

Provider name: Bath Spa University

Bath Spa University Students' Union

Teaching Excellence Framework Student Submission 2023

Approach to evidence-gathering

Bath Spa University Students' Union exists to represent, support and champion all students at Bath Spa University. We also provide opportunities to enable students to develop their skills and confidence as well as building community and having fun whilst at University.

We are led by a team of four elected Sabbatical Officers who work full time to represent students locally and nationally, working closely with the University's senior management team within their various remits. The President acted as the lead student contact for this submission and provided final sign off, with the majority of drafting and analysis undertaken by Students' Union staff as well as an external consultant.

The evidence for this student submission was predominantly pre-existing. As part of the Union's strategic planning process we had planned to survey all students in November 2022 and took the opportunity to add a number of survey questions relating to aspects of the TEF that provided helpful, additional evidence. The full list of evidence used, along with response rates, is outlined below. Whilst we analysed a range of student feedback and have drawn on this throughout the submission, we also drew on our day-to-day work as the recognised representative body of Bath Spa students. We work with and for students on a daily basis and gather feedback directly from students as well as from student leaders who volunteer for roles within the Students' Union.

We have included all Bath Spa University students in the submission, including those based at the recently acquired Bath Spa University London campus. The University also has a number of franchised and validated partners both new and longstanding but it is not practical for us to gather direct feedback on their student experience and therefore they are not included.

This student submission was written independently of the University and there was no undue influence over the content. The Students' Union President and lead staff member were members of the University's TEF Working Group and have been fully included throughout the provider submission drafting process. The University provided access to data and analysis to support the student submission and gathered additional information when requested. We are proud of the positive approach to partnership working we have with the University. Whilst we are a small Students' Union with limited resources and time to devote to a project of this kind, we have used our knowledge and a variety of evidence sources throughout and therefore we believe this submission accurately reflects a holistic picture of students' experiences at Bath Spa University.

Sources of evidence

Source	Responses	Student mix
National Student Survey 2020	1,256 (73.8% response rate)	Final year UGs
National Student Survey 2021	1,225 (78% response rate)	Final year UGs
National Student Survey 2022	1,255 (74.5% response rate)	Final year UGs
Bath Spa Experience Survey 2021	413 (11.1% response rate)	L0, L4 and L5
Bath Spa Experience Survey 2022	405 (10.4% response rate)	L0, L4 and L5

Big Students' Union Survey 2022	(82% of responses were UG/Foundation)	All students
Welcome Survey 2022	617 (8.9% response rate)	UGs and PGTs
Student Rep Forum minutes 2021 - 2022	Various	UG and PGT Senior Academic Reps from all schools
Course Rep roundtable minutes 2021/22 - 2022/23	Various	UG Course Reps from all schools
Staff Student Liaison Committee minutes 2020/21 – 2022/23	Various	UG Course Reps from all schools
Bath Spa University London Class Rep drop in minutes - May 2022		Business and Management Foundation Year
Learning and Teaching Survey 2022	353 (6.2% response rate)	UGs and PGTs
Wonkhe Survey 2020	369	All students

Student experience

Introduction

Bath Spa University is a unique community of students and staff with values of creativity, inclusivity, respect, sustainability and global citizenship. The University is focussed on students and their experience and, in a small-medium sized university, students generally feel known and recognised and in turn care for the community they are part of.

As one student in our Big SU Survey 2022 said in response to what helps them feel a sense of belonging at Bath Spa:

The caring culture the university has built for its students. The lecturers, cleaners, admin staff, receptionists, caterers, security, all care for students, just as students do for them.

Our students are diverse in terms of background, socio-economic status, disability, age and sexuality, and whilst the majority of students are white, the number of students of colour has increased in recent years. The majority of students are home students, though the proportion of international students is increasing and a significant number of students commute to university. This mix of students is predominantly spread across two campuses: Newton Park, which offers stunning countryside surroundings; and Locksbrook, which is a state of the art facility for students studying art and design subjects. A small number of students from Bath School of Design continue to be based at Sion Hill, the former home of Bath School of Art and Design, though the aim is to consolidate at the Locksbrook campus. According to our Big SU survey, 73.1% of respondents currently work or are actively looking for work alongside their studies. The average number of hours a week they work is 22 hours with some stating they work in excess of 30 hours per week. It is against this background that we seek to effectively engage and represent students and try to ensure they are able to make the most of all the opportunities that a university experience can provide.

We are proud to work in partnership with Bath Spa University and to have an effective, progressive and positive working relationship. This is predominantly focussed around the Sabbatical Officers

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who have regular meetings with the Vice Chancellor and Pro Vice Chancellor Student Experience. Under the Union's constitution, the Union's Senior Leadership Team meets with the Pro Vice Chancellor on a monthly basis, which acts as the formal liaison point between the Students' Union and the University. The Sabbatical Officers and senior Union staff also attend the monthly Student Feedback Management Group, chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor Student Experience, which ensures that emerging and current insight is shared and the experience of students is central to decision-making and collaboration between the Union and University.

Whilst our relationship with the senior team is vital, our positive partnership also extends to academic, catering, communications, facilities, IT, library, student wellbeing and many other staff across the University. Recent areas we have effectively worked together include responding to the cost of living crisis, providing free period products, changes to the exceptional circumstances policy, creating a leadership programme for students of colour, and addressing sexual violence and misconduct.

Overall student satisfaction as measured by the National Student Survey (NSS) has been increasing in recent years and in 2022, Bath Spa was ahead of the sector average in 17 out of 27 sections of the survey, compared to 7 out of 27 in 2021. 84% of respondents to the Bath Spa Experience Survey (BSES) 2022 survey agreed that they feel engaged with their course, which is an increase of 12% on 2021, perhaps highlighting the positive impact of emerging further from the pandemic.

The University's Education Strategy 2030 has provided a framework for recent significant investment in areas that directly enhance the student experience. Our Sabbatical Officers were able to contribute to its development and ultimate approval through membership of the University's Education Committee and Academic Board. Senior Academic Reps were also consulted on the strategy at the Student Rep Forum in May 2021.

Teaching and Staff

In the Big SU Survey, 86% of respondents agreed that teaching is high quality and enables them to learn effectively which is backed up by the results of NSS 2022 in which 86% agreed that staff are good at explaining things and 80% agreed staff made the subject interesting. Analysis of the NSS free text comments in 2020 and 2021 indicated that the majority of positive comments concerned staff being supportive, engaging, approachable and interesting. This is echoed in the Welcome Survey 2022 when students were asked what they were most enjoying about the course, lecturers were frequently mentioned and described as friendly, supportive, engaging and helpful.

In NSS 2022, 84% agreed they could contact staff when they needed to and for non-final year students, 90% of students agreed they could contact staff when they needed to (BSES 2022). Communication with course staff was a prominent theme in free-text comments when students were asked what was working well in BSES 2021. This positive feedback should be consolidated through the introduction of standard expectations on the use of emails between staff and students, including a minimum response time of 48 hours (Academic Response Times Paper to Education Committee, December 2021). Discussion of the agreed email etiquette was positive at the School of Education SSLC (Student Staff Liaison Committee) in March 2022, sparking consideration of both student and staff wellbeing. However, there is inevitably some variability amongst schools. 10.8% of Bath School of Art, Film and Media students definitely disagreed and around 1 in 4 Bath School of Design students tended to disagree they could contact staff when they needed to (BSES 2022). We acknowledge there have been staffing challenges in these two schools over the past year that have impacted on some students' experiences. The challenges are being addressed through recruitment and reallocation of resources.

In the Big SU Survey, when asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'My course stretches me to develop my knowledge and skills' 91% of students agreed. This is echoed in SSLC minutes from Drama and English in February 2022 where course representatives commented that the topics were challenging, interesting and they were developing their skills as a result. In the Big

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SU Survey, 76% of students agreed they had adequate opportunities to engage with employers, undertake research, or develop their professional practice as part of their course. The University has significantly invested in a new Employability Enhancement Plan recently and it is expected this area will improve in the coming years.

Assessment

Students' opinions on assessment and feedback have improved significantly in recent years. The NSS 2022 score was 6.5 points above the sector average, which is a notable improvement since 2020, when this section scored 2 points below the sector average. In the Big SU Survey, 86% of students agreed that their assessments and feedback effectively supports their learning.

The University has focussed on improving the quality of assessment and feedback, including introducing a maximum turnaround time and revising the Assessment and Feedback Policy to embed inclusivity and accessibility. Many courses have also sought to embed their learnings from the pandemic and continue with renewed and relevant approaches to assessment. The University's enhancement theme for 2021/22 was inclusivity with a focus on making courses accessible to all as well as decolonising and diversifying the curriculum. Sabbatical Officers were consulted on revisions to the Assessment Policy and were members of the Inclusivity Enhancement Theme Working Group.

The perennial issue of bunching of deadlines was raised by students from different schools during Course Rep roundtables in November 2021 and November 2022 with the Christmas assessment period highlighted as particularly stressful. Students in Bath Business School suggested better coordination between module leaders would help to spread the assessment load more evenly. In the School of Education, following discussions with the Senior Academic Representative in autumn 2022, deadlines were revised to enable spacing between deadlines.

Community

Community is an important facet of Bath Spa, with 76.1% of students in the Big SU Survey indicating it is important they feel part of the Bath Spa community and 79% agreeing they feel part of it. Students were most likely to say that their course, friends and flatmates made them feel part of the community, as well as clubs and societies. This is mirrored in the Welcome Survey 2022 where 76% of students said they felt connected to the Bath Spa community, though level 6 students were the least likely to feel connected (60%) which is probably an impact of the pandemic on this cohort. Suggestions students made to increase the sense of community included more in-person teaching, more events and better connectivity between campuses. During Course Rep roundtables in 2022 and 2021, students from creative disciplines such as art, film, media, music, and drama raised they would like more opportunities for collaboration with students on similar or related programmes, both within and outside the curriculum. This is supported by findings from the Big SU Survey, in that 84% of students have friends on their course whereas 73% of students have friends at university outside their course.

Despite the majority of students feeling part of the Bath Spa community, we are very aware that loneliness remains an issue for our students, which should be viewed within the lens of the worsening mental health crisis amongst young people. In the Big SU Survey, 56% of students said they felt lonely on a daily or weekly basis which is similar to 2020 when 52% of students felt lonely at least once a week (Wonkhe Survey). We know the University are committed to addressing this as part of their whole-University approach to mental health as they work towards the Mental Health Charter. We in the Students' Union are committed to developing our community-led approach to increase students' sense of belonging and it is one of the key objectives of the Students' Union's emerging strategic plan.

The University has strengthened the coordination of induction and Welcome Week activities in recent years. We have developed our role in this crucial period through membership of the central oversight group, and some increased funding for additional community-building activities. The

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University has sought to focus on developing course-based social activities that help to build academic community and confidence. We have focussed on providing opportunities for students to make friends, aiming to provide free, accessible events primarily focussed around food. As well as targeted mixer events for specific groups of students such as mature students, commuter students and students who identify as Disabled and LGBTQ+. For the first time this year, we collaborated with Careers and Employability on a number of welcome events in order to provide students with a fun way of engaging with careers early in their university journey. The approach appeared to be successful with strong engagement earlier in the year with the careers portal compared to previous years. We would welcome the opportunity to develop our role in this area even further.

Supportive learning environment

In the Big SU Survey, 92% of students agreed they could access the academic support they needed to complete their studies and in BSES 2022, 80% of respondents indicated they felt supported by the University, although 20% of Bath School of Design definitely disagreed with this statement. This may be explained by the issues the school has been facing as mentioned previously.

There is a perception amongst some students who don't study at Newton Park that Bath Spa is Newton Park-centric. Whilst this is sometimes inevitable, as the University's main offices and the only library building is on the Newton Park campus, renewed focus could be given to address this from both the University and Students' Union. The issue has been raised a number of times by Reps from Bath School of Art, Film and Media and Bath School of Design. A student also raised an issue, which was 'up-voted' on Unitu (student feedback platform) that the University's communications are too Newton Park centric. Student Wellbeing Services now hold drop-ins at Locksbrook, the communications team are tailoring messages and the catering team ensure there is provision across campuses. As a Students' Union we are very aware of the need to be more visible at Locksbrook and Sion Hill and indeed a large number of responses in our Big SU Survey that asked what the Students' Union could do to improve was to increase provision at Locksbrook. We are members of the University's Locksbrook Working Group and have been fully engaged with the development of the University's Estates Strategy and consideration of how support services could be developed and co-located across the Newton Park and Locksbrook campuses to further improve the student experience.

The remaining Bath School of Design students were due to relocate from Sion Hill to Locksbrook by September 2022, following building works during the summer 2022. Delayed works, as well as the late obtaining of planning permission for a new building near to Locksbrook, meant this had to be delayed very close to the start of the academic year. Whilst staff worked incredibly hard to minimise the impact on students, feedback from Senior Academic Reps, Course Reps and students indicated frustration at the lack of information and particularly the uncertainty around timetables. Textile Design and Fashion students continue to be based at Sion Hill, and whilst they have access to necessary resources, we understand it is difficult for them to feel fully part of the supportive Bath Spa community when they are 'separated' in this way.

The University has made significant investments in systems, processes and staff to support student success over the past 2 years. This has included the creation of a single digital hub (MyServices) where any student query can be raised which will then be directed to the relevant professional services team including IT Services, Student Information and Timetabling. The new approach through MyServices saw 86% of 14,000 calls received being resolved within their specified timeframe in the initial 6 weeks of the academic year. They also created a physical hub on the Newton Park campus which enables students to speak to a variety of student support staff in one place. The Student Hub has been in operation since October 2021. A smaller scale hub will be introduced at Locksbrook as a result of the building works in summer 2022.

The investment has also included the creation of a student progress team and the development of the student engagement and retention team as well as the development of learner analytics including dashboards where staff and students can track progress. This has included the

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introduction of an app that has all university portals, communications and information in one place. The app also supports a new approach to attendance monitoring which aims to proactively support students identified as struggling or at risk of non-completion. Its technical implementation inevitably experienced some teething problems, including some students being incorrectly recorded as absent. Reps raised issues at roundtables, SSLCs and on Unitu through the soft launch phase so these could be quickly addressed. We look forward to the full realisation of benefits to the learning experience the project will deliver in years to come.

Following a pilot project in 2021/22, which our former Vice President Education contributed to, personal tutors have now been replaced with Academic Advisors. These roles have a much clearer remit and receive tailored training and support. It is very encouraging to see that 90% of School of Sciences students who completed the Welcome Survey 2022 knew who their Academic Advisor was, with other schools receiving scores around 70%. Level 5 students were least likely to know who their Academic Advisor was, but given the changes to roles are new for 2022/23 this is unsurprising and communication about the change is ongoing.

The University also made a significant investment in Student Wellbeing Services in summer 2022 resulting in significantly more staff to support mental wellbeing, disability support and to develop proactive services and activities such as peer wellbeing ambassadors, mental health training and art therapy. This was in response to overwhelming demand for services over the past few years, and the significant increases as a result of the pandemic. In BSES 2022, 1 in 4 students who had used Student Wellbeing Services rated it as 'poor' or 'very poor' with comments praising the level of support provided but referencing long waits to access support. We recognise the significant investment that has been made to address these concerns, including the introduction of 24/7 services and MyWellbeing, the 'one stop shop' for all wellbeing support and the anticipated improvement such investment should bring, acknowledging however, the service will never be able to replace the woeful underfunding of NHS children and adolescent mental health services.

For disabled students, we have previously heard anecdotal reports regarding the inconsistency of application of Academic Access Plans across the university. In November 2022, Course Reps in 3 different schools raised concerns that plans were not being read or implemented by academic staff. As part of the investment in improved learner analytics and the development of the PowerBI dashboard, the process whereby staff read and action Academic Access Plans should be much improved.

Any student can receive support from services such as the Writing and Learning Centre. From Course Rep roundtables, it is clear the support provided is well received with one student in the School of Education describing it 'invaluable' but discussions indicated that awareness of the support available may not be widespread.

No discussion about learning support can fail to mention the many technical staff who support students on a variety of courses across the University. Senior Academic Rep reports and feedback from students regularly highlight the invaluable, high quality support they receive from technical staff. Many students have even put their academic success down to them!

Learning resources

NSS responses in the area of learning resources, whilst improving since the pandemic, are still below benchmark. The score understandably took a dip during the pandemic whilst students studying creative and practical courses could not access appropriate resources due to lockdown restrictions. The score improved by 11.6 points from 2021 to 2022 but that is still 4 points below benchmark. However, in the Big SU Survey 89% of students agreed the physical and virtual resources supported their studies that may indicate the investment as part of the University's Digital Transformation Strategy is resulting in improvements for students.

The question scoring lowest in learning resources section of NSS 2022 is "The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well", which at 68% has declined 7 points from 2020

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to 2022. Scores are particularly low in non-technical disciplines such as Fine Art (37%), Religion and Philosophy (44%), History (50%) and Forensic Psychology (50%), suggesting it may be VLE resources rather than specialist equipment and software that these students are dissatisfied with. This may be addressed by the upgrade to Blackboard Ultra in summer 2022 and the fact Bath Spa is now an Adobe Creative Campus, providing all students with full access to the Adobe Creative Suite.

IT resources were discussed at the May 2021 Student Rep Forum, and students expressed that they needed bookable computers; hop-on, hop-off computers for printing; space for people to use their own laptops away from static computers; short term laptop loans; and that the student laptop fund to allow lower income students to purchase laptops should be reinstated. The University's Digital Transformation Strategy subsequently led to a significant amount of investment in infrastructure. As part of the University's designation as an Adobe Creative Campus, they held a specific student engagement event in October 2022 and are recruiting a number of student Adobe Ambassadors to the project.

In the 2022 Welcome Survey, undergraduates felt least informed about IT services, software and equipment compared to all other areas of University life: although 71% said they felt well informed about these, scores for all other areas were over 80%. Interestingly, the group least likely to feel informed about IT services was level 6 students (58%), who were the most likely to have undertaken significant periods of online learning prior to completing the survey. This may be due to the fact IT Services took part in the student experience induction presentation for all new students for the first time this year, something level 6 students did not benefit from.

A roundtable discussion with Course Reps from Bath School of Design in November 2022 indicated that the cost of materials for arts and design-based courses is a growing issue for students. Variability of practice in providing basic materials such as glue, and the costs of digital printing were highlighted. In the Big SU Survey, 19.6% of respondents stated they did not feel at all informed about the additional costs of books, equipment and materials needed for their course with 12.1% stating there had been a big impact on the quality of their work because they couldn't afford the materials, equipment or trips recommended. Whilst this is thankfully a low number it nevertheless indicates this is an area that may invite attention particularly in light of the cost of living crisis.

In BSES 2022, 95% of students rated the library as either 'very good' or 'good'. Library resources were also well rated during the pandemic, (BSES 2021). In the Welcome Survey 2022, the library was the most used University service (82%), and had the highest satisfaction rating (92%). The library service's development of digital resources and click and collect service are well used and contribute to the high satisfaction rates. However, the lack of a physical library space, along with no free transport to access the space at Newton Park, may continue to negatively impact on the satisfaction of students not based at Newton Park.

Several Course Rep roundtable discussions in 2021 and 2022 raised issues with booking study spaces on campus. School of Sciences students in 2021 said that they thought there was sufficient space, but awareness of where the spaces are across campus was low. We acknowledge the work undertaken to open up a number of student spaces within Main House at Newton Park which Sabbatical Officers and Senior Academic Reps were able to shape. The Locksbrook building works have also prioritised study space.

Bath Spa University London (BSUL) and Partnerships

Following the withdrawal of the partnership with UKCBC, the Students' Union worked with the University to support the transition of students studying Bath Spa validated courses to become full students at Bath Spa. BSUL students present a different demographic and with three intakes each year, a different academic calendar too. We received much-welcomed additional funding for a member of staff to initially focus on the development of representation of BSUL students. Embedding an appropriate approach with a very different student demographic has taken a while,

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though we held a successful drop-in meeting with Foundation Year class reps in May 2022 where students expressed a preference for online teaching due to family and work commitments. We welcome the recent additional staff posts, including dedicated wellbeing support, and we look forward to working with the University in support of the students' experiences going forward. Whilst BSUL is no longer a partner and is part of the University's standard provision, there are a number of new and longstanding franchised and validated partners. Whilst partnership agreements require careful consideration for effective systems of representation to be in place, this is a developing area that remains a priority for us and we continue to work with the University to highlight and discuss ways to ensure a parity of experience, expectations and any gaps in support.

Student engagement

We are proud of the positive partnership we have with the University and the commitment to engaging with students at all levels of the University. Examples of partnership working at the University-level include decolonisation, the creation of a content warning policy, and the annual VC Awards which recognise the achievements of students and staff. Sabbatical Officers and some Senior Academic Representatives are full members of all University committees, including the Governing Body. Students are treated with respect and their views are very much valued in these spaces, though we have jointly recognised more could be done to provide training and support early in their terms to enable them to be as effective as possible. Students are co-creators during the development of all new courses, which generally works well.

The Students' Union manages the Academic Representation system with support from the University. Indeed, as a result of the work of the Student Voice Working Group chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor Student Experience, from September 2021, the University provided funding to enable all Senior Academic Reps to receive responsibility allowances in recognition of their time. Course Reps are currently recruited for all courses across the University with one Undergraduate and one Postgraduate Taught Senior Academic Reps elected in each school, along with one PGCE Senior Academic Rep in the School of Education and one PGR Senior Academic Rep for the University. Whilst the system is generally effective (we have 291 Course Reps and 10 Senior Academic Reps, including a full suite of undergraduate Senior Academic Reps, this year), we have begun a project in partnership with the University to 'reimagine representation'. The aim is to take a more community-based approach that doesn't put too much expectation on individual students who we know are time and cash poor.

In the current system, the Students' Union hosts Course Rep roundtables every term. All Course Reps in each school are invited to the meeting that is chaired by the relevant Senior Academic Rep and provides a helpful forum for students to share their experiences with our Vice President Education and each other. Course Reps are invited to attend their relevant SSLC and to feedback to their relevant Senior Academic Rep who is a member of their School's Quality Management Committee. All Senior Academic Reps are members of the Student Rep Forum that is co-chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor Student Experience and Students' Union President. The forum meets on a termly basis and enables students and staff to bring items for discussion. All meetings are minuted, with actions recorded, followed up and then crucially reported back. Issues that have been discussed include the introduction of an ethical careers policy, approach to hybrid teaching and a new approach to module evaluation.

In both the Big SU Survey and the BSES 2022 survey, 84% of students said they had opportunities to provide feedback on their course but comments indicate that many are unaware of how their feedback had been acted on. Discussions at the Bath School of Design and Bath School of Music and Performing Arts Course Rep roundtables in April 2022 echo this with Reps stating SSLC minutes are not regularly shared and they don't always know if issues from the meetings are acted on. We recognise there is varied practice across the University with good practice in the School of Education, Bath School of Art, Film and Media and the School of Writing, Publishing and the Humanities where a dedicated member of staff regularly meets with Senior Academic Reps which helps to close the feedback loop. During the 2020/21 academic year, Bath School of Art, Film and Media developed a dynamic reporting template to make it easier for all students to track actions

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which is now used across the University. Another feature of good practice was reported in the School of Sciences roundtable in November 2022 where a member of staff offered the opportunity to provide mid-module feedback. Staff left the room and students were given 20 minutes to collate their feedback which was then presented anonymously. Students enjoyed the opportunity to feedback in this way.

Response to the Covid pandemic

Like the rest of the sector, the Covid pandemic was a very challenging time, especially in a university with a significant number of creative and performance based subjects. The overall response from the University was positive, acting quickly to pivot to online teaching and remaining responsive to student and staff feedback throughout. A Laptop Fund was created and additional funds were put into the Access Fund. The Students' Union President was a member of the University Emergency Planning Group, chaired by the Vice Chancellor, which initially met weekly. The President was also invited to comment on all university-level student communications sent throughout the period. Other Sabbatical Officers and Students' Union staff were members of all other pandemic planning groups, providing a regular and clear route for dialogue and response to feedback.

Following feedback and lobbying by Course Reps from Bath School of Art, Film and Media, we gathered feedback on additional course costs incurred as a result of the pandemic. This evidence was presented to the University's Learning and Teaching Pandemic Planning Group and an approach agreed to reimburse students in Bath School of Art, Film and Media and Bath School of Design who had incurred increased costs for materials due to the closure of the University's Art Shop. The University also arranged the loan of some equipment, such as mannequins for Fashion and Textiles students.

As we began to emerge from the pandemic, where some in-person activity was permitted, Course Reps in November 2021 were generally happy with the balance of online and in-person teaching but expressed confusion over which session was which. Reps from the School of Education expressed a strong preference for in-person teaching due to difficulty debating online. Reps from the School of Sciences preferred in-person interaction but wanted to retain the flexibility of recorded lectures and appreciated the opportunity to choose different slots for their lectures around work commitments. At the request of the Sabbatical Officers, the University conducted a Learning and Teaching Survey in December 2021 to gauge student opinion on the balance between online and in-person activity. Overall 45% of students wanted more in-person teaching and 38.8% wanted about the same blend that was currently in place. The difference split along disciplines with students in our arts and performance schools preferring more in person teaching. This difference in opinion amongst students still exists with a Unitu post in November 2022 asking for more in-person lectures that created a number of responses from other students disagreeing and maintaining a preference for flexibility.

The University introduced the Audio Video Recording for Educational Activities Policy in September 2021 that requires the majority of lectures to be recorded, unless there is good reason not to. This has been overwhelmingly appreciated by students and is an example of the positive impact of the challenging pandemic.

Student outcomes

Whilst we of course want to see our students be successful beyond their time at Bath Spa, we do not necessarily believe this can be only achieved by securing a 'graduate-level' job, particularly as we feel this measure doesn't reflect the reality of working in the creative industries. It is our desire to enable our students to ensure their university experience provides them with the skills, knowledge and confidence needed for their own future goals and career plans. In our Big SU Survey, only 1.5% of respondents say they felt 'not at all confident' that their university experience will enable them to develop the skills and knowledge to achieve their future goals and career plans. When asked what students would change about Bath Spa in the Big SU Survey, several comments

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indicated a desire for more placement opportunities and more investment in long-term career support. This was also discussed at the Creative Arts Practice and Media and Communication Course Rep roundtables in April 2022, where Reps stated they would like more placement opportunities, industry links and opportunities to network.

In recognition of the challenging progression metrics and a desire to create a step change in progression, employability is a University strategic priority. The University's Strategic Resource Group agreed a significant investment in Careers and Employability in September 2022. The plan was set out in the Employability Report and Enhancement Plan considered by the Education Committee in November 2022. The plan was developed in response to an external consultant's report and will proactively address student feedback. We are supportive of the work and pleased to be a member of the recently established Graduate Outcomes Steering Group. Whilst we acknowledge student and alumni interviews contributed to the development of the plan, it would have been preferable to be involved in discussions earlier rather than only being made aware when it was presented to Education Committee for consideration.

The Students' Union provides a variety of opportunities that contribute to positive outcomes for students. One of the main ways we do this is in our support for committee members who lead our clubs and societies. We have over 70 student-led clubs and societies with 1308 active club memberships as of October 2022. We know the skills development and confidence building that happens when students lead groups for their peers not only contributes to their sense of belonging but supports their employability too. We know that lack of time and money can be a barrier to them accessing these opportunities that develop their confidence, resilience and creativity – all markers of educational gain and we plan to review our approach in order to try to address this further. We were pleased to introduce a participation fund in 2022/23 to try to remove the financial barrier to participation for some students and to have received funding from the University in 2021/22 and 2022/23 to provide free credit to new students to enable them to join clubs and societies as part of the Bath Spa Start. Discussions regarding additional University funding to further remove the barriers to participation are ongoing and we very much hope this area of work will enable us to play a key part in the implementation of the Employability Enhancement Plan going forward.

Bath Spa has a large proportion of mature students who are supported to achieve positive outcomes. NSS 2022 shows that mature students are overall more satisfied than younger students (80.7% v 74.7%). A large proportion of Bath Spa's mature students study at BSUL, which returned a fantastic 100% satisfaction score in 2022. If these students are excluded, mature students are still more satisfied than their younger peers. Mature students are a key group within the University's Access and Participation Plan activity with targeted support provided at open days and during induction. The University created a Mature Student Working Group in 2021 in order to ensure this positive work continues. Recent improvements include the provision of baby changing and breast-feeding facilities at Newton Park and Locksbrook.

Bath Spa has increased the number of non-white students in recent years though we remain acutely aware that Bath Spa and indeed the surrounding area is predominantly white. White students are more satisfied in every area of NSS 2022 than students from other ethnic backgrounds and despite some closing of the awarding gap during the pandemic, a gap persists. We are pleased to be members of the University's Access and Participation Steering Group and Equality and Diversity Steering Group, which considers issues such as this. We were delighted to partner with the University to deliver a new leadership and empowerment programme for all students of Caribbean, African, Arab and Asian heritage that ran for the first time in March 2022. We enabled students from our African Caribbean Society to shape the first programme and to develop the programme's title: 'Bath Spa Empowers'. The first cohort, whilst small, provided overwhelming positive feedback about the impact the programme had on their experience and identity. Our former Vice President Education facilitated feedback from the cohort which the University and Students' Union are looking to implement and we are delighted to be supporting the second programme which will take place in February 2023, alongside leaders from our African Caribbean Society.