

1. Approach to Evidence Gathering

We are the democratic representative body of students at Canterbury Christ Church University. As the Students' Union we have four elected officers who represent students' views at a University level and we have approx. 500 elected Course Reps across all taught courses at the University representing the views of students on their individual courses.

This Submission has been created by the Students' Union based on data gathered from our student members. This has then been reflected back to the Course Reps, who are our most demographically diverse group of engaged students, for comment.

We have used pre-existing evidence sourced from our Student Life Pulse (SLP) survey. This is a survey designed for students' unions by the market research company Alterline, and contains questions about students' experiences and their perceptions of the range of services offered by the students' unions. A random sample of 1/9 of the entire student body is surveyed each month, so every student is only surveyed once per year, but the SU is able to track trends throughout the year. For example, 471 Christ Church students took part in the October-December 2021 Pulse. The SLP data from this and other pulse surveys throughout the last few years has been our primary source of data. We have also used the NSS survey results and the OfS data dashboard.

As part of our writing process we reflected back questions to the Course Reps present at a Course Rep conference held in December 2022. We then gathered their comments through round table discussions and focus group style feedback. Those in attendance represented 7.5% of all elected Course Reps, covering a range of courses, across five different Schools and all three Faculties. We gave the questions to Course Reps in advance of the conference so that they could reflect these to the students they represent and bring opinions to the conference which were not just their own, but also of those they represent on their course.

As the OfS data dashboard shows, the University's lowest scoring area concerns Student Voice. Looking at the subject split in this area it is clear that our lowest performing areas are in Health and Education courses. Therefore, we conducted two specific focus groups with Course Reps from these areas; one hosted at our Canterbury Campus and one hosted at our Medway Campus. We invited year 3 Student Reps from courses in these areas to discuss their experiences over the last three years reflecting back over the COVID period. and discussing their experiences across their three year journey at the University. In advance of the focus groups we asked Reps to share the focus group questions with the students they represent and bring opinions to the focus group which were not just their own, but also of those they represent on their course.

We chose not to include any optional courses as it would have been difficult to engage sufficient numbers of students to ensure meaningful data for these types of courses.

We have had a good open working relationship with the University in planning and writing the Student Submission. They ensured TEF student contacts knew who in the University was leading on TEF, how to get in touch, and who was involved in the University submission. They made sure student contacts had access to any data that the University had that would be useful for our submission. They shared training on, and analysis of, the TEF indicators that were available to people writing the University's submission. They maintained regular contact with us to offer support and resolve queries. We had regular planning meetings and mutually shared drafts of our

submissions. We were able to maintain the independence of the Student Submission and we can confirm that the University did not unduly influence the content of this Submission. We worked to include more up-to-date evidence based on current students' perspectives through our data gathering both with our Student Life Pulse (SLP) survey data, and with our specific focus groups and Course Reps Conference.

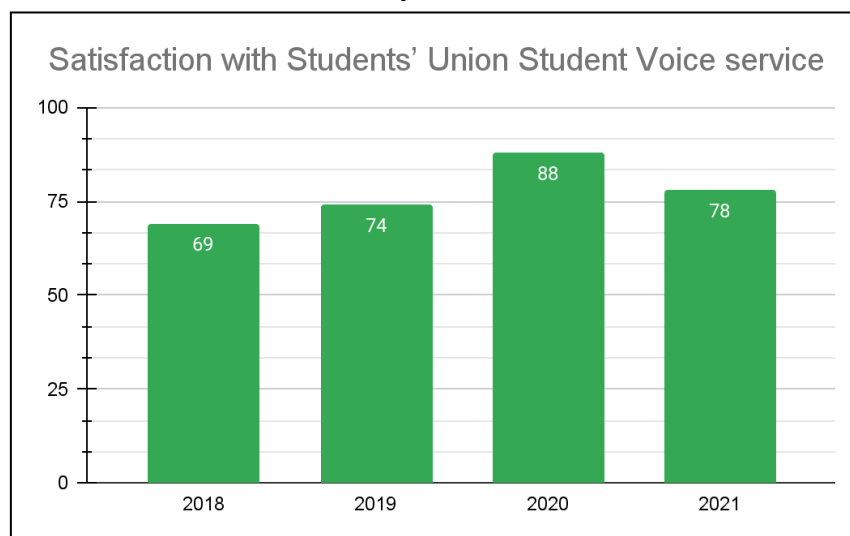
2. Student Experience

We have chosen to focus the Student Submission on two key areas:

1. **How well the physical and virtual learning resources support teaching and learning**, with a specific focus on the pandemic / post-pandemic landscape and informal learning spaces on campus.
2. **How well the University engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students**, with a specific focus on the Student Voice.

We have chosen to focus on how the University engages its students because we feel that the Student Voice is the fundamental role of the Students' Union, it is an area in which we have the most to say and the best additional data we feel we can present, and it has consistently been an area of lower performance in the NSS.

The Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Landscape



Respondents: Pulse One Oct-Dec, 2018=522, 2019=481, 2020=597, 2021=471

As you can see in the graph above, data from our SLP shows 2020 was a record year for the Students' Union in terms of our students feeling satisfied with our Student Voice service. We feel that this is directly attributed to the work we did in partnership with the University around the response to COVID and the emergency measures put in place to support students' academic endeavours and wellbeing during the initial stages of the pandemic.

During this time, we created an online community which reached 1.4k student members within a very short space of moving to virtual learning. We were able to utilise these connections and regular weekly updates and podcasts from the elected officer team to gauge the needs of students and reflect this back to the University. As a direct result of this work we were able to negotiate with the University not only to provide a 'no detriment' policy and extended submission deadlines

without the need to supply evidence, but also initiatives concerning digital poverty such as a laptop loan scheme and paying for home internet access.

The Students' Union President was a member of the University's 'gold' group and the Union's CEO was a member of the 'silver' group that dealt with the responses to the pandemic throughout, meeting regularly throughout the pandemic and at some points early on, almost daily, and therefore bringing the Student Voice directly into the considerations/responses/discussions as the University responded to the developing situation and regulations, whilst learning from others.

The Students' Union President worked closely with the University on addressing student hardship and digital poverty, with an expanded laptop loan scheme and streamlined process for hardship funds applications. In total, this awarded in excess of £500k of additional hardship funding. In addition to this, we conducted numerous insight activities as a response to the pandemic. Student Life Pulse added a new bank of questions, which we used to inform senior University decision makers about students' experiences of learning during the pandemic, and we additionally ran a survey to explore students' experiences of returning to campus in April 2020, and fed back some safety and wellbeing concerns to the University (e.g. social distancing / hand sanitisation).

In response to the first national lockdown, the Students' Union launched three additional surveys to gather students' views to inform our own, as well as the University's, response to the pandemic. Two of these were snap surveys concerning wellbeing and academic experience. These helped to secure a 'no detriment' policy from the University as well as highlighting student concerns around digital poverty, financial hardship, and the quality of online course delivery. The third survey was externally run, and had 602 Christ Church students respond concerning their expectations for the 2020/21 academic year. This helped to inform the Students' Union and University's planning in the era of COVID. These were all well received by the University who worked closely with us to implement support for students.

Quote from 2022 NSS student comment: "Community. As a whole, the University (or more specifically the Students' Union) has provided opportunities to create a sense of community with other students both within my course and the uni as a whole even in spite of the Pandemic."

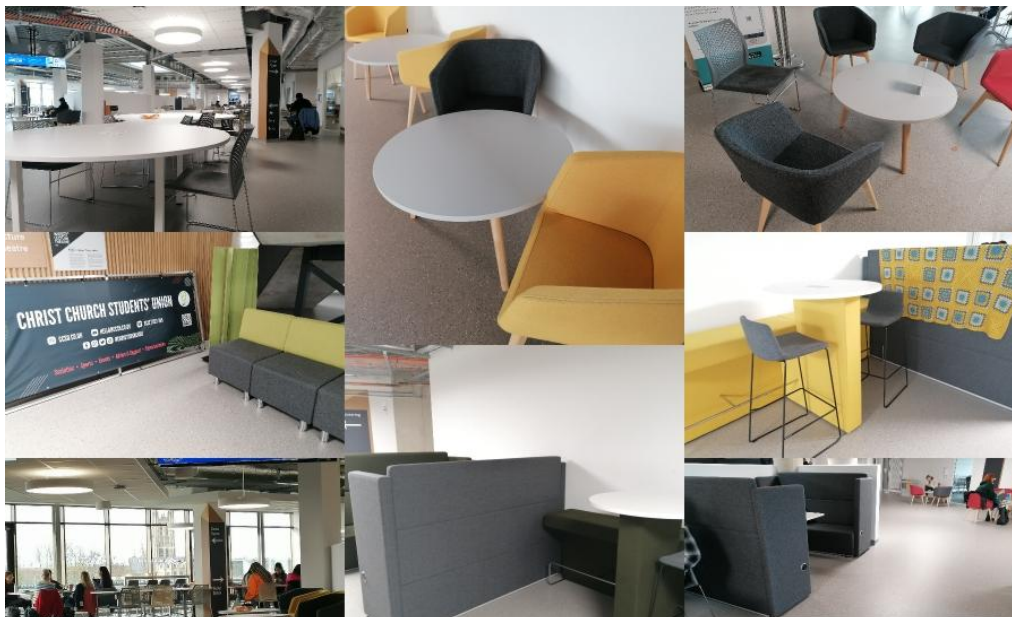
Quote from 2020/2021 CCCU Student: "I don't blame the uni for this situation - they don't have control over government guidance and I think that CCCU have handled the situation a lot better than many other universities."

Quote from 2020/2021 CCCU Student "In a time that is so overwhelming, this is such a clear and empathetic explanation, everything you've said makes a lot of sense. Appreciate everything you're fighting for behind the scenes"

Informal Learning Spaces

After a multi-year campaign by successive sabbatical Officer Leadership teams, the University listened to its students' voices and implemented some of the Union's proposals for additional informal learning spaces on the Canterbury Campus. This included redeveloping the central coffee area and bookshop (picture opposite)

It also meant that during 2020, when the University was completing work on the new STEM building, Verena Holmes, they asked us to create online focus groups with students to discuss the furniture and layout of the social spaces within that new building. This gave students an excellent opportunity to have a say in the way they get to utilise learning spaces on the Canterbury Campus.



At our recent Course Rep Conference we asked Reps “How well do the physical and virtual learning resources support teaching and learning?”, and the responses from Reps included:

- “Resources are relevant and helpful”
- “Both virtual and physical resources are very helpful”
- “Free softwares are great e.g. microsoft 365 and adobe suite”
- “The virtual resources are very useful for those who commute from afar”
- “Library resources really help”
- “Library online and physical resources are really good”
- “The anatomy lab is interesting and closes the gap between what we learn in lectures and being able to apply it practically which helps in placement”

Student Voice - Specific Focus Groups

University level Student Voice TEF Dashboard Data is shown in this table:

Year	Denominator (FT students)	Diff to b/m	Benchmark
2019	1,810	-4.8	74.7
2020	1,620	-5.3	74.6
2021	1,690	-4.5	66.2
2022	1,610	-0.5	66.4

In the last four years overall the University has improved from being significantly below benchmark to being in line with benchmark. The University’s lowest performing areas are show in this table:

	Denominator (FT students)	Diff to benchmark
Education and teaching	1,250	-7.7
Health and social care	250	-5.5
Allied health	420	-16.5
Nursing and midwifery	1,160	-7

These are all professional placement related areas and represent **45.9% of student FTE**.

When looking at these areas' results over four years, as shown in this table:

	Benchmark	2019	2020	2021	2022
Education and teaching	75.8	74.0	69.8	61.3	58.9
Health and social care	73.9	67.7	63.3	64.5	69.4
Allied health	72.4	59.9	62.2	40.0	56.1
Nursing and midwifery	68.1	64.6	67.1	53.7	57.3

We can see that the majority of their underperformance comes directly as a result of the impact of COVID. Students on placement at the time of COVID felt that the decisions being made about their placement were not involving consultation with them and were being made to them. This was mostly as a result of government decisions regarding NHS Trusts and school closures and, therefore, was out of the hands of the University, however, where our University really let students down during this time was in not communicating frequently enough; keeping students regularly informed about the impact of the decisions and what to expect.

FOCUS GROUP - CURRENT PRIMARY EDUCATION AND NURSING/MIDWIFERY STUDENTS

We invited year 3 Reps from courses in these areas to discuss their experiences over the last three years, reflecting back over the COVID period and discussing their experiences across their three years with the University. We conducted two specific focus groups with Course Reps from these areas; one hosted at our Canterbury Campus, and one hosted at our Medway Campus. Some of their reflections include:

Education students reflected that, despite the pandemic, they did enjoy the first year and they felt the University coped well with managing the pandemic; although practical sessions were moved online; students felt this would have been much better in real life using practical specialist rooms and resources.

Adult Nursing students felt that the limited placement time during year one/level 4 meant that they were doing level 4 placements whilst in year 2. This meant that staff in the hospitals were expecting more of them. They talked about being expected to be performing as a year 2/level 5 when in fact they were still on their year 1 placements. They felt that there was more the University could have done in preparing placement staff to understand that these level 5 students were in fact going to be performing at level 4.

Midwifery students felt positive about how the University was doing a lot to inform current students of the current situation regarding the Nursing and Midwifery Council non-reaccreditation the Midwifery Course, and those in year 2 who might be affected if they needed to repeat a year were being kept updated. They in fact said they had been offered so many listening events it almost felt too much.

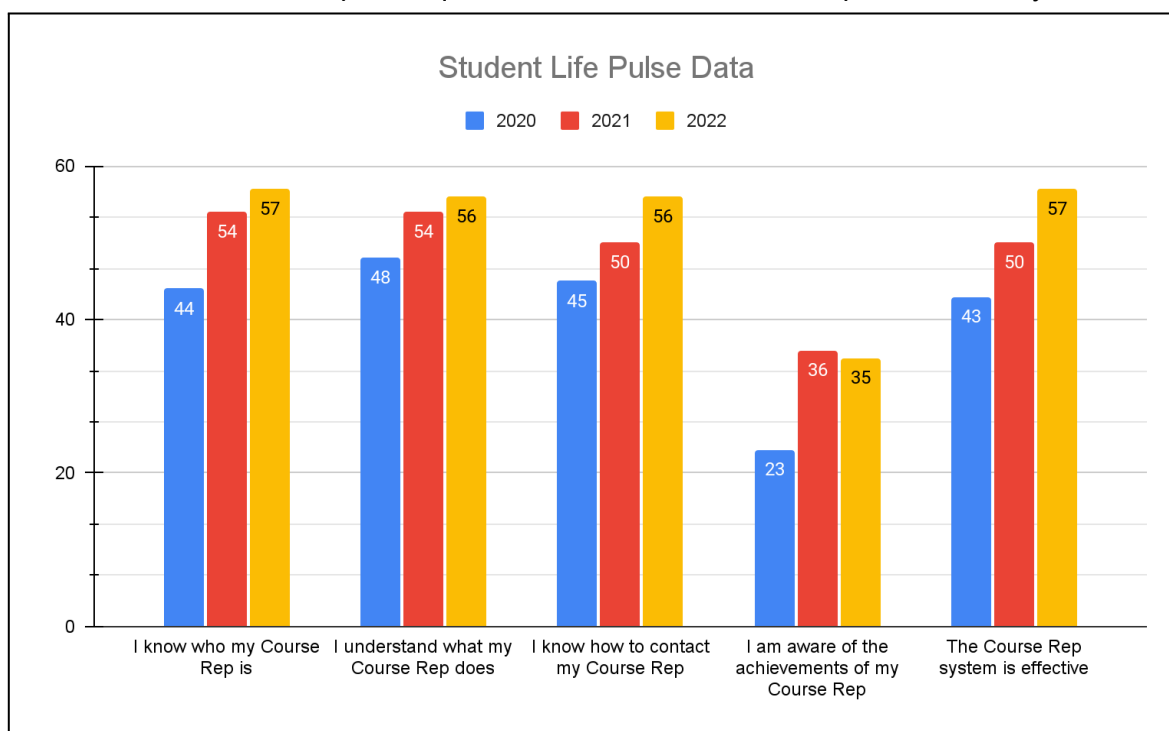
Midwifery students said that the use of PebblePAD was very good and there was an excellent guide on how to use the new EPAD system for their reflections on placements. Midwifery also noted that the use of Padlet to gather both positive and negative experiences of placements was very useful and seems to be well monitored by course teams and issues picked up well. They felt that the Student Voice Forums on placement issues were positive, and the issues identified were being addressed.

Education students reflected that “being back on campus is brilliant!”. One Course Rep felt that if they had been like that for all three years they would be in a much better place right now.

An Education Rep reflected that “it makes it all worthwhile when they check up on you, with a human, compassionate, caring, and comforting response”.

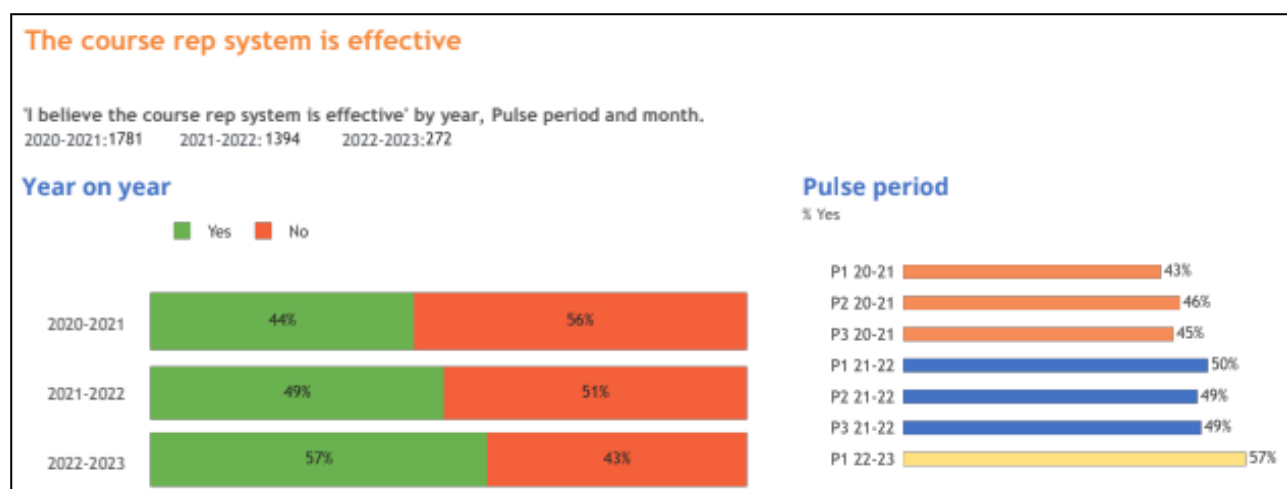
Student Voice - Student Representation System

Our SLP data asks students specific questions about the Student Representation System.



As shown in the graph above, in the last three years we have seen significant improvements in students' responses to questions around the Course Rep system.

In partnership with the University we have made significant improvements to the Student Voice system at the University. This has been reflected in the most recent data from the SLP survey. The 2020/21 Pulse One (October - December 2021) data showed that 43% of students agreed that the Course Rep system is effective, however, in Pulse One of the most recent 2022 data, this has increased by 14% to 57%. As shown in SLP data below:



We had a significant drop in engagement with Course Reps during COVID, which coincided with the Union's Student Voice Coordinator leaving and this post being vacant until August 2022, which would likely explain the reduced engagement, at least in part.

However, 2022 has seen an increase in commitment to Course Reps and a renewed partnership concerning academic representation between the University in the Union, which has included the University funding of a new 0.6 FTE student voice post within the Union to support academic representation.

Practically, we raised the profile of Course Reps by creating a series of videos, which were shared by course leaders during teaching and on course Blackboards. The four short videos, made by existing Course Reps, encouraged other students to take up the role by sharing their own experiences. In the videos, Course Reps explained how the role allowed them to influence improvements to their course and build their communication skills.

a Course Rep in 2021/22 said "a positive thing that we've managed to achieve is we changed next year's course layout. We'd struggled with certain things so I fed that back to the course lead and they've actually made some changes about next year's structure and layout"

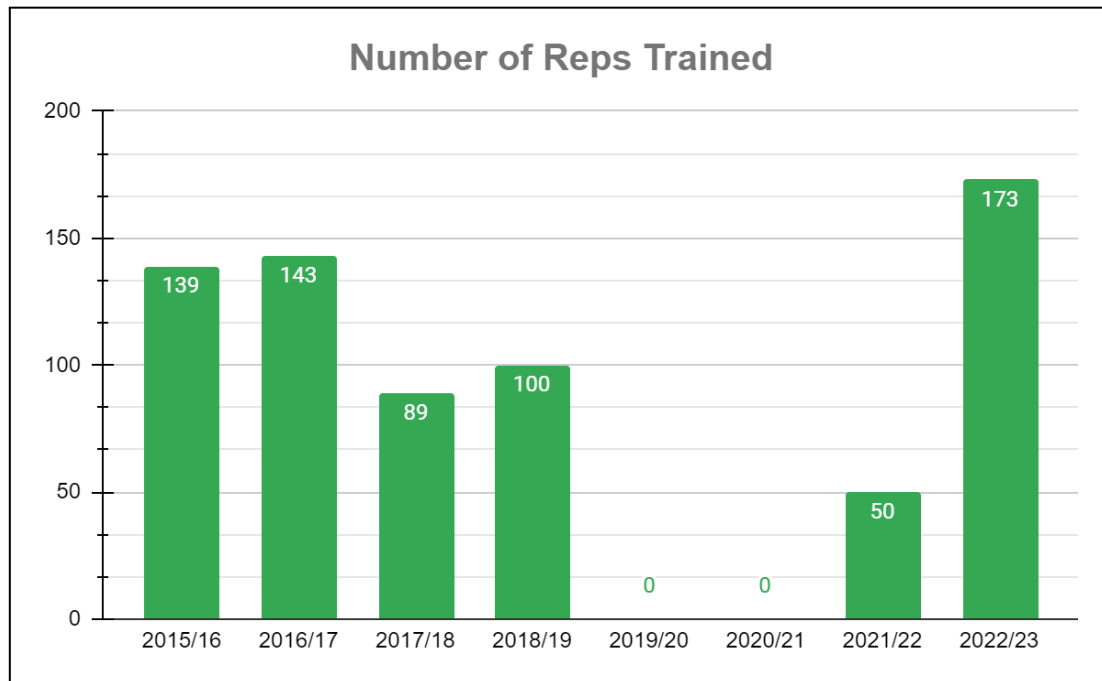
We also created a video where the Students' Union President and the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) talked about the role and rewards of becoming a Student Rep (a title that includes Course Reps, School Reps, and Faculty Reps). This reinforced the Union's message on Student Representation and gave DVC recognition of the role. It was promoted in lectures, and across the University's and Union's social media. We feel this approach has had a direct impact on the number of Reps recruited.

We recognised that student volunteers needed better support to take on the role of Course, School, and Faculty Representative. In partnership with the University, we co-delivered a series of half-day Student Rep training sessions. As well as providing training on the roles from both a Union and a University perspective, it doubled as an important networking opportunity for Student Reps.

Working with the University, we felt that the role of Student Rep needed to be clearer and better rewarded. We chose to change the name of the 'Student and Staff Liaison (SSL) Meetings' to 'Student Voice Forums' from 2022/23 to ensure that these are seen as student-driven meetings. It

was agreed that every Rep could receive an open reference from the DVC to recognise their contribution to the role and the skills that they have developed for themselves. This should support Reps to build their skills and experiences into their CVs. We also worked together with the University to rewrite the Course Rep role description. This provides a clearer remit of the role of Rep, as well as clearly defined expectations for both the University and the Students' Union.

As show in the graph below, this year we have successfully trained the most ever Course Reps:



At our Course Rep Conference we asked Reps “**How well does the University engage with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students?**”, and the responses from Reps included:

- 92% of Course Reps at the Conference felt like their fellow students knew who they were;
- 18 out of 25 Reps who responded felt that student engagement had been good; and
- 2/3rds of Course Reps felt that they were being listened to by staff.

Quotes from the Course Rep Conference

- “The University, in particular the lecturers, have listened well to any issues that have arisen they have kept the Course Reps updated on any changes that are being made and are constantly asking for feedback outside the SSL meeting”
- “The course leaders take on board all views of students and try to accommodate their wishes for improvements”
- “Lecturers and course leaders are very open to feedback and communication, they explain the reasoning behind issues very well “

Student Co-Production

Our Students' Union Strategy 2019-22 talks about “Empowering students to co-produce University policies that impact your living and learning”. This notion of shared policy creation has been well adopted by the University who now engage students in many more policy writing and creation of procedures in partnership with students. This is happening in Student Support, Health & Wellbeing, with the Mental Health & Wellbeing Framework and areas of work around supporting vulnerable

students. The University also worked with the Union on co-creation of the new student code of conduct which became the Expected Behaviours Policy, and almost 100 students were involved in the creation of this commitment. The University started to re-worked all its appeals, complaints and disciplinary policies last year and sought feedback from the Union Council on these procedures. University staff attended Union Council to present drafts of new policies and gained feedback from Council members in a consultation process.

In addition to Student Voice input directly through the Union, the University runs the Student Voice Research Panel. By becoming a member of the Panel students can provide valuable feedback on all aspects of the student experience and help make a difference. This group is used to provide ad-hoc feedback on different aspects of the student experience including areas such as recruitment, marketing, communications, events, courses and student support. Throughout the year Panel members receive invites to participate in surveys, focus groups, or online discussion boards. Members of the panel can choose which, if any, of these they would like to participate in.

3. Student Outcomes

The Students' Union does not collect consistent or robust independent data on continuation, completion, or progression so felt we were not able to give an evidenced response in these areas. Therefore, in this section we have chosen to focus on educational gains around work readiness.

Educational Gains

When looking at work readiness and gains relating to the development of employability skills such as team working, commercial awareness, leadership, and influencing, we feel that our University does a lot of impactful work in this area, specifically with the GradForce project.

GradForce was an OfS-funded project to help graduates with low-mobility progress into graduate employment in Kent and Medway SMEs. One of the main benefits for students was the opportunity to take part in 'Get Hired!' (seen in the picture below) - a development programme for final year students to prepare them for graduate employment, and a recruitment matching service with local employers. It is now fully-funded by the University and a permanent service offered as part of the Careers & Enterprise service.

Quote from CCCU Education Graduate: “During my final year at the University I benefited from support with my personal statement for job applications from the course lead”

CCCU First-Class Law LLB Graduate

“Honoured to be invited to speak about ‘Mental Perseverance’ at the launch event for GradForce. Thank you to the whole Careers and Enterprise Team who were so welcoming to me at Canterbury Christ Church University. This is my first experience of returning as alumni to share my story, and definitely won’t be my last!”

CCCU Accounting and Finance Graduate (2:1)

“Today I received my GradForce Get Hired! Award. This course has really helped with my professionalism development for my future. So much so that I have applied for my teacher training course to hopefully start in September! Thank you for supporting me with my CV and much more in the last couple of months at Gradforce, you have been a huge help!!”

CCCU Undergraduate Creative and Professional Writing Degree

“This week I picked up my GradForce Get Hired! Certificate, thus completing the programme. Want to say thanks, the sessions have been amazing and have definitely prepared me for my post-uni journey!”

CCCU Politics Degree

“Anyone who’s thinking of doing GradForce I would 100% do it! Not only are the team lovely but they gave me all the support and materials in order to build my CV, prepare for interviews and overcome my imposter syndrome. I’m now starting my career with the tools I need to feel confident in my ability”

CCCU BSc (Hons) Biomolecular Science Graduate 1:1

“I have now submitted all my University assessments and presented my Honours Project poster just a few days ago, bringing an end to my degree in Biomolecular Science! Joining the GradForce Awards Ceremony, on Friday, has been the best way of celebrating this achievement, in which I also received an award for ‘Personal & Professional Development’. I cannot put into words how much I have learnt at Canterbury Christ Church University and how many amazing opportunities this University has given me!”

4. Conclusion

The partnership between Canterbury Christ Church University and Christ Church Students’ Union has enabled a number of developments that have enhanced both learning opportunities and students’ experiences in recent years. The shared work of broadening and deepening our Academic Representation system to amplify the Student Voice and help ensure the quality of teaching, our joint Expect Respect project - a response to the national agenda to tackle ‘lad culture’ and violence against women on educational campuses, and the Mental Health & Wellbeing Framework that we jointly co-produced with students are just three examples. All of these have had a positive impact on the social and academic outcomes of past and current students. The Students’ Union is confident that the University will continue to support the Students’ Union, and work in close partnership with students, to shape a sustainable future that prioritises inclusivity and wellbeing.