



FACULTY STUDENT VOICE REPORT '16

SCIENCE

A portrait of Summer Jette-Gray, a young woman with long dark hair, smiling slightly. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

SUMMER JETTE-GRAY

FACULTY SAB FOR SCIENCE

Welcome to Liverpool Students' Union's Faculty Student Voice reports. These reports are produced each year in partnership with our members, your students. The main aim of these reports is to provide staff with the voice of their students regarding the issues that matter most to them. Students were surveyed this year from the 24th-28th October and were asked a series of questions. There are many key themes running throughout these documents that we hope to work in partnership with members of the faculty to try and address.

We would like to say a special thanks to any and all staff in the Faculty who support the work LiverpoolSU do. Your support of our work, including supporting the course rep scheme, is excellent and we appreciate the effort that it amounts to!

The student voice is at the heart of everything we do as a Students' Union, without it, we would not exist as an organisation. The purpose of these reports is to gather and feedback the student voice on the issues that matter the most to students. In addition, each year we ask for and receive constructive criticism regarding the nature and format of these reports from LJMU staff to make sure that these reports are the best they possibly can be and we welcome any feedback you may have.

This year there are also a number of exciting new initiatives, which will be detailed within these reports, being rolled out across faculties by LiverpoolSU that we are keen for staff and student to become ambassadors of.

This year in partnership with LJMU staff we'll be recruiting Faculty Representatives, bringing student representation into the heart of each faculty. In addition to Faculty Reps, we'll also be rolling out a new online tool, SimOn.

Finally, we will also be discussing Dragons' Den one of our major projects giving students the opportunity to pitch for £8000 to make life better for LJMU students. You can find out about all these exciting initiatives on page 12.

Our aim for these documents is that you consider and accept the recommendations and work with your Faculty Sabbatical Officer and Faculty Representatives in order to make these recommendations happen.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

BLACKBOARD AND CANVAS

We are delighted to hear that the university has listened to the voice of our students and decided to move from Blackboard to the new Canvas system. We look forward to being a part of this new VLE and providing support and input in any way we can.

PLACEMENTS

- Create minimum standards of best practice placement processes in the Faculty.
- Create consistent information, covering communication and support across placements from LJMU
- Ensure that students have adequate time and support as part of their placement to complete any work given by LJMU to the best of their ability.

COURSE REPS

- We would love to work with you to increase the promotion of course reps and their activity throughout the University and within modules.
- Embed a LiverpoolSU Student Rep section into the new VLE so that reps have an institutional virtual environment to reach their students.
- Give reps the opportunity to collect feedback at the start and/or end of lectures.
- Ensure that every School and Faculty has a representative.

TIMETABLING

- We are pleased to say that LJMU are currently looking into personalised timetables, as reflected in the recommendation here and would welcome engagement with our student reps around this.
- Provide students with their timetables prior to their teaching weeks.
- Look into the accessibility of student timetables and the clarity of the information given to research and implement support for students to learn how to access their timetables, that is flexible across faculties.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

- We would welcome working with you to embed the assessment and feedback recommendations into University life.
- To review the options of group work and how social loafing is dealt with across the faculty, so it is perceived as fair and reasonable by students.

PERSONAL TUTORS

- To do a faculty audit of personal tutoring in order to ensure that students are receiving a standard practice across the institution.
- To create personal tutoring training, ensuring that all personal tutors are aware of the expectations of their role and how it aids students development
- To increase the 121 contact hours for tutors and communication with their personal tutors.

WHAT ARE THE STUDENTS TELLING US?

BLACKBOARD AND CANVAS

We are delighted to hear that the university has listened to the voice of our students and decided to move from Blackboard to the new Canvas system. We look forward to being a part of this new VLE and providing support and input in any way we can.

Blackboard is a resource utilised by all students and staff at LJMU. From student feedback, it is believed to be at the heart of communication, in order to deliver on course objectives and assessments.

It is recognised by students that a lot of work goes into creating a Blackboard site by staff in order to make sure that all key information is central for students to use. 80 out of 405 students rated it a 10 for usefulness with only 77 rating it a 6 or below. However, students were asked whether they have experienced varied format and structure of blackboard across their modules, adding that they there is no consistent standard of blackboard information across modules, programmes or faculty, which would improve their experience of Blackboard.

FACULTY	YES	NO	UNSURE
APSS	105	18	17
EHC	66	7	6
SCS	95	20	22
FET	30	9	12

Adding to this, student feedback acknowledges the usefulness of a central hub of information as well as a mobile app to access information for lectures while on the go. However, students have stated that, while having a central hub for information is useful, in practice there are a number of issues with the site.

19 of the 137 students who responded thought the system was working well and that there was no real need for change. That said, there were a wealth of issues raised by the other SCS students. In relation to the site itself, students want Blackboard more logically organised, with a better interface, to aid accessibility and be user friendly.

STUDENTS SAY...

"Lectures being put up earlier in advance, better ways to contact lecturers in a less formal way than emails e.g more discussion boards, ways to book tutorials with anyone in a department because someone may not be in a lecture (for purpose of module changes or postgraduate conversations with module leaders."

- BSc Sport and Exercise Science, Level 5

"More information on how to access certain aspects of the module topics and its overall clarity- found it difficult to locate aspects in first couple weeks of using it and would've benefitted from some more information on where to locate things."

- Pharmacy, Level 4

"Sometimes navigation of the site was quite difficult, hard to find certain lecture slides. The format is similar throughout, it may look more appealing by using different colours or making certain titles bold."

- Pharmacy, Level 5

"All modules to include basic information in the same places e.g. lecture slides and notes in 'Module Content', timetable and module guide in 'Module Information'."

- Applied Psychology, Level 6

"For material to be uploaded at least 24 hours before. Any relevant reference materials to be added such as journals, etc."

- Forensic Science, Level 6

Notifications should be re-developed to offer specialised information for students based on their program and level instead of blanket notifications. Furthermore, students stated how useful a "How to..." guide to Blackboard would be to help clarify how the site works as they initially start using it.

In terms of the content many students sighted their frustration at lecture content and other useful materials being uploaded after their lectures, as students wanted to print relevant notes prior to the lecture. The lack of standardisation means the content available across different modules is inconsistent. Timetables were also seen as being too complicated and simplification was desired. The app also had issues with slow software, limited access, confusing navigation system, and a lag in notifications.

PLACEMENTS

87 placement students answered a series of questions relating to how prepared they felt when starting their placement on a 1 to 10 Likert scale. The data shows that over 50% (44) of students rated their preparedness an 8 or above. To look at the ways in which students were equipped, they were asked to comment on how they were prepared before and during placement.

Beforehand, there were a variety of information resources utilised. These included, professional training guides, lists of organisations offering placements with contact information, and specific pre-reading materials. This shows us that the resources utilised to prepare students are not used consistently across the board.

When asked what support or information they were given during placement, and whether a main contact was allocated to them, the majority of students said they were given a main contact with only 7 of the 32 who responded saying they were not aware of, or given, any support.

This information shows us that support across programmes and faculties does vary, affecting the experience of each placement student individually. This is reinforced through further free text comments on how students would like placements to improve.



STUDENT THOUGHTS ON SUPPORT AND INFORMATION GIVEN BEFORE AND DURING PLACEMENT

"I received a professional training guide - this outlined what was expected during my placement year but also what is expected once I complete my placement."

- Forensic Science, Level 6

"I attended a workshop on how to dress and how to act professionally in the pharmacy which was far from where they live."

- Pharmacy, Level 5

"I had visits from my visiting tutor to see how my time there was been spent."

- Forensic Science, Level 6

"The placements I was given were very far away from where I live and some other students had placements in pharmacies closer to me which was far from where they. I think students struggled on public transport trying to reach an area far away where they have never been before. By taking a student's term time address into account this could be avoided."

- Pharmacy, Level 5

"Provide opportunities to speak with students who have taken a placement and how it influences their future learning."

- Forensic Science, Level 6

"More opportunities are needed for mature students."

- Forensic Science, Level 6



COURSE REPS

Course Reps are elected and selected at the start of each academic year which, depending on each programme, typically happens in October or March. This year we have recruited 1249 course reps, with 435 in APSS, 226 in EHC, 325 in SCS and 143 in FET. This is the first year we have ran online basic training for reps, to make it more accessible for all to complete, with 400 undertaking the training so far. To ensure we have a continuous feedback loop throughout the year, we are looking to recruit level 5 and 6 reps for the 2017/18 academic year, in March across all faculties, allowing for a constant representation process.

“During the induction week we are told that students can volunteer to become Course Reps. After that we usually receive email reminders from our programme leader. You could improve it by asking previous Course Reps (or someone who represents Course Reps all over the university) to give an introduction and encourage students to volunteer.”

- Animal Behaviour, Level 6

“Course Reps could be supported more by lecturers as it helps to open pathways of communication and bring forward more opinions.”

- Sport and Exercise Science, Level 5

“Our programme leader told us to go to our elected student reps if we had any issues or feedback. I think the course reps should be decided a bit more quickly so that the course reps can be informed of their duties earlier on and know exactly what is expected of them.”

- Forensic Anthropology, Level 4

Students were asked if they knew who their Course Reps were and, 267 out of 405 (66%) student said that they did, with 339 (76%) of those students confirming that they were also given the opportunity to become a course rep as well.

This suggests that while the majority of students are given the chance to become a rep, once the elections are held, the result of the election/selection is not promoted broadly enough and therefore we have students who fall between the gaps and do not know who their course rep actually is.

DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR COURSE REP IS?

FACULTY	YES	NO
APSS	80	60
EHC	63	16
SCS	99	37
FET	25	25
ACROSS FACULTY	267	138

WERE YOU GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME A COURSE REP?

FACULTY	YES	NO
APSS	118	22
EHC	67	12
SCS	116	20
FET	38	12
ACROSS FACULTY	339	66

Qualitative feedback from students support this, with the majority of comments acknowledging that they are aware of a rep system, but unaware of who their rep is. Feedback also highlights several suggestions for improvements, and using tools such as blackboard and lecture shout outs to show students who their reps are and aid promotion of the system.

SCS students felt that the election process should be quicker so new Course Reps have time to fully learn what their role entails early on in the year so they can commit to the best of their ability. The selection process could also be weighted towards students who haven't had the opportunity to be a rep allowing each student a fair chance to join the system.

TIMETABLING

Students were asked how clear and easy to understand, as well as how accessible their timetable is. As you can see from table below, according to the Likert scale, the majority of students believe the timetable to be clear and easy as well as accessible, with the majority of students scoring an 8.

When asked for further comments about the timetable, the majority of students referred to timetables needing to be personalised and course specific, which would improve clarity of information by being more user friendly.

Adding to this, students also mentioned that accessing the timetable itself can be difficult, leading to further barriers when attempting to compile them.

Some students have stated that they do receive support in how to use their timetable from their induction, however it is not clear whether this is standard practice.

The key themes here centre around making the turnaround time on marking as small as possible, having reasonable gaps between deadlines, feedback on marks to be detailed and specific, and staff being responsive and supporting.

HOW CLEAR IS IT TO UNDERSTAND YOUR TIMETABLE?

FACULTY	5 OR LESS	MORE THAN 5
APSS	52	87
EHC	54	81
SCS	21	56
FET	11	38

HOW EASILY WERE YOU ABLE TO ACCESS YOUR TIMETABLE?

FACULTY	5 OR LESS	MORE THAN 5
APSS	53	86
EHC	49	86
SCS	21	56
FET	14	35



STUDENTS SAY...

"We have to compile our timetable ourselves and it only gets released very late."

- Pharmacy, Level 7

"The timetable website is not very user friendly and does confuse a lot of individuals as they either cannot find the correct timetable or they cannot understand the information presented to them."

- Sport and Exercise Science, Level 5

"Only given a few days in advance. We get separate module timetables and have to compile our own. Also have to organise our own placement swaps as many of them clash."

- Pharmacy, Level 6

"Timetable set out is very confusing. A personal one should be uploaded to each students Blackboard homepage where it is always visual to see on a weekly basis."

- Sports Biomechanics, PhD



ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK

In June 2016, the current Vice President Academic Quality (VPAQ) put forward an objective to work in partnership with the University to develop assessment and feedback methods. A paper was put forward to the university with 9 recommendations of this paper. They were:

1. Greater use of effective forms of group feedback being used, such as peer assessment, use of model answers, or engagement with the marking criteria in a small group seminar.
2. All summative assessment coming with detailed, personalised, and constructive feedback to enable students to improve their marks for future assignments.
3. Students should be encouraged to request face-to-face meetings with staff for dialogues around coursework feedback, and for feedback on examinations.
4. Increased use of developmental assessments that will enable students to reflect on their performance and develop their personal and employability skills.
5. Assessment Mapping will be implemented across the institution as soon as possible and a calendar of deadlines will be made available to students prior to module selection, to avoid the potential clustering of assessment deadlines.
6. An introduction to University study skills included in the induction period for every student and that sessions on specific types of assessment are offered before each type is attempted by students for the first time.
7. Study skills support provided by Student Advice and Wellbeing (SAW) being advertised through students' lecturers and personal tutors, especially during busy assessment periods.
8. Students being offered sessions with tutors to discuss the marking criteria and ensure they have not misunderstood it – this is especially important on heavily weighted assessments.
9. Students being offered feedback on samples of their work when requested in order to allow them time to improve before their next deadline.

A number of these were taken forward and are currently in progress with the University to be taken on board this academic year.

When asked what further support and improvement could be implemented to their studies assessment and feedback, the comments here show what students had to say.



STUDENTS SAY...

"We should have more of a say in which type of assessment works best for us because feedback from previous students is good but the current students may be completely different."

- BSc Sport and Exercise Science, Level 5

"Feedback isn't given individually, is usually not helpful or specific."

- Pharmacy, Level 4

"We use wiki sites which I dislike as you don't get notified when they are updated. We should be given samples of previous student work or practise questions to prepare for essays."

- Zoology, Level 6

"Some feedback is sometimes not very detailed and does not tell you what you could've done or could do in the future to correct it."

- Sports Biomechanics, PhD

"Mostly we just get a grade and no feedback. Grades are often late to be posted."

- Pharmacy, Level 7

"Feedback should be offered more to students."

- Zoology, Level 3



PERSONAL TUTORS

Last academic year, the Vice President Community Engagement worked in partnership with LJMU to establish the development and implementation of a personal tutoring policy. One of this policies aims included a further promotion of what the personal tutoring system is to students, with a clear purpose for the role.

It is great to see that students, when asked whether they knew who their personal tutor is, that 94% are aware across faculties.

DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR PERSONAL TUTOR IS?

FACULTY	YES	NO	UNSURE
APSS	129	8	3
EHC	78	0	2
SCS	132	3	1
FET	43	5	2
ACROSS FACULTY	382 (94%)	16 (4%)	8 (2%)

When students were asked about any further comments on positives or necessary improvements of the personal tutoring on their course, a number of themes came to light. Contact hours and personal 121 meetings, rather than group sessions were frequent among comments. Adding to this, students also highlighted the use of having a personal tutor that is linked to your modules and course, in order for them to be aware of any changes happening and the support required.



STUDENTS SAY...

"More one to one's. Some people may not feel comfortable talking about progress in front of other people!!"

- Drug Discovery and Design, Level 7

"Meet more monthly instead. Not seen my personal tutor since first year!"

- Forensic Science, Level 4

"The lecturers need to communicate more because in one instance a tutor will want you to complete an assignment to suit then and another PT will ask their students to do it another way. There is no consistency."

- Forensic Science, Level 6

"I have no teaching modules with my personal tutor this year so he doesn't really know what's going on with me or what modules I'm doing so he can't give as personal advice. It would be better if your personal tutor changed with your module choices."

- Pharmacy, Level 6



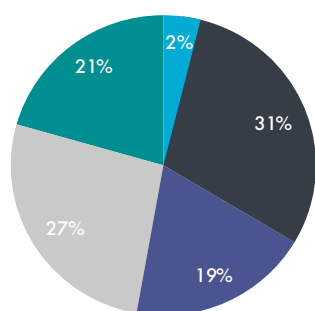
ACADEMIC ADVICE SERVICE

OVERVIEW

CASES & ENQUIRIES OPENED BETWEEN 1ST APRIL & 30TH SEPTEMBER 2016

*Data from LiverpoolSU advice service

FACULTY	#No of Cases
APSS	95
EHC	58
SCS	80
FET	62
NOT SPECIFIED	6



- Faculty of Arts, Professional & Social Studies
- Faculty of Education, Health, and Community
- Faculty of Science
- Faculty of Engineering and Technology
- Not Specified

SCIENCE

FACULTY OF SCIENCE | **80**

27%

OF OUR CASES 1ST APRIL
- 30TH SEPTEMBER 2016

SO WHAT WERE THE 5 MOST COMMON COURSES...

COURSE	NO# OF CASES	% OF FACULTY CASES
MPHARM	26	32%
BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE	13	16%
APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY	8	10%
SPORTS AND EXERCISE SCIENCE	6	7%
FOUNDATION NATURAL SCIENCES	4	5%

THE TABLE BELOW SHOWS THE MAIN ISSUES FOR SCS STUDENTS...

PROCESS	NO# OF CASES	% CASES FOR SCS	% ACROSS FACULTIES
APPEALS	18	22%	24%
EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES	15	18%	10%
ASKED TO WITHDRAW	14	17%	9%
FAILED ASSESSMENTS/ REFERRALS	13	16%	17%
COMPLAINT	8	10%	7%
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT	6	7%	15%

WHAT IS HAPPENING NEXT FOR LIVERPOOLSU REPRESENTATION?

SimOn

In late January 2017, we will be launching SimOn our brand new online feedback tool. SimOn stands for Simple Online tool. It will allow student reps to take hold of the feedback they receive and quantify it using 3 questions about the student experience; what works well; what doesn't work well and what ideas do you have to improve this. This tool will be accessible for students across all levels 24/7, 365 days of the year through the LiverpoolSU website. We hope that SimOn will become the basis of all feedback for students in order to give Course Reps the evidence they need to make active change throughout their time at LJMU.

FACULTY REPRESENTATION AND SCHOOL/ DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATION

This year we endeavour to recruit representatives for each faculty, both postgraduate and undergraduate, as well as a representative for each of the schools and departments within each faculty by January 2017. These representatives will then become an integral part of our representation system, allowing LiverpoolSU to access students at every level and embed live student feedback further into academic committees and processes. These representatives will be equipped to work with both students and staff across all levels and solidify the communication that we have to embed the student voice.

RETENTION PROJECT

We have recruited a retention project coordinator to research the current experience that LJMU students are having and find out how LiverpoolSU can support their student experience, to continue to Love Student Life.

We will be utilising this research to direct our focus with our work and ensure that everything we do has the heart of the student experience at its core. This is a very exciting time for the work we are doing and we would welcome any opportunity to create partnership in this area.

DRAGONS' DEN

We have some exciting new initiatives open to all of our students this year. Dragons' Den is one of these with £8,000 worth of funding available for students to pitch any form of idea that will improve the student experience. We will be working with students to solidify their projects, giving them the opportunity to develop their skills, including working with external dragons, while also giving them the opportunity of a life time that will improve the experience of their peers and themselves.



