

Summary

The University of Brighton is a positive and supportive place to study. Whilst there are some challenges that are being addressed to ensure constant improvement, it is our view and experience that the vast majority of students have a very positive learning journey. The University listens closely to student feedback from Brighton Students' Union and students directly.

It is our opinion that the University was behind some other HEIs for several years in terms of some key student focused policies on assessment areas and teaching pedagogy. In the last few years we have worked together to create some very constructive changes which are starting to reflect in student feedback and the survey results, which are moving in the right direction.

Many Brighton courses have lower tariff entry requirements than other Universities. This is a very inclusive situation, making it accessible to more potential students. However, it comes with the requirement to ensure very high levels of support are in place, and an understanding that it is not always the first choice for students. We believe that this impacts the below benchmark completion rates despite the University's continuous improvement on the welcome activities and building belonging.

With many of the key student-focused policies now in place, the key is closing the feedback loop, and ensuring that students understand just how much their voices are heard and acted upon. In the latest Course Rep survey in November 2022, 85% of Course Reps said that they believed their feedback would be listened to, which is a real improvement. This will continue the improvement in student satisfaction scores moving forwards.

Student Voices In This Submission

Brighton Students' Union (BSU) is the representative body for students at the University of Brighton, and has produced this submission on behalf of the student body. We are an independent charity whose mission is to 'Make Student Life Better', and we do this by representing students within the University, locally and nationally, providing support services and organising activities. We sit on committees at all levels of the University to represent students' views, from our 600+ Course Representatives sitting on their course level Student Staff Forums, to the BSU President and BSU Education Officer sitting on the University Board of Governors.

The _____ is the lead student for the TEF submission. They have chaired a committee that set out the structure, research requirements and reviewed initial drafts.

_____ All elected officers have agreed the final draft prior to submission. The submission has also been based on the feedback of the 650 Course Reps, 1377 student open comments in the NSS and the c.2,000 students that have completed the BSU survey.

To ensure that we are bringing informed and representative of current voices from across the University to this submission, in addition to the published metrics we have used the following evidence bases:

National Student Survey Open Comments

Each year we analyse the NSS and evaluate which areas to focus on for our representation work. We split the results down by demographics, school and analyse the free text comments to create a list of priority areas to focus on for the following academic year. From the last year's NSS there are 2773 free text comments from 1377 final year students.

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BSU monthly pulse survey

This is a new survey that we started to gather more information for this submission, but will continue to be utilised. The survey contains a set of constant questions every month to compare month-by-month data. This includes questions about confidence, belonging and what issues are concerning students. Since May 2022, the survey has received approximately 1000 responses across all 7 schools and Brighton and Sussex Medical School.

Course Representatives

We run a Course Representative programme where each year between 600-700 Course Reps are elected to attend Student Staff Forums and provide feedback on the running of the course directly to the course team. We collated the minutes of the meetings, together with an annual survey of Reps.

Demographical analysis of BSU Activities

At the end of every academic year, we send the University Evaluation and Policy Department (EPD) the student ID numbers of students that participated in all our activities. EPD analyse this information to calculate the percentages of students involved in BSU activities by a range of characteristics, including school, level of study, year of study, mode of attendance, ethnicity, mature category, gender, disability status, Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles and Participation of Local Areas (POLAR quintiles). The data is all presented back anonymously to maintain confidentiality.

Student outcomes for engaged students in BSU are also compared against with a control group of students who did not participate in any of these activities. This is to see whether we engage a variety of students and whether there is a positive correlation in between BSU involvement and continuation, progression, and attainment. The data referenced in this submission will be from the 2021/22 academic year.

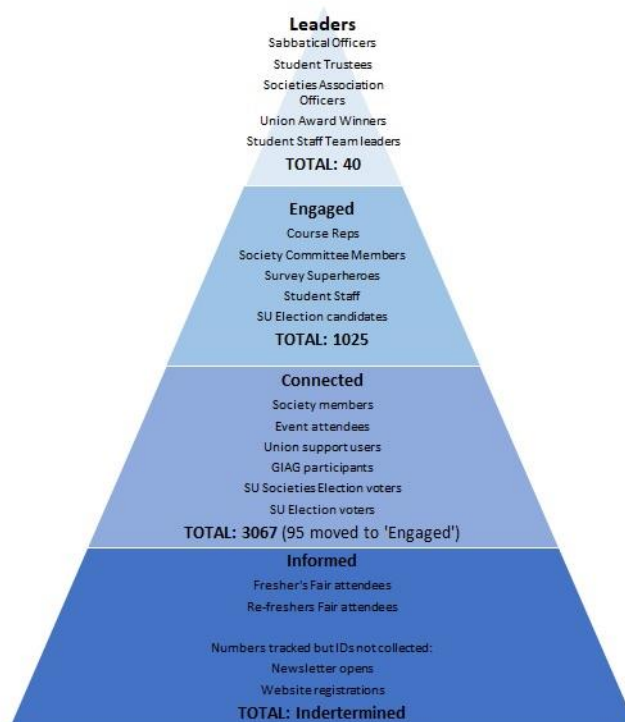
Union Support Users

Our Union Support team provide one to one support for students with a range of academic issues, such as complaints, appeals, extenuating circumstances and academic misconduct. Whilst individual casework remains confidential, the themes of these issues are recorded through our case management system and used to highlight any particular issues occurring in particular schools or courses.

Informal Conversations with Students

Our officers and staff continually have informal conversations with students. We engage students in a wide range of activities (as shown in our Engagement Pyramid opposite) such societies, elections, Give it a Go activity (GIAG) and student trustees. These interactions provide our staff and officers with continual up to date feedback on the student experience.

We believe that the sources of evidence we have outlined above and used in this submission are a robust and representative set of the student body.



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Working with the University on the TEF

The University have provided us with the TEF headline data report that presents the institution-level TEF indicators and CAH-2 level subject split indicators.

We have maintained our independence throughout the process and can confirm that the University has not unduly influenced the content of our submission. We have conducted our own research and drafted the report separately from the University.

We have been part of the University's TEF working group and provided feedback on the University's TEF submission. We have also been part of committees where the University's TEF submission was shared for discussion. We have shared a copy of our submission in advance with the University Senior Management to make them aware of the content of our submission however, we have not submitted it for feedback or amendments.

The remainder of this submission seeks to address key areas that are raised by students, and determine their satisfaction levels with the University.

Teaching and Learning

Academic Support

Throughout the feedback in both the NSS and by Course Reps, students praise the passionate and supportive teaching and professional staff at the University of Brighton. We get numerous nominations for this award at our annual awards evening. The Student Support and Guidance Tutors scheme is excellent, with a member of student services being located in every school. This provides a really good bridge between the academic schools and student services. We believe this is one of the contributing factors to the University's 2.5% rise in the NSS score for Academic Support between 2021 and 2022 as more students are becoming aware and using the service.

We have worked closely with the University to continue with self-certification post pandemic for students requesting 'Additional Considerations' (academic mitigations). This is a new process that is just bedding in so won't be reflected until future NSS results. It gives more confidence and trust to students, which we know through anecdotal feedback in casework with individual students that we support going through the process.

Differential Support

The University have a proud history of treating students as individuals. This is reflected in some excellent work on supporting the higher than sector number of students declaring a disability through Learning Support Plans.

For example, last year the University completed a project on commuting students, and as a result produced a range of resources, and specific study groups were created. The University also committed to maintaining free student car parking for students, prioritising those who commute or have caring responsibilities, which enables these students to actively engage in learning activities and student life without facing additional barriers to participation.

The mentoring programmes are first rate. Students are given the opportunity to have an industry mentor to support their personal and career development through a programme called Momentum. This was initially targeted at Black students, then developed for LGBTQ+ students, and now been extended to more students. 100% of the student mentors in 21-22 said that they felt more confident as a direct result of the mentoring (UoB Momentum survey 2022), and students on mentoring programmes are statistically more likely to progress (UoB APP evaluation 2022). Our elected officers

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sit on the Access and Participation Oversight Committee to make sure we are able to see evidence of these projects success and ensure they have student input at a strategic level.

Care leavers also receive bespoke support in recognition that many move straight from the care system and the support around that, into independent living and study. The University have signed the Care Leaver Covenant, and are members of the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers. Students will typically receive one to one support from a Support Tutor, guaranteed accommodation and a mentor.

Even relatively small actions to support minority groups is welcomed by students, so the University's commitment for senior staff to walk side by side with students at Brighton Pride each year is a very practical and visible way to increase the sense of belonging, and this is certainly the feedback from our LGBTQ+ society members.

The University launched a Race and Faith Commission in 20/21, on which the BSU President was a member. The Commission carried out extensive research into the current practices and experience of different demographics of students and staff across all campuses. We were involved in organising a number of focus groups with the Vice Chancellor to ensure students had a platform to speak.

In response, an anonymous disclosure tool was launched 2 years ago, and whilst there is still a need for more promotion of this, students have expressed increased confidence in the system and reassurance that any issues will be addressed. This was reinforced by the #NEVEROK campaign, and two BSU Officers sit on the oversight group to ensure progress continues to be made. Whilst these are not directly regarding teaching, they have direct link to improved sense of belonging and community which aids continuation and progression.

The annual programme of Race Awareness Speakers is an excellent staff development tool that will inevitably translate to good practice to our students. Officers are members of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee which receives reports on training, feedback and developments on these areas to ensure they continue.

Inclusive Practice Partners

Following the rise in the Black Lives Matter movement, the University introduced Inclusive Practice Partners. These are students who are recruited to work alongside academics in creating and reviewing the curriculum in relation to improving representation and understanding of difference cultures and race. Reports received to the Brighton Achieves committee on which an Officer and our CEO sit, show that employed students gained significantly with a clear correlation to improved outcomes rates against peers, and all students will gain through increased representation.

Access and Participation

We know the University cares deeply about widening access to Higher Education and are working hard to reduce the degree awarding gaps between various groups of students.

The University takes an incredibly detailed approach to evaluating its access and participation funded projects. The University's Evaluation and Policy Department works closely with project leads to establish a Theory of Change and evaluation methodology at the start of each project to help evaluate projects and ensure that resources are allocated to the projects that have the most impact.

We receive £75,000 per year through the Access and Participation Fund and have worked through this process first hand. It has revolutionised our understanding of the types of students that are taking part in our programmes and the impacts of our activities, as is the case across all University Access and Participation Plan funded projects.

Through these rigorous evaluation methods over the past couple years, we have been able to identify that more students from widening participation backgrounds are taking part in our activities, that

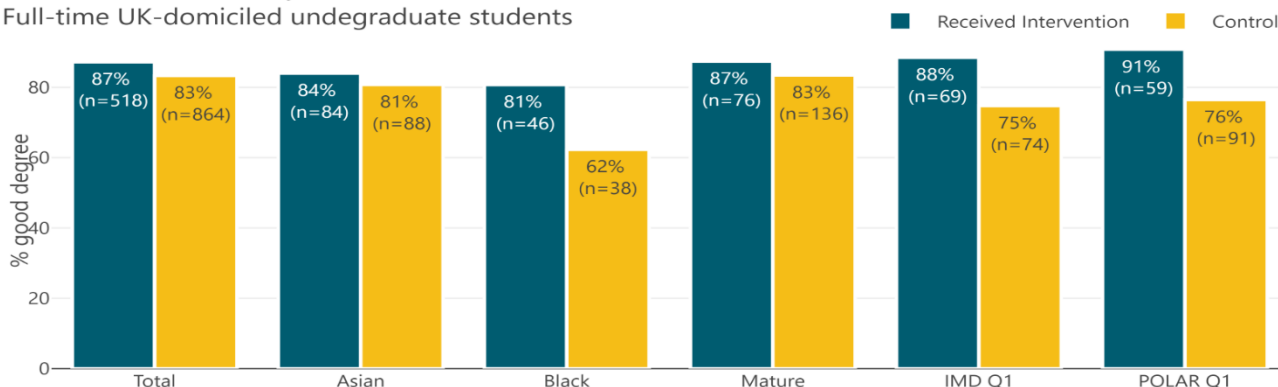
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these participants are much more likely to report a higher sense of belonging and more likely to feel a sense of community on campus and are more likely to stay on their course from year to year and achieve a 'good degree' (1st or 2:1).

This chart shows the comparison of Attainment in 21/22 between certain demographics of students who participated in our activities against a control sample group. The numbers are lower than previous years to the pandemic impacting in person activity;

Attainment (BSU Activity)

Full-time UK-domiciled undergraduate students



It is because of this detailed and thorough evaluation of its activities that we see annually, we are confident that the University will continue to make improvements to the differential outcomes between student groups.

BSU representatives sit on the various University scholarships and bursary committees. We are pleased that there is ongoing work to evaluate the effectiveness of these for recipients, with a particular awareness of the increased financial pressures many students are experiencing.

Value Added

Many of the students who come to Brighton join via clearing (780 in 22/23). Inevitably that leads to some students not joining the University with a fully positive mindset, or having completed all their research. The University also have relatively low tariff entry scores for some courses. This makes the value added of moving these students from entry to achieving a successful outcome even more challenging, and impressive. Brighton achieves this.

The University has recently introduced an Attendance and Engagement Policy where students receive an email if they are deemed to not be engaging enough with their course, either through attendance in class or through utilising online resources. This is followed up with emails of more concern if there is no increased engagement. This has been carefully implemented ensuring there is an emphasis on support rather than punishment for lower attendance and engagement. Technical issues have got in the way of full implementation, but it is a positive start to the project, and we would like to see an extension of a more personalised approach as the technology advances allow a more detailed picture of engagement.

Belonging

As discussed by Thomas (2012) in 'Back to Knowledge Hub Reports, Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change...', there is strong academic research to link a student's ability to continue, complete and progress with their sense of belonging and confidence.

These rates are an area of general strength for the University. The University's recent Student 'Check In' survey from November 2022 (n.2235) showed that students have an increased sense of belonging. The overall % agree score for the belonging theme was 81.9%, up by 7% points from the previous year's score of 74.9%. This is very positive, and should hopefully further improve student

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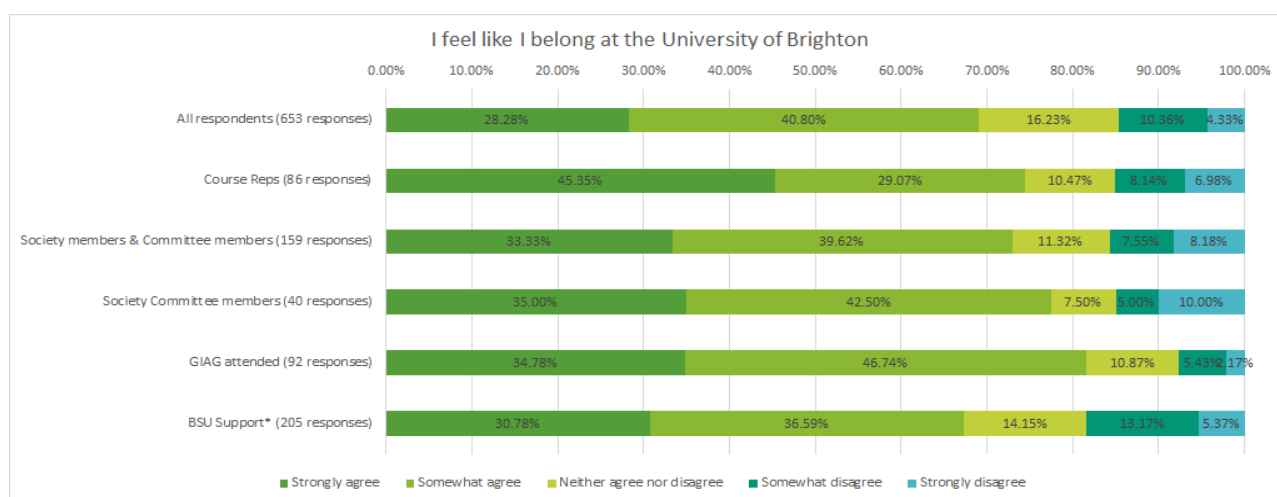
outcomes. Our own survey results showed an improvement of student's sense of belonging too, with a 6% increase from May 2023 to November/December 2022 (BSU Student Pulse Survey).

It is particularly pleasing in the Check In Survey to see a year on year increase of 10% in belonging for the Humanities and Social Science School which has been on a very positive journey over the past few years, despite being disproportionately impacted by industrial action.

Some of this can be attributed to the return to fully in person teaching, but also the constant improvement in the University's Belong at Brighton package. This year saw over 500 events timetabled for students, which ensured that more students benefited from the full induction programme on offer.

The University are also in the middle of an extensive Estates Strategy, part of which is moving School closer together, as some are currently spread across a couple of campuses. This is very likely to improve belonging even further, with more like minded students being taught in the same locations. This is all being supported by the continuation of a free inter campus bus service, which allows students to feel welcomed across all sites, and able to use learning resources and extra-curricular activities on all sites.

There is also a strong link between students who participated in BSU activities and their sense of belonging, as shown from the chart below which compares the students who did and didn't get engaged with some of our activities in 2012/22 (GIAG = Give It A Go):



Covid 19

Throughout the National Student Survey (NSS) free text comments, students highlighted how the Covid 19 pandemic has impacted their studies. This is the case across all HEIs of course. University of Brighton's response was to make some quick and student focused changes to protect students' academic potential during the pandemic. They worked closely with us to introduce a 'no detriment policy' that ensured students were not negatively impacted academically by the pandemic. We believe that these measures were positive for students and more supportive than we saw at other institutions.

However, the University was unfortunately slow to communicate some key ongoing information to students, with the announcement of the extended changes to the academic regulations coming out after the NSS period in 2021. This led to a lot of unnecessary negative feeling towards the University from students about the University's level of support for students during the pandemic, and this can be seen when reading the free text comments from last year's NSS. Once the information was released, there were a lot of positive responses and messages of feelings of reassurance from

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students. We believe if this information was released before the NSS survey was conducted the University would have achieved much better results.

Some of the 'no detriment policy' aspects were extended into a 'safety net' policy in 21/22 as we worked with the University to recognise the significant long tail impact of the pandemic, for example taking the 'best of 80' credits approach.

Industrial Action

Strike action has had a significant and continuing impact on the student experience over the last few years with some students experiencing strike action during every year of their course. Due to the University of Brighton having a highly active branch of UCU, who frequently take industrial action, we believe this has had more of an impact on students studying at Brighton than at other Universities. This is often mentioned in all the feedback we collect, and is a very challenging situation for all parties. Regardless of the validity or otherwise of the action, students have a closer relationship to their course tutors, and therefore will often place blame on the central University administration and management. This is reflected in NSS comments and scores received.

Most schools are affected to some level, however the students in the School of Humanities & Social Sciences are particularly impacted. In feedback from pulse surveys, students in that school often express sympathy for the rationale, but then cite the lack of staff support, rearranged teaching, and poor communication of students' rights during strike action as a cause of dissatisfaction.

Timetabling

Timetabling is raised as an issue of concern amongst students in the NSS and by Course Reps in Student Staff Forums. Students complain that timetables are often released too close to the start of term or even later. This affects students' ability to arrange work or childcare. Students have also complained that there are too many long gaps between classes on a given day or even only one class per day on multiple days. Students would like a more condensed timetable that allows them to work alongside their study, care for their families and reduces the need to travel onto campus.

A new policy is in place for this year which should improve the situation and reflect more positively with students in the future. This includes the commitment to release continuing students' timetables two weeks earlier than previously to help with caring and work commitments. This is agreed to be more challenging for first year students, due to the high volume of applicants through clearing.

They are also currently auditing individual timetables to look for patterns and seek improvements where possible. This will become easier once the University's Estates strategy is further along, and there are more teaching spaces available.

Exam timetables are also being improved this academic year, with dedicated web pages and individual emails sent to students with learning support plans ready for the January 2023 assessments.

Assessment and Feedback

The University has a policy of returning marks and feedback within 20 working days. This is a welcomed policy that we campaigned for, and the next stage is ensuring compliance across all schools.

We welcome the news that the University is now starting to audit the implementation of this policy, and also seek to more clearly manage student expectations. We believe that by monitoring this policy the University will see improved levels of compliance and the NSS scores for assessment and feedback will continue to rise.

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In the NSS and the Course Rep feedback, students raise the issue that assessment information and marking criteria are not often clear. Students complain that feedback often comes too late to be able to help them complete their next assignment. They also complain that feedback is not consistent, being too brief or overly critical and not constructive.

In the last year, the University has done some excellent work to improve assessment information and marking criteria by standardising the information students get and the location where this information is available to students. The University are now putting in processes to monitor how this intervention is being adhered to. We believe this will also have a positive impact on the NSS scores for assessment and feedback over the coming years as more people adhere to the new policies.

Anonymous marking has only recently been rolled out across courses, and we are not sure all students are aware of this excellent policy which seeks to address any real or perceived bias that may have previously led to low NSS scores for 'Marking and Assessment has been fair'. We have also successfully lobbied for anonymous exam boards which are currently being implemented. Once these are fully embedded and communicated to students, we believe this will increase confidence levels, particularly from some demographics.

Learning Resources and Lecture Capture

Lecture capture was the prime reason for the lower score in Learning Resources, as seen by the NSS open text comments, and feedback by Course Reps.

Just prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, the University worked in partnership with us to create a lecture capture policy. This was a huge development for students who had been asking the University to provide lecture recording for many years, and formed part of the larger Inclusive Practice and Accessibility Policy that we jointly worked on. It is widely acknowledged that lecture capture aids students' revision, supports students for whom English is not their first language, supports students with caring responsibilities that may not be able to attend and supports disabled and neuro-diverse students who may need to watch the lecture back to embed the knowledge. The University has invested over £500K in lecture capture equipment, and students that receive the lecture recordings really benefit from them.

However, there are still a considerable number of students that are unable to benefit from lecture recordings as reported in last year's NSS and Student Staff Forums. Lecture Capture continues to be raised in the 2022/23 Student Staff Forums. This is because some teaching staff refuse to record lectures which is extremely frustrating for students. There is also some communications issues between staff and students to understand what can and can't be recorded, and why.

BSU officers sit on this committee, and the University is working in partnership with us to identify areas of low usage of lecture capture and to provide additional training and support for staff as well as reiterating the importance of lecture capture to the student experience. We hope that this work will help to see an improvement in the amount of recording, and therefore NSS scores moving forward.

Student Voice

There are student voices on all University committees and the Senior Leadership actively listen to the Student Voice. This was extremely evident during the pandemic for example, when student focused academic regulations were introduced in a matter of weeks to reassure students and respond to concerns. However, this is not always translated through all levels of the University, or back to students.

The metrics for Student Voice are below benchmark, we believe these scores are related to the University being unable to resolve the issues outlined above (learning resources, lecture capture, timetabling, assessment and feedback) at the speed that students demand. Understandably, some

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of these projects such as buying and installing lecture capture equipment and training staff to use the software can take years to embed, so it is anticipated that this will improve.

There are also areas where the University have simply not closed the feedback loop to students, and informed them of the changes made due to their student voice. Where this has occurred, those subject areas are above benchmark for Student Voice, such as Education. They regularly inform students of the changes they have made as a result of feedback through newsletters and the school leadership team meeting regularly with Course Reps. The School of Health and Sport Science also have above sector results, with Course Reps meeting the leadership team on a regular basis, in addition to the existing structures in place.

Our relationship with Schools continues to improve, and this year we have met regularly with the Deans and Associate Deans to discuss student representation and how we can support student engagement withing the schools. This has led to joint work on creating academic societies and being able to quickly resolve student issues outside of the committee cycle. We also work closely with the dedicated Engagement Leads from each school to ensure that there are Course Reps for every year of every course and support each other with different engagement initiatives. For example, we have worked with the Engagement Leads from two schools to run mature students networking events that aimed to bring mature students together from within the school.

We have 600-700 Course Representatives elected each year. They proactively seek student views which are feedback to BSU and to two Student Staff Forums each year for each course. Annually we ask them to highlight the areas that are of greatest concern, and these contribute to forming BSU's Education Campaign for the following year. Previous issues have included Lecture Capture and Anonymous Marking which are now in the process of being implemented and improving students' experiences.

Sitting above Student Staff Forums are school level School Education and Student Experience Committees (SESEC). These committees are an opportunity for students and staff to work in partnership to improve the experience within the school. Course Reps are invited to attend alongside a BSU elected officer and staff member to provide a summary of the feedback that has been raised in Student Staff Forums and update students and staff within the school about University wide student representative issues.

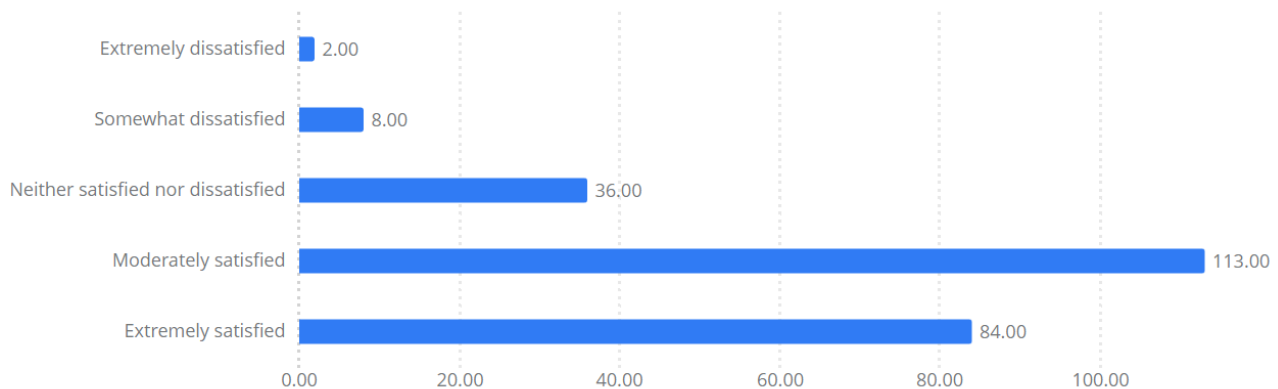
We successfully lobbied the University to implement a Mid Module check-in survey in 19/20. This was to try and achieve meaningful change for current students as soon as possible. It is right to suggest that there is still some work to do to increase the response rate, and also get a greater level of response at course level. This is now being more closely monitored by School leadership teams, so we hope to see further improvement soon which will likely lead to students feeling more inclined to complete the survey.

This year we have also recruited two paid part time Super Reps across the seven school. These Super Reps will help to collate feedback from Course Reps across the school and identify themes that the SESEC can then create actions to address. They will also be joint members of the committee and work together with staff within the school to create positive actions to student feedback.

We are currently working in partnership with the University on a project to look at our student engagement practices and policies including our Course Rep system. This is already receiving positive results, with Course Reps stating that believe that the feedback they raise at Student Staff Forums is acted upon and helps improve the university in a November 2022 survey;

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How satisfied are you that the issues you raised at the Rep meeting will be resolved? 243 ⓘ



This shows that the students involved in the student voice systems at the University are positive that their feedback is being acted upon. The challenge the University has is to widen that confidence amongst the rest of the student body and inform students of the changes they make based on student feedback.

Employability and Outcomes

We carried out a full student survey in May 2022, and employability continues to be highlighted as an area students consider very important.

We are incredibly pleased with the graduate outcomes and earnings that our students achieve after graduating. The University of Brighton is 1% above the sector for 'employment' and level with sector on 'highly skilled employment' in the Graduate Outcomes Survey. In the latest Longitudinal Education Outcomes tax report, the median earning for a student graduating from a degree at Brighton is £22,300 which ranks 53 out of 151 institutions. Three years after graduation the median earnings is £26,700 with a rank of 46th out of 150 institutions. Lastly, five years after graduation the median earnings is £28,900 which ranks 57 out of 155 institutions.

This shows the students that study at the University of Brighton are achieving above average returns on their study compared to the rest of the sector. This gives us confidence that the education they are receiving is of high quality and gives our students a better chance of success in the job market than other Universities. This is particularly impressive given the range of courses on offer at Brighton, with many that might not lead to obvious graduate roles, and where students start the University academically.

The Employability team have transformed over the past few years, and there is a significant emphasis on the importance of placements, and getting students to consider the next step from entry point.

Activities such as industry mentoring, and an Employability lead staff member in each school has increased the focus of this area even further. The University have also developed a grid of Graduate Attributes to try and help students understand and then demonstrate the valuable transferable skills. This has been really well received by students, as it was created using employer feedback, and is now utilised in curricular and co-curricular activities, including our own. This helps students to articulate how their experiences can be translated into their chosen employment.