

SECTION 1: STUDENTS' UNION CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION TO LIVERPOOL HOPE STUDENTS' UNION

Liverpool Hope Students' Union has a unique relationship with Liverpool Hope University. There is a constant dialogue between LHU and LHSU, facilitated by weekly meetings between senior university staff and sabbaticals. As a result, both collaborate in many areas directly relevant to the student experience, these include decolonising education, improving inclusive practice as well as promoting the importance of the student voice. We are clear that working together best suits the needs of our unique student community and is essential to offering the best possible, personalised student experience. This ethos of working collaboratively has continued throughout the TEF 2023 process. Ideas and thoughts have been discussed, and while both submissions remain independent, they are incredibly supportive of one another's content.

The SU is composed of Sabbatical Officers and permanent staff. There is the President, the Vice President of Education and the Vice President of Welfare and Community. The Sabbatical Officers are elected via a democratic process and the votes were from students from previous academic years. The officers and staff are supported by the Union Manager to ensure smooth day to day running, accountability and strategic oversight of the organisation. They also communicate with peer Union Managers across other SUs in the city and region. We also have an in-house advice centre run by our advice lead and academic advisor. This service provides students with general advice and signposting, academic issues, employment issues, housing issues, external support and financial advice. This role also covers complaints and will guide students through the correct procedures and areas within the University to resolve them. In addition to this, we have a member of staff responsible for overseeing the SUs Sports and Societies and the events lead. This role also allows the SU to build relationships with local businesses when we have our Freshers Fairs and strengthen other external partnerships, which in turn enhances student experience.

APPROACH TO EVIDENCE GATHERING

As a Students' Union we used a variety of methods to correlate student data from a range of different student populations. Our primary method of data collection was to analyse existing data from a multitude of sources such as NSS surveys, school/departmental surveys, course representative surveys and SU surveys. These surveys span from the 2018/19 academic year through to the present, to fully comprehend differences in data sets and gain accurate student perspectives.

The following surveys were used:

Survey	School/ Departmental surveys	Course representative training surveys	SU surveys	TEF student survey
Purpose	To give all students a voice providing positive and negative feedback	To provide a review of the course representatives system,	To provide feedback to SU on where it can improve.	To gather specific data for the TEF

	about all aspects of their course	particularly the training		
Distribution method	Distributed whilst the whole class is present during seminars	Distributed in person after the training session and also via email at the end of the year	Distributed via email	Distributed via email with advertisement on instagram
Distributed by	University	SU	SU	SU
Frequency/ Timing	Termly	Annually at end of year	Annually at the end of the year	December 2022
Cohorts involved	All students, all years	All course reps, all years	All students subscribed to the SU email chains	All students
Response numbers	Total number of students per year according to FTE data 2020/21- 4953.92 2019/20- 4480.09 2018/19- 4498.10	2020/21: 39 2019/20: :78	2021/22: 186 2020/21: 214 2019/20: 213 2018/19: 431 Respondents are evenly split across schools/depts. and year groups.	166

We acknowledge that surveys do not create an entirely accurate picture and other forms of data sets can provide more detailed data on different groups and backgrounds. Hence the SU conducted focus groups during winter 2022, to gather views about specific groups of students to ensure our data contained a mix of students' backgrounds and experiences. Students were selected via completing the TEF Survey in December 2022.

The following focus groups took place:

Focus Group	Disability	Mature	Network of Hope
Participant numbers			
Participants	Represented a range of different conditions which required a variety of adjustments throughout their	Represented the mature age range of TEF split indicators of 21-30 and 31+ from different schools. 3 recent undergraduate	Represented Early Childhood, Education Studies and SEN subjects and included

Focus Group	Disability	Mature	Network of Hope
	academic career. 2 never formally disclosed their disability to the University however they did disclose it to their school	graduates, 2 third years, 3 second years and 2 first years.	18 yr olds to mature students.

We facilitated informal conversations with a variety of recent graduates who had relevant experiences that were discovered as an outcome of our surveys. The discussion with the students/graduates encompassed a range of different lived experiences such as elected part-time SU officers. We thought it essential that these stories were heard, as individual stories are often overlooked when displayed in a data set. However, these students' stories are a true representation of the embodiment of Hope - the University's commitment to supporting all students and enabling individuals to thrive from arrival onwards.

In addition to the above, we accessed the Student Voice Committee (SVC) minutes where Course Representatives would raise their points and receive feedback. These minutes allowed us to evaluate whether the University acted on the feedback gathered from these meetings. We received minutes from each school, which was nine in total consisting of Law and Criminology, Education, Social Science, Creative Arts, Humanities, Business, Mathematics, Psychology and Health Sciences. This feedback included the opinions of Course Representatives from foundation year through to MA. This allowed us to have a comprehensive view of the feedback from students on different courses, while also having access to the school's annual review and evaluation (ARE) documents to see staff's own evaluation of their courses.

SECTION 2: STUDENT EXPERIENCE

ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK

Assessment and feedback *have* always scored above sector average *here* according to the NSS data with 76% agreeing compared to the sector average of 68%. One reason we found from feedback is that 93.4% of students find lecturers approachable for academic and pastoral advice, which gives our institution a personalised touch rather than being a name on a register or a number in a spreadsheet. Lecturers consistently offer to meet outside of their drop-in hours when required which assists in progression as additional support can easily be granted to any student. *graduate reported that a lecturer called them via Zoom in preparation for an assessment at 8pm, outside of their working hours due to both of their busy schedules. This one instance is not the only example of academics going above and beyond their requirements in ensuring students felt supported. This in turn created a positive, learning environment amongst students to be able to ask for help when struggling which is demonstrated by 93.4% felt their personal tutor was approachable to discuss concerns, according to the TEF 2022 survey results. Lecturers have repeatedly demonstrated their care for more than academic success through student outcomes after University, for example by inviting alumni students to talk to current students. The disability focus group reported that staff were proactive in the schools/departments*

that these students were from by offering additional support, providing analysis of feedback of being able to go through with every student. Members of the group found it was additionally beneficial for them to be given the feedback as a verbal discussion, enabling them to understand their grade further by being able to ask questions.

According to the TEF 2022 Survey results 89.2% of students received feedback on their assessments within 4 weeks of submitting their work. Drop-in sessions, specifically after assessments, have been introduced to include detailed discussions about feedback, which assists in building academic confidence and the skills to succeed. This aids with the attainment gap for disabled students as the tailored 1 to 1 meetings are able to further look at additional support the University offers, for example writing mentors. The academic skills mentoring service provides support in building students confidence in developing their academic skills from critical reading techniques to referencing, navigating the University's systems and technology. Members of the disability focus group all stated they were proactive in asking for help and support from lecturers surrounding their academic work, which they received. In instances where they wanted initial support in creating extra arrangements, members of the group said they would approach the VP Education in the SU to come with them to request the additional support from staff, which was forthcoming.

STUDENT VOICE

Course Representatives provide an integral part in giving students a voice by acting as a communication channel between staff and students for feedback of the student experience by course. There are many avenues at Hope for students here to provide feedback to the University. A specific example of this is the Student Voice Committee meetings leading into the University Sounding Board. Students are invited to sit on committees alongside senior staff to further voice students' experiences. This is vital to providing changes the students want to see, but it is also rare that universities give students this experience of learning the University decision making process and being able to become so actively involved in making change. After each SVC meeting any negative feedback requiring an action will be noted with updates to be given at the next SVC meeting, but updated sooner if matters are of an urgent nature. One example being Level C (first year) reps in Mathematics; their SVC stated that at times they found the transition to HE a bit difficult 'with some feeling that the text book has been helpful; but would prefer to review a chapter a week to help improve this'. This was actioned by the relevant lecturers and since then there has been an improvement in the understanding of materials. Course Reps, alongside students that sit on school academic committees, receive considerable training to support them in these roles. Training delivered by the Students' Union consists of a variety of topics in teaching students what contributes to the student learning experience, how to gather feedback and how to give effective feedback. This training allows students to evaluate their course content and whether the course is giving them enough development in their knowledge and skills. The 2020/21 Course Rep training feedback survey found that 94.9% of the course reps that attended the training rated the training a 4 and above out of 5 in usefulness of the material covered, with 66.7% rated it a 5 in a likert scale.

Another method of support that the Students' Union offers is the elected part time Student Representatives which cover 13 areas highlighted by students as areas with traditionally

underrepresented groups and which the University has welcomed. These roles ensure increased participation in student voice for specific student populations to further equality of opportunity and outcome with particular regard to the five liberation groups incorporated into this scheme: Disabled, Trans and Non-Binary, Womens, LGBTQ+ and Black and Global Majority. We also have an International Rep, Non-Resident Rep, Mature & Part-Time Rep, Postgraduate Rep, Sustainability Rep, Campus Life Rep, Network of Hope Rep and NI/RoI Rep. These representatives, elected by the student body, receive the necessary training and support from sabbatical officers to aid in campaigns in assisting the demographics that they represent. These students have been contacted in relation to TEF via informal discussions surrounding our research into our report, with officers from 2019/20 and 2021/22 being contacted. Examples of previous campaigns include: the gender neutral toilet campaign, accessibility guide, disclosure guide to sexual assault, and 'Pink, White and Blue: A trans guide to Liverpool'. These campaigns help students voice their own identities and backgrounds with the University's goal that these factors should never inhibit students' success whilst at University. The gender neutral toilet campaign in 2020/21 is a specific example which allowed for non-binary and transgender voices to be heard regarding their own comfort of toilet preference to match their gender identity. Students involved reported feeling recognised for who they were and an increase in students wanting to reach out. Students from affected groups reported that both Pink, White and Blue and the accessibility guide to Liverpool meant that students have knowledge of all the external support they can access whilst studying in Liverpool as well as feeling included in the University community. This enabled them to feel more at home at Hope, especially students who were not from Merseyside, as it created a sense of belonging and familiarity to the city of Liverpool as well as the University.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

From the moment students start at Liverpool Hope University they are supported and welcomed into the community. This is demonstrated by both residential and non-residential students' induction week, facilitating students to settle into their new environment and be able to get to know their cohort and lecturers. Students are signposted to all of the support systems/services before they formally begin class, enabling them to focus fully on academic studies when teaching begins. This is vital to students' academic confidence as students don't begin class as strangers, but as familiar faces from induction week. What makes Liverpool Hope special, is its personalised approach, year one students are placed in tutorials groups of, normally, no more than 15 and have a class every week with their pastoral tutor to provide support in a smooth transition to University whilst enabling them to talk about assessments more often. Small tutorial groups remain a permanent fixture across all levels of study here to keep this consistent support. From our TEF Survey, 78.9% of students rated the quality of academic support as above average and 93.4% of students reporting that their tutor was approachable to discuss concerns.

Liverpool Hope University provides a supportive, personalised environment from the moment that students begin their course with the skills to succeed discussed throughout their degree, with a session at the start of year refreshing the skills to achieve their aspirational grades. However, these sessions focus on more than just an academic skill set, but also transferable skills such as critical thinking to aid in completing the degree. One thing that should be emphasised from student experiences here is the personalised approach to education, where we are all seen as individuals rather than numbers on a system. This personalised experience enables students to have a close relationship with University staff and helps us thrive. As previously mentioned from our own TEF

Survey 93.4% of students said their personal tutor was approachable to discuss concerns, both academically and pastorally. This is only further demonstrated by our NSS scores which were above the sector average of 74%. Liverpool Hope scored 78% in satisfaction on academic support.

Additional support is available for anyone who may want or require it. The student voice, discussed earlier, makes clear these needs. Post COVID, for example, there is an increased awareness of support for our disabled students. Employment amongst autistic individuals found that only 21.7% were in employment according to the Office for National Statistics.¹ Hope's neurodiversity group, a joint collaboration between the SU and the Student Development and Wellbeing team at the University, provides enhanced support encompassing a variety of means to ensure these students have the best experience inside and outside the classroom. The disability focus group stated that 80% of them felt that their LSP was being correctly utilised in the support they have been receiving in class.

Support outside the academic system is often discounted when it comes to accessing the University learning experience, however as students we argue that is what makes Hope University its own. Students have a variety of support that they can access whilst studying here whether that is academic or pastoral support. The Gateway building provides the gateway to support with all available services in one place: financial, well-being, residential life and the Global Centre. This has been purposefully designed to try and remove external barriers from impeding students' experiences at University. This demonstrates the University's commitment to provide additional support to students who require this and this support helps students progress to each level of study.

SECTION 3: STUDENT OUTCOMES

COVID

Covid impacted our University but not as adversely as one may expect. NSS scores do show a dip in satisfaction in 2021 from (year three) students compared to previous years, with this being the majority of the year teaching was spent online. However, Liverpool Hope did remain above sector average for learning community and assessment and feedback, whilst remaining level on some themes within the sectors. These scores substantially improved in 2022 in all themes which could further illustrate student satisfaction from the University's initiatives during COVID-19 providing the most benefit to first and second years. Within days of the decision to discontinue face-to-face teaching as a response to the initial lockdown, our education continued on Zoom to ensure minimal disruption and stability in our education. This enabled students to have instances of familiarity amongst the uncertainty ahead. This allowed Liverpool Hope University and students to take a moment back and evaluate our own university system for improvement. The University has incorporated hybrid learning in some of our classes, if a student is unfortunate enough not to be able to attend an in-person session. Other initiatives included re-evaluation and updating our services and curriculum to minority groups such as People of Colour and disabled students to ensure they have their best experience at University. Our Deputy VC sent weekly emails to update students on the situation which encouraged a more personalised relationship with senior members of staff. Students wrote back with any concerns or problems they were

¹ <https://www.autistica.org.uk/news/autistic-people-highest-unemployment-rates>

experiencing, and these were then addressed². Support services, such as Student Development and Wellbeing (SDW), continued to provide students with mental health conditions or general worries, support through their drop-in system. It continued to provide counselling hours, with a pastoral support team checking in regularly most days with students who were the most vulnerable. Liverpool Hope University recognised and acted on the need to adjust assessments in light of Covid and did so quickly by creating emergency regulations. These adjustments helped support students during lockdown as did the empathy we all received from our lecturers as we were all going through the same thing. Our university realised the importance of face-to-face teaching and how this embodies the sense of community for students. Therefore, once it was safe to bring teaching back in person, it returned. 2020/2021 students who had practical degrees were back to face-to-face in the last term and all students were back on site in the last half term. This continued through to 2021/22 whereby all students were facilitated fully back on site for the whole academic year. The University, however, remained committed to support all students in the decision making process of transitioning back to face-to-face with vulnerable students' needs taken into consideration and providing additional support where required. Our university was, and remains dedicated in the current cost-of-living crisis, to support students in receiving the same opportunities. It created the laptop loan scheme during Covid to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is not diminished to the detriment of students who couldn't afford a laptop. One student from our mature focus group said that, 'the laptop provided for the remainder of the academic year is so beneficial for me since I wouldn't otherwise be able to afford one without this scheme. It also meant that I no longer had to do assignments on my phone or use computers on campus'.

EMPLOYABILITY

The University has its own job scheme called Hope Works which provides a variety of jobs, with students allowed to work a maximum of ten hours a week. This allocation of hours aims to maintain students' balance of study and part-time work, while also maximising the number of students who can benefit. However, it is more than a job for students; each job supervisor focuses on enhancing their students' skill set to help with employment. An informal conversation with a student placed on a pastoral scholarship for the jobs that the student held, stated that the 'system of Hope Works allowed me to still be able to work and get the skills needed for a full time job alongside completing my degree. The University understands the importance of this balance and therefore were able to be flexible with my hours to work around my studies'. This scheme therefore allows students to develop the skills they need for employment and experience to be able to enter graduate employment upon completion of their degree.

The Careers and Employability team play a vital role in students life by organising talks with every course and level of study twice a year with a session to help students learn about possible career choices. These sessions are beneficial to students because, it not only provides them with helpful advice for careers once graduating, but also suggests steps on how to achieve those career aspirations in the meantime.

² With examples of these emails that our deputy VC sent out can be found via this link which demonstrates the regularity of communications as students we received while amidst COVID-19 pandemic which gave students a continuous awareness and an ongoing network of support during those hard times

<https://www.hope.ac.uk/gateway/students/covid-19information/studentcommunicationsarchive/>

To further assist students this team provides drop-in sessions to be able to give more personalised advice about choices in careers and to be able to help make amendments to CVs and prepare for job interviews.

2020/21 launched the new initiative for a (year two) summer research scholarships which aims to strengthen the necessary skills in preparation for the (year three) dissertation project. Skills such as data collection, data analysis, experimentation, bibliographical research, archival retrieval and draft report writing are some of the skills which are enhanced with this scheme. This scholarship provided students with £1,000 for their assistance in providing 100 hours on a research project under the guidance of their assigned supervisor. "This scholarship really benefited my academic experience as it allowed me to strengthen my research skills such as analysing quantitative data but also let me specialise more in my area of psychology as I got more 1 to 1 time with a tutor and could experiment with my writing style."

Liverpool Hope allows students to thrive in their own personal development through the variety of professional accreditations and awards on offer for students to embark on, including SALA (Service and Leadership Award) and DofE (Duke of Edinburgh Award). Both these example awards help with students employability after completing their degree by developing skills and confidences.

INCLUSIVITY

The Network of Hope (NoH) widens our University's participation through its appeal to a different demographic to the traditional student, hence encompassing a pathway to be inclusive in all sectors of the community. Holy Cross College facilitates evening Liverpool Hope University classes that are beneficial for those who would not be able to commit to several daytime classes but instead receive their education one night per week. Widening participation is vastly beneficial for making University accessible for all. The Network of Hope focus group emphasised the importance of Holy Cross provision as it allows people a further chance to be able to learn at University, combating potential socio-economic barriers. NoH encompasses a wide variety of students, with one focus being students accessing the University system immediately after leaving high school. Holy Cross College offers a variety of benefits to its students of being able to study one day a week in the evening which caters perfectly to their family life or full-time work whilst still granting them access to higher education to ascertain a degree. All in the group spoke of praise about their course and the facilities of being a Network of Hope student. These students as a result had an increased interest in studying with discussion, centering on life skills learnt from the student experience and the freedom of degree to study. Emphasis was placed on how their degree is teaching them crucial skills that will help them in the employment industry. A student from NoH during the focus group has stated that, 'the NoH scheme has allowed me to be able to achieve a degree whilst classes were at a time that suited my work; without the NoH scheme I wouldn't be able to access higher education'.

As mentioned in our section on the Student Voice, the SU has part time officers who cover a wide range of areas. The aim for these roles was to create a more inclusive and diverse community within Hope and keep the University and SU accountable on issues that impacted these students.

*"I was elected as the trans and non-binary representative ,
and I do believe that having an active part in the University community really uplifted the*

experience I had at Hope. In this role, I was the voice of transgender students at the University, and ran a number of campaigns alongside the Students' Union. As a transgender man myself, I saw the support of the University from the beginning, which really helped in making changes for my community. This role helped me to develop my confidence, and built my relationships with other students and staff members. With taking part in this role alongside my studies, I really began to thrive at Hope, due to being involved in more extracurricular activities. My grades improved and I had a new outlook on the University experience. I strongly believe that without Liverpool Hope University, I would not be the person I am today in terms of personal development. The University gave myself and others the space to be who we truly are, by creating a safe and positive environment to learn in."

Case study - student discussed with us the freedom and the ability to thrive and exceed any previous expectations that were previously set upon her before arriving at Hope. wanted to highlight how further education never allowed the opportunity to thrive, with more barriers being presented and minimal assistance provided.

. From the support of her pastoral tutors and lecturers was able to publish first scholarly article in a book and graduated with a first class honours degree. 'I wouldn't have been able to achieve all that I did without the help and support of my lecturers whilst at Hope, I now know I can achieve more than what people previously told me I could'.

Liverpool Hope Students' Union helps increase the student experience whilst at Liverpool Hope University. Although its aims are not solely focused on the academic quality alone, we do contribute to the quality of the educational experience of the students at Hope. Data from all SU surveys showed that students reflected this sentiment, with one student saying, 'LHSU allows me to communicate my issues with a certain part of Uni life, such as if I had a problem with the way a certain module was being taught, I would bring it up with the LHSU'. This comment reflects that when a student is struggling, even when it is academic related they would not hesitate to come to us for support and work alongside the University to support the changes that students want to see. The 2021/22 SU survey shows this, stating that '81% of students agree that LHSU is the principal voice for students at Hope' and 90% of students agree that LHSU plays a key role in creating a positive student community at Hope.

As mentioned previously we have our own in-house advice centre. The Hope 2020 SU survey responses showed that the students thought the top priority of our SU was, 'Providing independent advice and support to students' which 42.7% of students said, our independent advice caters to the needs of each individual student who comes to us for help and support. The Hope 2021/22 SU survey showed that, '79% of students know they can come to LHSU for advice and support' which we know the University will listen to.

Another crucial aspect of student experience that TEF hasn't taken into account is sports and societies; 88% of our students are aware of sports teams and societies at LHSU and 56% of students believe the sports teams and societies enhance their University experience, according to our Big SU Survey. Students have found that sports and societies are incredibly important for their mental health which is ultimately beneficial for both students' experiences and outcomes. As a Students' Union, we have made it incredibly easy for students to set up a society or sports team, requiring only 3 people for a society and 5 for a sports team; this ensures that all students are able

to create their own university experience by finding like minded people of similar interests. Our societies have a wide variety to choose from, whether that be academic, interest based such as gaming societies or cheese and biscuits, to ones based on identity. The University encourages and values these activities by recognising students' participation in them for its Service & Leadership award. The skills and knowledge gained from sports teams and societies provide development for students.

“When I first joined the University I couldn't see myself in any leadership roles,

*Through
my development with the team I became more confident, planned training sessions
and inevitably what helped me go for the role*

One area that the University is working to address is its attainment gap for students who are Black or POC. OfS APP figures recommend a target of 6% and the University was at 14% in 20/21. To try and reduce this figure the University set up a project known as Bridging the Gap. This project aims to support students to become a social worker in a field where there are not enough POC social workers. This subsequently gives back to minority groups in the community from being able to have someone that may be able to understand their life from a unifying perspective and background. These students are given a POC social worker as a mentor to help support them through their studies who understands the struggles of being a POC social worker. This is just one example of how Liverpool Hope University is supporting its surrounding community by giving back through providing the needed representation into pivotal careers that lack this.³ The main themes of Liverpool Hope University are the sense of community and belonging and personalised learning; this is evident in its strides to break the attainment gap by making sure that everyone no matter their race, gender or sexuality, there is a place for everyone here to achieve their potential.

³ This information was sourced in a variety of ways from interviews about Bridging the Gap project that students and SU representatives have done which is demonstrated from the links below

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeC_ST522WY;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjxxzNjCFcc>