

Optional student submission template for TEF 2023

1. Approach to evidence-gathering

Keele University's Student Submission has been written by _____, elected Education Officer for _____ in Keele University Students' Union (Keele SU). The role is to support students' studies and ensure that students get the most out of their experience at Keele. The role is responsible for several projects including Student Voice representatives, where students' opinions can be acted on at both a course and school level. It also includes making sure that student voice is heard and acted on, as well as providing input into university processes.

To create this submission, support has been provided by the Membership Services Manager for Student Voice and Activities, _____, and Membership Services Co-ordinator (Campaigns & Student Engagement Lead), _____ who sits within the Student Voice team. The Student Voice team is integral for being a conduit of student feedback throughout a students' time at Keele, ensuring that the Students' Union is democratic in its processes and that students' voices are represented during decision making processes within the Union and University. The University hired a TEF data intern who has been supporting the Student Voice team in analysing & providing data for the Students' Union to use in relation to the submission to TEF. The Education Officer at Keele SU sits on Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Sub Committee where discussions around TEF have been happening, the Membership Services Manager has been able to contribute to this group. This group has been able to provide data on request for Keele SU. Student Voice Representatives (SVRs) and Lead Student Voice Representatives have been consulted during the writing of this submission, students in general have also had the opportunity to feed into this through existing student voice structures at the Students' Union.

The pre-existing evidence we have used:

Student Staff Voice Committee Minutes -

These meetings happen 4 times during the academic year where SVRs and Lead SVRs can discuss issues, raised by students on their course, and improve the quality of their education. These meetings are minuted and happen in every school.

Union General Meeting (UGM) Minutes -

Union General Meetings are the way for students to be heard and involved in decision making at Keele SU. Students can submit ideas/motions online for the UGM ahead of the meeting, then at the meeting students can discuss and vote on those ideas/motions. UGM's are open to all Keele students and minutes are made available on the Keele SU Website.

Speak Week Report -

Every year, Keele SU runs a Speak Week campaign. The campaign asks students "What would they change if they ran the university?". Students mention University wide issues that are most important to them at that time. The feedback is then collated into a report which is shared with the University and made available for students on the Keele SU website.

The Keele100 -

The Keele 100 was an initiative run in partnership between the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Student Experience and the Students' Union. 100 Student Voice Reps were invited to a

large forum where they were given two topics to discuss in depth. Topics have included sustainability in the curriculum and induction.

Survey Data -

Keele SU & Keele University designed a survey in partnership, which was sent out to students to gather feedback for the TEF submission. The design of the survey was complex enough to ask different sets of questions to returning students and new students. 1472 students filled out this survey, respondents represented all Schools at Keele covering nearly a majority of courses. We have also used NSS data over the reporting period to support our submission

Throughout the writing of the TEF submission, Keele SU has upheld editorial independence from the University. The Students' Union has allowed the university oversight of the Student Submission as a gesture of goodwill but has not allowed direct input into content of the student submission.

In this submission, we aim to provide panellists with a picture of the taught student experience at Keele University as well as providing a supplementary account of some of the enhancements that support the student experience such as student voice, extra-curricular activities and examples of partnership between the University and the student body. We have divided the submission into two sections; the student experience and additional relevant information. The student experience section of this submission investigates the areas of teaching and learning, assessment and feedback, student voice, learning resources and academic support. The second section contains a cross section of information we feel will be of interest to the panel.

2. Student Experience

Overall Student Experience

As the representative organisation for Keele University students, Keele SU sees a wide range of views on the student experience at the University. We believe that overall, Keele University offers an excellent learning and teaching experience, as shown by its consistently high performance in the National Student Survey and the recent student survey. Much of the work to improve and enhance the student experience is done in partnership. Thanks to this partnership, we can work together to respond to arising issues.

Teaching and Learning

Students' experience of teaching and learning is framed through the core principles of Keele, that they are given a broad-based education and cultural experience, underpinned by a set of graduate attributes which deliver this educational gain alongside the 'Lindsay Vision' - "the pursuit of truth in the company of friends".

Students can be involved in shaping their curriculum in several ways – the most direct of which is through the Student Voice Representative system. Students can put themselves forward as a Student Voice Representative (SVR), feeding forward the views of their peers to Student Staff Voice Committees made up of themselves and senior academics within a school. Programme and module developments are often discussed within these meetings, with SVRs acting as partners in curriculum design. This is further reinforced through Lead Voice Representatives sitting on School Education Committees, finalising approval for programme-level developments which will then be scrutinised by a Faculty Education Committee including the full-time elected Education Officer. This shows the high degree to which students are embedded in curriculum development – from initial design discussions through to formal validation.

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Keele prides itself on embedding sustainability in everything it does, which includes within the curriculum, recognised through the award of Global Sustainability Institution of the Year at the International Green Gown Awards in 2021. The Students' Union has also achieved 'Excellent' in the Green Impact awards across the TEF period.

A key tenet of Keele's approach to portfolio delivery is interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary. The importance of this has been raised in student voice activities – for example, in a Union General Meeting, attended by a range of students from all three academic faculties, the ability to experience an interdisciplinary education was noted. Working in partnership with the University, this led to more free-standing elective modules being offered outside of the students' original discipline with approximately 400 being available, as well as the development and launch of elective pathways – known as Global Challenge Pathways – which embed interdisciplinary learning and the UN Sustainable Development Goals at their core – which has seen over 500 (40% of eligible students) opting to undertake this as part of their degree.

Keele prides itself on having a diverse and inclusive curriculum, which is recognised and welcomed by students. The importance of decolonisation in the curriculum has been noted in our democratic meetings, with students' submitting several motions on the matter. In response to this, school level Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committees were created, which include student representatives, as well as an EDI oversight group and Decolonising the Curriculum Working Group, which includes elected sabbatical officers as core members.

Students also have several digital enhancements to their learning which were created in partnership with the University. A focus group of students across all faculties of the University surrounding 'free computing skills', led to the investment in LinkedIn Learning – a service which allows students to access a range of free courses with the ability to earn digital badges, boosting their employability.

Assessment and Feedback

Assessment and feedback are framed through the Keele Learning Principles – established in 2021/22 – which set out consistent principles for assessment. This has had significant student involvement, with members of the elected officer team sitting on the University Assessment Task Force. This has led to several key 'wins' for the student body, such as ensuring flexibility in open-book assessments with all students having 28 hours to complete them – this ensure that students with caring responsibilities, or those that work alongside their studies, are not disadvantaged.

Recently, the University has embedded authentic assessment as a core part of its assessment portfolio. These assessments are ensured through assessment strategies which require assessments to be linked to current practises within a students' discipline, as well as to the development of transferable skills to aid employability – students view on the embedding of employability at a programme level can be seen through Student Staff Voice Committee (SSVC) feedback:

'It is important that employability is embedded during my course, as it allows me to feel more confident in taking the next step after I graduate – I like how my school relates lecture content to the real world, and that assessments are similar to tasks I would do in the world of work'

An inclusive and diverse portfolio of assessments is also a key principle outlined in the University's strategy, student representatives sit on EDI working groups at a school level, with the full-time

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Education Officer and Welfare Officer sitting on the University Decolonise the Curriculum Working Group as well as the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team.

Student Voice

Keele SU and the University work in partnership to deliver a system of academic representation in all taught courses via our Student Voice Representative system.

Students apply to become SVRs in the first few weeks of term and are appointed by the elected officers. Until this year, SVRs had been elected rather than appointed, however, we found that elections were a barrier to some students applying to become SVRs and low levels of engagement in the elections meant that they often lacked a democratic mandate. Through changing this method of appointment, we have seen a marked increase in the number of SVRs appointed, from 260 in 2019 to 290 in 2022, a 12% increase.

Keele SU recruits and trains SVRs and sends regular communication about opportunities and relevant issues. Keele SU is also responsible for rewarding the work of SVRs through our volunteering scheme and SVR awards. Schools are responsible for organising SSVCs and acting on the feedback of students. In addition to course level representation, we have Lead School Voice Reps who receive a stipend of £500 per year. These Lead Voice Representatives work closely with the Education Officer and attend School and Faculty level meetings.

Feedback from our Lead Voice Representatives has demonstrated the breadth of issues that these representatives have covered and is an excellent example of students and staff working in partnership to improve the student experience and build a strong academic community with one of our Lead Voice Reps reporting:

"I have found the committee meetings to be invaluable, as I had a chance to be a part of a larger community with the lecturers, I felt this improved my university life."

Every two years, Keele SU reviews academic representation using the Student Engagement Toolkit for benchmarking systems of academic representation that was developed by the National Union of Students. Many enhancements have been made to the SVR system over the years, the most recent example being the introduction of paid Lead Voice Reps following a successful funding bid to the Strike Fund (a fund set up by the University for projects to enhance the student experience).

On analysing the demographic makeup of SVRs, we are proud to say that they are generally reflective of the demographics of the student body except for mature students, with an over representation of some students from liberation backgrounds. See below for 2022:

	Total Students	Student Voice Reps
Gender	62% Female 38% Male	68% Female 31% Male
Ethnicity	60% White 37% BAME	51% White 42% BAME
Disability	13% Disabled	27% Disabled
International	13% International	11% International
Mature	44% Mature	23% Mature

Learning Resources

Keele consistently has positive feedback regarding its' learning resources – with the TEF metric for this indicator being 2.6% above benchmark. In addition, in the 2022 NSS, 80% of students agreed that the learning materials available on their course had enhanced their learning.

There has been significant investment on-campus to improve physical spaces, which has been positively received by students, through the development of key buildings such as a new Central Science Laboratory, the Keele Business School, a building for the Harper-Keele Vet School, as well as a large informal student learning space, created in response to student feedback from Keele SU, surrounding flexible study space. This is on top of already significant physical space for students to use – with access to several IT suites across the campus, as well as the 24-hour library access during term time. These hours were impacted over the pandemic and following feedback from students, the library returned to 24 hours opening on a permanent basis. There are other examples of student feedback being sought and acted upon, such as the Library Advisory Group, which is a consultation group involving SVR's and library staff who work together to enhance the service provision. This group has overseen work such as revamping individual rooms to ensure there is more collaborative study areas whilst ensuring adequate quiet-study provision.

Beyond physical resources, students also have access to excellent digital resources; this has been boosted by significant capital investment in the digital estate which sees all timetabled teaching spaces equipped to provide high quality AV equipment and lecture capture software – the latter of which has consistently been raised in student voice activity, with increased lecture capture uptake being a significant benefit for students, especially for those from liberation backgrounds such as students with a disability. Physical IT spaces provide students with access to specialist software – some of which has been implemented due to student feedback. Students also have remote access to PCs within the Central Science Laboratories and Library IT suites providing them access to these whilst working off campus, giving students additional flexibility within their learning.

One theme that we have identified in student feedback, through a variety of sources, is frustrations with administrative functions such as timetabling and attendance registers. Often such issues are school specific. The University has sought to address inconsistencies between schools as part of "OneKeele", a University wide review to streamline processes. Such changes to staffing structures and administrative processes take time to implement and it is likely that some students have experienced administrative delays because of this project. We recognise that to improve process, changes must be made, and that change can be initially disruptive, especially to students who had been familiar with past process. This could be the reason for a slight drop in satisfaction on the NSS, especially around organisation and management. Specifically, the question which asks "the timetable works efficiently for me" dropped 6% from the year 2021 to 2022. Despite this drop in satisfaction, we are confident that the University is committed to improving and streamlining administrative process, which did see students obtaining their 22/23 Semester 1 timetable far in advance of previous years, and hope to see satisfaction climb again as students become familiar with new processes.

Academic Support

Every student has access to an academic mentor. This is a development from a prior personal tutoring system. Student feedback from both SSVCs and UGMs consistently highlighted issues such as an inconsistent approach to wellbeing support and a lack of understanding of the role and responsibilities of a 'personal tutor'. Through this student feedback two changes were made.

Firstly, the creation and investment in a new Student Experience & Support Team. This team provides all students with the opportunity to access one-to-one wellbeing support from a team of trained staff, based in their school and because of such knowledgeable of specific context. Secondly, the concentration of the former personal tutor role into an academic mentor – with a revised Code of Practice. This role is there to provide mentorship over the students' time at Keele in terms of their educational experiences, including next steps, as well as being there to signpost to appropriate sources of specialist advice as needed.

Students have access to an exceptional circumstances (ECs) process when unexpected circumstances may prevent students from submitting academic work. This system was impacted by OneKeele,. Whilst this caused disruption to students applying for ECs, it did ultimately allow the University and Keele SU to work in partnership and consult with students on an improved process. This new process has seen a move away from an approach which required evidence for every delay in submitting work, to an approach that aims to give flexibility as standard, by allowing students to request an automatic 7-day extension on a self-certified basis. This scheme has received positive feedback and has seen a reduction in the overall number of additional assessment opportunities requested.

Additional Relevant Information on the Keele Student Experience

Cost of Living

Currently, one of the most pressing concerns for our students is the Cost of Living Crisis. Whilst this does not relate directly to teaching and learning, we believe it is significant enough to impact the academic experience of students. In late 2022, the Welfare Officer surveyed 95 students on their cost-of-living experiences. 93% of respondents stated they were worried about the cost-of-living crisis and 48% stated they considered skipping academic lessons or extra-curricular activities because they couldn't afford to get to campus. Keele University has responded to this crisis with several measures such as increasing the grant costs eligible to students as part of the hardship fund from 60% to 100% and increasing the maximum allocation of the hardship fund to £2,500. Low-cost food options have been provided on campus, bus travel has subsidised, and more financial support and advice drop ins have been offered.

AcED Bursary

The Keele SU, Academic Enhancement and Development Bursary is a pot of £2500 that is available to all Keele students studying on an undergraduate course. There is a bursary available specifically for postgraduates through the Keele Postgraduate Association. The bursary is designed to support students' academic development & attainment and enhance their personal and professional development. Students can apply for up to £100 to cover the costs of materials, trips and activities to enhance their studies at Keele. Students are also able to apply for funding retroactively, if the event or purchase took place in the last 12 months.

Since 2018, there has been an average of 30 applications each academic year and Keele SU has successfully funded 76 students through the AcED Bursary scheme.

Co-curricular Enhancements

Students can enhance their employability skills through a well-established volunteering scheme at Keele SU. At the time of writing, we have 1021 students registered as volunteers who are engaging in volunteering opportunities. There are 153 current active opportunities available to students. These opportunities cover a broad range of activities, many of which are subject related, such as the Witness Service Court which is of particular interest to law students. Volunteering also

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allows students to develop skills, confidence and to contribute to the wider community. This scheme enhances the employability of students, giving them workplace experience and adding to their Higher Education Achievement Report.

The HEAR has been in place at Keele University since the 2014 academic year. As well as a transcript of a student's academic achievements, the HEAR also provides an account of recognised co-curricular activities on section 6.1 of the report. Not all co-curricular activities are included; only those that are likely to provide professional development opportunities such as positions of responsibility on committees, volunteers, peer mentors and student councillors. Since 2014, there have been 6163 unique students with at least one record on section 6.1 of their HEAR; 21% of all eligible graduating students. This is a significant number of students and we believe it demonstrates the high levels of student engagement at Keele University.

The motto of Keele University "the pursuit of truth in the company of friends" does not only apply to the academic experience of students. The co-curricular experience of students helps to build a strong academic community where students develop a sense of belonging. There are currently 176 Clubs and Societies at Keele SU and 36% of FTE students are a member of at least one of these groups. The University supports this co-curricular activity by not scheduling formal teaching on a Wednesday afternoon for the majority of students; a common concern for students during "Speak Week" was that these Wednesday afternoons are kept free.

There are 49 academic societies at Keele. They deliver events such as external talks, trips, revision sessions and social activities to help course mates to bond and 1242 students are members of these societies.

Student Experience Projects

The University and Students' Union recognise that there is no universal student experience and that there are some students who are likely to face additional barriers to learning and engagement in the academic community such as international students and those who commute. We have been able to work to dismantle barriers for students through several special projects, for example investigating lived experience of hate crime.

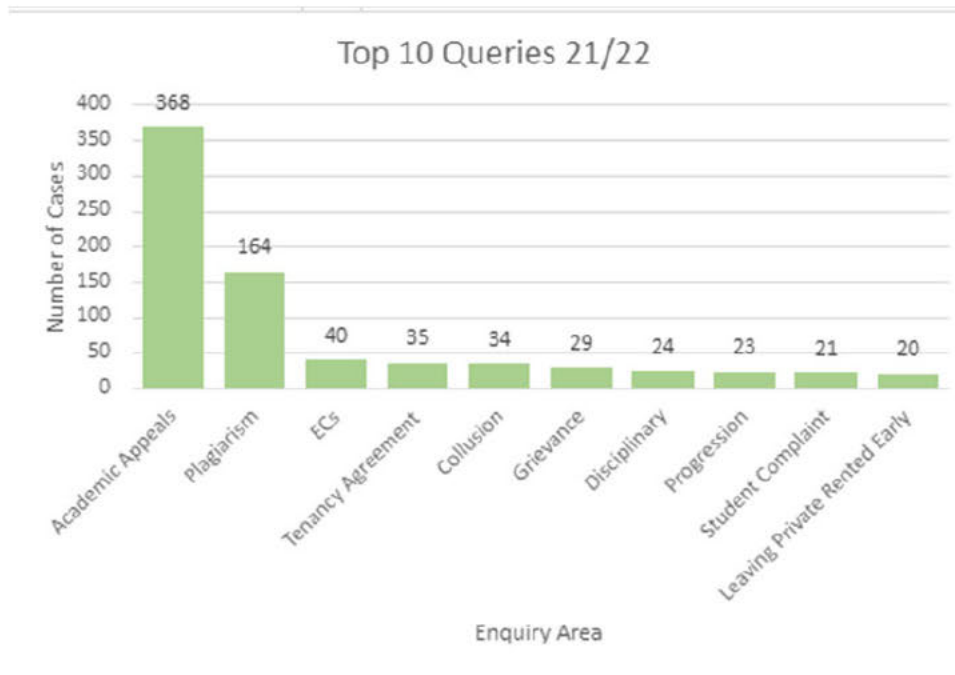
One such project sits within the Students' Union, with a staff member having been recently appointed to investigate lived experiences of international students, how they experience student life and how integrated their student experience is. The aim of research undertaken is to create a set of evidence led recommendations for the Students' Union and the University. The purpose of the project is to undertake research into lived experiences of international students, which will inform evidence-based recommendations, approaches to service delivery, training, campaigns, activities and good practice across Students' Union and University activities. This work will also inform the implementation of immediate interventions to be carried out by the post holder, often in collaboration with other departments.

Like many institutions, Keele has been impacted by UCU industrial action which has disrupted students' study and resulted in a significant sum of unpaid salaries. A decision was made by University Executive Committee to reinvest this sum of money into projects that would directly benefit students and created a "Strike Fund" which departments from across the University and Students' Union could bid for. The panel responsible for dispersing these funds includes student representation. The Students' Union has put in several successful bids since 2018 which has been used to fund projects such as student liberation support roles, skills development training for student leaders (such as committee members and SVRs), and stipends for LVR's.

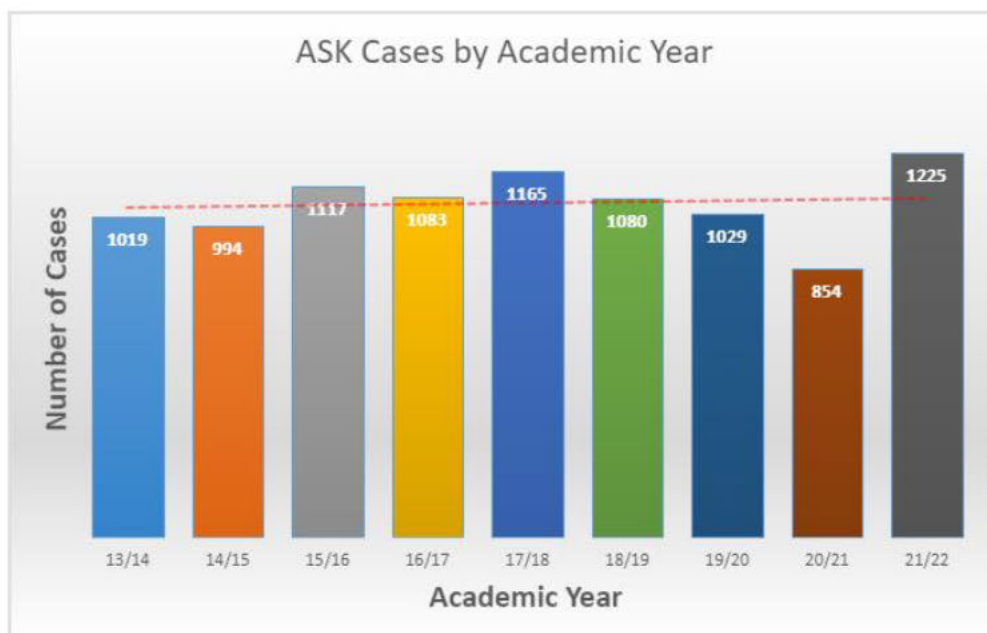
3. Student Outcomes

Advice and Support at Keele SU (ASK)

Keele SU has an independent advice service which advises students on a range of issues. We monitor for trends in the data and aim to triangulate these with other representation and advocacy at the Students' Union such as information from our SVR's and issues raised through our democratic forums. There is a regular "Social Policy" meeting between elected officers, the ASK service and student voice team. Here we identify widely and deeply felt issues with the intention of raising these with relevant staff within the University or doing further research into the issues raised. We also consider patterns of queries seen by ASK. Below is a graph showing the top ten enquiries from ASK in the 21/22 academic year.

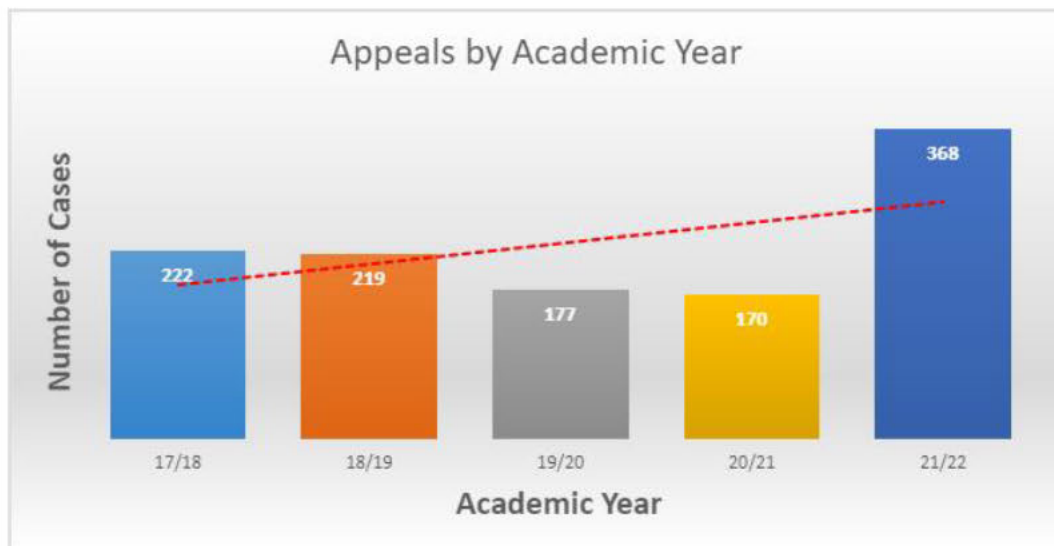


As you can see, the most prominent issue is academic appeals, followed by academic misconduct. Below is the overall number of cases seen by student advisers year on year. A comparison of previous calendar years is shown below with trend line.

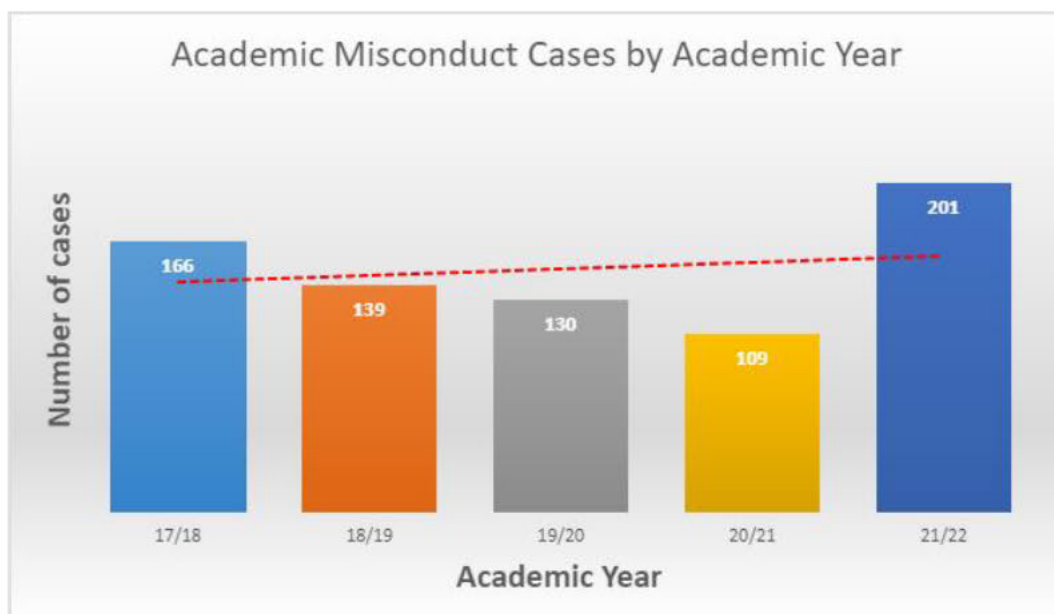


The 21/22 academic year has been challenging with a 43% increase in case numbers on 20/21 and a 5% increase on the previous busiest year of 17/18. It is worth noting that in 17/18 ASK was a larger team with an Office Coordinator in post.

The dip in student case numbers reported in 2020-21 due to the pandemic has not repeated as students returned to campus and ASK offered a range of appointment options (face to face, video call or phone call)



The increase in case numbers is partly explained by a massive 116% increase in academic appeals in 21/22 when compared to 20/21 and a 65% increase on the previous highest figure in 17/18. Academic appeals are resource heavy cases, often requiring multiple contacts with students who are distressed, so the increase was particularly challenging. Most of the appeals also cited undisclosed mental health as their grounds, but we also saw an increase in cases where administrative errors by the University had caused issues and where the Exceptional Circumstances process had caused problems.



The increase in academic appeals was compounded by an 84% increase in academic misconduct cases when compared to 20/21 and a 20% increase on the previous highest in 17/18. The increase is partly explained by higher collusion cases linked to new assessment methods, particularly open book assessments and assessments that are completed over 24-48 hours. Academic misconduct cases are another time heavy enquiry area often comprising of an initial interview, statement guidance emails and attending the misconduct meeting with the student and a follow up contact.

We have seen an increase in international students with academic conduct cases who have very often missed initial induction sessions, and/or have had accommodation or financial issues to deal with, upon arrival. Due to this, they often have not had sufficient time to accommodate to new requirements around academic requirements such as referencing. There are also a number of professional students who return to Keele to study after a long period of time since their original degree; there is often an assumption that they will understand referencing and academic conduct, but this is not always the case. It is very rare that students intend to cheat and most students with academic misconduct cases do not go on to have another one during their time. Because of this, the University could be more comprehensive at the start of the course. This has begun to be addressed in partnership with the Students' Union, with a review of academic skills as well as the creation of an academic integrity working group which has begun to lead on work including focusing on academic preparedness through induction for all year groups, monitoring of academic progress through the My Keele Journey dashboard, and curriculum design work.

At Keele SU, we were delighted in 21/22 to have launched our Reciprocal Arrangement with Staffordshire University Students' Union. This agreement ensures representation is available to students when either SU students' union has a conflict of interest. The agreement is innovative and has already benefitted two students in 21/22. In August 2022 we presented the agreement and its benefits at the NUS Membership Service Conference, with the OIA's Chief Adjudicator commenting on the value of the agreement. We have also presented the agreement at an OIA event more recently to allow other students' unions to benefit from our experience.

In 2021/22 ASK continued to engage on a regular basis with the OIA's outreach team to ensure that we feedback on data gathered around the student experience. We have also attended the OIA's outreach events, consultation briefings and meetings along with other students' unions, and contributed to the recent OIA visit to Keele.

In conclusion, we believe that this submission has highlighted the strong partnership between the University and Students' Union which has led to a fulfilling opportunity for students to thrive during their time at Keele. Where issues have occurred across the focus period for TEF 2023, there has been a quick and appropriate response from the institution which includes student engagement at its core. We have been privileged to work in partnership with the University on key issues such as Cost of Living, Inclusive Education, Global Citizenship, and Teaching and Learning as a whole; we believe that they put students' interests first and that Keele truly offers a gold standard educational experience.