

Provider name: University of Huddersfield

TEF student submission: University of Huddersfield Students' Union

1. Approach to evidence gathering

This student submission has been developed by the Students' Union,

The submission covers the themes outlined by TEF and our aim is to complement the University's submission through student feedback and analysis that is not already available to the TEF panel. We benefit from a positive and collaborative relationship with the University of Huddersfield and wish this submission to be considered as a genuine contribution to their TEF assessment. We have also been fully involved in discussions, planning and drafting of the institution's own submission.

The data and insight sources used in this submission are as follows:

- Redbrick student research 2021 (online survey where n=2371 / 16% of population)
- Student Rep tracker – a database used to capture Rep feedback throughout the year(s)
- HudFutures research – a longitudinal research study initiated in 2019 and due to close in 2025
- We have also had access to all relevant institutional data related to the TEF metrics
- Focus groups with academic Reps specifically linked to TEF metric feedback
- Focus groups with liberation network leaders (LGBTQ/ B.A.M.E./ Global/ Disabilities/ Women) as above

Our context:

Our elected officers sit on University committees where they represent student views. The relationship the Students' Union has with the institution is excellent, enabling representation in all school level committees including School Boards, School Teaching and Learning Committees and Student Panels.

Academic Representation is delivered in partnership with the University. The schools recruit reps per year for each course, resulting in 100% coverage across campus. Training is offered to all reps, new and returning, across a range of media and delivery methods throughout the year. The Reps host a weekly get together - Coffee, Cake and Reps – where as well as cake, there is a topic for discussion and a relevant speaker. Topics have included: democracy, mental health, timetabling, the cost-of-living crisis among others.

The Reps complete an online tracker to log directly any changes made, meetings attended, conversations held, problems faced, requests for help, interesting information etc. Each tracker entry is read by the team, responded to or appropriate action taken as required. Measurable changes are logged for each student, these are also highlighted in the end of year report. As required, the Rep team also arrange focus groups to gather student feedback, either for the SU or for other University departments including Library, School, Disability Services or Careers.

Our officers have worked with national organisations to extend their influence:

2. Student Experience

NSS performance informs HSU's representative work and interventions with schools to positively impact on the student experience. Below is a brief summary of student views on the TEF NSS themes:

✓ **Teaching on my course**

The University and Union have jointly tackled timetabling issues to maximise student satisfaction and experience. These have included room changes, improvements to lecture capture and deadlines, a focus on allowing Wednesday afternoons for extra-curricular activity among others. As discussed later, we believe that time for such activity during the timetabled week positively impacts student continuation and success.

One particular amendment that students asked for and have benefited from is modelling long teaching sessions around agreed breaks allowing students to engage with their learning in a rested and refreshed manner.

Additionally, student feedback around placement opportunities has fed into the development of on-campus clinics for podiatry and optometry – delivering placements for students as well as needed services for other members of the University community.

The Students' Union and University have collaboratively delivered significant work in tackling the B.A.M.E. awarding gap. The Union's B.A.M.E. Ambassadors created a manifesto that formed part of the University's Thematic Review, this led to a recommendation of improving diversity of assessment and curriculum materials. Students and Students' Union Officers were part of a short life working group: Building inclusivity into course design at validation. The result was the creation of an Inclusive Design Checklist, embedded into the course validation process.

A student version of this checklist has been developed for Academic Reps to present during student panels, ensuring a continuous collaborative approach is maintained between students and academics in the development of inclusive course content.

✓ **Assessment and feedback**

From an assessment perspective, we were grateful that the University worked closely with us on developing additional measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, the 'safety net policy' that ensured students were not disadvantaged by the change in assessment format and were supported to achieve their potential.

The University is also happy to respond to suggestions made by students through our democratic processes.

In 2019 we were pleased to be involved in national lobbying for a ban on essay mills, and received support from other SUs and institutions across the UK before reaching government.

✓ **Academic Support**

Personal Academic Tutors play an important role in the support students receive, and therefore often feature in student feedback.

Some students have fantastic experiences and see the benefits of the PAT role and (as is to be expected) while not all feedback was positive, we know the institution is committed to ensuring consistency in practice and experience in this area. As a direct result of student feedback, a PAT

<My PAT> is always reassuring me and giving me realistic goals to make my uni work seem less intimidating. We have a laugh and I always go away from our calls feeling less stressed and anxious.

module was created on Brightspace (VLE), allowing PATs to maintain accurate notes and records for all their tutee's and easily see the whole student profile including engagement and grades to give conversations direction and purpose.

After receiving feedback from students that the exam timetable regularly clashed with the Muslim celebration of Eid, the elected Officer Team worked with the

University Registry Team to ensure that no exams will be scheduled during the predicted date of any religious holiday, as outlined in the University Academic Administration Timetable. This demonstrates the value of delivering an academic timetable focused on the needs of our diverse student population.

✓ **Learning Resources**

'Broaden My Bookshelf' is an initiative to increase the range of texts in the Library written by marginalised people (e.g. people from a Black, Asian and/or minority ethnic background and/or who identify as LGBT+) or which are about marginalisation. This has been an excellent example of collaborative working between the SU and the University, and student feedback on this project has been fantastic.

Our Black, Asian, minority or ethnic (B.A.M.E) Ambassadors, have been campaigning to dismantle the B.A.M.E awards gap, as well as ensuring B.A.M.E students are represented and their voices are involved in key decision-making committees, to negotiate teaching and learning from a position of authenticity and finally providing a safe space for students who identify as B.A.M.E.

The Students' Union is proud that the projects undertaken so far have had national recognition from various organisations: the B.A.M.E Ambassador Scheme has been shortlisted for Course and Curriculum Design (Guardian Awards 2019), Giving Back (WhatUni Student Choice Awards 2019) and NUS's Representation and Campaigning Award (NUS awards 2018). The B.A.M.E Ambassador scheme has gone on to win the NUS Black Students Campaign of the Year (NUS Black Students Campaign Awards 2018).

We are pleased to have supported the University in making such great progress on the B.A.M.E awards gap as well as ongoing work on other forms of differential attainment.

✓ **Student Voice**

The three NSS questions in this theme have followed a similar trend in responses each year i.e. that while a high proportion are satisfied with feedback opportunities (c82%), fewer students believe staff value their views (c75%) and fewer again believe action has been taken as a result (c62%).

To tackle this trend and ensure feedback is actioned appropriately there have been several interventions:

- Student Panel membership & timetabling: At our request, some schools are trialling a system where timetables include details of School Panels, enabling all students to attend with questions or issues. We hope these trials will support student voice, as well as enabling student leadership – we have requested an option for students to chair these panels.
- To support Academic Reps to provide good quality student feedback and prepare for Student Panels, the Students' Union created a preparation form. This enables Academic Reps to reflect on the number of students they've spoken to and the type of feedback they've gathered. The topics reflect those in the NSS and prompt Reps to gather feedback around assessment and

feedback, learning community, resources and teaching quality. Introducing this form has enabled more reactive change, and for feedback to be gathered and acted upon quickly.

- In 2020 in response to the COVID pandemic and sudden shift to online learning, the SU set up 140 MS Teams with all students added to course level teams to enable reps to talk to all students that they represent in one online space. This also enabled Academic Reps to close the feedback loop with the students on the course.

Some notable interactions as a result of these teams are:

- Academic Rep Group - Making the most of feedback gathering, promoting up-coming events such as the weekly coffee sessions, online skills café, to chats about fees and sharing articles.
- HUES (Engineering Society) - Using the space to inform all Engineering students of events (online) being organised at a campus level), regionally and nationally.
- Music Technology - Enabling conversation across MHM and CE and developing channels for smaller group conversations.
- Engineering - Using the MS Teams space to allay fears around fees and sharing all of the support information that is available for students to access. And to post questions and polls in advance of student panels to gather student opinion and feedback.
- ADA PGR – Asking questions regarding research practice and sharing information.
- Photography – Sharing information about University news and support; and gathering feedback

3. Student Outcomes – Continuation, Completion and Progression

As the TEF metrics demonstrate, the overall rates for continuation and completion are above threshold and compare positively with the sector. As a students' union, we recognise and see the impact that University interventions and activities have on our students' ability to complete their studies successfully; and many of these will have been summarised in the institutional submission. In this section therefore we intend to focus on areas of practice we believe are having significant positive impact; we will also focus our attention on the progression metrics and provide some narrative around our students' aspirations and career success.

✓ Interventions and activities

There are a number of excellent examples of interventions that boost retention and support students. The University submission covers these in detail but we would like to draw the panel's attention to the personal academic tutor programme (as mentioned above) as well as specific targeted programmes like 'Back on Track' and 'Flying Start' which aim to reduce the risk of attrition and poor

✓ Academic societies

Since 2018 we have worked with the University to auto-enrol students to a society that is aligned to their academic discipline. Student societies and groups exist in most HE settings, yet engagement in extra-curricular activity can be challenging for those students who have competing demands on their time and resources. In our recent survey, nearly half of respondents stated they were concerned about balancing their studies with their other responsibilities. We know that up to 80% of our students could be classed as 'commuters' and have often busy and complex lives that involve caring for others, working significant part-time hours and maintaining a life that is not solely characterised by their student status. In this broad context, we know that removing barriers for engagement in extra and cocurricular activity is critical. Auto-enrolment has meant that 31,666 students have been enrolled in a course-based society since 2018, these students may not have engaged previously. Some excellent examples of this activity include:

- A VIVIT Live Autopsy was organised by the student Bioscience society. This event was jointly funded by the School of Applied Sciences and the Students' Union, engaged 120 students and was the first time the event has been held at the University of Huddersfield.

- A specialist suturing workshop was organised by the student Midwifery society, again jointly funded by the School of Human and Health Sciences and the Students' Union with almost 100 attendees.
- The Engineering Society built and raced an electric car as part of their HudElectrics project.

Students value this activity because it bridges the social and the academic spheres, enabling them to develop skills or knowledge that is pertinent to their discipline, while enjoying networking and socialising opportunities outside of a classroom environment. As a Union, we are grateful to those schools who engage so fully with their societies, often providing funds and support to the society leaders and helping their cohorts enjoy their studies and improve their chances of a positive outcome. While 'sense of belonging' is not included in this assessment, we assert that activities that boost belonging and community are likely to impact student outcomes as articulated in these metrics. We look forward to continued research in this area both nationally and locally.

In 2017/18, the union introduced a network group called the B.A.M.E ambassadors where students were invited to share lived experiences with peers they identify with, discuss politics and events that are currently happening in the world such as; B.A.M.E awards gap, micro-aggressions, Black Student Mental Health. This has spurred the creation of network campaigning group around the specific liberation groups as defined by NUS. There are now six networks – the B.A.M.E ambassadors, Women's Network, LGBT+ Network, Disabled Students Network, Global Citizens Network and Social Class and Mobility Network.

✓ **Student support services**

As will be discussed in more detail later, Huddersfield's record of widening participation and enabling access to HE is exceptional. As a Union we are proud of the University's track record in this regard and it is disappointing that an institution's work on WP is not considered as part of this assessment.




Here at Huddersfield the University recruit heavily from the local area, bringing us an overrepresentation of students who commute (as high as 80%), students who received free school meals and those from low participation backgrounds. The University also works hard to accept and prepare those with non-standard entry requirements to ensure students can maximise their potential. Statistically, all these factors can mean that our students face additional challenges; and having continuation and completion rates that are at or above benchmark is a credit to our whole University community of staff and students.



The devolved nature of the University's operations can mean that activity differs significantly between schools and disciplines. Each school offers a level of in-house support for students struggling with academic skills, and every student receives support from their personal academic tutor (PAT). There is consistent centralised support however and this is delivered by a student support team who intervene and respond to individual concerns as well as delivering programmes of support for disabled students, those in need of counselling or practical support.

✓ **Progression – intervention and activities**

In research and in feedback activity, our students consistently talk about their future employability and their career ambition. In answer to the question 'what made you decide to go to University?' 57% and 55% of respondents respectively chose 'to make a better life for myself in the future' and 'to improve my career prospects'. In the same 2021 study, a third of respondents stated that the area they would like attention focused was work experience, placements and general careers and employability activity. Our students arrive at University focused on their future success, and these

aspects of their experience are rated more valuable than those related to social and extra-curricular activity. We work with the University on meeting this demand in the following ways:

Activity	University-led	SU-led	Impact
<p>Global Professional Award</p> <p>The GPA is a mandatory award undertaken alongside study in the three areas of Employability and Enterprise, Wellbeing, and Global and Social Awareness. Students engage in a variety of sessions and can receive credit for demonstrating their skills in relevant extra curricular activity.</p> <p>The GPA award also provides a level 5 qualification in Leadership and Management from the Chartered Institute of Management meaning that students leave with a recognised qualification in addition to their degree.</p>			<p>The GPA is still a relatively new programme and engagement is growing. The interruption of Covid and additional pressures on students' lives during that period inevitably had an impact on the overall take-up of the award.</p> <p>We support and promote GPA to our students, it is an excellent way of demonstrating skills to future employers and we recognise the value it can add. Indeed, it was developed partly in response to student demand and ideas around skills development.</p> <p>Feedback from Reps on the GPA can be mixed, and this is primarily due to perceptions of overlap with academic study (e.g. students on professional courses who already cover similar content for PSRB requirements) or those who struggle to see the relevancy for their chosen profession. However it is also true that GPA completion rates among the professional course cohorts is higher than average.</p> <p>We see GPA as one excellent tool for students to boost their future success and while it may not suit every circumstance, it is to the institution's credit that they resource this award.</p>
<p>Work-based learning and placements</p>			<p>Evidence suggests that Huddersfield students' progression can be positively impacted by up to 20% by undertaking a placement. The University encourages every single UG student to take up a placement and as a Union we promote the opportunity and try to create placement opportunities of our own to support this endeavour.</p>
<p>Community and Campus volunteering</p>			<p>All leadership and voluntary roles within the Students' Union are designed around a set of seven graduate principles: <i>Communication, Resilience, Global & Social awareness, Collaboration, Empathy, Initiative & Entrepreneurship, Critical and Creative thinking</i>. These seven areas differ slightly from the University's attributes but were developed by students at the start of our current</p>

			<p>strategic period in 2018. We have based research activity around them as will be explained later.</p> <p>As an SU we work in partnership with 'Volunteering Kirklees', allowing us to accredit our students' voluntary activity through their nationally recognised scheme.</p> <p>In the last academic year, we provided over 1500 students with volunteering transcripts certified by VK that can be used to complement CVs, to evidence GPA, CPD (particularly in Education and Health Care courses) and sections B and D1 and D3 of the Researcher Development Framework.</p>
Targeted skills development support			<p>Women in Leadership is a programme of activity targeted at women students who would like to develop their leadership skills. Through a combination of panel speakers, networking activities and skills development sessions, this programme complements other activity (GPA/ SU training) but is focused on women and has already demonstrated an impact.</p>
Student financial support			<p>As a direct result of collaborative work on addressing the current cost-of-living crisis, the University have provided an injection of extra funding into the Access to Learning/ Hardship fund and have introduced low-cost meal options on campus to alleviate the costs being borne by students in need of hot food while at University.</p>

✓ **Progression and graduate outcomes: What is important to our students?**

In 2018 the Students' Union launched a new longitudinal research study called HudFutures. This study will run until 2025 and will engage students in annual cohorts with a survey focused around the seven skills identified above. Each cohort of students is followed until the end of the research study, with a new cohort added each year – this provides a range of insight from students who are at every stage of their student life, including those who have graduated. The purpose of the study is to determine why students engage in SU activity, which skills they believe they are gaining, and whether or not they believe those skills have been helpful in their life after graduation. We believe this data set is an excellent complement to the graduate outcomes metrics in TEF.

The set of skills identified by our students in 2018 that form the basis of this research are: communication, resilience, global and social awareness, collaboration, empathy, initiative and entrepreneurship, critical and creative thinking. These skills underpin our activity and help us plan new initiatives and interventions.

While we are yet to publish full analysis of the HudFutures data, it is clear that students who engage with the SU during their time at Huddersfield recognise that the skills gained are those they will find beneficial in the workplace. Some free text quotes from the data sets are listed below:

- ★ *Being in society committees has helped me develop leadership roles as well as team working.*
- ★ *Understanding the intention of why an activity is important and to whom. And being able to question said intention and unpick it's value and quality of decision making/problem solving.*

★

- ★ *By getting involved in being an academic rep and getting involved with certain societies I was able to become more aware of people's needs and wants to help them develop their own academic or personal development. This has really taught me the skills to reflect, engage with others and be able to share my knowledge into my job role in a more confident manner.*
- ★ *To go with my initiative and be reflective on how things have happened/ on my choices*

As well as skills development opportunities being important to our students, we acknowledge that the characteristics of our student cohort have a significant bearing on their future employability and life choices. The metrics used for TEF focus solely on the level of role achieved following graduation (professional vs non-professional) and we do not believe this reflects the true value added to individuals and the community through University education.

As the TEF data dashboard shows, there are far fewer students at Huddersfield from a geography of employment quintile 4 or 5, and yet the institution is at or above threshold for those from lower quintiles (the vast majority of our students). Our students are drawn primarily from our local region – around two-thirds of our UK intake come from the immediate Kirklees area.

According to the Future Goals Labour Market Report 2021¹, “22% of neighbourhoods in West Yorkshire are among the 10% most deprived nationally, more than twice the share one would expect. Moreover, 83% of West Yorkshire neighbourhoods that fall within the most deprived overall are also classed among the most deprived 10% in terms of education, skills and training, showing the strong correlation between the two”.

It is to the University's credit that such a high proportion of this local community are enrolling on programmes of study, but this context of social deprivation likely means students engaging with their studies without the cultural and social capital of their peers in other institutions. Many of our students (up to 80%) commute to the University, maintaining their previous lives, networks and responsibilities while engaging in academic study. Following graduation, a high proportion of our graduates stay in the West Yorkshire region where the demands of the local labour market will determine the professions they enter. The same report referenced above notes that “employment in higher skilled management, professional and associate professional occupations is under-represented in West Yorkshire. These occupations account for 47% of total employment compared with 50% nationally. In absolute terms this represents a deficit of 33,000 fewer people in higher skilled employment.” In fact, the one area of the labour market that has increased (by 20%) is ‘Caring Personal Services’, a category that includes social care and childcare – both disciplines that are taught here at

¹ <https://futuregoals.shorthandstories.com/lmireport/>

Huddersfield, serving a significant local demand. Yet, those kinds of roles will not be considered highly skilled from a TEF metric perspective.

Coupled with the deficit of higher skilled employment opportunities regionally, these factors make Huddersfield's performance in the GO metrics a significant achievement.

✓ **Educational Gain**

Together with students, the institution has agreed the following definition of Educational Gain:

Education gain refers to the experiences we provide that make a difference to our students' lives, enriching and accelerating learning and personal development beyond what otherwise might be achieved

As the institution's submission will explain more about the proposed metrics for measuring this gain, we felt it prudent to complement this with some qualitative context demonstrating the impact such gain has on our students in two areas – extracurricular activity, and success despite diversity in qualification on entry.

As an organisation we categorise the opportunities we offer in three distinct layers of an engagement triangle (pictured below) we refer to as our **Community Engagement Measure**. We track engagement levels with each activity and undertake analysis of the types of students we are engaging to understand our reach and plan to improve breadth of participation. The data below relates to the 2021/22 academic year and is the most recent full data set.

The impact of Covid was felt deeply by our students, and we are still in period of uncertainty following the drop in engagement levels in 2020 and 2021. Student behaviour has changed, and the increase in mature and commuting students has meant a shift in activity away from a traditional events-led programme.

Our independent advice service however sees a similar proportion of commuter and non-commuter students, suggesting that these students understand the value of the Union's support but are less inclined or able to engage in other activity.

We are not currently able to determine the impact on continuation, completion and progression that participation in SU activity delivers, but this is an area of insight we are working with the institution to develop. Additionally, the HudFutures data set will soon be complete allowing some analysis on employability and skills readiness to be undertaken.

It is also helpful to consider the diversity in qualification on entry of our students. Some 44% of our cohort hold a BTEC qualification, which holds A-level equivalence but is widely acknowledged to be more practical rather than academic in nature. Interventions such as those mentioned already (flying start, PATs) ensure that the impact of this disparity in academic familiarity is minimised. Educational gain or 'distance travelled' is therefore greater for many of these students who perform at broadly the same levels as their peers.

✓ **Conclusion**

As is evident from this submission, we believe the University of Huddersfield to be an excellent institution focused on maximising student satisfaction and success, with student feedback and insight being central to a variety of institutional programmes and decisions. Like the rest of the sector, we are collectively dealing with the lasting impacts of covid as well as the current economic downturn – none of which has been easy or simple for students to deal with, or institutions to find solutions for. The continued neglect of the student community by central government has left our students in financial difficulty, the targets of politically motivated narratives around immigration, free speech and others, and has pitted students against their universities in a faux marketplace within which they have no genuine power. The detrimentally low level of student maintenance loans which have not

been increased in line with current inflation rates, coupled with frozen income for institutions is a travesty and should be the focus on significant attention.

We are happy to contribute to the TEF assessment and hope the panel has found our submission helpful in their analysis. The lack of attention given to access and participation in this years' metrics does institutions like ours a disservice and we urge the OFS to reconsider the focus of future assessment programmes. The way Huddersfield serves our local and regional community and economy should be celebrated. Our students' success and future wellbeing is worth more than the sum of their graduate job achievements.

