

## Royal Holloway Students' Union

### TEF Student written submission

#### 1. Introduction

Royal Holloway Students' Union (RHSU) has taken the opportunity provided by the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to display how we represent student voice at Royal Holloway. We have a strong working relationship with the institution, and this is often displayed in the collaborative and cooperative work that we carry out. As President and former Vice President Education at RHSU, I have personally had two years to represent student voice here, amplifying their interests on a range of university committees, leading campaigns driven by what is important to students and working with the university to improve student experience. Due to the strength of the relationship with the institution, as a Students' Union, we have considerable opportunity to enhance the student experience both inside and outside of the classroom. Over the past two years, as we emerged from lockdown, we have worked in collaboration with the institution to learn how best to represent our students and build the educational experience that suits them. In this submission, you will see details of the key projects that RHSU has led on and how the institution has welcomed this work and acted upon it. As always there is more to do, but I am proud of our relationship with both students and the institution and look forward to working together on the future challenges we face.

#### 2. Methodology and Data

This submission is reflective of the views of students at Royal Holloway and is grounded in the ongoing research carried out by RHSU to continually understand our students. RHSU works in partnership with the institution in this work, actioning feedback through various mechanisms, formal and informal, to make student life better. Each year RHSU undertakes several activities to collate student voice alongside the more traditional surveys and student representative networks. Below is a table of the data sources utilised for this submission and provides examples of how RHSU collates student voice:

Source	Explanation
National Student Survey	Annual Survey conducted to look at student satisfaction that has been analysed by our internal team and our research partners Alterline.
Student Voice Reports	The Students' Union conducts research pieces to look at specific areas – including BAME Students, The Careers Service and Private sector housing
Digital Education Reports	Work conducted by RHSU on the impact of the pandemic
Rate Your Union	Annual survey looking at students' satisfaction with RHSU
Insight Reports	Data driven work conducted by RHSU to take a snapshot of experience on specific topics impacting student life
Alterline communities	Third party research, commissioned by RHSU to look at the experience of specific communities of students

These data sources outline several key areas of focus, highlighted within this submission that relate to the sections the TEF exercise explores, student experience, student outcomes and student progression.

The data and insight considered in this submission, has been collated and analysed by RHSU's Student Voice and Insight Team, with a full time employed role dedicated to research and insight for the organisation, who has led on data collection and analysis. In addition to the internal research and insight, RHSU engaged Alterline, to support further research and evidence gathering. Alterline completed a pulse survey on the student experience at the end of 2021-22 academic year, followed up by RHSU running two focus groups within identified communities: Student Voice Reps and Commuting Students. These communities were selected as they have both been areas of focussed work over the past few years and as a result, RHSU has made significant improvements to the academic representation system and responded to the growth in commuting students at Royal Holloway.

The information in this submission has been put together by a team, made up of the elected Officers, RHSU's Student Voice Team and the Head of Membership Engagement. The team has been responsible for organising the content and working with partners and the institution to ensure we have covered as wide a range of views as possible.

### 3. Student Voice and the Academic Rep Changes

In 2017, RHSU conducted a full-scale academic representation review with an external consultant that was fully supported by the institution. The review highlighted several challenges and recommendations to implement for improvement, the institution agreed with the outcomes, which led to the leadership of this representation system moving across to RHSU and the formation a partnership agreement that is reviewed annually. Although there is a commitment to student voice across the university, it was noted that a 'one size fits all' approach is not the most effective structure and, in the past, there has been confusion regarding roles, responsibilities and expectations across the institution, which requires on going work to clarify and often leads to disparity of delivery across departments.

In 2021, in response to poor engagement with and performance of the Staff-Student Committee meetings, RHSU carried out a peer review of 22 institutions. The review found that 20 of the institutions followed the standard practice format, as was also delivered at Royal Holloway at the time but highlighted that two of the institutions had recently restructured their rep systems, placing them at the forefront of academic representation nationally. RHSU therefore conducted a detailed review of the innovations and identified specific areas which could be replicated to inform some significant changes to the academic representation system at Royal Holloway.

The new structure at Royal Holloway has seen the removal of the Department Rep role and the introduction of the Senior Course Rep role which now bridges the gap between course and school reps across each academic department. Course and Senior Course Rep roles are now both appointed through nomination and without a cap on the number of positions course to course. Resulting in the School Rep and VP Education roles being the only elected positions in academic representation. The 2022/23 year saw the pilot of the new course/department action meeting structure in which three of the six schools are participating and the remaining three are continuing with the original Staff-Student Committee approach. Notable differences between the two systems are that action meetings are more flexible spaces that allow departments to consult students, as partners, in the co-creation of their teaching and learning environment. Action meetings take place more regularly than the Staff-Student Committee meetings and they allow for a solution-focussed discussion, supported by issues being raised continuously outside of meetings. Identified actions are to be recorded in a single live document called an action log which replaces the traditional use of minutes. These logs are to be updated and maintained both in and out of the meetings throughout the year by staff leads and Senior Course Reps and should be hosted in a shared space, accessible by identified staff members and all students in the respective course.

As mentioned above, RHSU engaged Alterline to run a focus group with our academic reps to delve deeper into how these changes have impacted the academic representation experience for both reps and all students at Royal Holloway.

#### Academic Reps

Speaking to the academic reps identified a great level of maturity and belief in the RHSU values, evidencing the impact of the training and support they receive to achieve great change. One rep commented *"I don't think that there is an ideal academic representative. In fact, I think it's a good thing that there is a wide range of diverse people who work together on behalf of students, all with slightly different skills and capabilities."* Reflecting directly what the rep system aims to achieve and that it is working.

Reps have in the past been concerned that the elections process was a popularity contest and had been a barrier to putting themselves forward and as such have welcomed the changes to a volunteer recruitment approach and the hybrid approach to training for the roles introduced post-pandemic. Feedback has highlighted that it has been good for reps to return to face-to-face activities, over the virtual methods used during the pandemic, but having the advantages of hybrid approaches ensures there is flexibility and inclusivity for all students.

In addition to the impact on the academic experience, reps also state that they benefit as an individual as the role allows them to grow and develop as a person, whilst also believing that the relationships with staff and students improves due to the opportunity. It was good to hear directly from a rep who said *"Being a rep has made me more confident and has improved my communication skills. It has also made me more resilient"*. Broadly across the institution, the reps state that they find it easy to communicate with staff and to raise issues and feedback as part of the institution's governance process. It was good to hear directly from a rep who said *"Being a rep has made me more confident and has improved my communication skills. It has also made me more resilient"*.

Some of the changes cited by Course Reps as successes include:

- additional IT training for lecturers, for better prepared and inclusive lessons post-pandemic,
- revised academic timetables and examination schedules to allow for flexibility within education and mitigate issues such as assessment bunching,
- provision across the institution of social study space for better collaboration and teamwork within departments.

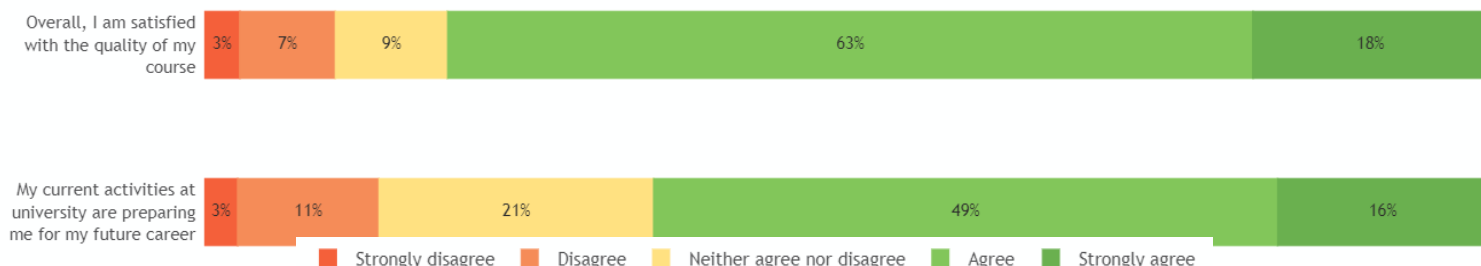
## Student views on their academic experience

In preparation for this submission, RHSU collated up to date information on the views of our students in order to reflect any changes across the TEF period. As such, the aforementioned pulse survey was conducted in May 2022 by Alterline. This survey saw over 600 respondents in total and provided a raft of views to show how students felt about their course towards the end of the academic year.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements, with the results showing an overwhelmingly positive view on both current satisfaction with their course and preparation for their future:

'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?'

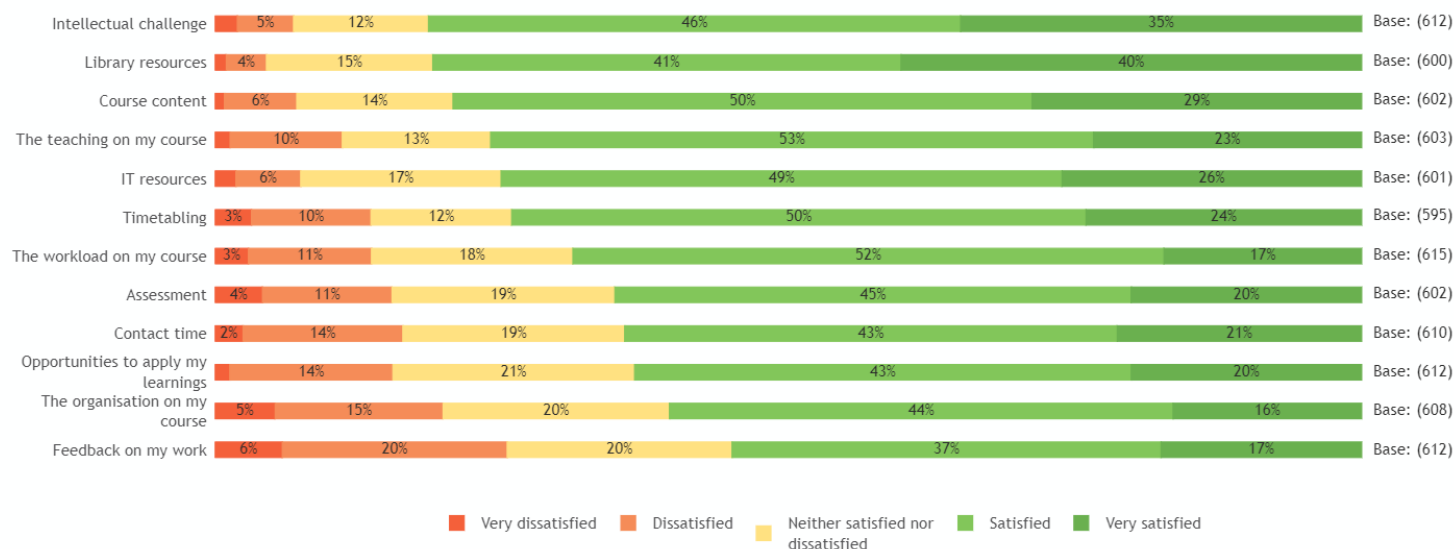
Base: All respondents (617)



The Alterline Pulse Survey also provided insight into student views on a range of aspects of their academic life. Overall, the majority of respondents were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' across the key statements on the quality of their experience. Below you can see the summary table of results from over 600 respondents:

'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of your academic life?'

Base: All respondents, excluding 'Not applicable'



This table shows several high satisfaction levels within aspects of academic life, it is great to see that the intellectual challenge scores so highly. This shows that students feel strongly that their course and the content tests and challenges them. This is followed closely by library resources, highlighting the success of the institution's various improvements with availability of physical and virtual resources to support learning. Including the reintroduction of 24/7 library access post-pandemic, campaigned upon by the VP Education at the time. Course content came in third, being linked with intellectual challenge, in displaying that students enjoy the work they are faced with during their studies. The lowest scoring area is feedback on work, which aligns with the findings from the National Student Survey (NSS) and is aligned to the national trend.

#### 4. Views from the NSS

Royal Holloway's NSS rates are hugely positive with minimal rating below benchmark, reflective of satisfied respondents and whilst there has been a slight decline in ratings above benchmark across the TEF period, they are still at least even with benchmark and in 2020 and 2021 are in line with sector trends due to the disruption caused by the pandemic and UCU strikes. In 2022, the slight decline has resulted in 3 metrics dropping below benchmark, but there is still strength across the board when compared to other institutions and the planned action to mitigate through School-led NSS action plans provides reassurance that the ongoing work to improve will continue. The table below shows the last four years compared with the sector using a tolerance of 2%:

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
Questions above benchmark	16	8	6	3
Questions even with benchmark	10	19	21	21
Questions below benchmark	1	0	0	3

Notably, respondents' overall satisfaction with the quality of their course was two percentage points above the benchmark, increasing to 79% in 2022. In the last four years Royal Holloway has remained between 2-4 percentage points above the benchmark as shown in the overall satisfaction table below:

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
% of respondents	88	87	77	79
Benchmark	85	83	75	77

In 2019 and 2020, agreement that students were satisfied with the quality of their course was statistically significantly higher than the sector benchmark and is also reflected in the internal surveys and rep feedback of the time. Additionally, the ongoing work of the institution to mitigate the risk around 'feedback on work is timely', has resulted in being slightly above benchmark in 2021 and 2022 in an area that is problematic across the sector.

There are several notable positive trends pulled from NSS feedback that should be highlighted:

- 'Feedback on my work has been timely' saw a decline in 2020, but it wasn't as dramatic as the sector and has subsequently risen above the benchmark in 2021 and 2022.
- 'The course is well organised and is running smoothly', 'Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively' and 'The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well' have all increased slightly in line with the sector.
- 'The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well' was below the sector for 2019 and 2020. It had a significant drop in 2021 by 12 percentage points but remained in line with the sector and at benchmark. And in 2022 it rose 8 percentage points and remains in line with the benchmark.
- 'The library resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well' recovered well in 2022 by 10 percentage points after a significant drop in 2021 as students returned fully to campus and is now slightly higher than the benchmark.

RHSU has identified the following areas to work with the institution on to improve:

- 'The course is intellectually stimulating', 'The course has challenged me to achieve my best work', 'I have received helpful comments on my work' and 'It's clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on' have all declined slowly since 2019
- Staff are good at explaining things has dropped below the benchmark for the first time in 4 years in 2022
- 'I feel part of a community of staff and students' saw a decline in 2021 and agreement has remained at this level
  - This aligns with our own research in Digital Education 1 and 2 where students repeatedly comment about feeling isolated and lonely with online teaching, although potentially reflective of the pandemic experience.
- 'I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course' also declined in 2021, and agreement has remained at this level even though the benchmarking had a slight improvement. It should be noted that the agreement hasn't dropped below benchmark but is an area of focus for the institution and RHSU, linked to feeling part of a community.
- 'Staff value students' views and opinions about the course' has dropped below the benchmark for the first time in 2022 for the period 2019-22 and RHSU will focus on reviewing any impacts because of the academic representation changes.

## 5. Policy Inquiry

RHSU has concentrated on championing primary research to inform the enhancement of the student experience and ensure an insight-led approach to effecting change. This approach is entitled 'Policy Inquiry' and comprises a range of activities to prepare extensive reports into specific, identified areas of work that students direct. These reports are welcomed and supported by the institution and its senior team and feed into many decision-making committees within the governance structure. Policy Inquiries have proven to be an impactful way of working across RHSU and the institution and are reflective of the successful relationship that both parties benefit from.

### The BAME Student Experience

Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
<b>BAME Attainment Gap</b>	17%	15%	11%	13%	6%	8%

This inquiry into the BAME student experience at Royal Holloway was initiated following participation in The Student Engagement Project (TSEP) and to give voice to the lived experiences of our BAME students, in order to inform the Access and Participation Plan of the institution. To ensure their voices were at the heart of the research, RHSU employed student researchers from the BAME community. The researchers consulted their peers, producing a report that informed the work with the institution to successfully reduce the BAME attainment gap over three academic years from 2015-2018. During this period Royal Holloway saw a gap reduction of six percentage points which highlights successful work undertaken in that time. This is further underpinned by its commitment to address inequalities related to race with the institution's renewal of membership in the Race Equality Charter.

During the pandemic there was a drop of 7 percentage points to a 6 % gap during the 2019-20 academic year. The gap has widened slightly to 8% during the 2020-21 period which shows there is still work to be done and a renewed focus from RHSU, alongside the institution, intend to revisit and revitalise the work started in 2015. The 2021-22 figures have not yet been released, and it will be interesting to see where the direction of travel is headed.

### Findings from Digital Education 1, 2 and the Future of Education Project

Online teaching occurred for most departments following the first lockdown in March 2020, however, teaching was not consistent across departments with some performing better than others and resulting in an element of disparity across the institution. The extent of the move to online learning at this point was very reactive to the situation, and the survey results around student satisfaction reflect that. There was an understanding among students that academic and professional services staff were trying the best they could in a short period of time with limited resources, which was seen nationally. Consequently, there was a large proportion of respondents who selected 'Neutral' or 'Not applicable' satisfaction ratings about their remote learning experience in our Digital Education 1 survey. This is reflected in the table below and is specific to that moment in time:

<b>Student satisfaction Term Three 2019-20</b>	<b>% of survey respondents</b>					
	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Unsatisfied</b>	<b>Very unsatisfied</b>	<b>N/A</b>
How satisfied are you with online teaching?	8.97	33.82	29.94	16.73	7.52	3.03
How satisfied are you with the online resources available to you?	13.21	36.36	24.97	17.82	6.79	8.85
How satisfied are you with your overall experience of online study?	5.66	17.05	22.16	10.56	5.34	39.21

Over the summer, a lot of changes had to be made due to pandemic pressure, and at the time of writing the first Digital Education report in July 2020 the institution had already reacted to this and student voice and planned on moving all online teaching to Microsoft Teams for the autumn term. Consequently, there was a much more streamlined approach for the 2020-21 academic year.

Our Digital Education 2 survey in November 2020 recognised this, but it also highlighted that there were still areas of improvement: some lecturers needed additional training with how to use recording equipment and microphones, there were still some inconsistencies with Moodle and other online resources like lecture slides and there were still connectivity issues with Microsoft Teams. The institution responded to this feedback quickly and introduced additional more training and support for academic staff to ensure a more consistent approach to blended learning. Demonstrating how a centralised approach to pedagogic practice worked well for Royal Holloway and is potential model for future change delivery at the institution.

Overall respondents reflected a much-improved experience of online learning compared to the spring in Digital Education 2 and there was a positive shift in satisfaction away from the large proportion of neutral and not applicable answers we saw in Digital Education 1. Thus, suggesting that the work the undertaken by the institution during the summer months was well-received by students. The table below shows this change:

Student satisfaction Term One 2020-21	% of survey respondents					
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	N/A
How satisfied are you with the functioning of Microsoft Teams	22.83	51.09	18.12	5.16	1.81	1
How satisfied are you with the quality of online lectures?	22.55	50.54	15.76	6.34	1.63	3.17
How satisfied are you with the quality of online seminars?	14.78	35	22.12	8.34	2.72	17.04
How satisfied are you with the online resources available to you?	24.84	50.05	17.46	5.32	1.87	0.47
How satisfied are you with your overall experience of online study?	18.77	49.85	20.04	8.90	1.86	0.59
Do you feel satisfied with the digital wellbeing support currently provided?	13.03	26.25	29.97	11.56	4.60	14.59

While satisfaction with digital learning was more positive, one of the main issues identified in both surveys was students' ongoing feelings of isolation and experiences of low mental health and wellbeing while learning remotely. This issue has been felt across the sector for both undergraduates and postgraduates. Alterline's student pulse survey in July 2022 asked students about the impact their time at Royal Holloway had on various aspects of their lives, including their mental health and wellbeing, and the results are shown in the table below.

Impact of university on students	% of survey respondents (617)				
	Very positive	Slightly positive	Neutral	Slightly negative	Very negative
Physical health/wellbeing	16	32	33	15	5
Mental health/wellbeing	16	24	27	23	10
Personal confidence and self-esteem	26	34	26	11	4

In the Digital Education 2 survey there were recurring comments for departments to check in more with students, or to try to create a stronger feeling of community when remote learning through Moodle, informal online social events or more contact opportunities with staff. A challenge levelled across the sector and an area of disparity at Royal Holloway, with some pockets of excellence and other with more challenge from students.

RHSU reported back on some great examples of lecturers using their creativity to bring students together in virtual settings, providing unique experiences that tried to mimic those normally delivered.



It was a significant challenge for the institution and across the sector to replicate this type of approach and again suggests that a central pedagogic team may have had an impact here.

Importantly, while students appreciated having access to recorded materials, there was still a strong desire among respondents for a return to in-person learning because they missed engaging with staff and students. This was recognised and responded to by the institution and a transition back to in person teaching was planned for 2022/23, whilst trying to ensure the flexible learning experience was available for students who needed it and for those that find it effective. This mirrors the changes to NSS scores in the Learning Community section of the survey for the last few years and has appeared as a recurring comment for the last two years in the RHSU's annual Rate Your Union survey.

## **6. The Pandemic response**

As is evident across the sector, the pandemic hit the student experience hard. It is testament to the relationship between RHSU and the institution, that the elected student leaders were invited to the virtual top table daily to discuss the challenges faced. The President, Vice President Education and CEO of RHSU met daily with the Senior Leadership Team of the institution, facilitating a platform to feed student voice directly into the decisions being made and the institutional response to the pandemic. Over this period, RHSU also took the chance to build virtual networks with students and collate feedback to really understand the effects of the pandemic on their learning experience. This enabled the elected officers to be the informed, driving force for action, designing support plans and influencing change during this tough time for students.

In 2020/21 RHSU carried out Policy Inquiry on the 'Future of Education' designed to engage with undergraduate and postgraduate academic reps, to learn more about how they would like to experience their education post pandemic. While different schools have different needs, there was a consensus that students wanted online lecture recordings to remain once in-person teaching resumed, alongside a desire to return to in-person teaching as much as possible, as students missed the engagement with staff and students, as part of a 'blended approach'. Students were clear that they did not want to learn purely remotely but did want to have some flexibility and identified this as 'blended'. Recorded lectures were viewed as an additional resource to compliment in-person teaching and allow for flexible learning when students may miss a lecture due to personal reasons like illness, commuter difficulties or caring responsibilities. Students also stated that recorded lectures provided an opportunity for improved note-taking and additional review for exams and assignments.

The tables below show the overall respondent scores to specific questions around how students would like to experience their education at Royal Holloway for the 2021-22 academic year:

<b>How do you want teaching to be delivered in the future? (overall)</b>	
<b>Answer</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Face to Face	28.05
Blended	71.95
Online	-

Many students also wanted online or alternative assessments introduced during the pandemic to remain an option at Royal Holloway:

<b>How do you want the method of assessments and exams to be delivered in the future? (overall)</b>	
<b>Answer</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Face to Face	12.20
Blended	57.31
Online	30.49

Alternative methods of assessment is something that the elected officer team have been working on with the institution to ensure we keep the best parts of the lessons learned during the pandemic, alongside ensuring meaningful contact with staff and students and developing a strong sense of belonging for students.

## **7. Student Progression**

In 2020, the institution, as a result of student voice, requested that RHSU conduct a Policy Inquiry on the Careers Service. The Policy Inquiry produced a list of recommendations to improve the service. Many of the recommendations about online service provision were able to be enacted swiftly, due to the changes already being made due to the virtual requirements of the pandemic. It appears the undergraduate services have remained relatively strong since the

report, and the institution has responded strongly and made progress to improve this service for students. This aligns with the Alterline student pulse survey results for their question around careers support as seen below.

Alterline Survey: Student life Metrics	% of survey respondents (617)				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strong disagree
My current activities at university are preparing me for my future career	16	49	21	11	3

It can be seen from our Pulse survey that students have a generally good idea of their next steps when it comes to life after graduation:

**'Which of the following best describes your current plans for your career?'**

Base: All respondents (617)



One of the main outcomes of the Policy Inquiry initiated workstream, is the implementation of CV Stac by the institution and supported by RHSU. This provides a model for students to understand, record and evidence the skills they gain inside and outside of the classroom. The intention is that in future, it will help them to apply these skills when it comes to career planning and career progression, serving as a useful reminder of the impact of their time at university. RHSU has been working to mirror this work within enrichment activities to ensure students see the benefit of their involvement and the growth as student leaders, beyond the formal curriculum.

## 8. Royal Holloway Students' Union (RHSU)

One of the five key aims of RHSU is to play a positive role in the quality of education, and track this each year as part of the RHSU Rate your Union survey. The table below shows RHSU's journey over the past four years:

The SU pays a positive role in improving the quality of my educational experience at Royal Holloway.							
% of respondents							
Year	Definitely Agree	Mostly Agree	Slightly Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Definitely Disagree
2022	26.47	32.47	15.06	15.65	5.18	3.06	2.12
2021	26.32	24.56	18.80	18.30	6.27	3.01	2.76
2020	31.77	34.62	15.89	9.36	5.18	1.84	2.34
2019	27.27	38.96	15.08	11.79	4.20	1	1.70



Whilst there has been a positive increase across the last two years as a result of post-pandemic activity, across the TEF period there is an increase across the 'disagree' categories of 3.46 percentage points and highlights the ongoing need to respond to the changing expectations of students in a post post-pandemic world. There has been work focused on other key areas of the student experience which relate to outcomes and progression, the key findings are highlighted below.

### Joint Honours Experience

The Joint Honours experience is an area of the student experience which is often underrepresented and less understood within academic departments and schools. Joint Honours students tend to feel that the joint degree is not integrated into their departments. This feeling of exclusion from their departmental experiences can be varied and includes timetabling issues through to exclusionary language used by teaching staff. While many Joint Honours students regularly receive communication from each of their departments, there is a consensus among students that they felt departments did not communicate well with each other. RHSU has worked with students from this community to produce a list of recommendations on how the experience can be improved, informed through student surveys and focus groups. One of the biggest points of contention for both students and staff within the Joint Honours programme is the management of timetabling and deadlines. Joint Honours students are often left to choose what to sacrifice in their studies, such as a preferred module or a social event to minimise clashes while undertaking their chosen course. It was clear that there was no standard process for recording this information and the institution have responded by initiating a piece of work in Student Administration to record assessment deadlines across all courses and for this data to be available to departments to facilitate planning and managing workload in future years.

### Personal Tutors

Personal Tutors is a recurring issue reported by Royal Holloway students, and student dissatisfaction with this area of their studies appears in the comments section for NSS and RHSU's annual Rate Your Union survey. Although it should be noted, that again that is a disparity across the different departments, with pockets of great practice with highly satisfied students with their relationship and the support of their personal tutor. During the 2020-21 academic year, RHSU included a specific section in the Rate Your Union survey to learn more about students' experiences with their personal tutor, and the results shared with the institution to highlight areas of improvement. Following their review of the analysis, the institution produced a list of recommendations for the Personal Tutor system at Royal Holloway and are currently in the process of actioning these. Thus demonstrating the trust between RHSU and the institution, to collate and then respond to student voice.

### Focusing on commuters

The number of commuter students have increased significantly over the TEF period, with approximately 45% of students defining as commuting (living 3-50km from campus) at the start of the 2022/23 academic year. RHSU's insight from this community has shown that they believe their course is good quality and that they find lecturers easy to contact and provide the needed support for success. Specifically, with regards to studying on campus, commuter students have appreciated condensed timetables where they have been used, they generally feel that the library space is very suitable for their study needs and there are good places to eat and socialise on campus.

When asked for their views one student summarised:

*"I am in 3 days a week which I am really happy with as it gives me 4 days free at home where I can prepare for my course. This is very useful for me as my course has very intensive reading, so I am often reading over 3 texts/books a week.*

*. Last year I was in 4 days a week and I found this really hard and demotivating as it would be 1 hour a day at an awkward time that would centre around my whole day. However, now I feel that even on my days at uni I have arrived home by the evening and have time to do some work if need be."*

It was also great to see that seven out of eight commuters had good relationships with students on their course, highlighting the work done by to build good communities amongst courses at Royal Holloway.

## 9. Conclusion

When preparing this submission, it was evident the partnership between RHSU and the institution has been integral to the successes achieved throughout the TEF period and moreover, that the strength of the relationship has been consistent. The institution has always respected the opinion of students and the work that the RHSU delivers to effectively represent student voice has been successfully built up since the first review of academic representation in 2017. The Policy Inquiry approach, developed alongside the democracy review in 2018, provides a valuable platform for RHSU to present fully researched recommendations to the institution, through the preparation of in-depth reports that have been well received by staff across the institution leading and directly acted upon to deliver the changes that students want to see.

Recovering from the pandemic has been a significant challenge over the last four years and lots has been learned about the utilisation of technology and the impact on students' sense of community and belonging. RHSU and the institution continue to work together to ensure the lessons learned and benefits of flexible education and the imperative nature of connection with peers, continues beyond a pandemic response. This is key to any excellent student experience and something that Royal Holloway prides itself on: building a true sense of community and support so that students can achieve their potential.

Looking to the future, our role as elected Officers and as a Students' Union representing the student voice is never done and by continually strengthening RHSU's relationship with the institution in order to hone a critical and collaborative friendship, I am confident that impactful change on behalf of students will continue. As a result of the work completed on this submission, RHSU has identified three key areas in the short to medium term to work with the institution on to improve:

- Enhancing the current work around student progression and preparation for future careers; CV Stac is a start but more needs to be embedded across both organisations and throughout the institution to ensure students are well equipped when they leave Royal Holloway.
- Centralised support and development for teaching practices, to mitigate the sometimes-disparate approach to change. This will enable the student voice to be fed directly into the classrooms in an efficient and impactful manner and ensure Royal Holloway provides a consistently, high-quality educational experience across the institution.
- Understanding current and future students - a lot has changed in the last four years' and it is time for RHSU to conduct a largescale review of our students wants and needs. This will then feed into future planning for both organisations and preparation for new students.

The last four years has seen RHSU and the institution on a course of improvement, notwithstanding the setbacks of the pandemic and as such, condensing the many learnings, key achievements and examples of student success in this submission has been a challenge. We feel that the foundations are well built and tested for the next four years' and look forward to seeing the future impact of student voice.