



Annual Report

2022-23



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CEO Introduction

The Students' Union annual report is an opportunity to pause, reflect, and to thank the many people whose dedication and hard work has supported the SU throughout the year. Without the knowledge and passion of our staff, students, and trustees, both the volume and impact of our work would be much reduced. As with any year, there has been difficult moments, but the determination and togetherness of all involved in the SU has ensured we've had a successful 2022/23.

This was my first year as SU Chief Executive Officer and I'm incredibly proud to lead the team who have delivered on the initiatives you will read about within this report. In a year where we aimed to make the SU 'more visible, in more places, more often' to improve member understanding of their SU and drive

engagement, the team have been creative and courageous within their respective areas, to drive awareness and deliver impact.

As we move forward, there is much to be optimistic about, with key reviews initiated within the year to drive forward enhancements to our organisational governance and democratic processes. Through this, further work on our people and culture, and through the creation of a new organisational strategy, we have an opportunity to reshape the SU to better meet the needs of our membership. We must do this with students, with staff, and with other key partners, in a transparent and inclusive manner, so that together we build the very best version of Cardiff Met SU, both for now, and for the future.

Will Fuller

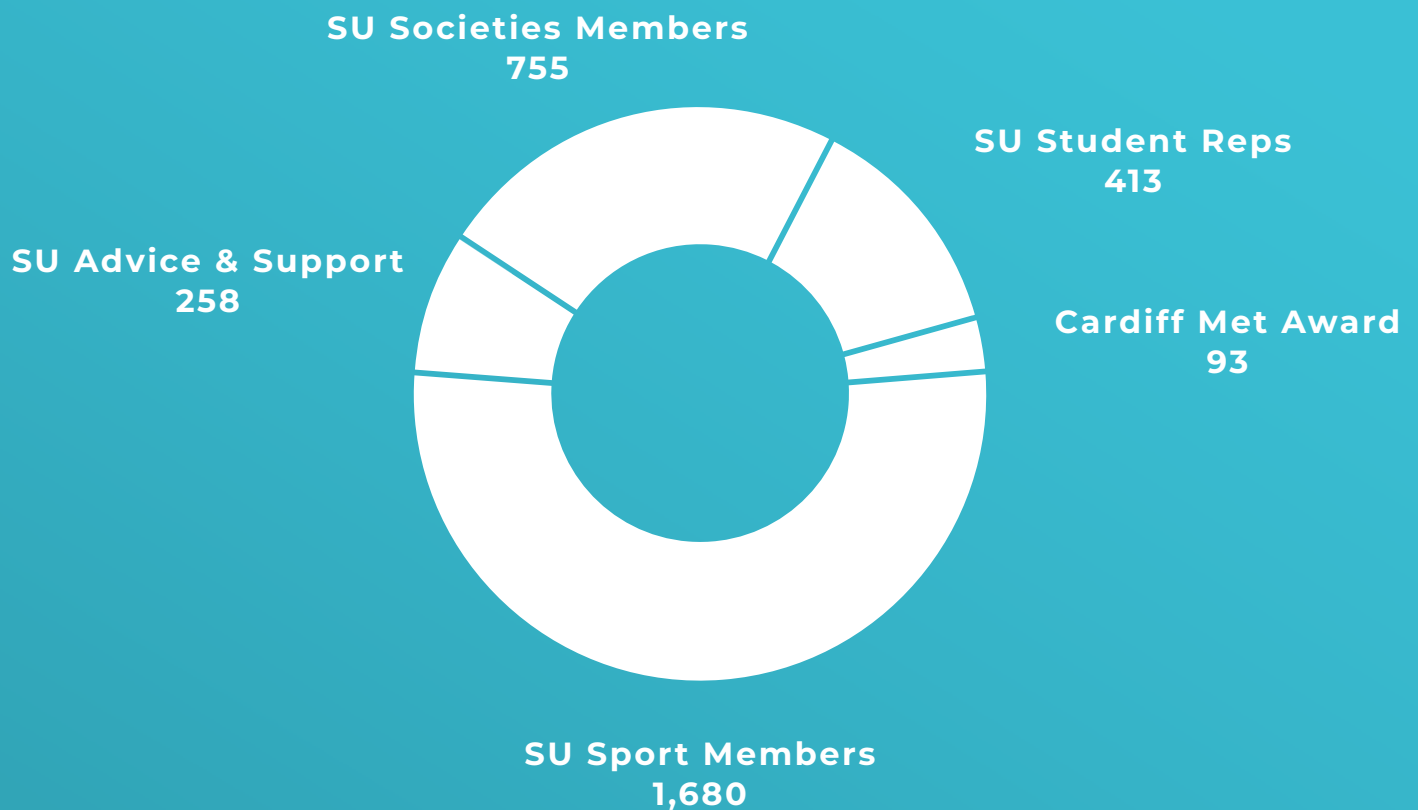
Will Fuller
Students' Union CEO

About us

We are Cardiff Metropolitan Students' Union (**SU** for short). We are separate body and organisation to Cardiff Metropolitan University, and we are here to support you through your student journey at Cardiff Met. We provide you opportunities for expression of your opinion through the rep structures, communicate with the university and external bodies on your behalf, and facilitate recreational student activities such as Societies and Sport Clubs. We help you boost your employability through the Cardiff Met Award, and we provide support and advice to any members in need. Through all this, we aim to make your welfare & experience at Cardiff Met the best it can be.



Year In Numbers



We were able to engage 3,200 students in our membership services!

We have had phenomenal 2,033 students voting in the SU elections in 2022/23, biggest turnout since 2017.

3 of our biggest events engaged 8,069 students! These consisted of the Freshers' Fayre, Refreshers' Fayre and Varsity.

The SU has sold over 700 Freshers' Fortnight bands, giving incoming students great experiences during their welcome.

Year In Review

The SU initiated three key organisational reviews this year, which included the Governance & Democracy Review, Health & Safety Review, and an HR Review, all of which were aimed at improving the effectiveness of the SU and improving your experience as our member. Work continues on two of the reviews, whilst the Governance & Democracy Review has now concluded with all its findings available to read [here](#).

How was the Governance and Democracy review completed, and what it did tell us?

As part of the review, crucial staff members of the SU and University have been interviewed by an external agency – GGI (Good Governance Institute) to establish the basis of the review. Student focus groups and rep focus groups were held where they dived into the issues you faced while engaging with the SU democracy, and what your expectations were.

Governance

The SU is governed by the Board of Trustees, currently consisting of 2 elected sabbatical officers,⁶ School Reps, the SU CEO and 2 external trustees, and functions with one sub-committee. One of the major recommendations is for the board to create purpose and strategy that sets out the values, aims and outcomes of the organisation, to give clear direction on what the SU purpose and direction.

Changes to the board composition was also suggested, with the removal of the SU CEO, and with the addition of more external trustees, the removal of the School Reps as trustees and designing a process to select student trustees in the future, allowing for more independent oversight.

Democracy

The review concluded that 2 full-time student officers is too few to appropriately represent the diverse membership that we seek to we represent. It has been recommended to increase the amount to 4 sabbaticals starting in 2024/25, with distinct remits for the 4 roles. There has been recommendation to see a SU President, and 3 Vice-Presidents with areas of: Education, Welfare and Community, and Activities to be introduced. The SU will be undertaking further focus groups to determine if these continue to be the remits our members want to see going forward.

Further enhancements for the academic year 2024/25 included changes in the Part-Time Officer roles, changing them from activity based to more liberation based representative groups, which we aim to deliver in conjunction with the new roles of full-time officers, to ensure the remits are clear, and that they cover all areas of representation.

Changes that will be implemented with immediate effect include the removal of the Lead Reps from the SU structure. This puts bigger emphasis on the School Rep. The SU will need to closely monitor this to assess whether the current structure can function effectively, or if an additional school rep roles/ staff support roles are required.

Other major changes you wanted to see is creation of an online portal, where you can leave feedback at any point, or give suggestions to your full-time and part-time reps on areas to explore, with ultimately creating a student-voice forum. In 2023/24 the SU will work towards the creation of these, giving you more opportunities to have your voices heard!

Welcome 2022

In September 2022, we have welcomed over 13,000 students back on campus. We were pleased to see many new students beginning their journey at Cardiff Met, as well as many returning students who did not previously have the opportunity to experience the extracurricular activities or even welcome activities due to the impact of Covid-19.

The SU has printed **3,000** of our **Ultimate Freshers' Guide**. For the first time, the SU has been part of the move-in weekend, being part of your experience from the moment you arrived to University halls, telling you about the opportunities and services available to you!

We held our annual Freshers' Fortnight, hosting a series of **14 events**, with **over 700 students purchasing the Freshers' wristband**, making new memories, and meeting new friends and becoming part of the Cardiff Met community.



Freshers' Fayre

We kicked off the academic year with our Freshers' Fayre, which was a one-day event attracting **over 100 stalls** from Societies, Sport Clubs, the SU, University Services and external vendors. We were able to **welcome more than 5,600 students!** On top of the Freshers' Fayre, your President and Vice-President were holding welcome lunches along with the School Reps and Part-Time Officers, which were held throughout the week. They raised the visibility of their respective roles, and how students can leave feedback.

ReFreshers'

For the second time, we have organised the Refreshers' Fayre in term 2, giving our January entry students opportunity to find out about the SU activities and services. With **over 30 stalls**, we managed to get **1,167 of our students** to attend and get engaged in new activities!



Representation

We were able to recruit **385 course reps** and **16 lead reps**, who were led by the **SU President, Venky Gonavaram**, and the **Vice-President, Natalia-Mia Roach**, and supported by team of **6 School Reps** and **5 Part-Time Officers**. As previously mentioned in the report, the democracy structure of the SU is currently underdeveloped, and has faced staff changeovers resulting in difficulties in delivery and content creation of the training and support to the reps this year. The positive outcome is that the SU now has a dedicated staff support to the representative structures for the first time!

The representative structure has played a significant role this year, as we faced a high level and scale of issues students were handling. These included coming back from covid, the cost-of-living crisis, a local and national housing crisis, transport issues, UCU strikes and many more.

Your representatives have worked closely with university staff at all levels, from school staff, professional services departments and university senior management, and they were able to implements many changes to your experience.

We want to thank all 413 of our reps for always bringing student issues to the forefront of agenda, and to thank all of the university staff who were receptive to the student feedback in one of the most challenging times higher education has faced.

Although we are thankful for all the changes, we were able to make, we are also mindful we still have great scope for improvement of our representation systems at Cardiff Met SU. The democracy review has highlighted many areas of improvement, and we are looking forward to implementing these changes over the next 3 years. We want to create spaces where you have a chance to leave your feedback, and to discuss your ideas. We are aware we do not currently communicate the changes that happen as a result of your feedback better, and by implementing changes every year, you will see improvements in your representative systems in next few years.

There are many more issues we were not able to solve, from the housing crisis, to achieving more student and society space in Llandaff, or having a bar, and having more sporting facilities to be able to facilitate more social sports in both Cyncoed and Llandaff. These are the issues at forefront of all our discussions, so please keep providing us with feedback and what you want to see, and we will achieve better student experience together.

Achievements

Cost-of-living Menu

Discounted menu in all university catering outlets, providing affordable food options on campus

More vending machines and water dispensers across the university

Addressing high usage of campus outside opening hours of catering outlets

Getting university to change boundaries of 'local' students for purposes of getting accommodation

Free graduation gowns hire for the first time

Warm spaces on campus 24/7

Keep the SU space P Block in Llandaff

Commitment from university to not raise prices of food during the year, despite any unexpected changes in inflation

Keeping the M1 services into 2023/24 despite funding cuts

Continuing Period Dignity Campaign

Allowing first 800 students to get discounted rate on bus pass by £100

Funding from University to extend the campaign. Provide students period products during cost of living challenges.

Elections

We held the annual student-officer elections in March, electing your next President and Vice-President. Elections are one of the most important times of the year, when you get to decide which ideas and candidates resonate with what you have been experiencing, and who should lead the SU in the upcoming year.

Results from the previous elections indicated that significant changes to the process are required in order to attract more candidates from diverse backgrounds to these roles and to drive voter turnout. This will be even more important once we increase the number of full-time officers to 4.

We were able to have an external Returning Officer, who has supported us in creating new processes and independent oversight of the delivery of the election, and providing a valuable insight.

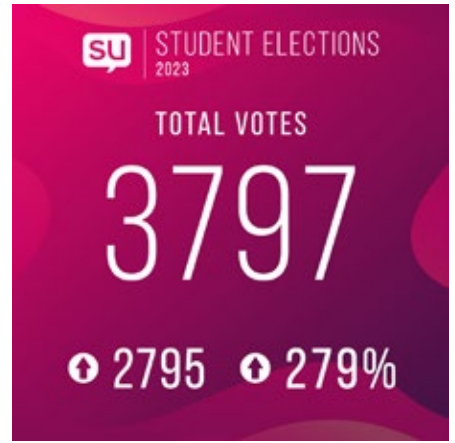
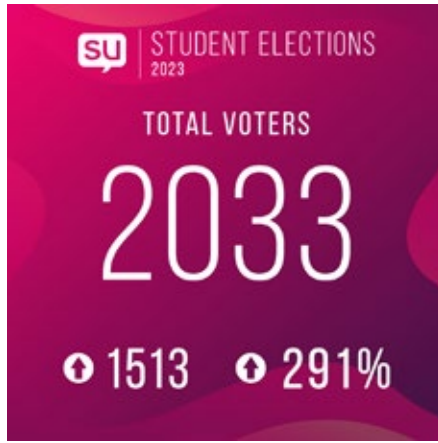
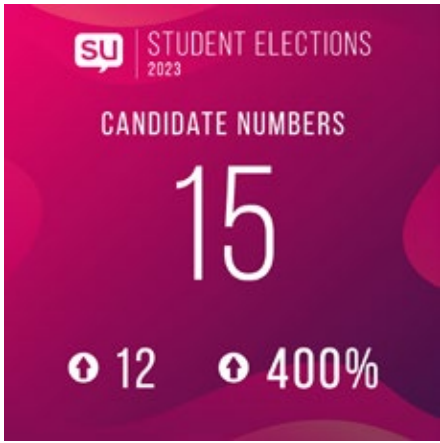
We have updated all our election rules, and for the first time extended the nomination period to 4 weeks, allowing candidates more time to come across the idea of leading the SU through different events, posters and communications. The SU has held multiple sessions across these 4 weeks, where students could drop in to find out more about roles and receive support in running campaigns.

Additionally, the nomination process was put fully online this year – meaning to register an interest, you simply had to log into the SU website and sign up for the election, and freely change your manifesto and picture any time before the deadline, and signing up for the Election meant member of staff was immediately reaching out to offer additional support.

The support provided to candidates, combined with longer nomination period has seen an increase in candidates running – 15 in total, up from only 3 candidates in 2022.

The SU has explored how to make the voting process easier and more appealing to students, and we have implemented incentives at polling stations for those voted, and we were able to use tablets at 3 voting stations, where students were able to vote by simply putting in their student ID, overcoming some of the barriers presented by having to log into the SU website.

We were able to achieve total of 2,033 unique voters in the election, up from 520 in 2022, making it the largest turnout in an SU election since the SU began running their voting digitally in 2017.



Celebrating Success

Sports Awards

The SU has received a combined **869 nominations** across our awards, in order to recognise the amazing work undertaken by fellow students, student leaders and university staff!

Our Sports Awards have attracted over **450 attendees**, acknowledging and celebrating the successes of our sport clubs, athletes, coaches and support staff. Our partnership with university's broadcast MSc course enabled us to play a fantastic year of sport video which has raised the spirits of all our archers. As part of the awards, we received **550 number of nominations** which we recognised on the night.





Student-Led Teaching Awards (SLTA's)

Our annual awards that recognise the exceptional efforts university staff are making. This year, we have introduced new categories such as Student Life Award, Postgraduate Tutor Award, and Postgraduate Research Awards and received total of **197 nominations** across these!

Student Achievement Awards

We were able to celebrate the hard work undertaken by our student-led societies, society members and our representatives in 2022/23. It led to some really hard decisions, as we have seen a rapid expansion across the societies! We have received **122 number of nominations** across the different categories. We were able to celebrate these successes jointly with the Student-Led Teaching Awards, which attracted **70 attendees** on the night.



Student Activities

SU Societies

As we continue recovering from Covid, we are looking back at a year that has been busier than ever for the societies. With the ability to plan any activity, and with nearly all covid restrictions gone, we were able to grow to **42 active societies**, up from 31 in previous year, and up to **755 society members**, nearly double the previous year's 386!

The SU supports societies in handovers, training and in supporting the delivery of their plans through dedicated staff support. We were able to provide handovers for more societies than ever before, but also start many new exiting societies like Yoga, Poker, Chess

Societies have been prominent in engaging with students, with many having a stall in Freshers' Fayre. In addition, societies have been more active than before, with many hosting weekly events and meet ups.

Just some of the society highlights of the year: Climbing and Snow society reached new highs, with 61 and 57 number of members respectively. Met Marketers were able to secure a collaboration with Nando's. LGBTQIA+ society has joined the SU during the Pride march in Cardiff. Capture the Flag won a hacking competition, and so much more!

2022/23 - 755 Members

2021/22 - 386 Members



Student Activities

The Cardiff Met Award

We continue providing students with further development opportunities through the Cardiff Met Award. Through this award, Cardiff Met students are able to start a personalised self-development journey, which is supported by the SU. It helps students reflect on skills learnt throughout their studies and employment, identify areas for development and equip them with real-life employability skills.

We have had 94 students registered for the award in 2022/23, with 41 of them completing either the main or an additional level of the Award. This year has seen the addition of the "Justice Level", designed with support from BSc Law staff. We have continued returning more to in-person meet ups throughout the year, which has been positively received by students. We continue to provide support for the Cardiff Met Award online and through Teams, to provide further flexibility for students.

41 Completed the Award

94 Students on the Award



SU Workshops

The SU provides free personal development workshops, which can be attended by any student, but continue to be predominantly attended by students enrolled in the Cardiff Met Award. All of these have been scheduled to be in-person workshops.

We have had 91 students attend 10 of our workshops, and while the engagement at these has been great, we will trial putting some of the workshops in 2023/24 online, to provide students with more flexible opportunities on how they can engage in further development.



Student Activities

SU Sport

We have seen great engagement throughout our Sports Clubs this year, with **29 clubs** and total of **60 teams**, joined and led by **1,680 students**, reaching our highest figure yet. Although sport had been slowly returning throughout the previous year, it is undeniable that with a full return of sport, we have seen many first years through third years and postgrads taking part in sports. New and returning students have been able to find more about different clubs through Freshers' Fayre.

SU Sport has seen the return of many regular activities such as BUCS Wednesdays, with some of our biggest events attracting much wider audiences than ever before. We have seen over **600 tickets sold for our Clash on Court** (basketball and netball) matches, and over **3,000 tickets sold for the Cardiff Clash**, two BUCS Super Rugby matches between Cardiff Met & Cardiff University held at Cardiff Arms Park Stadium. We were able to hold a three nations event to profile women's and men's rugby at Cyncoed, with **over 1,500 students attending**.

This year there was much to celebrate, with 20 of our BUCS teams achieving first place in their respective leagues, and 3 teams coming in first in non-BUCS national leagues. We have been able to help **290 athletes** in attending **29 events**, with **36 students scoring a medal** in BUCS League and **31 scoring a medal** in non-BUCS national competitions, with 15 and 13 of those bring in gold medals respectively.

These achievements show unwavering commitment to competitive sport from the SU, our students, officials and coaches who have collectively made these achievements possible. It is safe to conclude the student engagement in taking part in sports, or coming to support your teams and friends remains at a very high level, driven by the amazing achievements of our sports teams and individual athletes who help us grow the archer family.

2022/23 - 1,680 Members

2021/22 - 1,535 Members



Sports Events

Varsity

The much-anticipated return of the biggest sporting event at Cardiff Met, seeing our first home Varsity since 2019! The event has returned bigger than ever, **with 3,000 students watching or competing** at the event. Although the weather was not in our favour, the atmosphere was second to none, with 24 games of our students going head-to-head with Bath University.

The attendees were given a Varsity T-shirt, with addition of reusable cup upon entry. It was a unique opportunity to invoke the Archer spirit. It has been hugely successful event, despite Bath University winning overall.





EDI Events

The SU has hosted range of events throughout this year, catered to wider range of audiences, and raising awareness and celebrating different cultures. We were able to do this in collaboration with the university, providing our members with plenty of opportunities.

Disability History Month Talk

In collaboration with the University, we held a lecture followed by an interactive workshop held in the Atrium. Staff and students have been able to come together and celebrate the differences.

Black History Month Quiz

For Black History Month in October, we were joined by Nubian Jak Community Trust, who created commemorative plaque and sculpture scheme focused on memorialising the historic contributions of Black and minority ethnic people in Britain and Beyond. They have created a quiz to teach our members more about black history in Britain.



Pride March

Our final EDI event for the year has been a Pride March, in collaboration with the University and the LGBTQIA+ society. It has been a great way to bring many of our students, SU & University staff together, and mark the progress that has been made in Britain, and to remind ourselves how we still have a long way until achieving equality.

It's a Sin

This was an event part of our LGBTQ+ History Month, joined by Terrance Higgins' Trust – charity raising awareness tackling issues regarding to HIV/AIDS, as well as by Jill Nalder and Rupert Whitaker, and sharing their experiences of the HIV/AIDS epidemic during the 1980s that led to the creation of the hit TV show.



International Events

International Nights

We were able to partner up with Revolution Bar, for unforgettable International Nights. We have had two rooms where a selection of Afrobeats, Desi and Bhangra was played all night long, to offer our international students a space that feels more like home, and to give our UK-based students opportunity to experience something new! The event has been a great success and will see a return in the following academic year.



Diwali

We immediately jumped to Diwali, festival of lights. This even was facilitated by your President – Venky Gonavaram. The event began with a traditional Pooja ceremony, followed by a delightful fashion show featuring traditional attire. We all relished a delicious Indian curry feast, and the evening came alive with music and dance.





Fairtrade

The SU celebrated Fairtrade Fortnight, and our part in Cardiff Met being ranked as the best university in the UK for sustainability in People and Planet's Green League 2022/23. Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice has reached out to the SU to join us in these celebrations and came to campus for a Fairtrade Quiz and chocolate tasting. The event aimed to highlight the importance of making ethical purchasing choices and the impact those choices have on a global scale. This shows the extend of the commitment by the SU to sustainable initiatives.

As part of the Fairtrade Fortnight, the SU has held multiple information stalls engaging students in Fairtrade and getting them engaged in the steering group that has been getting restarted, supported by our staff member and the environmental officer.



SU Advice & Support

SU Advice and Support is an independent and confidential advice service offered to all students enrolled on a Cardiff Met course, this also covers all students enrolled with our local partners and international partner organisations.

The service offers guidance on all aspects of university life including university procedures, academic procedures, housing, and student wellbeing. Our aim is to ensure that all students are fully informed of their options, are supported to make decisions, and signposted to services and additional support when needed.

2022/23 has seen a return to campus and the demand for the advice and support service continuing to grow. We have seen an increase of international students struggling with accommodation, and in search of part-time opportunities.

Academic year (1st July to 30th June)
Total cases supported.

2016/17	200
2017/18	247
2018/19	309
2019/20	229
2020/21	252
2021/22	373
2022/23	258

During 2022/23 we have noticed the increase in complexity in student cases, often taking longer time to support and establish the base of the issues. This has often been true especially when other parties such as parents want to get involved in the cases.

National Student Survey (NSS)

Every year, the Office for Students runs a National Student Survey, where they ask all final year undergraduates about their experiences throughout their time at the university. This year, the review methodology and a large amount of the questions within were changed, with the neutral option removed. This made mapping to the previous NSS scores, with the exception of the overall satisfaction question, which remained the same, difficult. It is important to note that England now has slightly different set of questions, and the question of overall satisfaction is only asked in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The university has scored relatively **well** compared to the sector in **5 out of the 9** themes, but unfortunately the overall satisfaction remained lower than average – 73.1% compared to Welsh average of 76.7%. Given the new set of questions, it is challenging to draw direct comparisons to previous years. Although the overall scores for majority themes were high, Cardiff Met did score above the Welsh average in only 5 questions out of 27.

With more detailed analysis, we can see differences across the different programmes, but thematically we can see Student Voice, the Overall Satisfaction and Organisation & Management achieving score under 75% in half of the programmes. This aligns with the institutional data which shows these 3 themes are overall under 75%, as well as the Mental Wellbeing which has not been reported

on programme level. It is important to note that Mental Wellbeing was one of the 5 questions where Cardiff Met has scored above the sector average.

There is a singular question regarding how well the SU represent students' academic interest. The SU has scored 50.8% in the previous year, with scoring **69.8%** in the latest NSS. It is great to see the jump, although we anticipate large amount was due to the removal of the neutral option.

Analysis of the free-text comments shows a variety of themes. The positive themes focus on teaching, academic staff and experiences and knowledge learnt throughout the degree. The negative themes focus largely around Covid, experiences during Covid, and subsequent disruption due to the strike action.

These did make up very large majority of all the comments, but taking these away there have been comments surrounding issues of placements (cost and travel), organisational management, timely communications, overlapping deadlines and group work. Majority of these comments were programme (or school) specific, and there was not huge amount of overlap in the negative experiences of different students on an institutional level. The only theme that has been seen more across the institution is the organisational management of courses, and timely and relevant communication from staff.

Conclusions

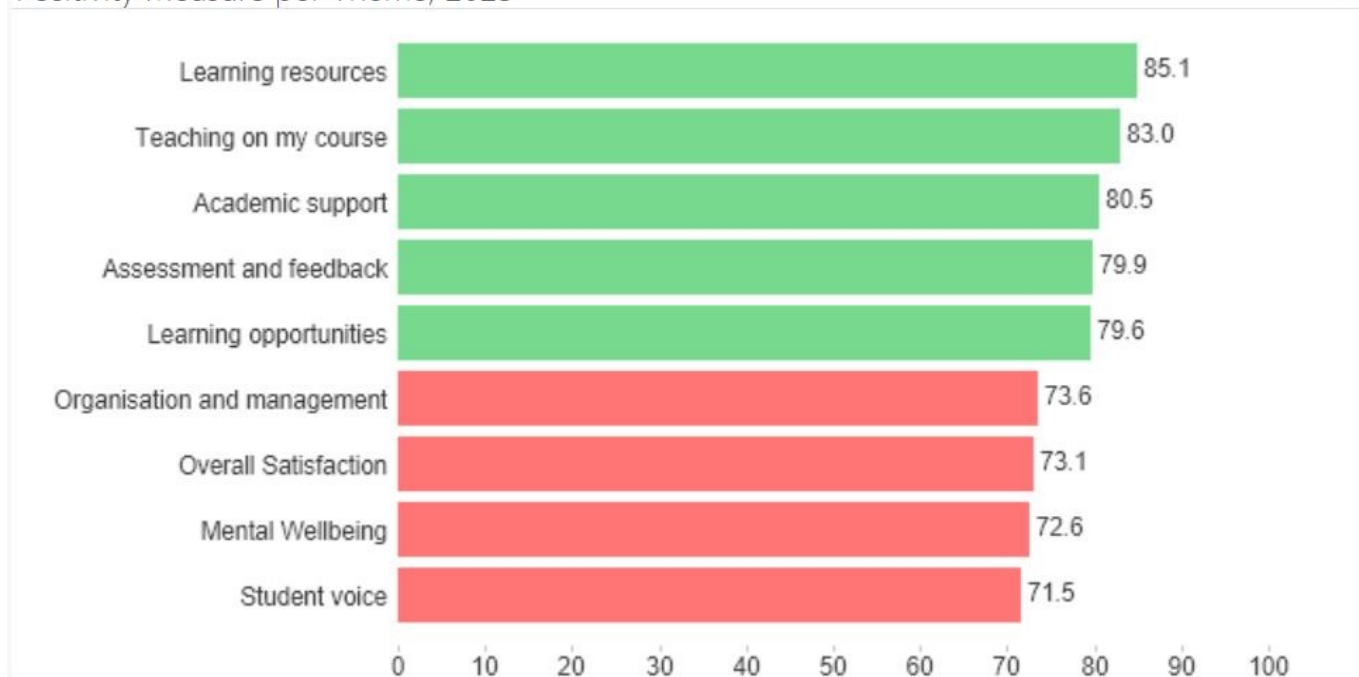
It is really positive to see the improvement in the data, showing implementation of the previous plan has been successful, with much lower number of students having negative comments about communication, timeliness of feedback and marking not being consistent.

The university still needs to tackle the issues in organisational management of what experiences look like across the board, and work on setting expectations with incoming students on what their time on campus will look like, and how much time they should expect in dedication to it.

The overall satisfaction and student voice being low despite all the other categories considering the academic experience being high suggests dissatisfaction might be arising due to non-academic, or wider student experiences they encounter along their academic journeys, that is currently out of scope of questions asked in the NSS.

It is recommended the **SU and university** review and agree how we collectively cover the feedback mechanisms and structures with a focus on non-academic feedback, and to review methods of closing the feedback loop.

Positivity Measure per Theme, 2023





SU President Conclusion

Reflecting on the Union's activity for this past year, I am grateful for the faith students put in me as your Vice-President, and now President. What a year it has been.

Clearly, there is no shortage of incredible achievements in the last year to be proud of, many examples of which are included in this report, and many others in the making that are not included. We have engaged with so many students, in so many other ways not mentioned, such as through our venues – Centro and the Shop, and having students visiting us in our offices.

I am happy to show you the impact we have achieved with Venky Gonavaram, your previous president, but I am mindful there are still many changes that need to be made by the SU.

In the past year students have been going from one crisis to the next, whether it has been covid, cost-of-living, housing shortages or the strikes, there are too many things affecting your experience, having to work more and more alongside their studies. Despite this, I feel optimistic about working with students, organising and collectively achieving the change you want to see.

To succeed when addressing these challenges, we have to ensure that we show an ability to partner and collaborate with each other. We should use our history and previous experience as a foundation for ambitious change. Most of all, we must show solidarity and compassion to our people and our community in the broadest sense. This is my vision for this Union, and I hope that our members, our staff, our funders, and our wider community and friends share this as well.

Natalia-Mia Roach
SU President 2023/24

2022/23

SU Actions

Action

Update

The SU to develop a bespoke SU Rep recruitment and training process for FE and TNE partner reps

The SU has met with the schools to discuss the recruitment through at all levels, and will support schools in the recruitment. It will need to be further investigated how this approach works for the FE and TNE partners.

The SU to review election processes to boost turnout, support the candidates and raise the understanding of elections.

The election process has been reviewed and immediate changes have been implemented, boosting the turnout by over 1,500 unique voters.

The SU to formalise the inclusion of a Postgraduate Student Rep to better represent the voice of PGR students.

The SU has worked with the PGR rep to start embedding them in the structures, but in light of the Governance and Democracy review will need to rethink where the PGR representation will sit.

The SU to further promote the SU School Reps within their respective schools and the school-based SU Rep system to raise awareness of student voice.

The promotion has gone really well, with the ability to have the reps on screens throughout the year, and in better awareness of the school reps.

The SU to continue the growth of SU Societies across both campuses to improve the sense of student community.

The SU was able to nearly double the society memberships, making positive steps towards achieving a bigger sense of belonging.

2022/23

University Actions

Action

Update

The University to continue to embed #NotAnExcuse campaign into student life, sharing the campaign across the academic year.

The University has embedded the campaign in wide range of resources, and continued in supporting the campaign.

The University to develop spaces within both campuses for social activity where SU Society, volunteering and other student led activity can take place.

The University has created some temporary arrangements to allow for some space to be dedicated to societies. However, this space will not be available in the next year, and the issue of space remains and we still need resolutions for students who are currently with us.

The University to work with the Students' Union on a series of in-person summer transition activities targeted at supporting the transition of groups with high suspension and withdrawal rates.

Unfortunately, due to resource available to the SU there has been only limited capacity in which it supported the University's transition activities.

The SU has included the previous set of actions. However, the report will focus on the impact of the SU going forward, and as such the SU will not be producing actions directly from the report, but rather use the information provided in the report in planning and improving the SU throughout the year.