrangements, such as childcare, are unable to sort these out and could potentially lose out, both in the short-term and in the long-term.

Below is the result of the Rate Your Union 2014 with regard to timetabling, with the first graph and table depicting the current trend in relation to the question “Have you experienced problems with your timetable this year”. 11% (11 percentage points) more students have experienced a form of timetabling problem during the 2013/14 academic year, and there has been a dramatic rise of 21% (21 percentage points) since 2012.

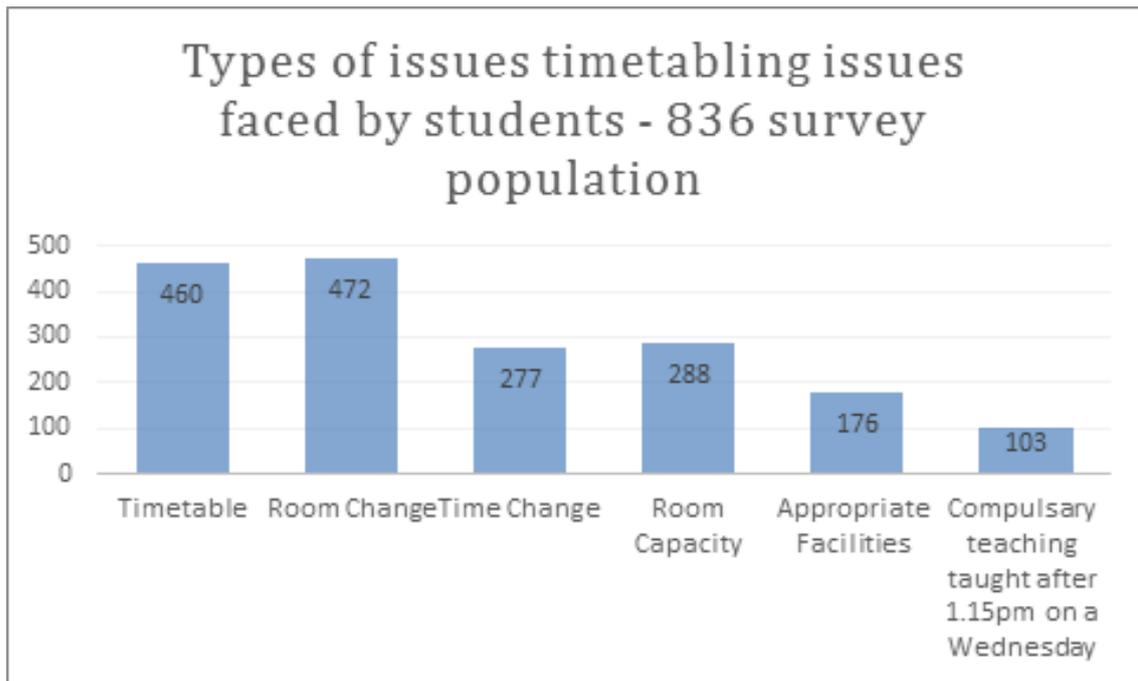


	2012	2013	2014
Yes	21%	31%	42%
No	79%	69%	58%

Respondents were then asked about the type of issues that they have encountered over the 2013/14 academic year, of which 836 responded.

The two major problems were room changes to the timetable and also the timetable in general. Other issues that also gathered a significant number of responses were changes to timings, the capacity of the room where they are being taught, the correct and appropriate facilities and compulsory teaching after 1.15pm on a Wednesday.

*HUU does note that the University is working hard to rectify timetabling problems and that it is a major project within the Student Experience Programme.*



#### Recommendations

ST – To make sure room changes and time changes are communicated effectively and in a timely manner to students

LT – For the University to continue to develop the timetable process

### 3.2.2 Communications

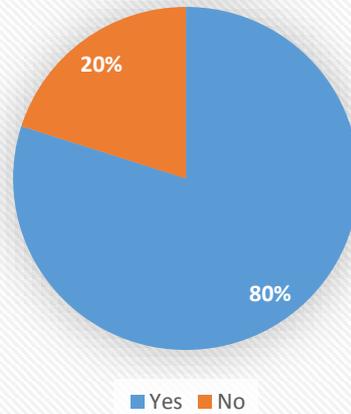
The communication between the university department and the student is crucial to make sure the correct information is being delivered effectively and efficiently to those that the information is intended for: the students. One of the main forms of contact that the student may have with their department is through their lecturers and the staff within the department. The latter can include aspects such as the undergraduate/postgraduate office, or the departmental office, depending on their faculty.

Therefore knowing when office hours are, and their relative consistency, needs to be communicated effectively, and stay relatively consistent, in order for students to be able to contact their department with ease.

80% of the 1141 respondents state that the office hours of the staff and lecturers are consistent, with the other 20% disagreeing with this. It is important to keep office hours as consistent as possible, to allow continuity for students.

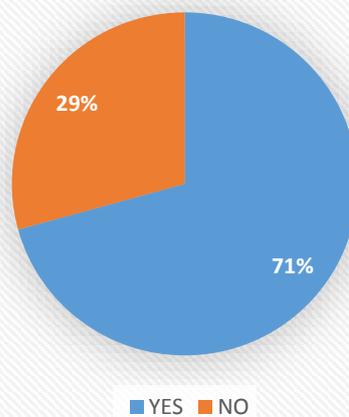
At times, it is understandable for office hours to change due to unforeseen circumstances and other such issues, but when this is the case, effective communication to students needs to be made, informing the students of such change.

### Are your lecturers/staff office hours consistent each week?

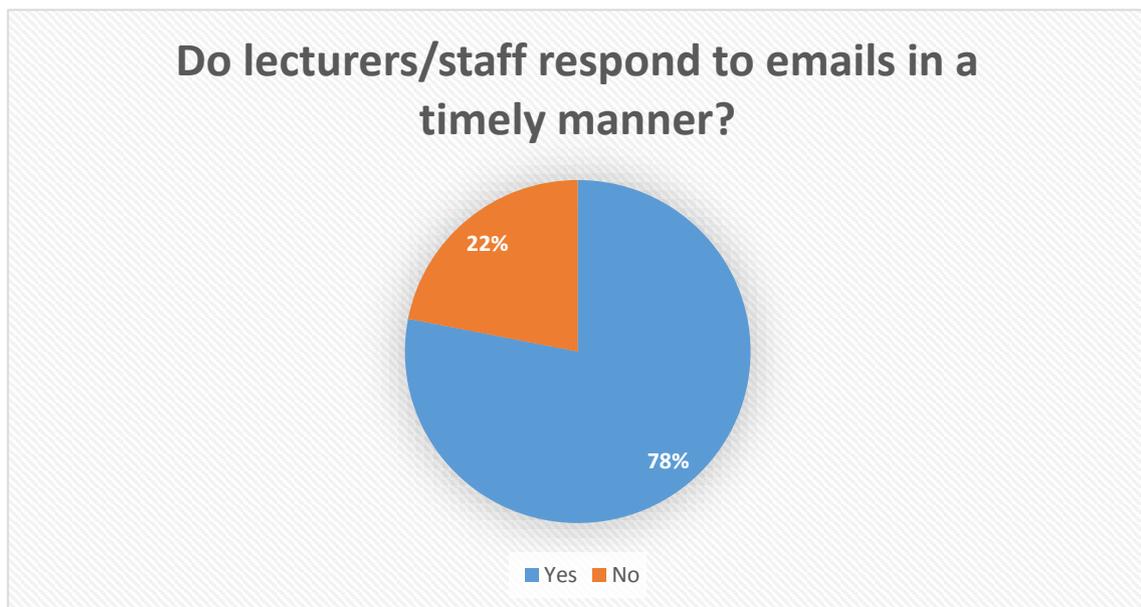


As well as communicating when change to the normal office hours occurs, a clear communication of when the office hours of staff and lecturers actually are in the first place also needs to be considered. As seen in the survey question below, 29% of the 1154 respondents state that locating the office hours of staff and lecturers is not easy to do. This could be one reason as to why students have not seen their personal supervisor (See 3.1 Personal Supervisors).

### Is it easy to find out what your lecturers/staff office hours are?



When a student emails a member of staff or their lecturer, it is to be expected that the staff or lecturer should respond in a timely manner. 22% of the 1153 respondents to the question “Do lecturers/staff respond to emails in a timely manner” stated that they don’t. This could be dependent on what the individuals deem to be timely, be it 24 hours or a week, and whether these are what the students think as “timely”, or what the lecturers believe to be timely.



#### Recommendation

ST – For office hours to be communicated effectively, and to be found in an easy-to-find location (Social media, VLE, department notice board, text message etc).

ST – For effective and consistent communication to occur when the normal office hours have to change.

ST/LT – For an agreed timely response framework to be implemented and monitored, with regard to what is deemed as a timely response.

### 3.3 Employability and Skills

One of the main reasons as to why students wish to pursue Higher Education is to become more employable, therefore degree courses, alongside any extra-curricular activities, need to incorporate opportunities for students to gain, develop and enhance their employability skills to help them prepare for when they have graduated. 68% of students who answered the question “On your course, are you given the opportunity to develop skills for employment?” believed that their course did so, whilst 32% stated that they didn’t. This can be depicted graphically below.

In comparison to last year, there has been a 7% rise in the number who believe that their course provides them with the opportunity to develop their employability skills. This therefore can show that the University, as a whole, has improved with regard to making their courses involve greater opportunities for students to develop their employability skills. Some respondents delve into the questions further, supplying qualitative reasoning to their answers:

“We are able to develop skills in communication, critical analysis and time management, as well as having the opportunity to experience a work setting within the placement”

“I have had facilitated substantial hands on experience with supervision and support within a biochemical laboratory environment specifically, and given free reign utilising departmental equipment within the laboratory environments I have experience in. Faultless.”

“My work placement prepared me for my chosen career, as I essentially had a year’s worth of training in that field.”

“We are encouraged to develop our thoughts and ideas into structured arguments that flow in an essay. Also, we have the opportunity to work in groups as part of a team and improve our presentation skills by feeding back ideas to the rest of the seminar group.”



Bottom three departments based on NSS data - 2014

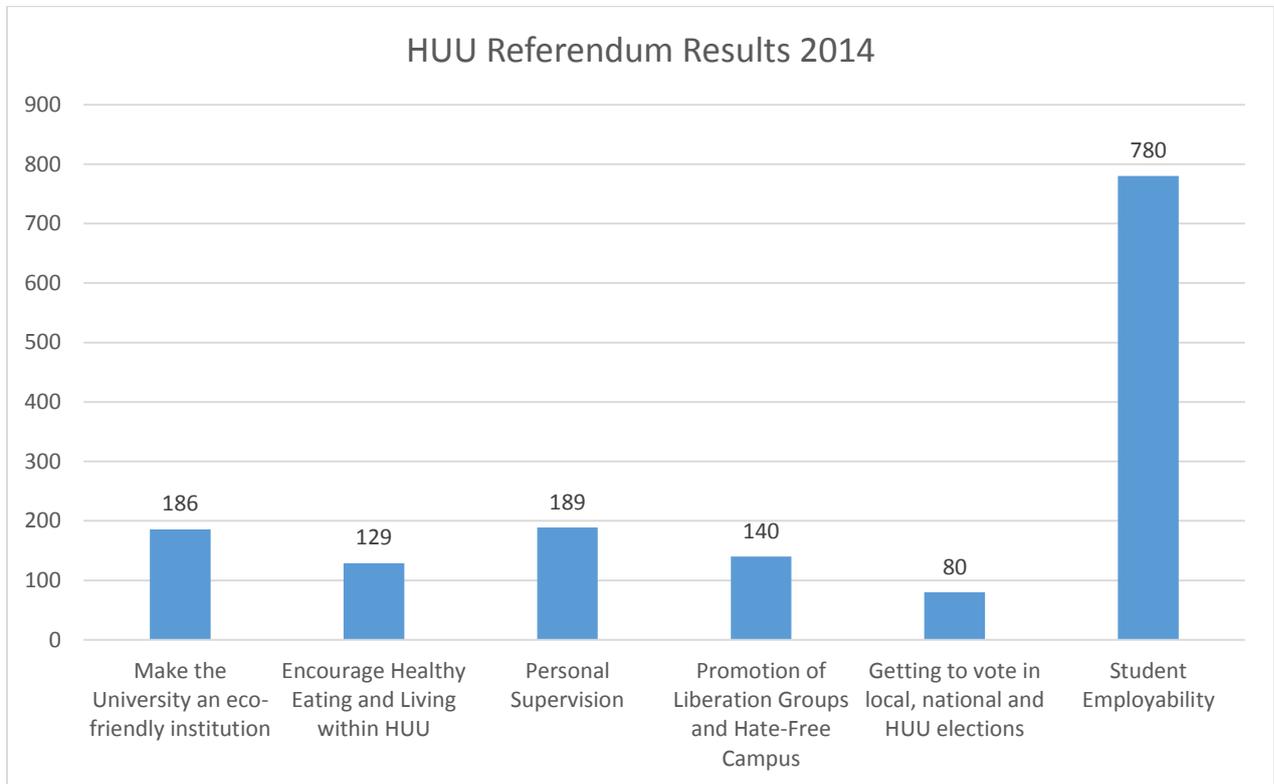
	Personal development	19. The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.	20. My communication skills have improved.	21. As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.
Digital Media	65%	65%	74%	58%
Psychology	73%	73%	76%	70%
Engineering	77%	79%	72%	80%

Top three departments based on NSS data - 2014

	Personal development	19. The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.	20. My communication skills have improved.	21. As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.
Music	95%	97%	94%	94%
Centre for Environmental and Marine Sciences	94%	98%	90%	94%
Drama	94%	95%	92%	94%
Scarborough School of Education	93%	95%	94%	91%

Regarding NSS results, the chance for students to hone in on employability skills and general skills can be envisioned within questions 19, 20 and 21. Each of these 3 questions received a 1% increase in 2014 in comparison to in 2013. Further to this, it can be seen that some departments flourish in this area with significant effect, whilst other departments may need further assistance to increase their opportunities for students.

Although it can be seen that the University is improving to develop and include opportunities for students to enhance their employability skills, students still believe that student employability is a major priority. This can be seen within the HUU referendum results from March 2014, with student employability claiming more votes than the other 5 areas combined. Graphical reference to this can be seen below.



*HUU's referendum results from 2014 with 1504 votes cast.*

The Hull Employability Awards are an area that the University is rolling out across the institution this year after a successful pilot project that involved 83 Undergraduates, 4 Postgraduates and 1 PhD student, giving students the opportunity to articulate their skills and achievements. HUU, Careers Service and the Skills Group are all partners within the Hull Award. HUU will be running training sessions for students to gain new skills as part of the award. This scheme running across the University shows an increased focus on employability.

#### Recommendation

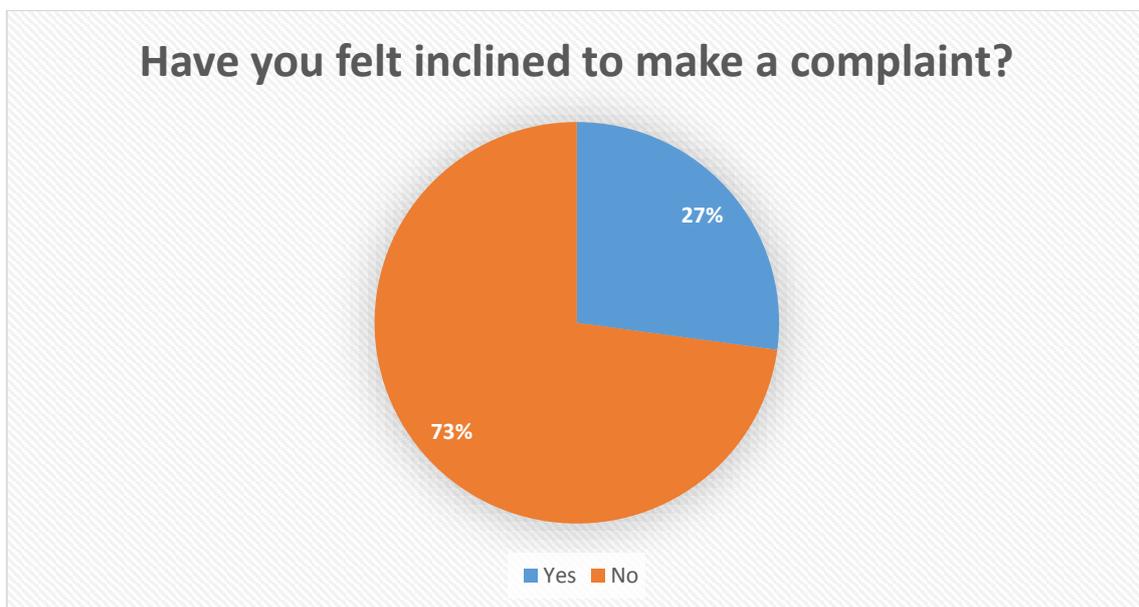
ST – For HUU to look into how it can enhance the employability of students, and to work in partnership with the University to achieve this.

LT – For students to have a greater involvement in key decision making processes, both within their departments and the University.

### 3.4 Complaints and Academic Appeals

In previous years, HUU has been concerned with current processes i.e. how students can make formal complaints and academic appeals against the University, a University department or a specific member of staff.

Initially it can be difficult for students to understand how to complain, with some students fearing that a complaint would negatively affect them in the long run, especially around their marks for assignments and exams. The graph below shows the results of the question “Have you felt inclined to make a complaint?” from the Education Survey 2014 and received 1193 respondents.



325 (27%) of respondents felt inclined to make a complaint, which is up by 6% from the same question in the 2013 Education Survey.



Out of these 325, only 27% of these actually made a complaint, showing a weakness in the complaints process. The information for the question "Did you make a complaint?" can be seen below.

Those that didn't complain were then asked their reasoning as to why they didn't complain. These responses can be categorised into the headings below.

- 1) Students not knowing the process or who to talk to regarding complaints (38 Comments)
- 2) Students who presume the process would be timely/cannot spare time to complain (19 Comments)
- 3) Yet to complain (7 Comments)
- 4) Fear of repercussions (23 Comments)
- 5) Trying to work through the issues with the University or individual (3 Comments)
- 6) Used Student Representation (6 Comments)
- 7) Didn't feel it would make a difference (20 Comments)

Responses for those who did complain about how they found the process categorised into the headings below.

- 1) Poor (21 Comments)
- 2) Unsuccessful (11 Comments)
- 3) Haven't received a result yet (1 Comment)
- 4) Complaint handled correctly/speedy response (21 comments)

Here are some of the comments made to support the above categories.

"The process is worthless. If you make a complaint it has to go through the head of department, who would not take any action, because he is friends with the lecturers"

"If I were to complain I do not think that it would be taken very seriously. It seems very badly organised as it is so I do not see the department tackling any problems."

"Biased towards staff"

"Because when the University has failed me, it's usually heard by deaf ears"

"Have seen the complaint process act as damaging rather than constructive process"

All of these comments were made in the 2014 Education Survey. These clearly show that, from the student perspective, the University complaints system is deemed to be biased towards the University staff and perceived not to be a useful process. Therefore a stronger, anonymous and impartial complaints and academic appeals procedure needs to be developed, especially with an increase in those feeling inclined to make a complaint, and also the number of complaints that do occur.

This increase in both academic complaints and academic appeals can be seen in the table below, depicting the trends in complaints seen by Hull University Union’s Advice Centre.

Advice Centre Statistics – First time clients

Year	A1 Academic Appeals	A5 Academic Complaints
2010 – 2011	75*	30*
2011 - 2012	71	36
2012 – 2013	80	39
2013 - 2014	91	47

\*These figures exclude the month of July that is unfortunately unavailable

**Recommendation**

LT – For HUU’s Advice Centre to be made a formal part of the complaints process. With students being advised that if they are to make a complaint that they discuss it directly with the Advice Centre Advisers.

ST – For all personal supervisors to be briefed on complaints/appeals systems and be able to signpost students to the University departments that can help.

**3.5 Placements**

It has become apparent that there has been a lack of insightful research into the placement learning aspect of the student experience. Placement Learning is defined as an opportunity to learn and gain invaluable skills from a variety of platforms, be it through studying abroad or learning on industrial and professional placements, usually requiring a year out of studying at the University of Hull but is not always the case, especially those in professional placements.

HUU will intend to carry out extensive research around the concept of placement learning. This shall primarily focus upon the support, guidance and advice a student going on placement, or currently on placement, can expect to receive throughout the process from all parties involved. The major outcome of this research shall be to highlight the problems with the current placement learning structures at the University, especially around support and advice, and to seek out what the University, in partnership with HUU, can do in order to improve the experience of students on placements. The format of the research shall use traditional methods of data collection, such as surveys and focus groups, with a potential for more innovative methods to be used and adopted at later stages in the process.

#### Recommendations

LT – For HUU to conduct research into the support, guidance and advice students wishing to go on placement, or currently out on placement, will receive and the levels that these are being delivered.

LT – For the University to consider some or all of the recommendations presented in the report following the research into placement learning.

## Chapter 4 Learning and Teaching

This chapter of the Student Written Submission focusses on two crucial areas of students' academic experience whilst at university: Assessment and Feedback.

This chapter will consider:

Chapter B6 – Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning - Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

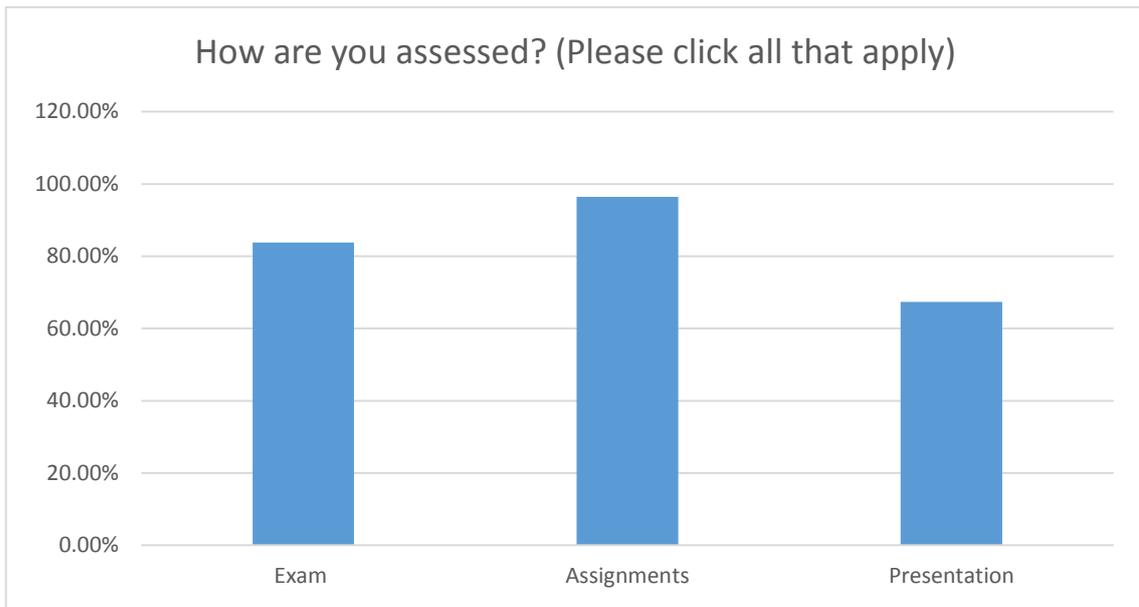
### 4.1 Assessment

Year on year, the concept of assessments takes a high precedence within the agenda of students. This is because whatever format the assessment may take, be it exams, essays or presentations, they all contribute to the degree classification the student receives. The graph below shows the results of how students responded when asked "How are you assessed?"

As can be seen, almost all respondents are assessed through the means of assignments, and over 80% of respondents are assessed through exams. Both of these, arguably, are more traditional styles of assessment. Due to this traditionalism, it can be argued that this can be a contributing factor as to why congestion occurs, with regard to assignment deadlines and their proximity to the exam period. When the deadlines and exam dates are all in close proximity, it can cause unnecessary stress and pressure, which in turn can have an impact on the eventual results.

#### Recommendation:

ST - For the University (with the help of HUU) to look into using more variation within its assessment methods. Using research from within its own organisation as well as across the sector.



*“There is certainly some flexibility about assessment for the students, but this is still within the confines of having to do 1 group presentation and 1 written assignment. Beyond this, they can negotiate.*

*For example, for the group presentation, they can choose the size of the groups, who is in the groups, the topic, and the presentation style...They have chosen to do standard powerpoints, role play/drama, interactive debates. One group even wrote a song and performed this as part of a pre-recorded film. They have as much flexibility as I can give them, but there are some things that are fixed: first, they cannot work on their own as it has to be a group presentation; second, the length of the presentation is fixed so as to be fair to everyone; third, they have to pay attention to meeting the learning outcomes.*

*For the written assignment, again, they can negotiate the topic and the style. Although it does state the word ‘essay’ in the handbook, this is a shorthand and some students have chosen to use a different format. For example, one student chose to design a teaching resource for primary school teachers which involved activities about democracy and citizenship. Another student wrote an ‘open letter to Michael Gove’ about why more schools should be democratic...*

*Although I think that this format has worked really well over the past few years, I have actually changed it for next year. I am going to experiment with them having to do one piece of individual work rather than the group presentation as well. I will give them as much flexibility as I can over this piece of work (again, so that they can use different formats and topics). I actually think that this will enhance the module as I can give them the maximum freedom that can be allowed under regulations. I also want to introduce some elements of peer evaluation into this process.” -Case study from Dr Max Hope, from the Faculty of Education on her Level 5 module; Democracy and Education*

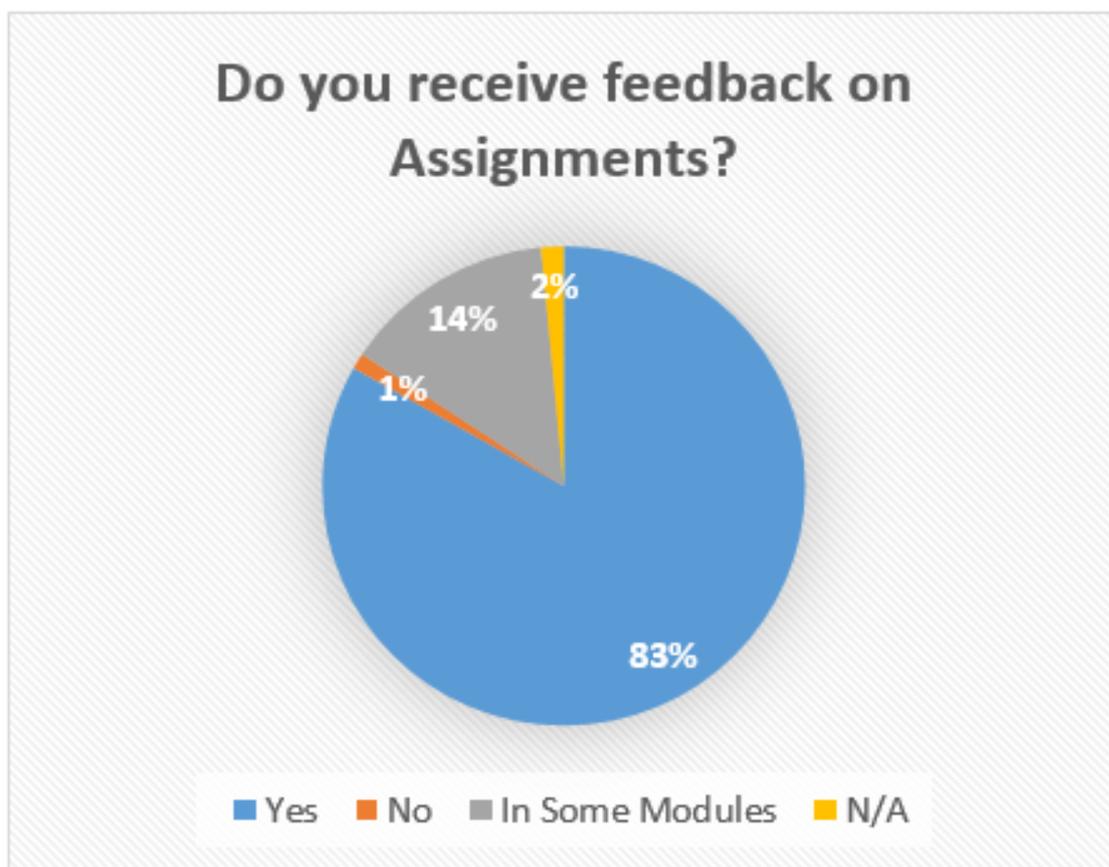
Dr Hope’s creation of these assignments have true pedagogic value for students

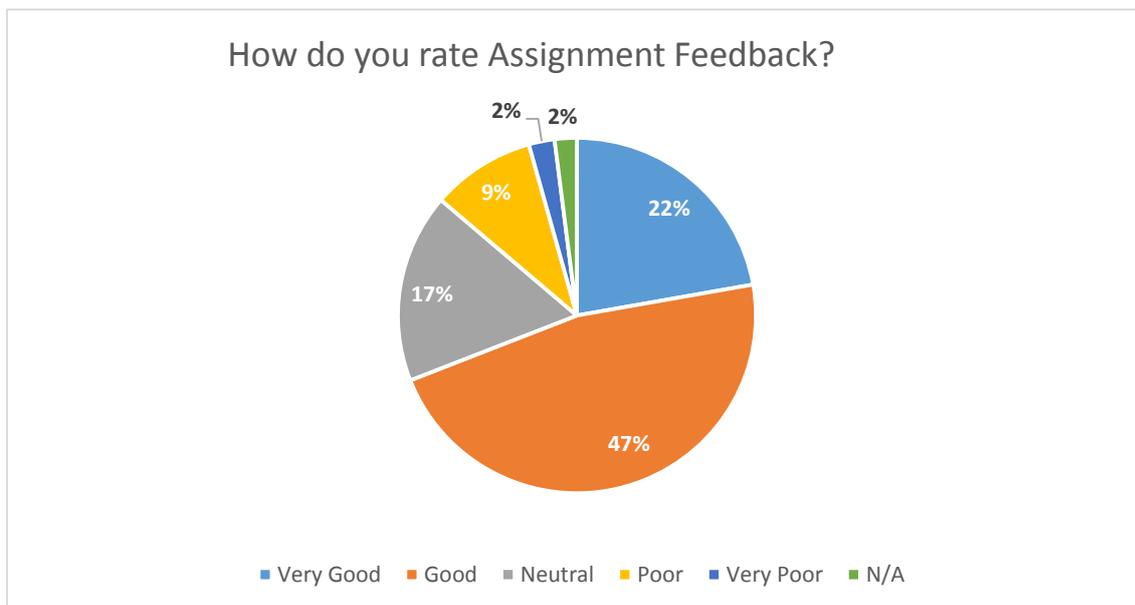
## 4.2 Feedback

Similarly to assessments, feedback is another educational aspect that sits highly with students. This is because feedback is a mechanism from which students can learn from what they have done well, or not so well, and how this can be improved for future assessments. This section on feedback shall look at feedback for different styles of assessments, focussing primarily on assignment, exams and presentations. Firstly, it shall look at whether feedback is given for these respective styles, to then dive further in and look at how the feedback for these are rated. In addition to this, the departments that did particularly well within the area of feedback, and those departments that didn't do very well, shall also be included, to recognise those departments that are doing well and those that may require further attention.

Please Note: The number of respondents for all information regarding to the assignment, exam and presentation feedback sections was 1202.

### Assignment Feedback





As can be seen in the above diagram relating to whether students receive assignment feedback, 83% of respondents, or 5 in every 6, received feedback for their assignments, dropping by 4% in comparison to 2013.

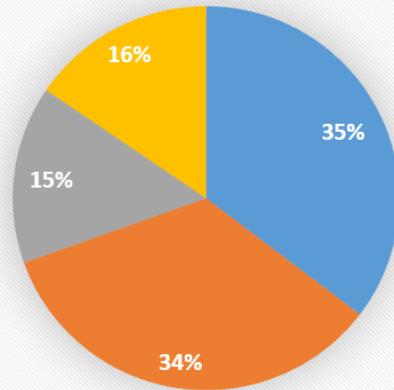
In addition to this, the percentage of respondents receiving assignment feedback only in some modules increased by 5% to 14%. Furthermore, the number of respondents stating they did not receive any form of feedback for assignments has dropped 3% from 4% down to 1%. Overall, it can be seen that a generally positive step has been taken with regard to receiving feedback for assignments, with only 1% not receiving any form of assignment feedback.

With regard to the quality of assignment feedback, however, the picture isn't as clear cut. Although 22% of respondents state that they receive very good feedback and a further 47% stating that they receive good feedback, both of these are down on the previous year's results, by 6% and 4% respectively. At the other end of the scale, a total of 11% of respondents received either poor or very poor feedback on their assignments, which is up by 5% on last year. It can therefore be seen that in general terms the standard of feedback during the 2013/14 academic year has not been of the same standard as the previous year

#### Recommendation

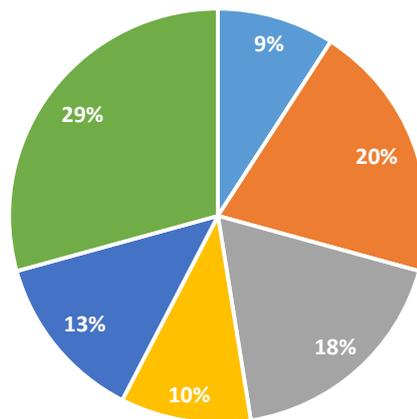
ST/LT – To develop and sustain a higher quality of assignment feedback

## Do you receive feedback on exams?



■ Yes ■ No ■ In Some Modules ■ N/A

## How do you rate Exam Feedback?



■ Very Good ■ Good ■ Neutral ■ Poor ■ Very Poor ■ N/A

Feedback on exams is currently quite a contentious issue amongst students; not for the quality of it per se, but in terms of receiving this feedback. This can be evidenced from the results above.

Only 35% of respondents received exam feedback during the 2013/14 academic year, and a further 15% stated that they receive exam feedback in only some of their modules. In contrast to last year, these figures were 36% and 21% respectively, showing a total drop of 7% across receiving exam feedback. Exams can be seen as a crucial aspect of the majority of students who study at the University of Hull as exams, in many modules, equate to at least 50% of the overall module grade. Therefore, feedback for exams needs to be made more universally acceptable across the institution, to empower students to strive for improvement and the best grades possible in all aspects of their degree.

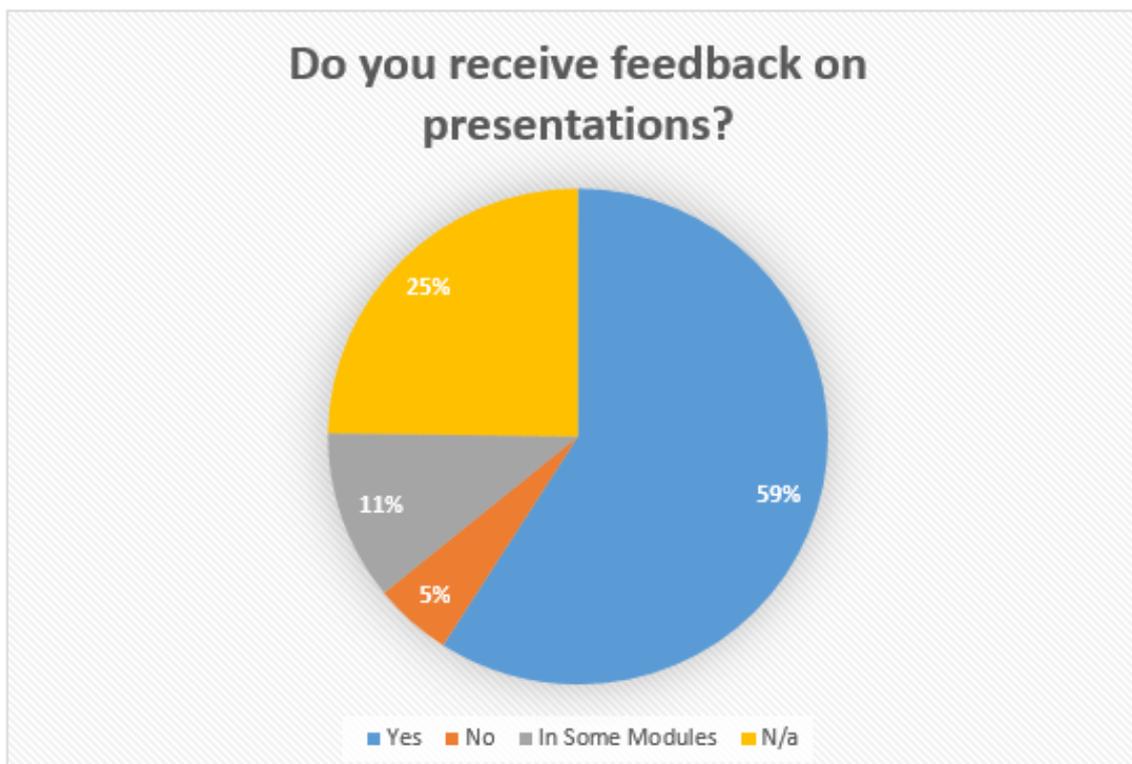
With regard to the quality of exam feedback, this has also dropped from the student perspective, with only 29% of respondents rating their exam feedback either very good or good, in comparison to 57% last year. At the other end of the scale, respondents rating their feedback for exams as either poor or very poor has increased by 11% since last year, from 12% to 23%. It can therefore be seen that the biggest area for improvement around the concept of feedback is exam feedback, both in its provision and quality.

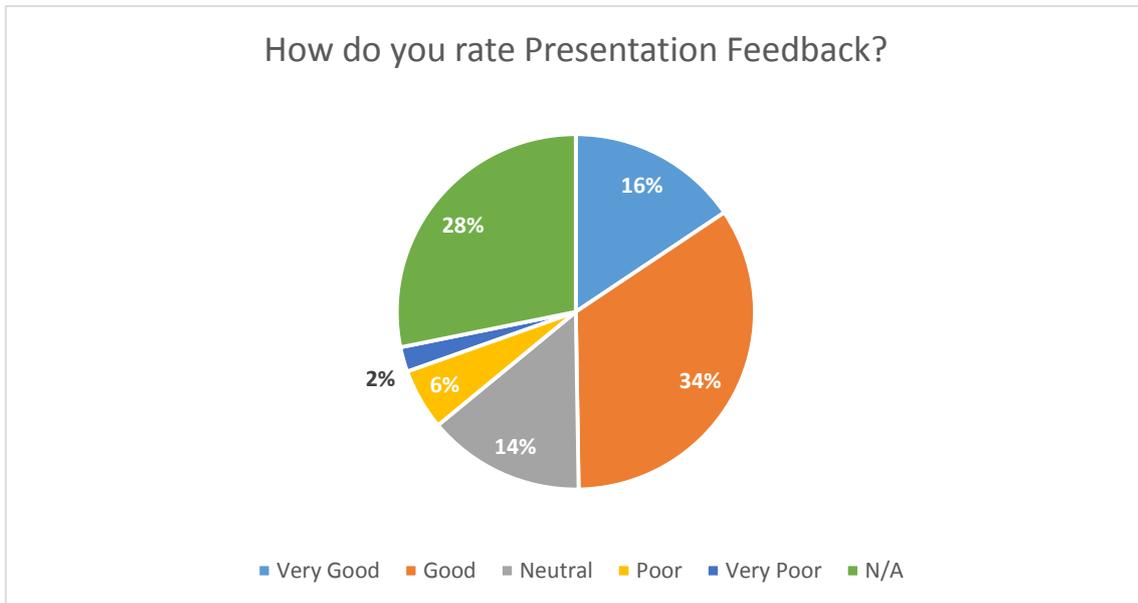
#### Recommendations:

ST - For Departments and Faculties to introduce high quality exam feedback universally, and if it is already offered then greater advertisement of how to get it.

LT – For high quality exam feedback to be developed and sustained across all university departments

#### Presentation Feedback





With regard to receiving feedback on presentations, the number of respondents stating that they received feedback has dropped pretty dramatically by 19%, from last year’s 78% to this year’s 59%. On a more positive note, the number of respondents who are not receiving presentation feedback has dropped, from 14% last year to 5% this year, which is a good step in the right direction, making sure that all students are receiving feedback on all assessed pieces of work.

The quality of feedback for presentations, much like the receiving of the feedback, can also be seen to have dropped.

Those who have rated their presentation feedback to be good or very good is at 50% for this year, in comparison to the 77% of respondents last year who stated the same. This could therefore mean that the quality of feedback for presentations has decreased. This is further supported by the number of respondents who have believed their presentation feedback to be either poor or very poor, which was increased by 3% since last year.

#### Recommendations

ST – From looking at all of the above varying assignments and their respective feedback, quality needs to be looked at across all differing methods for assignments.

ST – For the University’s focus to be upon, as well as quality for all, the implementation of exam feedback universally

Top performers in NSS for Assessment and Feedback

		Assessment and feedback Average	7. Feedback on my work has been prompt.	8. I have received detailed comments on my work.	9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.
<b>Centre for Environmental &amp; Marine Sciences</b>	% Agree	86	74	84	88
<b>American Studies</b>	% Agree	85	83	91	78
<b>Educational Studies</b>	% Agree	83	80	83	73
<b>Sport Health and Exercise Science</b>	% Agree	83	74	81	82
<b>Physics</b>	% Agree	81	60	83	83
<b>Music</b>	% Agree	80	65	84	74
<b>Creative Music Technology</b>	% Agree	80	72	80	80
<b>Drama</b>	% Agree	80	66	81	79
<b>Geography</b>	% Agree	79	68	83	76
<b>Accounting and Finance</b>	% Agree	79	80	70	69

*Congratulations to Centre for Environmental & Marine Sciences, American Studies, Sport Health and Exercise Science, Music and Creative Music Technology for being in the top ten again!*

*Even more congratulations to American Studies, Sport Health and Exercise Science and Music for being in the top 10 for 3 years in a row!*

Most improvement needed in NSS for Assessment and Feedback

		Assessment and feedback Average	7. Feedback on my work has been prompt.	8. I have received detailed comments on my work.	9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.
<b>Social Work</b>	% Agree	62	67	70	58
<b>Digital Media</b>	% Agree	61	58	68	42
<b>Psychology</b>	% Agree	58	50	52	45
<b>Theatre</b>	% Agree	56	53	68	53
<b>Management Systems</b>	% Agree	45	27	32	45

*Theatre and Psychology are once again in the bottom 5, psychology for the third year in a row! Furthermore, it is worrying that Social Work has gone from the top 10 last year to the bottom 5 this year.*

Recommendation:

ST – Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice (LEAP) should work with the departments who are consistently scoring low to try and improve their feedback, be it through delivery or quality.

ST – For best practice from departments consistently achieving highly to be shared across the University, as another method for enhancing those not achieving as high.

### 4.3 Student-Led Teaching Awards

The Student-Led Teaching Awards has been successful for a third year, with the event happening in April 2014. These awards are now receiving over 800 nominations, showing both an increasingly functional partnership between HUU and the University, but also that students are becoming more engaged with recognising the quality teaching and support provided by both lecturers and staff at the University.

As last year, both of the launch days of the Student-Led Teaching Awards were a huge success. 100 golden apples were hidden across the campus for students to find and return to us at the Students' Union, with the chance of winning Amazon vouchers (providing that they submitted a nomination of course!). At the Scarborough launch this year, we saw over 100 nominate on the opening day, and actually had more nominations than Hull on their launch day. Well done Scarborough!

The winners received nominations that highlight true areas of best practice and had an impact on the academic experience of students. The shortlisting for these awards was truly a challenge, as there were so many fantastic and inspiring nominations, and many people could have won each award, through their dedication and true enthusiasm to try and make the student experience better for all.

The award winners for 2014 are as follows:

#### **Best Module Award**

**Dr Stuart Humphries – Marine Eco-mechanics**

*“He’s an amazing lecturer who has done so much for the students, it would be such a shame not to recognise his dedication and passion to further develop the knowledge and understanding of the students taking his module”*



#### **Best Feedback Award** **Professor John Blenkinsopp**

*“He provides his feedback on academic queries with helpful insights and provoking thoughts”*



**Best Supervisor Award**  
Dr Sue Hull

*"I had to change some modules and couldn't go on field trips. Sue was very supportive and offered as much help as possible and stopped me from dropping out"*



**Departmental Administrator and Support Staff Award**  
Lola Sutherland

*"She has been there for everything from helping me get my timetable sorted and moving round lecture groups, to accommodate for transportation issues, to her missing her lunch break and staying in late to aid me with exams dates"*



**Support Staff Award**  
Tony Courts

*"He gives us confidence, help and encouragement to do the best in what we are doing. He always has a positive attitude and a genuine passion for performance and high standards"*



**Postgraduates' Choice Award**  
Dr Jason Boland

*"Dr Boland's relatively young age is an asset as he is open to new ideas. For a PhD supervisor this is a great quality as it enables the exploration of areas of scientific knowledge that older supervisors may dismiss"*



**Innovative Teaching Award**  
Dr John Williams

*“Keeping us all engaged, focused and quiet is never an easy task but he manages to pull it off with a smile on his face”*



**Inspiring Teaching Award**  
Yasmin Stefanov-King and Moira Foxton

*“They will go out of their way to offer help and support. They are very inspirational teachers who are very enthusiastic and engaging with their work”*

**Outstanding Achievement Award**  
Dr Cristina Leston-Bandeira

*“Interactive, engaging power points which always include some form of video and even in lectures, interactive polls”*



For the last three years the criteria has not changed. The definition of good teaching should be based on what students consider good teaching, whilst also noting good pedagogic outcomes (HUU will seek the assistance of LEAP with this). This will change the teaching awards into an innovative project – HUU liaised directly with NUS on this matter, and to their knowledge other students’ unions do not do this.

**Recommendations**

- ST – For HUU to continue to hold and host the Student-Led Teaching Awards
- LT - HUU shall review the criteria of the awards presented at the Student-Led Teaching Awards periodically.

## Chapter 5 Student Engagement

This chapter will consider the following quality codes:

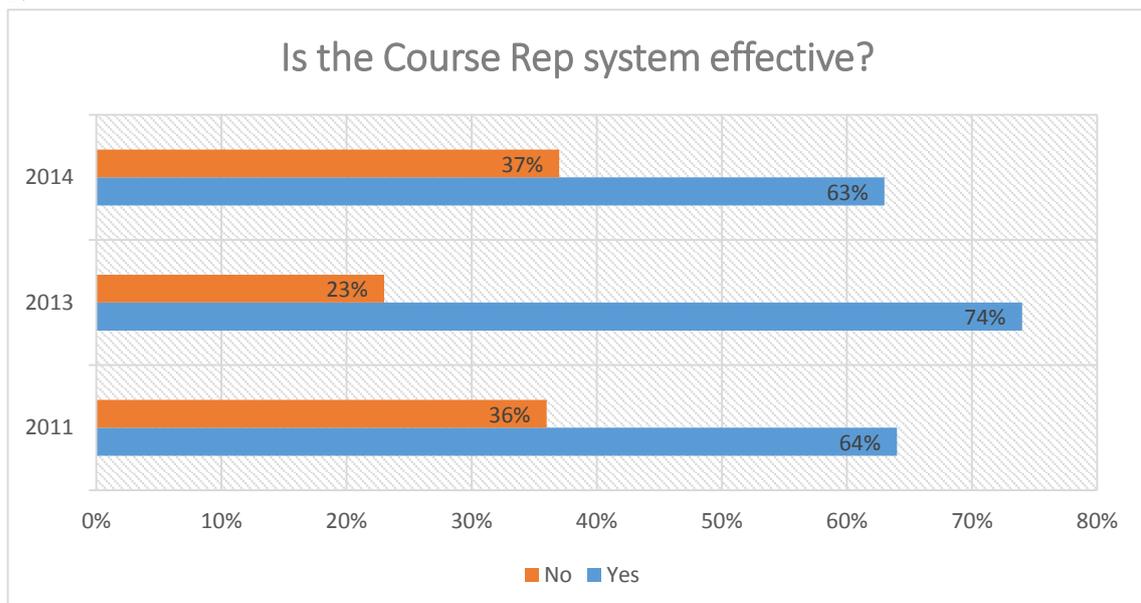
- B5 – Student Engagement - Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.
- B8 – Programme Monitoring and Review - Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

### 5.1 Course Representatives

The Course Rep system allows students to be a part of a collective that enhances the student experience (as referenced in Chapter B5 of the Quality Code).

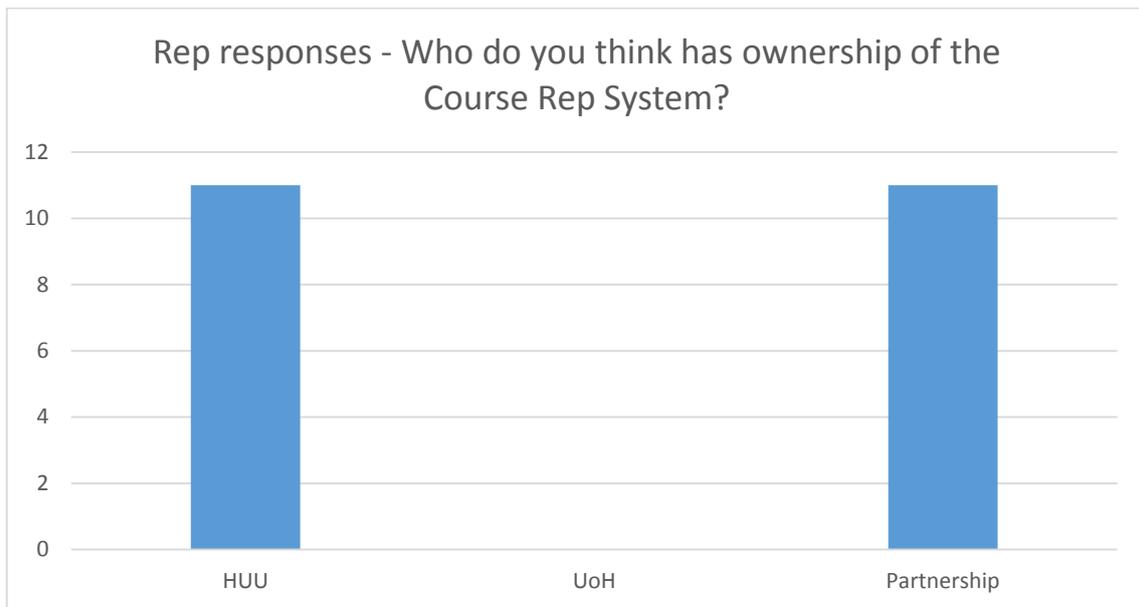
HUU and the University of Hull work together to facilitate the Course Rep system, with departments being autonomous, electing their representatives at both Course and Department level.

Senate is changing, some of its powers are moving to Faculty Board. This in turn means that more power and action will happen at a lower level. Faculty Boards will now become a place where there are more representatives than ever to ensure that the student voice is heard where things can change. Furthermore now sabbatical officers of HUU will be attending these boards to campaign and encourage a stronger student voice from higher levels.



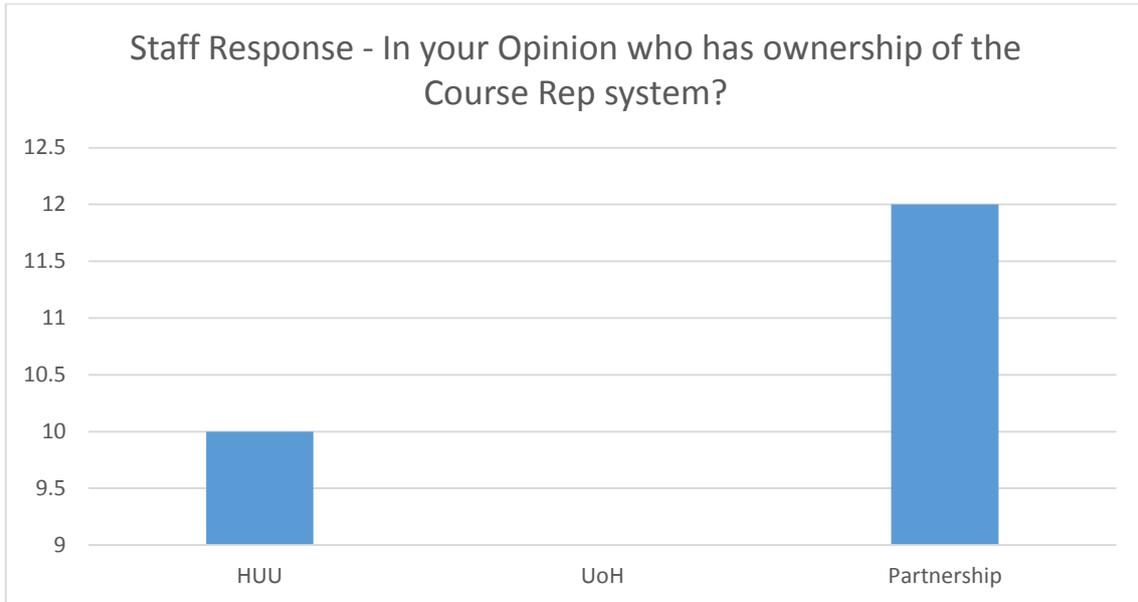
HUU's rate your union results 2011-2014

As this graph indicates a decrease the Course Rep system has shown increases and decreases in its effectiveness. This academic year has shown a decrease on the previous year of 15%. This year HUU has employed a Democracy & Governance Intern as well as a Research and Campaigns Co-ordinator; due to this the Education & Representation Co-ordinator will have more time to focus directly on Course Representatives and the system itself, providing more support for the student voice.



From the End of Year Reports that are submitted by individual Staff Student Committees to HUU we have data from both students and staff on the topics discussed at Staff Student Committees as well as opinions of said groups about the system itself.

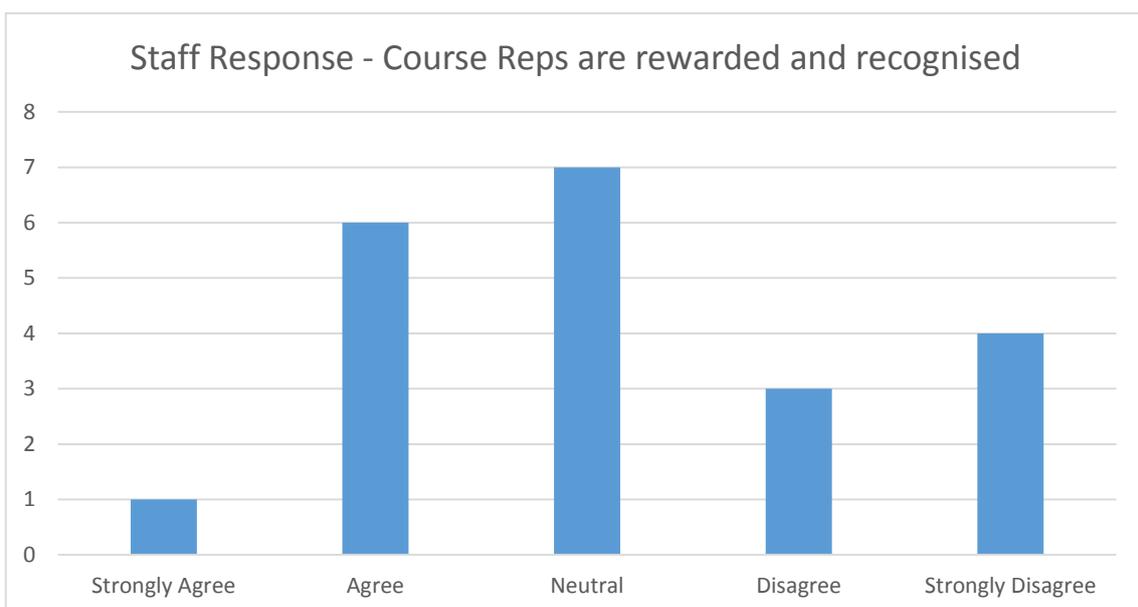
As the above graph explores 11 SSCs believe HUU has ownership over the Course Rep system, and a further 11 SSCs believe it is a partnership. It is positive that half believe that the system has joint ownership, however it shows also that the other half of student SSCs believe that HUU owns the system. HUU does not dictate to SSCs their responsibilities, instead it uses the Code of Practice to highlight areas of responsibilities of both institutions. HUU is more than happy to review the Code of Practice periodically to ensure the areas of partnership are adhered to.



Staff have responded differently with more SSCs responding with the ownership of the Course Rep system being a partnership, however, there are still 10 SSCs who believe that HUU owns the system.

With both Staff and Students responding to the End of Year Reports with a high level stating HUU has ownership, it is potentially time to review the Code of Practice.

LT: HUU to work with Students and Staff to review the Code of Practice on student representation periodically, ensuring that partnership is at the heart of the code. Students, HUU and Academic as well as Administrative staff are to be a part of the process of review.

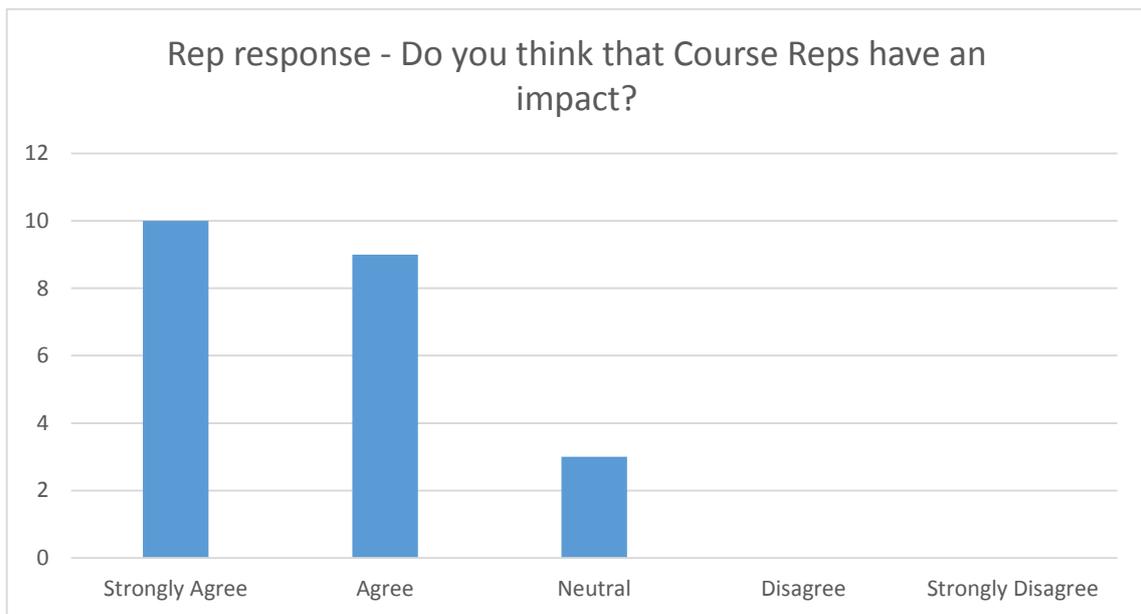
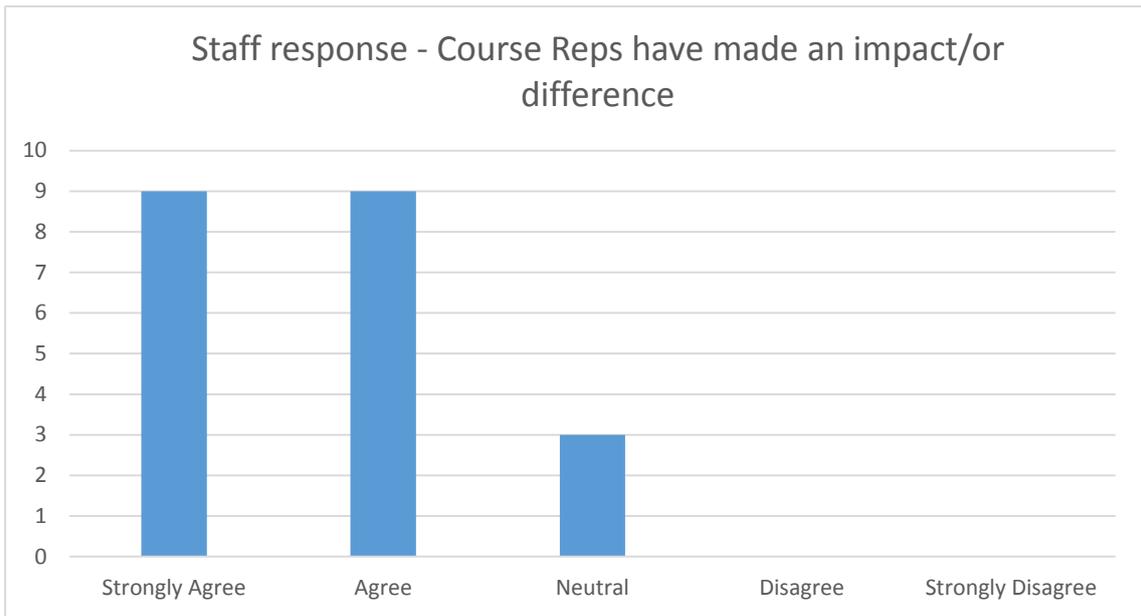


Last year within the Student Written Submission HUU was actioned to create a reward scheme for Course Representatives. HUU is pleased to announce its system of reward and recognition for Course Representatives – during the summer of 2014 the Education & Representation Co-ordinator and the Vice President Education constructed a new and University of Hull specific system. The system will reward for their engagement with the system, there is also the opportunity for Course Representatives to submit “Evidence of Change” where they are expected to write a brief summary of the achievements over the year and within their SSCs. This will allow HUU and the University of Hull to directly quote Course Reps within Institutional Review and raise awareness of the changes being made at each level.

The reward system itself is based on a criteria that involves engagement directly with University departments and HUU from training, to SSCs to Academic Council as well as assistance with campaigns.

As the above graph shows, recognition is dependent on the SSC with 7 agreeing and 7 disagreeing with the question within the End of Year Report.

Regarding impact, both staff and students from SSCs believe that Course Reps have an impact.



The table below outlines the topics that were discussed at SSCs in the Academic year 2013/2014, this information was also taken from End of Year Reports.

Theme	Number of SSCs discussing
Student Representation	18
Learning and Teaching Methods	24
Quality of Teaching	22
Work Placements/Year Abroad	10
University/Department Policy	14
Content and Quality of programmes and modules	19
Feedback and Evaluation of assessed work	19
Student handbooks	15
NSS	13
Last Year's Annual Report	13
HUU's Course Rep training	10
Assessment Methods	19
Student Evaluations	18
Project Work	12
Quality and Availability of resources	21
Library and IT Resources	21
Student Support	19
Personal Supervisor	16
External Examiners Report	14
Module Evaluation Report	14
Annual Monitoring	2
Academic Council	7
Promoting and advertising Course Reps	13
Additional	Health & Safety, Concerts, Performing, Deadlines, Curriculum Reform, Post Grad Resources, Placements, End of Year celebration, Bursaries Timetabling, Department Events and the Library re-development

Learning and Teaching methods remain one of the most talked about subjects at Staff Student Committees, this relates directly to the Expectation – students are deliberately given the opportunity to discuss enhancement, the University is fulfilling this section of the Quality Code.

## 5.2 Periodic Reviews

Within Periodic Reviews, students are members of periodic review panels. A student from a different subject area is on a review panel that looks into areas of quality assurance and enhancement. HUU works to supply panel members.

The selection process itself is done through the Course Rep nomination form, students have to 'tick' to agree to be a part of the pool of students that take part in the periodic review process.

#### Recommendation

ST: HUU and the University of Hull to change and challenge the 'norms' and have Course Reps "Opt out" of having to be involved in Periodic Reviews, instead of having to "Opt in". This will increase the bank of students available to take part in periodic reviews. For this to take place, the Code of Practice will need to change. HUU is aware that a review of the Periodic Review system is taking place and would like to be involved during the process.

### 5.3 HUU's Strategy

HUU's organisational strategy will change from 2014. Our research survey reached 3285 students. The research encapsulated everything it is to be a student at the University of Hull and how HUU can provide the correct service (and level of service) to its members. One area the research focused on was Representation and Student Voice.

Results were as follows:

46% - Agree that they can influence decisions at Course Level

36% - Agree that they can influence decisions at Union Level

27% - Agree that they can influence decisions at University Level

HUU will not be offering any recommendations at this time, it is simply noting that these areas will be within HUU's strategic plan.

### 5.4 The Student Engagement Partnership

NUS (The National Union of Students) has a division called TSEP (The Student Engagement Partnership). Within this division they have created "The Principles of Student Engagement", these principles are under discussion across the entire student movement as well as the sector.

The principles include: Learning & Teaching, Quality Assurance & Enhancement Processes as well as Decision Making, Governance & Strategy. HUU would like to consult with TSEP and make sure that the students of Hull have their voices heard on this national project, we would like to do so in partnership with the University.

Information on the document can be found at [tsep.org.uk/theconversation/](http://tsep.org.uk/theconversation/)

LT: HUU and the University to work together to ensure that on a national scale the University of Hull and HUU are part of projects that will shape policy and frameworks affecting student engagement, representation as well as student voice.