



The Annual Student Written Submission 2015



Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to annually assess improvements across the institution towards improving the student academic experience. We identify best practice, celebrate improvements and try to identify areas of development that we as the Students' Union and colleagues in the university can work on to continue to improve the academic experience of all students. This is ultimately judged against sector expectations set out in the Quality Code and measured through a number of methods, most notably National Student Survey and KIS Data. When we have identified improvements to the academic experience there are two occurring principles at work:

- That the improvement has been guided by evidence
- That partnership between staff and students has driven this change

Some examples of improvements identified in this document which adhere to both these principles are:

- University policy to return assessments within fifteen working days instead of twenty
- Greater amount of printing credits to level three students in the College of Arts for term two of 2014-15 academic year
- Distribution of swipe cards to level three and four engineering students so they could have greater access to specialised software
- Identification of space in MHT building that can be converted in 2017 to increase the number of general access computers desired by students
- The introduction of a university policy for staff student subject committee meetings to be jointly chaired by students and staff

It is also important to note that these principles are nothing new in Lincoln. That we can easily identify such principles is testament to how embedded the culture of Student as Producer is across the institution. This culture is now driven centrally by the Education Development Enhancement Unit created in the summer 2014 who have already had successful impact on many areas of work and their work and guidance is a constant presence when identifying improvements in this academic year.

With great improvements being made it is important to not become complacent continue to and identify areas of development to continually improve the Lincoln academic experience. Using a broad research base as demonstrated by the figure below and complimented by more focused studies where resource has allowed, we have been able to identify key issues that the Students' Union and University will need to address together for Lincoln to remain one of the biggest success stories of the UK higher education sector.

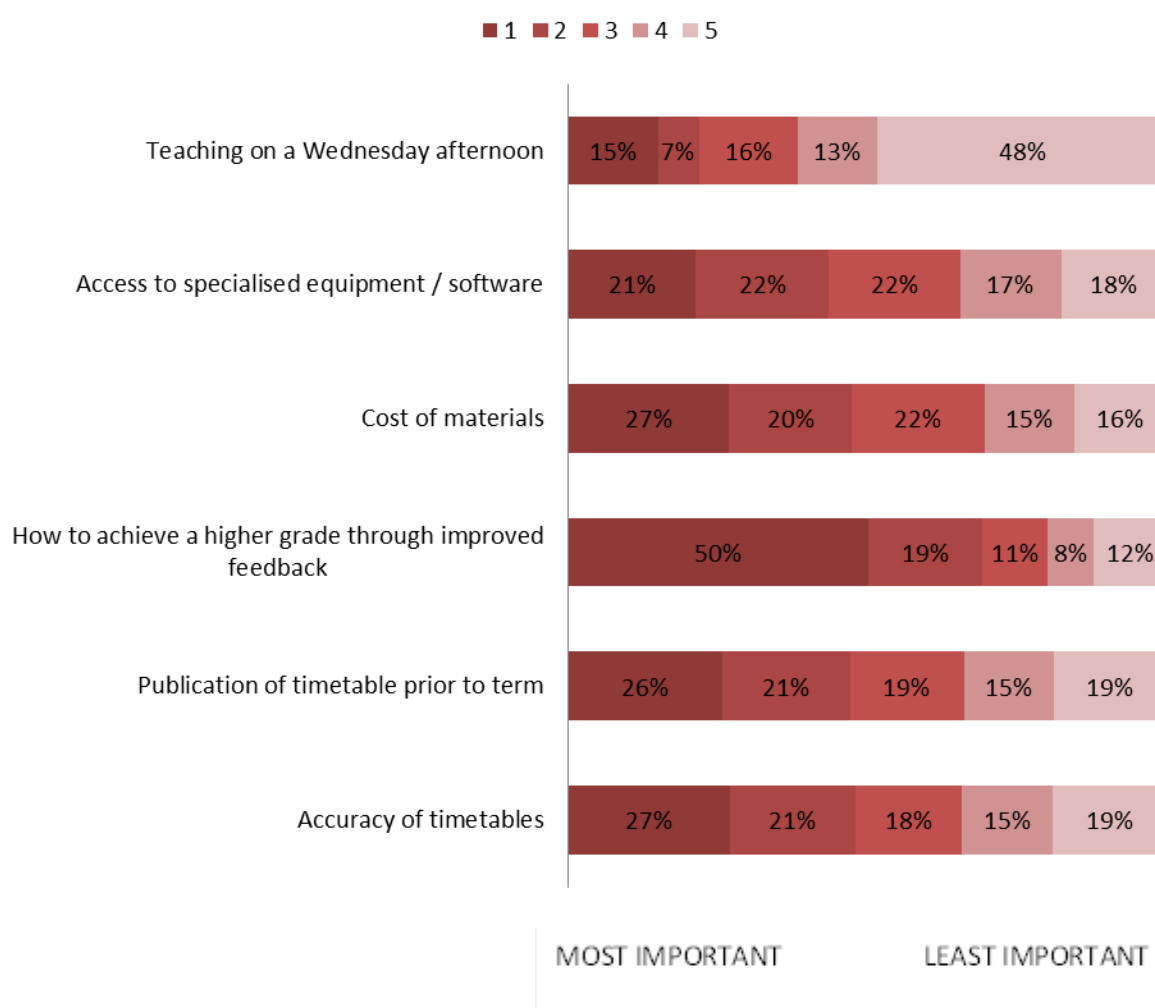


Figure 17: Chart showing on a scale of 1-5 what issues are most important to students. 804 respondents

Development areas:

- Feedback and Assessment. How to achieve a higher grade through feedback on assessed work was the number one preference of respondents for the Students' Union to work on. EDEU are also focusing on this work in 2015-16 with working groups to evaluate all aspects of the University's approach to feedback and assessment, which offers a great opportunity to make a step change.
- Module Evaluations are not being maximised to their full potential to discover how we can improve students learning experience as well as their taught experience.
- Access to specialised software and equipment still needs to be enlarged in a sustainable way. With the construction of the Isaac Newton building and the review of security there are again opportunities to make a lasting impact especially for the schools of Engineering and Computer Science where the evidence seems this issue is most pressing.
- This document also identifies multiple areas where systems are currently improving however there is still large scope for further improvements through better procurement or better intersystem relationships which could benefit the following areas;
 - Timetabling
 - Attendance monitoring
 - Security
 - Printing costs

The Student Written Submission has outlined a number of key recommendations for the Students' Union, the University, and a partnership between the two, which are as follows:

The Students' Union

- To investigate if there is a positive correlation between the number of staff with a qualification or HEA recognition and the school or the courses NSS results for 'Teaching on my Course' (page 15)
- To repeat question one and two of the Hidden Course Costs research with level one reps in the college in the November Rep Forum (page 17)
- To be more proactive in leading the methods of measuring Blackboard through our own work, welcoming input from EDEU and ICT with regards to the questions that will be asked (page 23)
- To over the next academic year, liaise with the group of Senior Tutors, through EDEU. To include the Senior Tutors, as key stakeholders, in Students' Union Communications where relevant opportunities are publicised for them to pass on to Personal Tutors and students within their school (page 24)
- To encourage students to attend the first meeting with Personal Tutor's in the first week of term one (page 24)
- To investigate other buildings and courses where access to specialised equipment may be limited (page 26)
- To investigate the impact of usage of the new swipe cards for access within the School of Engineering (page 30)
- To continue to support the prioritisation of Library 2.0. We recommend that the University prioritise initiating the planning stage of the Library extension (page 37)
- To discover what 'publication of timetables prior to term' means to students over the next year in order to provide information as to when students would prefer to receive their timetable. Then feed this into the enabling business process so the new system being implemented in September 2017 can meet student expectations (page 40)
- The Executive Team of the Students' Union to influence space planning and timetabling strategy, bringing evidence and feedback from students when needed (page 40)

- To concentrate support to student representatives who are members of the sub-groups of the Assessment and Feedback Working Group in order to help with understanding and enable them to have full input into complicated work (page 49)
- Continue to promote Rep wins with the introduction of Rep branding and segmented communication (page 63)
- Increase ability of all members to influence what the union does and complete this feedback loop (page 63)
- Increase support for PG reps (page 63)
- Tighter timescale for PG Rep elections in September/October (page 63)
- Improved training which is more focused on PTES/PRES results (page 63)
- Development of an increased skills based training programme for student reps (page 63)
- Creation of PG Rep booklet to support them through the year (page 63)
- Review of leadership of PG Reps within the union as identified in the Democracy Review (page 63)
- PG Rep hoodies similar to Course Rep hoodies (page 63)
- More emphasis on rep to student communication in Course Rep training (page 63)
- Create space for Student Engagement Champions and the School Rep to work with course reps on the school NSS Action Plan in Course Rep training (page 63)
- Increased visibility of reps through posters of course reps in subject areas (page 63)

- Increased promotion of rep wins to the student body (page 63)

The University

- To continue its programme of support to ensure that 80% of its academic staff has acquired qualification or recognition (page 15)
- To review information on course costs in prospectus' to accurately inform prospective student expectations (page 17)
- We recommend that the group that will lead the review of printer contracts to prioritise sourcing cheaper unit costs for students as they procure new contracts. This group should also have a student representative as part of it to help the group with any student consultation or communication it needs to do as part of the process (page 21)
- Consider the costs of the types of assessment used through the periodic academic review programme (page 22)
- Recommendation for the College of Arts: An investigation to happen within the College as to how much each module is required to print and credit that is needed for students to reflect this. The Students' Union should be involved in discussions about this (page 17)
- Recommendation for the University Communications, Development and Marketing team: To review the language around fees, such as printing and extra materials, that is available on the University of Lincoln website by 1st October 2015 (page 18)
- To investigate the use of Universal Student Cards as a swipe access system (page 30)
- To create a generic computer lab as part of the reconfiguration of MHT Building which is being planned for 2017 after the opening of the Isaac Newton building (page 26)
- To investigate the implementation of a swipe card access system based on a single student card for all campus buildings (page 30)

- The Security review to investigate how the use of new swipe card technologies can help make the campus more safe and secure as well identify how it can enable the use of swipe cards in new buildings (page 30)
- To implement the use of a swipe access system in all new buildings without a deposit for the card (page 30)
- To ensure timetables are published as early as possible before the start of term in September 2015 (page 40)
- In the short term, the ICT department should investigate the costs to implementing an electronic system at Lincoln for the 2016 Budget and Planning cycle (page 46).
- In the long term the University to implement a Universal Card system which included electronic attendance monitoring (page 46).
- Recommendation for Schools who have not discussed the feedback within their Subject Committee Meetings: Chemistry, Engineering, Computer Science, Health and Social Care, Business, Architecture and Design, Film and Media and Fine and Performing Arts, to do so in 2015/16 (page 49).
- Recommendation for Assessment Working Group: We recommend that the School of Psychology Assessment and Feedback work should be used as best practice, to create a formal Assessment Policy for across the College of Social Sciences (page 49).

Partnership between the two

- Current plans to include a mock lesson as part of recruitment should be progressed and the criteria involved in this section should include how interesting they make their subject and for the SU to work with EDEU to measure the impact of the new system and consider what questions should be asked and through what mechanism (page 15)
- The University Library and Students' Union should look to investigate what software could be provided with additional licenses and which specific software students need access to. This could be achieved by expanding on the current provision of 16 dedicated computers in the library (page 26)

- To explore what measurements should be used to measure improvement with the accuracy and timing of publicising timetables (page 40)

Introduction from Nyasha.

I am proud to be submitting the University of Lincoln Students' Union's Annual Student Written Submission. Although its title has changed, the Union's commitment to the report is perpetual. It celebrates the achievements of the positive partnership that is held here at Lincoln between the University and the Students' Union, as well as taking into account the progress made with the recommendations put forward last year. These have been at the core of the 2014/15 Executive Committee's work and so this document is also one of accountability.

This submission is forward-facing, setting new objectives from the areas that have been included because of student feedback received throughout the year. I am confident that the united progress made this year will continue through the consideration and implementation of the suggested recommendations.

Its focus has increased as the Union has grown to cover the key areas of Learning and Teaching, University Facilities, Space Planning and Timetabling, Organisation of Courses, Feedback at Lincoln, Academic Support for Students, and Representation. These have been decided based on the previous year's report, with the new areas having been prominent throughout my first year as Vice President Academic Affairs.

It captures the impact that the Students' Union has had for its members, as well as highlighting areas of improvement. Centring on our partnership with the University, we have worked to ensure that this document has been compiled with the input of its relevant stakeholders. As a Student Written Submission, we have engaged its driving force – students – in various campaigns, forums and surveys to produce an evidence-led basis for the work

we have undertaken this year. It has also been a pleasure to have the support of academic and professional colleagues in the progress of our work throughout the year and to have their input in this resulting document. For that, I say thank you.

I look forward to continuing to work with both students and staff on the areas covered in this report above areas and hope that its content of this report will generate open dialogue between the University and the Union. By working honestly, collaboratively and with determination we are able to tackle the issues and implement the ideas that students bring forward, together.

Yours truly,

Nyasha Takawira

Vice President Academic Affairs



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LEARNING & TEACHING

01



Theme – Learning and Teaching

Higher Education Teaching Qualifications and HEA Recognition

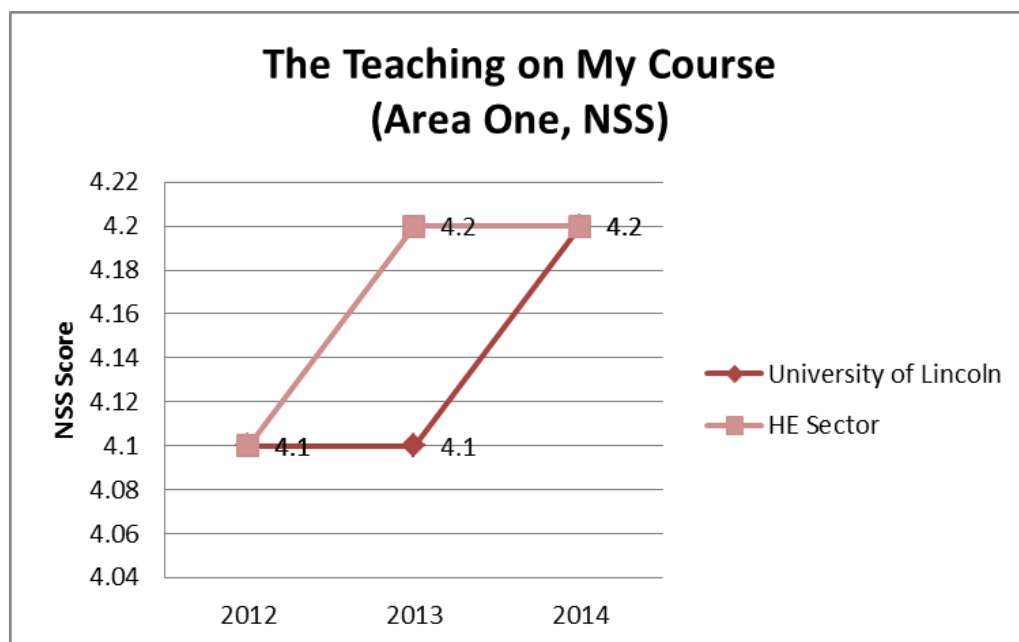


Figure 2: “The Teaching on My Course” NSS area results for 2012-14 for UoL and HE Sector.

The 2014 NSS institutional result for the area of ‘The teaching on my course’ increased by 0.1 to 4.2 to match the sector average. This score is underpinned by the following questions;

- Staff are good at explaining things, (4.2, 2014)
- Staff have made the subject interesting, (4.1, 2014)
- Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching, (4.3, 2014)
- The course is intellectually stimulating. (4.2, 2014)

This recognition by final year students of staffs enthusiasm and appreciation for the knowledge of lecturers seems to be a strength. However in the 2014 NSS data set there are

still subject areas where teaching can be improved. This is supported by discussions with Course Representatives and the Vice President Academic Affairs interactions with students. One area where we can make the most improvement is how we can support staff to make their subjects more interesting. To this end, the current plans to include a mock lesson as part of recruitment should be progressed and the criteria involved in this section should include how interesting they make their subject.

"So the main problem is understanding the subject. Lecturers spend loads of time trying to explain the information that they find necessary, but in fact it is just the quotes from subject readings, which we can find ourselves online." (Level Two Student, May 2015)

The 2014-15 recommendations for improving the quality of teaching on courses

"We will continue to monitor progress of the University strategic aim for qualified teaching staff in Higher Education. We will work initially with a focus on College of Science, then the College of Arts. Success should be the University reaching its target of 100% of qualified teaching staff in Higher Education by 2016."

Last year we made the above recommendation to help improve teaching quality. The responsibility for this target was given to EDEU as part of their creation which has resulted in accelerated progress of staff receiving teaching qualification or HEA recognition. As of 1st May 2015, 66% of all teaching staff at Lincoln had achieved a higher education teaching qualification or HEA recognition, a substantial increase from 47% qualified staff in November 2014. They have achieved this by increasing the visibility of the University's aim and support staff through drop-ins to identify relevant courses. They have also worked with Human Resources to instil the need for a qualification or HEA recognition into the university probation period for new teaching staff. They must now register and start their qualification training or HEA recognition within the first three months of employment, if they have not already. From this year there has been policy for all new teaching staff members to get qualifications, however there are still many existing teaching staff members who have not yet achieved such qualifications. This is a topic that is still being focused on by EDEU so that the target goal is achieved by 2016.

The other action EDEU has taken is to review whether the target of 100% was realistic. They have now set a new institutional target of 80% due to staff recruitment cycle and now

recognise that the statistic may reduce or increase depending on academic staff leaving and joining Lincoln as well as the time it takes for staff to complete the courses.

Recommendation for the University: We urge the University to continue its programme of support to ensure that 80% of its academic staff has acquired qualification or recognition.

Recommendation for the SU: To investigate if there is a positive correlation between the number of staff with a qualification or HEA recognition and the school or the courses NSS results for 'Teaching on my Course'.

Recommendation for partnership: current plans to include a mock lesson as part of recruitment should be progressed and the criteria involved in this section should include how interesting they make their subject.

Hidden Course Costs

The 2014-15 Recommendation for Hidden Course Costs was:

"This year the Students' Union will work to put the pound back into the pocket of students. One aspect of this is to create a partnership between the University and the Students' Union College of Arts Representative to ease the pressures of printing costs linked to achieving a good grade in different courses across the college."

Last year we identified through Student Council and Academic Reps that printing costs in the College of Arts was an issue that needed to be investigated. Together with the College of Arts Officer and School Reps, the VP Academic Affairs conducted research to gather information on the topic of Hidden Course Costs, specifically about Printing. They executed twenty hours of engagement over two weeks, concluding with over 900 students taking part – that's almost 25% of the College population (3797). This activity was based on four questions, and only at College of Arts students could participate.

The four questions asked were:

- **Before you came to University how much did you think you would spend on printing?**
- **How much were you expecting to spend on printing in the coming year?**

- **If we could change it, what would you like to see? (With the following options based on previous research: keeping the costs and credit the same, reducing the costs, increasing printing credit and releasing credit termly.)**
- **What they thought about printing costs?**

Once the Activity was completed and analysed, discussions were opened with members of staff within the University such as with the College of Arts Management Team.

From the research we concluded three recommendations within the Hidden Course Costs Report (December 2014).

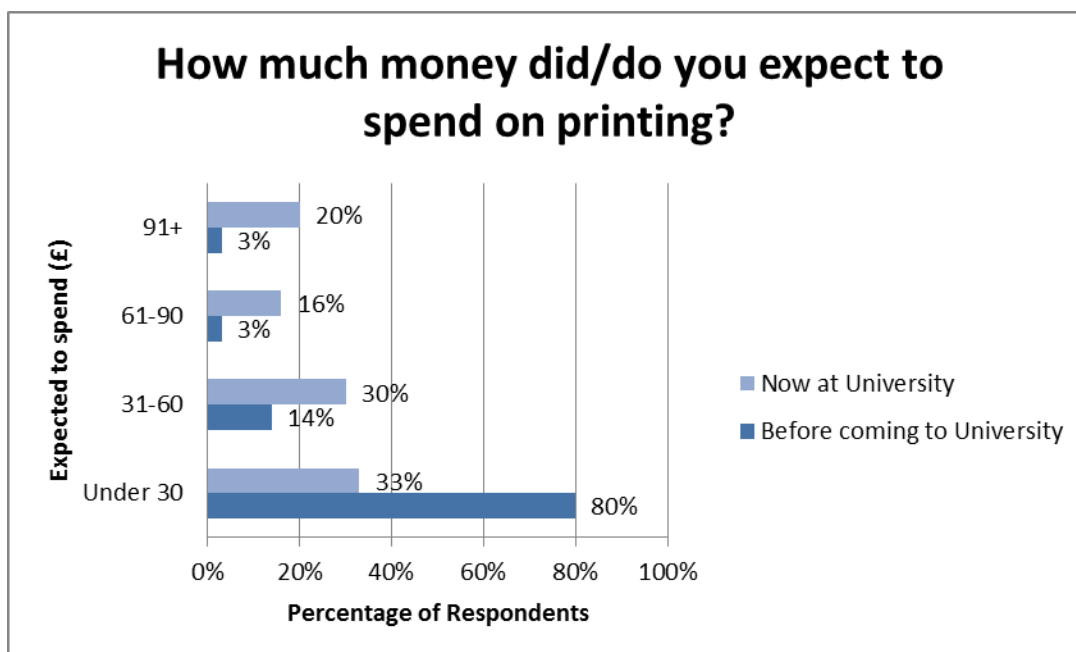


Figure 3: HCC: "How much money did/do you expect to spend on printing?" Graph comparing before arriving at University and since arriving at the University, from College of Arts respondents. 951 Respondents.

Recommendation one of Hidden Course Costs report:

Review information on course costs in prospectus' to accurately inform prospective student expectations.

The first and second questions of the research asked students what were their expectations before university and what their reality was as a student. Students' perception of what they would be spending on printing was less than in reality. It was a recurring theme from students in the School of Architecture and Design that the wording within the prospectus had led them to believe that they would be fully supported in regards to any materials needed for the course.

The information provided to students before they arrive or select their University, gives them the basis of expectations for their experience on that particular course. Not including such additional costs in the prospectus could indicate to students that they do not exist – which could be an explanation for why students in the School of Architecture and Design felt that way. Since the publication of the Hidden Course Costs report, the College has updated course webpages where there may be further costs within the details of the fees. However, student representatives took this to a Task and Finish Group reporting to College Board, as they felt that it still indicated you would be provided with the money to fulfil these costs when arriving at the University. The Pro Vice Chancellor for the College of Arts is currently discussing a review of information with the Director of Communications, Development and Marketing in order to accurately inform prospective student expectations.

Due to the introduction of the Consumer Rights Act 2015, students could be able to claim against an institution if they have evidence that they have been advertised something as included as part of their course and fee, but then have not had it delivered when they are studying. The misinterpretation of costs for materials or equipment could be an issue for the University due to this legislation. This is why we would like to encourage the Communications, Development and Marketing team within the University to continue to review the information about materials and equipment available to students and potential students in preparation for the 1st October 2015. To gauge improvements we as the Students' Union will repeat question one and two of the Hidden Course Costs research with level one reps in the college in the November Rep Forum.

Recommendation two of Hidden Course Costs report:

“Review printing credit given to students with the aim of increasing the amount of credit given as soon as possible.”

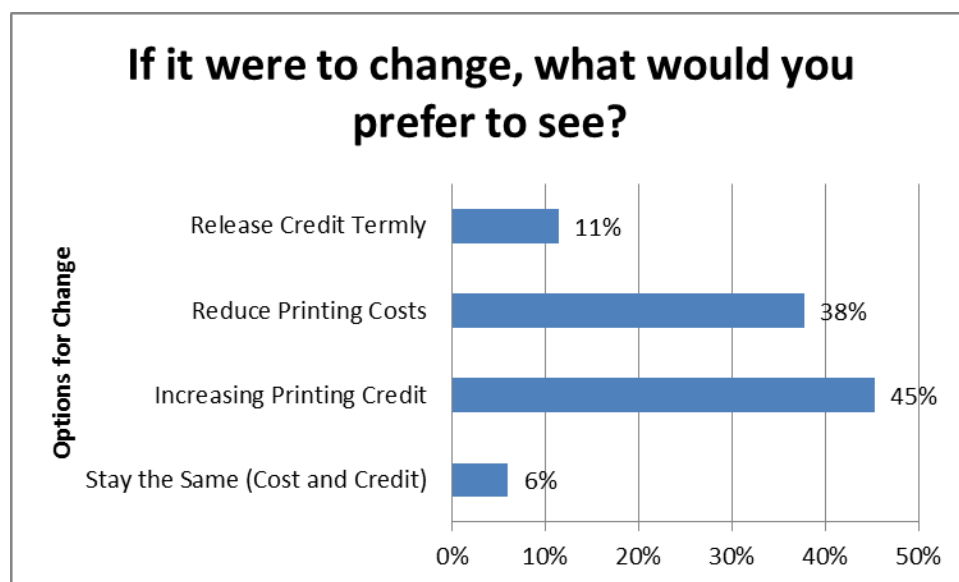


Figure 4: HCC: “If it [printing credit] were to change, what would you prefer to see?” 951 respondents.

The most chosen option when we conducted the research was to increase the printing credit with 45% of the 951 respondents opting for this action. In close second was the choice of making printing costs cheaper, to which a total of 38% respondents opted for. In response to these findings the College has provided additional credit of between £20-25 to level three students across 12 courses for the remainder of the academic year. The breakdown is as follows:

School	Programme with additional credit for 2014-15 of £20-£25
Arch & Design	
	BA (Hons) Product Design
	DEM
Film & Media	
	BA (Hons) Animation
	BA (Hons) CLM/Photography
	BA (Hons) Film & TV
	BA (Hons) Audio Production
	BA (Hons) Media Production
Fine & Performing Arts	
	BA (Hons) Fine Art
	BA (Hons) Dance
	BA (Hons) Drama
	BA (Hons) Fashion Studies
History & Heritage	BA (Hons) Conservation & Restoration

Figure 5: HCC: Breakdown of courses, by school, within the College of Arts who received additional printing credit for 2014-15

Although this was a positive outcome of the research, it is important to note that extra credit was only provided to level three students on twelve courses across the College of Arts. To advance this area further, talks have been held to ensure that in the next academic year a higher amount of credit is provided across the college. Particularly where there are currently assessments in place which need to be printed in order to be marked. Conversations with the Pro Vice Chancellor of the College of Arts indicated that the budgets and credits are set by Heads of School by end of July. We await the budget process to finalise and determine what printing credit has been allocated.

We recommend that the group that will lead the review of printer contracts to prioritise sourcing cheaper unit costs for students as they procure new contracts. This group should also have a student representative as part of it to help the group with any student consultation or communication it needs to do as part of the process.

Linking to this recommendation, there is a knowledge gap when looking into which students need more printing credit for their studies, as currently the evidence we have is how much they expect and want. Over the Summer, the College Management Team are conducting research to gather the information on how much printing is needed in which modules in order to allocate credit appropriately. When this information is available, the Students' Union's academic reps should discuss this with the College Management Team in order to ensure this recommendation is achieved for the applicable students.

Recommendation three of Hidden Course Costs report:

Consider the costs of the types of assessment used through the periodic academic review programme. We want to encourage cost effective and diverse ways of assessing students, whilst being careful not to discourage the diversification of assessment within the College. I.e. when costs are associated with certain assessments there should be adequate support provided.

A distinctive quality of the College is the way in which assessments differ from the other Colleges to reflect its creative nature. We do not want to take this strength away from the College, but we want to ensure that students are able to afford to do their work to the best

of their ability. This recommendation has made the College look into different methods of assessing creative pieces. As a result, the Pro Vice-Chancellor held meetings with the Head of Architecture and Design, and Deputy Head of Film and Media as well as colleagues within ICT to discuss investment into Electronic U-Touch Boards and the required software that will enable students to present work electronically rather than physically. The implementation of this should be complete by 31st July ready for trial in the new academic year.

The Hidden Course Costs report has influenced two actions within the College. The first is the increase of printing credit for the level three students on the named courses, enabling them to have financial support for term two. Secondly, the College will be investing in software and Crit Boards to enable students to present their work electronically, saving them money on large amounts of printing. The task and finish group created by the College Pro Vice-chancellor is currently investigating this.

Recommendation for the College of Arts: An investigation to happen within the College as to how much each module is required to print and credit that is needed for students to reflect this. The Students' Union should be involved in discussions about this.

Recommendation for the University Communications, Development and Marketing team: To review the language around fees, such as printing and extra materials, that is available on the University of Lincoln website by 1st October 2015.

Recommendation for the University: The group that will lead the review of printer contracts, prioritise sourcing cheaper unit costs for students as they procure new contracts. This group should also have a student representative as part of it to help the group with any student consultation or communication it needs to do as part of the process.

Recommendation for the SU: To repeat question one and two of the Hidden Course Costs research with level one reps in the college in the November Rep Forum.

Blackboard 9.1 SP14

The 2014-15 recommendation for Blackboard 9.1 SP14:

"To have Students' Union input to measurement of impact of the launch and new features of Blackboard 9.1 SP14, working with EDEU and ICT."

Blackboard 9.1 SP14 was introduced late summer of 2014. The recommendation was created to encourage measurement of student satisfaction with the platform update and to capture any issues that may have arisen for students. When the Education and Student Life Committee and the Technology Enhanced Learning Standing Group were created, the Terms of Reference included to:

"Oversee the evaluation of the use of technology, including Blackboard"

"Develop baseline expectations for the use of Blackboard and other technology."

So far this year we have seen progression with the creation of baseline expectations for staff to meet. This has been supported with the creation of examples of how to use Blackboard effectively and meet the expectations.

The changes made have made improvements to how Blackboard is used however we as a Union asked questions of how this improvement could be captured and measured at the Technology Enhanced Learning Standing Group in the autumn. It was not agreed how to measure the impact and who should conduct this. Due to this there has not been any reporting of the impact the update has made on student satisfaction this academic year. In the future when there are significant updates to virtual learning environment we will be more proactive in leading the methods of measuring Blackboard through our own work, welcoming input from EDEU and ICT with regards to the questions that will be asked.

Due to the success of minimising disruption with the update occurring during the week of board of examiners in summer 2014 we welcome that it has been agreed that any future updates to Blackboard will take place in the week of the Board of Examiners, although Blackboard will be inaccessible at this time it is less disruptive than a rolling update. The Students' Union's role will be to support the university in communicating this effectively to further minimise impact.

Recommendation for the SU: To be more proactive in leading the methods of measuring Blackboard through our own work, welcoming input from EDEU and ICT with regards to the questions that will be asked.

Personal Tutors

The 2014-15 recommendation for Personal Tutors:

"Work with the University to implement its plan to strengthen the Personal Tutoring system and the support it gives students."

This recommendation has been given extra weight during the academic year with evidence qualitative information within the New Starters Survey 2014/15 reinforcing the importance of the University's focus. In answer to the question, "Thinking about your experience of starting University, what should we start, stop and continue doing to improve next time?" the most prominent topic was that of Personal Tutors.

In 2013/14 an amended version of the Student Support and Tutoring Policy was passed at Institutional Committee level. By November 2014, the Student Engagement Manager reported that senior tutors had been appointed in all schools, with training to be set up and delivered before September 2015. The aim is to have between eight and twelve students in each Personal Tutor Group, and a group session in term one and two for level one students will be timetabled from September 2015. In addition to this there will be individual meetings and a further roll out of timetabled activity as that cohort progresses through levels of study. We recognise this is one of the more difficult things to achieve because it is so dependent on resourcing and Student Staff ratios, this is why we support the scaling up of personal tutors system as the University creates more capacity to hold timetabled sessions. The information within - such as a defined role and more detailed structure - was fully supported by the Students' Union.

We hope to encourage the use of such meetings through College, School and Course representatives to communicate change and attendance at these meetings as a positive experience and lead by example to their fellow students. In addition, we hope to be able to connect with the tutors, in order to pass on information that may be relevant to their students or provide different opportunities, such as the Lincoln Award or volunteering opportunities on and off campus.

We as a Students' Union believe that the launch of a more robust system for personal tutoring for level one students and its subsequent scaling up over the next three years will be of great benefit to students and the university. It will help the university community become ever closer, increase awareness of key services and opportunities as well as create a greater understanding of pressures on both staff and students.

Recommendation for the SU: Over the next academic year, we will liaise with the group of Senior Tutors, through EDEU. Additionally we will include the Senior Tutors, as key stakeholders, in Students' Union Communications where relevant opportunities are publicised for them to pass on to Personal Tutors and students within their school.

Recommendation for the SU: We will encourage students to attend the first meeting with Personal Tutor's in the first week of term one.

Partnership Recommendation: We will work with EDEU to measure the impact of the new system. What questions should be asked and through what mechanism. We believe the following three questions should be asked:

"Do you know who your personal tutor is?"

"Have you met with your personal tutor?"

"How useful was the meeting in supporting your personal development?"

Access to Specialised Software and Equipment

The 2014-15 academic year the College of Science Officer, Connor Muir, was part of the project group overseeing the Isaac Newton building. Through this group he identified the need to investigate the study habits of students within the college and their access to specialised software and equipment so that potential solutions could help future proof the new building. The following questions were asked:

- Where they study and why?
- Time of day when they study
- Satisfaction with regards to opening and closing times of subject buildings.
- Importance of Generic/Specialist Computers, Lab Space, Room for Group Working
- Ease of access to general and course specific software, and what this is.
- Ease of access to course specific lab spaces and what they are.

The survey was launched online in December 2015 using the Students' Union website. It was promoted via the Students' Union Social Media and Newsletter posts as well as through engagement activity by the School Representatives within the College. In January, we achieved 11.6% response rate of the College population, 240 respondents, out of a possible total of 2076. After the analysis of the results and a report was created, meetings were held with key stakeholders to discuss the practicality of recommendations made within the report, with the report feeding into the Isaac Newton Steering Group.

Results

The results of the survey demonstrated the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the times they could access equipment and software based in their building. The main driver of this result is that most respondents claimed they preferred to work in the evening after traditional office hours and which is when University buildings tend to be closed. The Head of Strategy and Communications of Estates has identified this as a significant finding and suggests that action is needed.

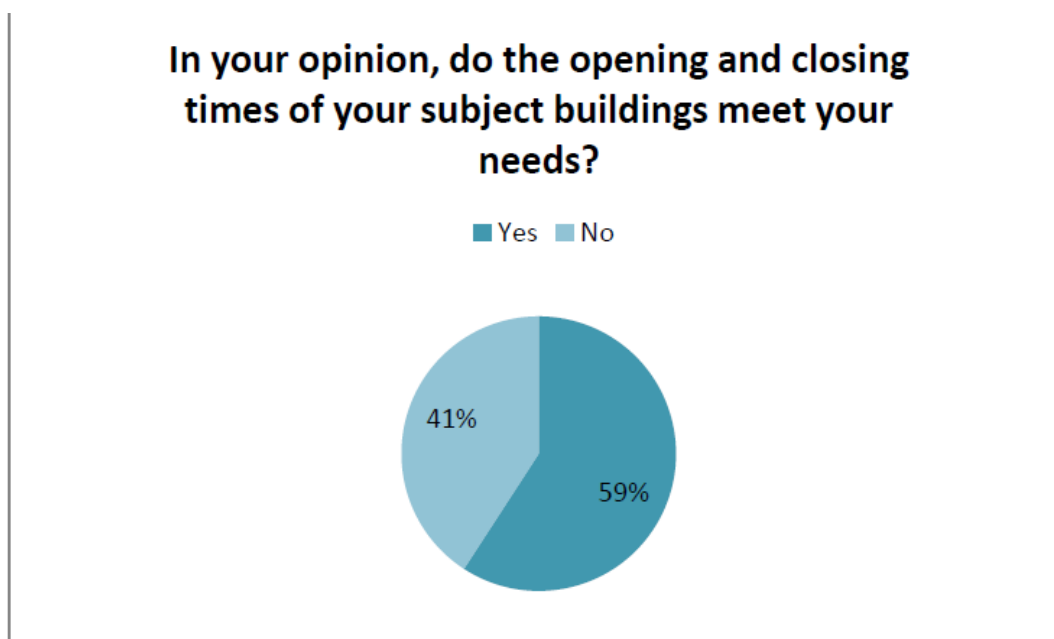


Figure 5: College of Science Learning Space Analysis. Q4: In your opinion, do the opening and closing times of your subject buildings meet your needs?

When satisfaction of opening and closing time of subject buildings was broken down by school, there was a variance in satisfaction.

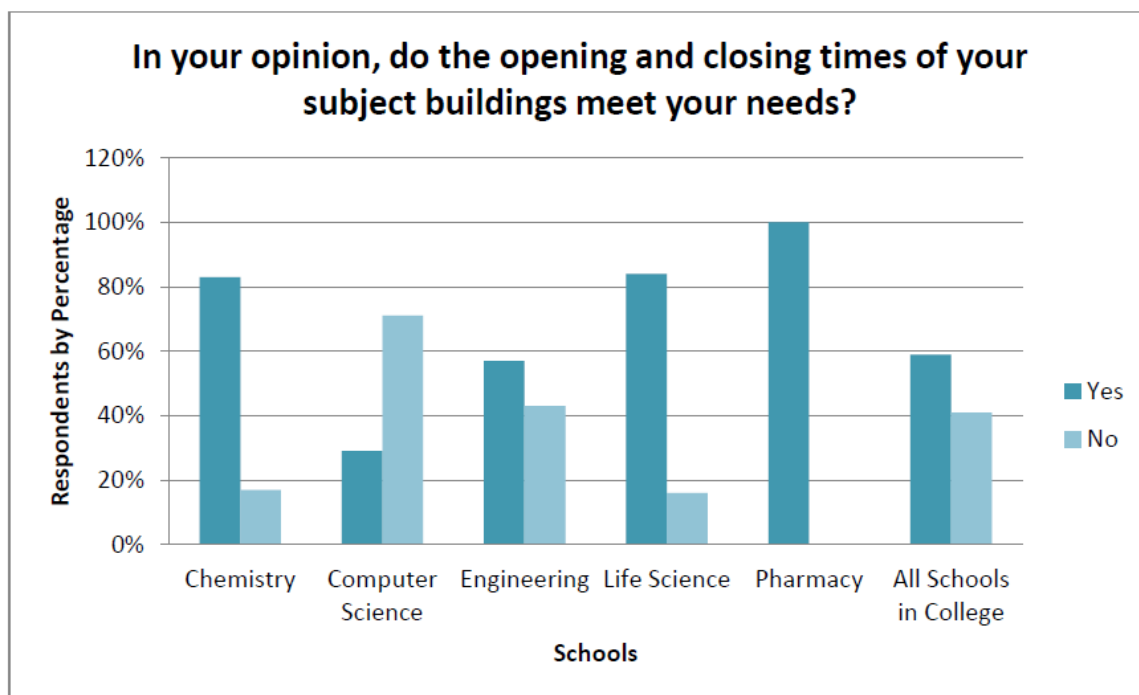
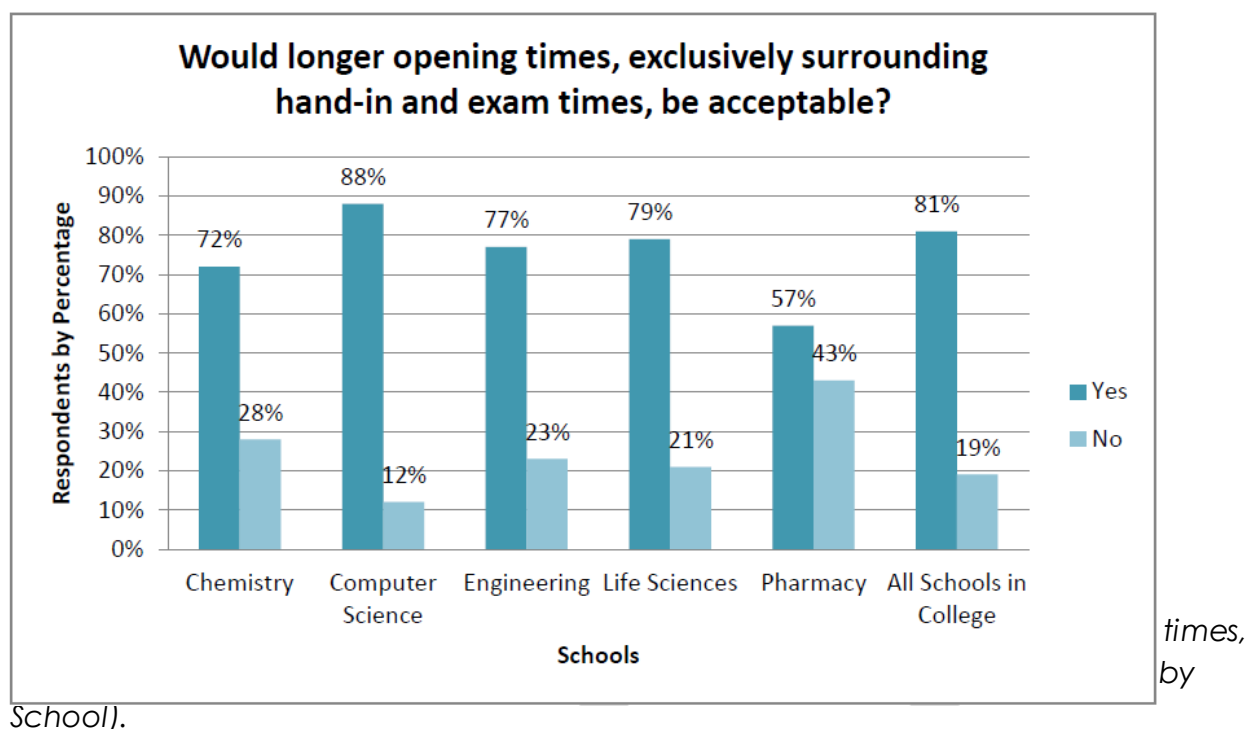


Figure 6: College of Science Learning Space Analysis. Q4: In your opinion, do the opening and closing times of your subject buildings meet your needs? (broken down by School).

The chart above shows that respondents from the Schools of Computer Science and Engineering feel that their needs aren't fully met with regards to their subject buildings opening times.



The chart above indicates that a high percentage of each school would like longer opening times, and not just those schools where the opening hours are currently dissatisfactory to the students within them.

Access to specialist computers/software were rated highly by our respondents, with 31% giving them a 10, and a further 23% scoring 8 and 9. The graph below shows that the schools who of Computer Science and Engineering scored this highest. This is, as expected, the opposite of the rating for Generic Computers.

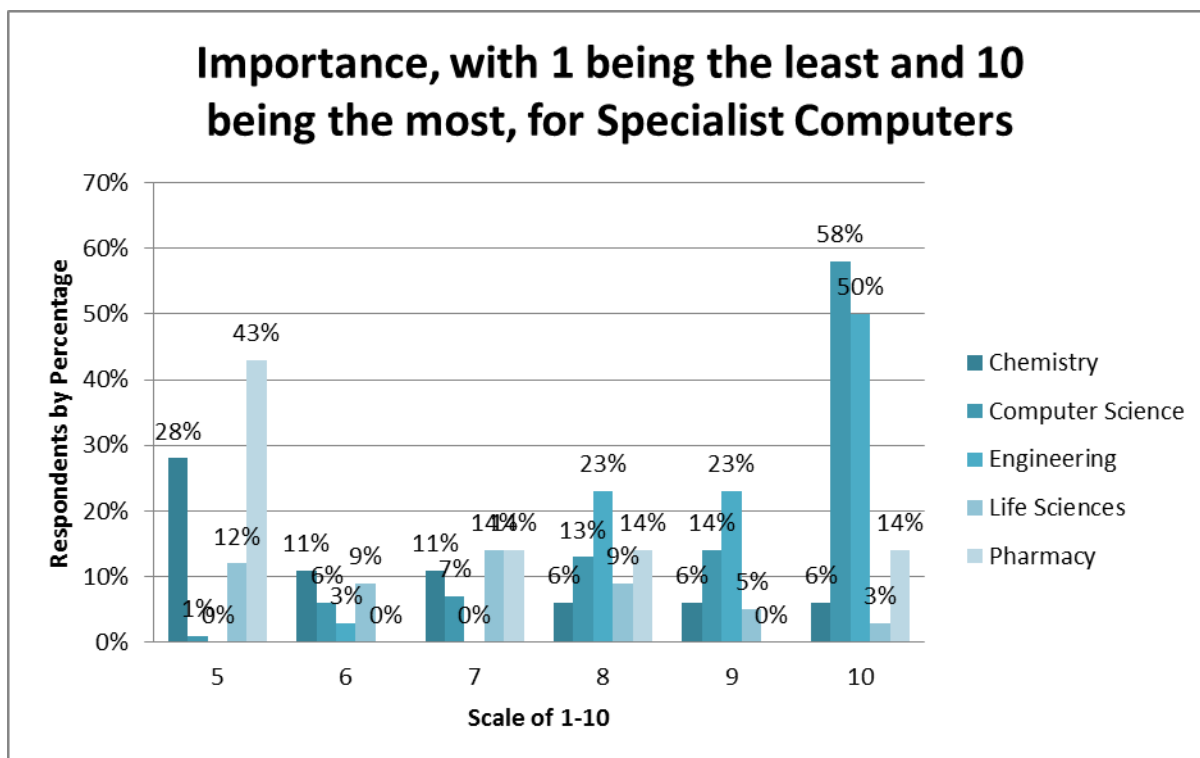


Figure 8: College of Science Learning Space Analysis. Q6: Importance, with 1 being least and 10 being the most, for Specialist Computers. (Broken down by School).

Finally, results around ease of access to course specific lab spaces were broken down by school. The results indicated that Engineering students are particularly unhappy with their current access to the software they need. Additionally it's interesting to see that respondents from Computer Science are torn as to whether it's easy or not, and for these two courses particularly this may be due to their lack of access to their subject buildings as mentioned previously. This raised the question of why students are finding it difficult to access the software.

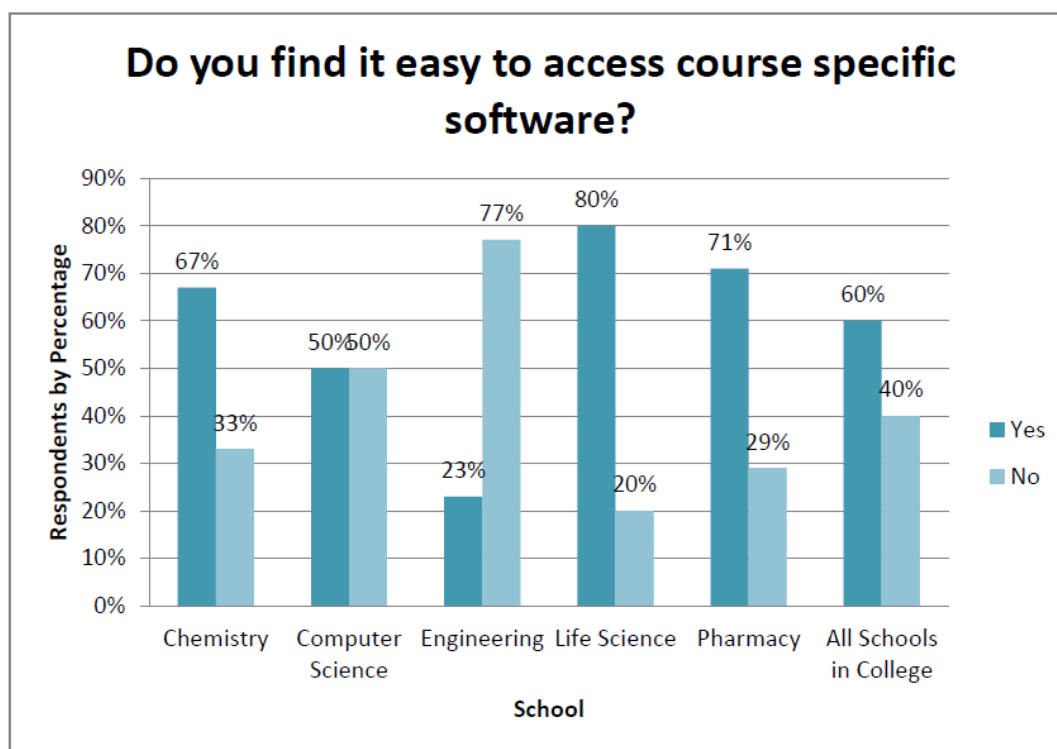


Figure 9: College of Science Learning Space Analysis. Q7: Do you find it easy to access course specific software? (Broken down by School).

Recommendations from the College of Science Learning Spaces Report (February 2015) is:

The University should look to investigate the use of Universal Student Cards as a swipe access system. This will allow greater access out of hours to course specific software in labs, especially with regards to the Sir Isaac Newton building which will house Engineering and Computer Science.

The University Library and Students' Union should look to investigate what software could be provided with additional licenses and which specific software students need access to. This could be achieved by expanding on the current provision of 16 dedicated computers in the library.

The University should look into creating a generic computer lab on campus which allows access to campus computers for all students, in addition to the library provision.

We would recommend that there is Student representation on the University Security Review to allow the concerns found in the survey to be heard by the review group.

Response for recommendation one from colleagues within the Department of Estates and Commercial Facilities, was that they fully support this idea. The ICT Services team has agreed to lead a project, with Estates and Commercial Facilities involvement, to gather the requirements and determine the scope for such a system. The ICT Services team will be best placed to provide progress updates on this project, to the Learning Support and Education Standing Group which will feed into the Education and Student Life Committee.

Recommendation two has seen consensus from the Students' Union and colleagues within the university that increasing the number of computers dedicated to specific software should be part of the expansion of stock that will occur with completion of new builds rather than before and reducing the number of computers available to the majority of students. This means the priority should be to implement recommendation three after the Isaac Newton Building is complete. Colleagues within the Department of Estates and Commercial Facilities indicated that they fully support this idea and it was already one of the proposed objectives for the reconfiguration of MHT Building which is being planned for 2017 after the opening of the Isaac Newton building. The reconfiguration of one of the existing School of Computer Science computer labs as a generic, centrally managed computer lab may be the appropriate solution.

Progress has been made towards recommendation four with the Head of Commercial Facilities outlining the scope of a security review and inviting the Vice-President Academic Affairs to join the group. The review will focus on how to manage extended access to the specialised software and equipment, addressing concerns over security when extending opening times. The discussion will investigate how better technology could inform who is in which building and at what times through the use of swipe card access and how that can help security out of hours.

Additional to the responses from colleagues from professional services, the report has had two significant impacts so far within the college,

The School of Engineering arranged for access cards to be given to third and fourth year students, for a small deposit, which will give longer access to the computer labs out of hours, with the look to create swipe card access for the Isaac Newton Building.

The college has invested a significant amount, about £16,000, in increasing their ANSYS licence for ANSYS APDL and ANSYS Workbench, from 30 copies to 250. This increase has allowed School of Engineering students to access the software at home and elsewhere on campus (where the computers are capable of running it).

Despite this progress as a result of the report, we still feel that there is work to be done to ensure this access is sustainable and enabled. The research and work carried out by colleagues in ICT and Estates and Commercial Facilities when looking into the Swipe Card Access will be highly important in the role of “future proofing” the growth of the University. We would also urge the University to prioritise the procurement of such a system and additionally, when considering the Hidden Course Costs research, we would like to see students provided with cards without the need for a deposit that currently exists within the School of Engineering. The use of a Universal Access Card could be the solution to this.

Recommendation for the University: To implement the use of a swipe access system in all new buildings without a deposit for the card. This will allow greater access out of hours to course specific software in labs in the Sir Isaac Newton building, a key finding of the Learning Spaces Report.

Recommendation for the University: They should create a generic computer lab as part of the reconfiguration of MHT Building which is being planned for 2017 after the opening of the Isaac Newton building.

Recommendation for partnership: The Security review to investigate how the use of new swipe card technologies can help make the campus more safe and secure as well identify how it can enable the use of swipe cards in new buildings.

Recommendation for the University: To investigate the implementation of a swipe card access system based on a single student card for all campus buildings.

Recommendation for partnership: To investigate the impact of usage of the new swipe cards for access within the School of Engineering.

Recommendation for the SU: Investigate other buildings and courses where access to specialised equipment may be limited.

Architecture and Design Swipe Card

The 2014-15 recommendation with regard to the School of Architecture and Design Swipe Card:

"We will work with the School of Architecture and Design to pilot swipe card system as planned within their NSS Plan 2013/14."

This recommendation was based on the previous year's 2013/14 NSS Action Plan for the School of Art and Design which stated that:

"(they would) investigate ways to maximise the access to facilities in light of the new building"

"Students were advised prior to relocating the course to the AAD building that 24 hour access would be available. On several occasions staff made arrangements for students to access certain studios but students were asked to leave by security staff each time."

Since the publication of the 2014/15 action plan there has been a restructure of the College of Arts involving the reallocation of staff and students to other schools. This has seen the focus of work of both the staff and academic representatives become how to integrate new staff and different groups of students as one school community. As the academic year has progressed the school representative of Architecture and Design, Daniel Orford, have identified no issues with the access to studios from students, due to implementation of open access. Discussions with course representatives of the Fine Art and Fashion Studies, now residing within the School of Fine and Performing Arts, told us that they had been given swipe access cards. These students said that:

"The access at all hours allowed flexibility and had been highly beneficial for the student cohort to complete their work."

The progress on this recommendation has been driven by partnership within the schools finding the correct solution for their space. This is a significant achievement for both the schools involved. These changes to access have provided a positive experience for students which will hopefully be reflected in NSS scores going forward.

Module Evaluations

When putting together this document we have looked to include evidence relating to specific courses to measure impact of our campaigns or the impact of the work done by schools to address issues; however this has often been difficult to obtain. This has made us reflect on module evaluations at the University of Lincoln. If they are conducted there would be a very large data set for the university to use to inform thinking on a number of issues, and would feature more prominently in planning throughout the university. This prompts the following questions;

- Are we collecting robust data consistently across course level?
- If so how useful is the information we are collecting?
- Is there more useful information we could collect that could feed into planning the course in line with the universities/schools objectives?

After discussions with student representatives it is unclear whether module evaluations are conducted consistently across the whole university. By this we mean some did not recall ever doing one, while some have done them in different formats and collecting different information.

For some information there is usefulness in collecting this across the university in a core set of questions at course level. An example of where this may be useful would be to explore how confident students are with the content of the course as this will be reflected in some NSS questions at the end of their time and would give a lead before their final year. We would also expect the more confident students are with the content the better their attainment would be, so over time would strengthen the course. The data in a possible core question set would not change so that we could gather longitudinal data about that course as well as benchmark it against others at the institution.

There may be other institutional or college data we could collect without the effort of another survey such as measuring the impact of the changes to Blackboard from August 2014. This type of information would not need to be collected annually so could form part of a thematic set of questions for that period of evaluation. This would be useful for the

Students' Union too as it could be we would like to measure something in line with an officer's manifesto and could save duplication of effort, so there is a real opportunity for partnership work here. There would possibly be difficulties in deciding who owns the decision about the content of the thematic questions for that evaluation period but whichever body does should have student representative input as well as the college, school and institutional academic oversight.

There will be other information that the school may want to gather in preparation for a periodic review or to measure a change it has implemented such as Psychology changing their feedback mechanism. Could we build this flexibility into the module evaluation process? This may ensure a larger sample size when testing these developments without the effort of a separate evidence gathering exercise. It could also help the school's academics feel ownership over the process and help with the consistency of implementation.

Going into the 2015-16 academic year we are aiming to work with EDEU to assess module evaluations to answer the following questions:

- Are we collecting robust data consistently across course level?
- If so how useful is the information we are collecting?
- Is there more useful information we could collect that could feed into planning the course in line with the university's/schools objectives?

We would also like the opportunity to investigate the possibility of putting the questions into tiers:

- Institutional: questions asked at each evaluation period, across the university that can be used to benchmark the course against itself and other courses at the university.
- Thematic: questions asked across the university/college/school on topics that have arisen through other research, or through reps at committees. These would prevent duplication of effort and would be set per evaluation period.
- School: these are questions schools or programmes could set each evaluation period to gather evidence specific to them.



UNIVERSITY FACILITIES

02



Theme - University Facilities

Library 2.0

The 2014-15 recommendation for the Library:

"Consider advancing the priority of Library 2.0."

On the 9th February 2014 the Library held a Student Reps Tea, engaging Senior Reps in high level discussion regarding three themes; support, development and improvement suggestions. These topics were also discussed at the Learning Support and Environment Standing Group and fed into the Library's Professional Service Review. A formal action plan has been developed out of the Professional Service Review. Although it has not been released at the time of this report, we are aware the review has identified students would like more Library space, in addition to spaces like The Library Learning Lounges

The view of student representatives seems to reflect that expectation is building towards this future development of the library. In their training at the beginning of the 2014-15 year they were very keen to be involved in the initial planning phase after and we expect a similar keenness for the 2015-16 year.

Recommendation

For the Students' Union: To continue to support the prioritisation of Library 2.0. We recommend that the University prioritise initiating the planning stage of the Library extension.

Specific Technical Staff

The 2014-15 recommendation with regard to Specific Technical Staff:

"The Union to include a person of expertise when collecting feedback on a very specific technical issue."

Last year, feedback around the developments of Blackboard was collected from Rep Forum by the VPAA. The feedback was used to develop and implement the version Blackboard 9.1SP14. However, further discussions led us to recommend that we have a specialised member of staff attend such exercises when issues or elements of their work were being discussed. This academic year we have had several visitors from around the

University use this mechanism to gather feedback from student representatives to be used in their work.

- The first Course Representative Forum of the year, held in November 2014, was attended by the Library team to gather student feedback on different mechanisms of Library induction and improvement methods that could be used in future induction sessions.
- In December 2014, Communications Staff from within each College of the University and of the Students' Union attended the Course Rep Forum. They worked with student reps on how to get the student representatives involved more in their social media channels as well as to gather feedback on what they presently do and identify what other channels to use.
- The Student Engagement Officer from EDEU attended the February Academic Representatives Committee. Within this meeting, colleagues led a discussion about a proposal to make student reps joint chairs of Subject Committee Meetings in order to gather ideas and feelings about the proposed changes. This exercise was valued by the representatives and enabled them to understand and be involved in discussions about this at institutional committee level when the proposal was brought forward.
- The Academic Representation Handover in April 2015, we held for outgoing and newly elected senior representative saw colleagues from Careers present and discuss ideas for the forthcoming year with the senior rep elects.

Recommendation for the SU: To continue this practice and invite more departments and schools to make use of our representatives in this manner in the future.



SPACE PLANNING & TIMETABLING

03



Theme - Space Planning and Timetabling

Timetabling

The 2014-15 recommendation for Space Planning and Timetabling:

"As part of the development of the University Strategy, the Executive Team of the Students' Union should influence space planning and timetabling strategy, bringing evidence and feedback from students when needed."

Last year's recommendation combined space planning and timetabling strategy, but this year we have worked on these interdependable areas separately. The College of Science Officer 2014-15 had a priority of learning space within his college, whereas student officers of other schools were more concerned with publishing timetabling and the effects that not doing so in a timely manner may have on part-time work or students with dependents. This is reflected by Figure 17.

This year in our Annual Membership Survey (May 2015), an area which was highlighted by our respondents was their level of concern over academic aspects on a daily basis. Just over 90% of respondents to the survey told us that they were concerned about academic achievement and academic workload on a day to day basis. To research this area further, we asked students about what we could work on that would lower their concern about academic issues. The results are shown in Figure 17 .

We asked students:

"90% of respondents to our Membership Survey told us that they are concerned about Academic issues on a daily basis. To help us lessen this concern we would like you to rate the issues below 1 for most important to 5 least important to you. This will help us prioritise where we spend our effort, time and resource next year in representing you to the university."

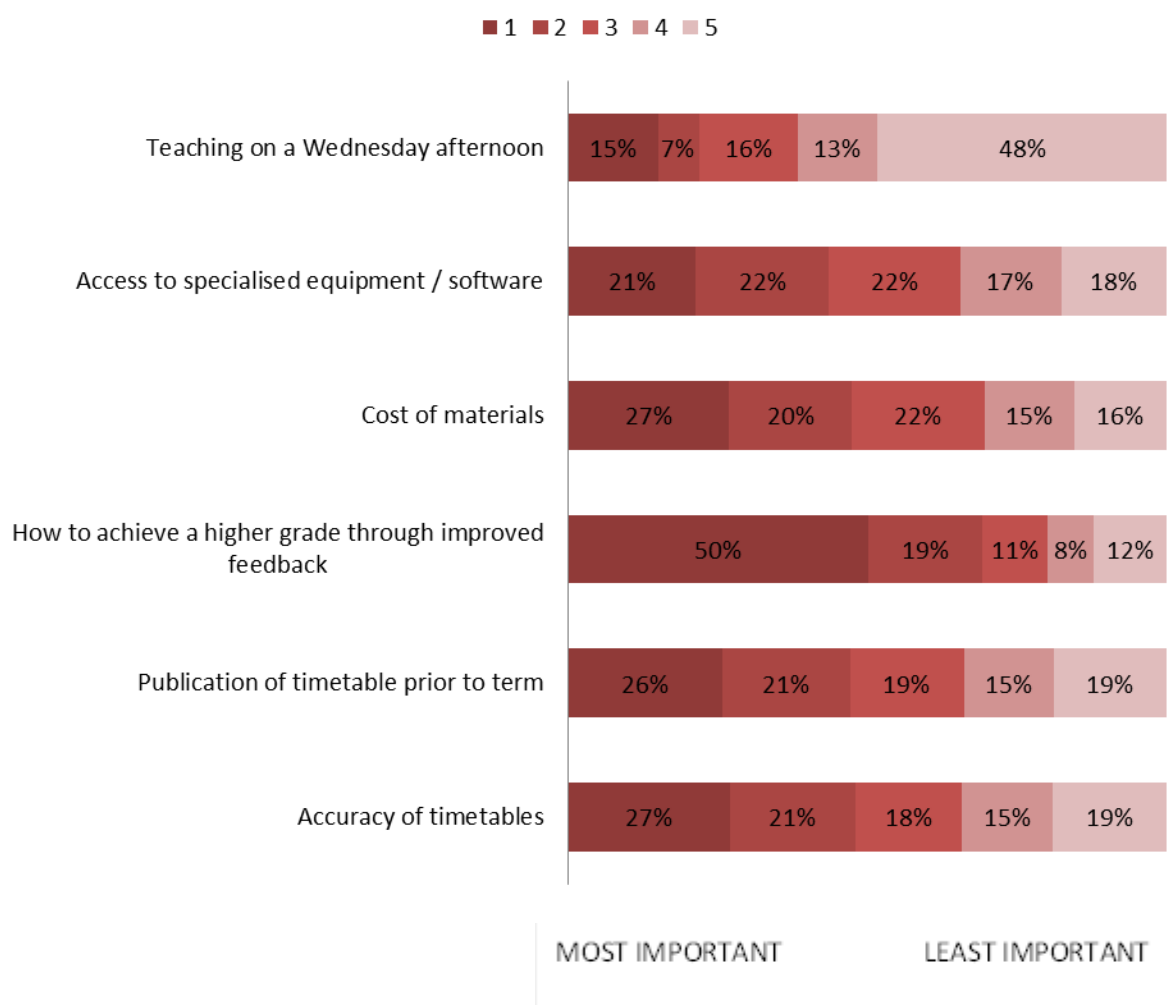


Figure 10: Chart showing on a scale of 1-5 what issues are most important to students. 804 respondents

The results in the chart above show that the publication and accuracy of timetables are similarly important to students and come second and third when students were asked to order the above as most important to least important.

In last year's Annual Quality Report, we reported that we had been informed that the University would be releasing timetables for new starters in the last week of August. This

year, after queries were received via social media to Student Union accounts as to when timetables would be issued, our President contacted colleagues within University Planning to find out the new release date. We were told that the intention had been to release the timetables in August but that there had been issues that were out of the team's control which had led to the delay of release and that they were to be released on 10th September. Using this information from Planning, we were able to communicate back to the students and timetables were successfully released on 12th September. However timetabling and the lateness of the release was raised as an issue by newly elected course representatives during various schools training events in October. Additionally within the review of Welcome Week, the College of Social Science reported different issues with timetables from the academic staff point of view. They claimed there were:

"Some clashes and unannounced changes of location have caused problems with the timetables" (Lincoln Business School)

"a potential hiccup was avoided with our welcome week timetable when we were initially given the wrong rooms but X checked the timetable carefully and this was picked up and a problem averted" (School of Social and Political Sciences)

"one of the groups was timetabled in a room that was still set up for enrolment with no chairs – they therefore had to hunt around the building for a spare room." (School of Sport and Exercise Science)

"I am also aware that there are some timetabling issues from an academic perspective." (College Manager)

During this academic year we have been made aware of the work that has been put in to improve the planning for the coming year. It was highlighted that one of the main pressures for timetabling, is getting the information needed to create a timetable from academics. This is because without this knowledge they cannot timetable students into specific rooms without knowing how many numbers are expected and therefore this delays the process of creating an accurate student timetable. One step to improve this was for the deadline for new courses to be approved to be moved forward to February in order to provide more time to plan the timetabling of the teaching across the University. We hope that this will improve with the deadline for new courses being in February. This new deadline will be

better understood each year so the 2016-17 academic year will see the full benefits of this change.

However other constraints remain on the timetabling process such as the management system that is being renewed through the enabling the business programme and is intended to be implemented for September 2017. Currently there are two separate systems:

- One which records electives

- One which compiles timetables

As schools vary their elective timeframe e.g. some are not till September of the same year as the elective, it's very difficult to compile it all accurately before September. It is hoped that the new system will streamline this and improve the ability to publish accurate timetables before the start of term.

Recommendation to the University: Timetables are published as early as possible before the start of term in September 2015.

Recommendation for the SU: To discover what 'publication of timetables prior to term' means to students over the next year in order to provide information as to when students would prefer to receive their timetable. Then feed this into the enabling business process so the new system being implemented in September 2017 can meet student expectations.

Recommendation for partnership: Explore what measurements should be used to measure improvement with the accuracy and timing of publicising timetables.

Space Planning

The 2014-15 recommendations for the Planon software and Strengthening Estates were:

"A member of the Executive Team of the Students' Union on the group implementing 'Planon' software to improve timetabling."

"As a Union, work to strengthen the level of engagement between facilities, Estates and the SU."

Students are frequently querying the Executive Committee on how space is allocated across the university and why they can't have access to more space. The VP Academic Affairs met with Sam Williams, Head of Strategy and Communications within Estates, and Jayne Bannister, Space Manager to discuss this and to deepen the Students' Union understanding of how the use of space is prioritised, allocated and how student opinion feeds into this process.

The work to strengthen the level of engagement between facilities management, Estates and the Students' Union has seen real benefit this academic year. It has done this in two ways improved communication of what projects are upcoming and why they are happening to the student body. Secondly it has created opportunities for students to work with Estates on different projects on campus, examples of which are:

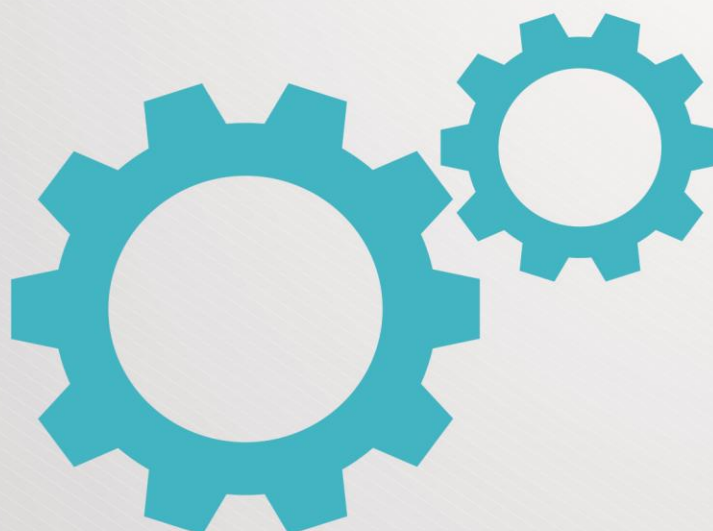
- A Law student has devised a recycling survey, with a focus of distributing this through the Student Village to get the students' thoughts on recycling in their accommodation.
- A group of final level students studying Events Management have organised an event on sustainable travel at the University as part of their degree. Dan Clayton has provided them with funding and resources to support them in order to encourage students and staff to use sustainable modes of transport.
- A Business and Management student is completing an ethnographic dissertation on the impact of Junxion Learning Space on student behaviour. Colleagues within the Space Management & Projects team and the Library team look forward to receiving the results to evaluate these new facilities.

The success of elected student members of Project Steering Groups shown in the Access to Software and Specialised Equipment mentioned earlier, has led to students influencing decisions on the building plans and spaces - such as the swipe card access for the Isaac Newton Building which has continued to be considered since the research was collated and shared. We are continuing this student representative participation on other projects such as the Sarah Swift Building.



ORGANISATION OF THE COURSE

04



Theme - Organisation of the Course

Electronic Attendance Monitoring

The 2014-15 recommendation for Electronic Attendance Monitoring:

"Investigate an electronic attendance monitoring system, with the aim of possibly piloting a system using student cards, within the largest lecture theatres where satisfaction with the current system and accuracy is most acute."

Movement towards fulfilling this recommendation has been minimal due to a variety of issues including: significant costs that would be incurred to install such a system; whether such a system would be acceptable to the UK border agency and the desire to see what impact a new attendance monitoring policy would have. This new policy passed at the end of the 2013-14 academic year has improved the current method of recording attendance. This is a paper based method relying on paper registers being signed by students this is then administered between the schools and the Directorate of Student Affairs with the implementation of the system overseen by the Student Attendance System Group. Since its initial implementation the system has continued to improve, as the implementation has put a strain on School Administrators with inputting the data that we believe an electronic system would mitigate. We do however, understand that there will remain a resource implication for Student Administration even with an electronic system due to the follow up of non-attendance. Automated communication could be part of the electronic system however the benefits and effectiveness of direct mail or e-mails would have to be considered.

The impact of this new process is that many more students are being contacted regarding attendance. This has significant welfare benefits for our students, our Vice President Welfare and Community stated that,

"This policy is beneficial in identifying students who may have stopped attending sessions due to not knowing where to get support from regarding personal issues. Students may face problems such as being homesick, lack of friendships or struggles with the university workload."

These factors affect attendance but also attainment so the improved system is ensuring that more students who may face such issues are discovering the correct help. There are further efficiencies that can be made to help even more students and the step change in

personal tutoring from September 2015 onwards should make further improvements in supporting students. However we continue to believe that electronic attendance monitoring can help produce the biggest improvements in making the system more efficient in a similar way to how colleagues at the University of Essex and University of Leicester have shared. We still need to clarify whether International Students and their Visa requirements could be monitored this way.

Recommendation for the University: In the short term, the ICT department should investigate the costs to implementing an electronic system at Lincoln for the 2016 Budget and Planning cycle.

Recommendation for the University: In the long term the University to implement a Universal Card system which included electronic attendance monitoring.



FEEDBACK AT LINCOLN

05



Theme - Feedback at Lincoln

Feedback

2014-15 Area of Action for Students' Union on Feedback

"Work with the School of Psychology to demonstrate the benefits of the redrafted Assessment and Feedback forms within the School of Psychology, with the view to encourage others to take steps to introduce a similar mechanism."

Timeframe of Feedback

Within last year's AQR we raised the questions; "had the previous extension period from fifteen working days to twenty working days enabled staff to not only meet the turnaround time but also to meet the expectations of students in providing effective feedback?" We posed these questions due to a change in university policy extending the time teaching staff had to return assessment feedback. The measurement for this is the NSS Question Seven 'Feedback on my work has been prompt' which went down to 3.6 in NSS 2014.

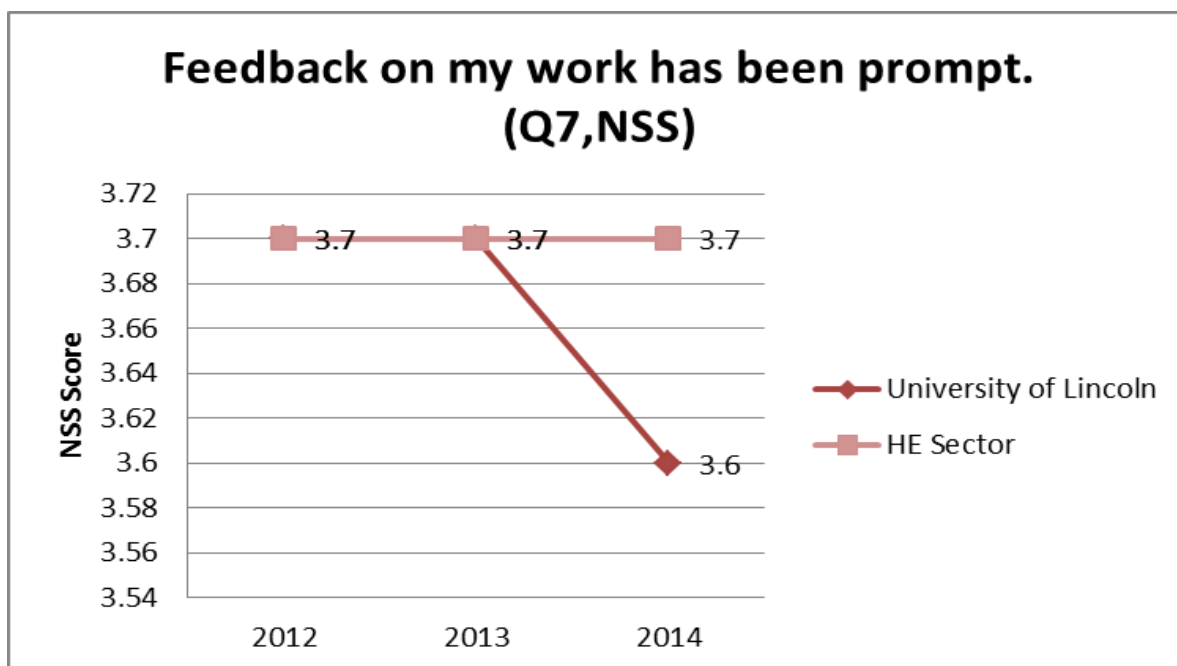


Figure 11: Graph showing the decrease of UoL for Question 7 of NSS, "Feedback on my work has been prompt", in comparison to the HE Sector.

The move from fifteen to twenty working days resulted in the institutional NSS score for Question 7 fall to of 3.6, down from 3.7 from the previous year, which meant that the University was now below the sector average of 3.7. This indicated that the change of timeframe for marking and feedback hadn't been successful in its first year. It was decided by the Senior Management Team after the NSS results were released that the timeframe would reverse back to fifteen days turnaround time for feedback. Since this change, the concerns from reps through rep forums has been that some staff were struggling to meet this target of fifteen working days especially when there were large cohorts. The reps usually expressed understanding towards this and were more focused on good communication to students of the new date when they should expect to receive their feedback, particularly within the College of Social Sciences.

Quality of Feedback

Last year's recommendation was based on the collaborative work that had been completed within the School of Psychology between the staff team and the student representatives. Over the course of the academic year the school rep had held a number of focus groups focussing on the Assessment and Feedback within the school and how to improve it. A result of consultation with both staff and students was to create a self-assessment sheet for students to hand in with their assignments as well as an adapted feedback form to be given by staff when students received these assignments back. Both sheets asked questions of the students and staff in order to be able to create a self-evaluation process and gain constructive feedback that was requested by the students. The recommendation was created to demonstrate why this work was positive and to replicate similar working partnerships elsewhere, but also to measure success within the School of Psychology after implementation of these new mechanisms.

Improving the quality of feedback has been a focus of work this year, with concerns about the quality of feedback coming from Rep Forums and Academic Representation Committee meetings. However, at the time, we had no access to significant research into pin-pointing what they were unhappy with. We identified that this evidence would be most useful if gathered by school/course to allow individual schools to work on solutions to what their students thought of the current feedback received.

'Is your feedback what you need back?' was the title of the campaign, using the language of need rather than want to manage students expectations. The campaign began in December with a pilot in the School of Psychology, and a roll out to the rest of campus in January. The reason behind the choice of Psychology for the pilot is that the School wanted to test its new feedback assessment forms. The 354 responses received showed positive thoughts on the new assessment forms. The campaign allowed the school to ensure that the changes made were in line with student expectations.

The campaign was then extended to all schools using a postcard to capture qualitative comments students were prompted with the campaign title question and two others:

- 'How was the feedback given and is that what you need?'
- 'What do you think about the quality of your feedback?'

These questions were to encourage students to think critically of what they received and constructively about how this could be developed. The postcards were then collated and analysed to gather cross campus view on feedback currently delivered, and then broken down into Schools. Institutional themes were then reported to the Education and Students Committee. All the evidence was also sent to the Director of the Educational Development and Enhancement Unit to inform work within their team through the Assessment Working Group and their sub groups- Assessment Design, Marking & Grading and Feedback.

The response rate for this campaign was 993, with students across campus taking part, the majority of which were Undergraduate students.

College	School	Number of responses
College of Arts	Architecture and Design	49
	English and Journalism	95
	Film and Media	27
	Fine and Performing Arts	19
	History and Heritage	8*
College of Science	Computer Science	26
	Chemistry	42
	Engineering	26
	Life Sciences	17
	Pharmacy	33
College of Social Science	Business	180
	Health and Social Care	10*
	Law	87
	Psychology	356
	Social and Political	8*

Science	
Sports and Exercise Science	3*

Figure 12: Table showing number of respondents per school to ULSU's Feedback Campaign.

(*) schools who did not receive a significant number i.e. 10 or below respondents.

As you can see from the table above there was a low turnout for schools of History and Heritage, Social and Political Science, Sports and Exercise Science and Health and Social Care so they did not receive the data that was collected unless requested, as it was not significant enough.

Some examples of the evaluation of feedback from students are:

"The feedback we have received has been alright although I think if they say you need to change something to explain it in more detail. Also for some modules we are waiting a long time for feedback."

"Last term we were working on four different modules - each one had a different approach to feedback. Two were based verbal feedback, either individual or as a group. One used a feedback sheet, looking at each criteria aspect and giving a comment and the third was simply a grade. Personally I prefer a mixture of both individual vocal feedback (more direct and personal) as well as a feedback sheet which you can take away and look at/assess individually. I think the best feedback is where you get told what went well/not so well and also give some points to work on/improve for next time."

"Not enough feedback in terms of constructive criticism in order to improve. Also there are no set dates for feedback and the return dates are poorly organised."

The school information was then sent to each Head of School, Engagement Champion and School Reps. School Reps were tasked with holding a discussion on the information received within their Subject Committee Meetings in order for students and staff to identify and implement improvements that can be made.

For the School of Life Sciences, the evidence showed that feedback is usually online, on time with occasions where feedback was still handwritten and rarely get any feedback comments at all. Students and Staff members discussed the results of the feedback campaign at a monthly school catch up in March. During this it was noted how useful the campaign was, and that the staff found the comments helpful in planning the next steps. This shall focus on the main issues of feedback being inconsistent, making it even more constructive, and improving its format.

The Lincoln Law School subject committee meeting saw the school rep present some of the evidence collated for students and staff discussion. Earlier in the year the school had edited its feedback form and are using the evidence from the campaign to review its progress.

The School of English and Journalism subject committee meeting concentrated on ensuring essays are given back on time as the evidence supported rep statements that some tutors were taking longer than others. The group also suggested that module handbooks should all have a table attached with the grade boundaries outlined. The representatives of this school stated;

"The campaign had been useful to start a conversation about what assignment feedback has been like for students and to seeing the school improve the feedback in the future."

In the School of Pharmacy, the results were taken to MPharm subject committee and the staff all gave themselves any necessary actions to take forward to improve on any relevant areas. The feedback campaign was successful in the school as it evidenced that students were happy. Going forward it would be interesting to see how the results go as this new school grows.

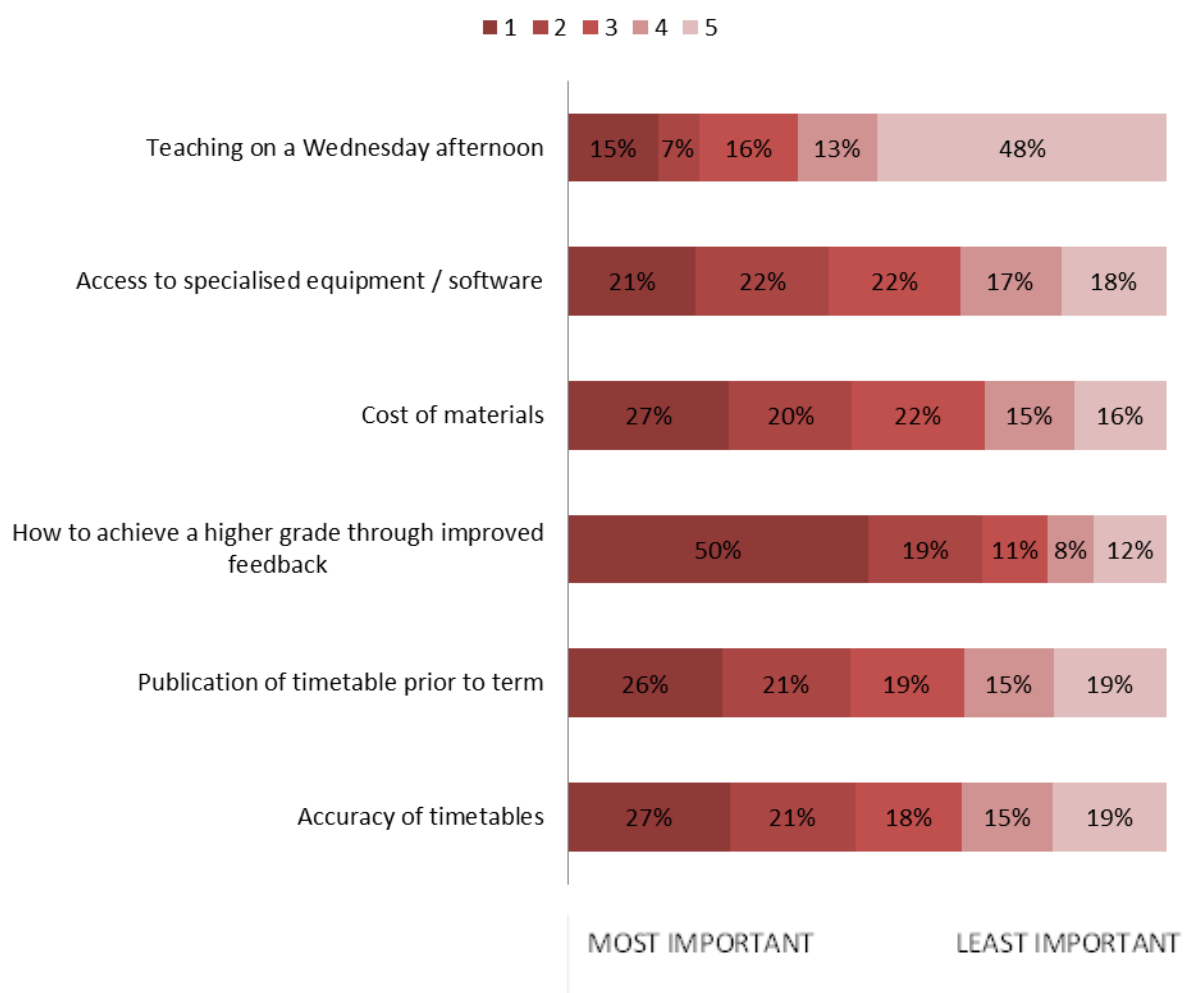


Figure 13: Chart showing on a scale of 1-5 what issues are most important to students. (804 respondents)

The chart above, as previously seen in the Timetabling section, follows up on “90% of respondents to our Membership Survey told us that they are concerned about Academic issues on a daily basis. To help us identify where we should focus our work we asked respondents to rate the issues below 1 for most important to 5 least important to you.

With 804 respondents it demonstrates the most prominent area of work respondents would like us to work on was, “How to achieve a higher grade through improved feedback” with 50% of respondents choosing it as their number one preference.

We now must strongly encourage staff in schools to use the feedback that the Students' Union has gathered to strengthen the feedback they provide within their area. We also welcome the work EDEU are undertaking to review assessment and feedback across the institution and are delighted the work we have done to collate student opinion can feed into this work as well as elected student representatives.

Recommendation for Schools who have not discussed the feedback within their Subject Committee Meetings: Chemistry, Engineering, Computer Science, Health and Social Care, Business, Architecture and Design, Film and Media and Fine and Performing Arts, to do so in 2015/16.

Recommendation for Assessment Working Group: We recommend that the School of Psychology Assessment and Feedback work should be used as best practice, to create a formal Assessment Policy for across the College of Social Sciences.

Recommendation for the SU: That the Student's Union need to concentrate support to student representatives who are members of the sub-groups of the Assessment and Feedback Working Group in order to help with understanding and enable them to have full input into complicated work.

NSS Plans

The 2014-15 recommendation with regards to NSS Plans:

"Merge NSS and Student Engagement Plans to save on duplication of information and developments. Continue the recommendation from 13/14 to include student representatives in consultations of the NSS Action Plans and Student Engagement plans."

The initial recommendation was based on the level of involvement that students had had within their areas NSS Action Plan and their Student Engagement Plans.

This year the move towards Survey Action Plans with the concept of student representatives signing off the plans was welcomed by the Students' Union, as we believed this would encourage partnership and engagement within each area. During training with the senior representatives in early September, they were informed of the level of engagement with the plans that was now expected of them and encouraged them to approach staff to be included with creation of the survey plans. At Academic Representation Committee in October we heard that in some areas Subject Committee Meetings had been used to present a plan to the staff and students but that some students were facing difficulties

during involvement. Using the NSS Dashboard on the University Portal as a reference, we've found that only courses within three schools, of those uploaded to the portal, had the student representative consulted and signed off on. We realise that the reason for this is due to the timeframe in which the plans have to be submitted, i.e. end of October so to encourage involvement we will be providing space and time to do this within Course Representative Training in October. Each Student Engagement Champion will be invited to their school training session and can use as the time as a discussion base and create the plan together with the student representatives. This is a recommendation which we're keen to work with the University schools and departments to progress on as the Student Voice is important for practical change and communication to students of what has been successful – from previous years to future years.



ACADEMIC SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

06



Theme - Academic Support for Students

Support/Advice Service

The 2014-15 recommendation for Support/Advice Service:

“Work to create a Students' Union Support Service offering independent advice and support.”

In last year's Annual Quality Report, the report reinforced the need for the Students' Union to create a Students' Union Advice Centre offering independent advice and support. As students continue to see us as a source of advice and are often disappointed to find out we do not and are unhappy with the level of service provided being signposted to other services. Where we offer support through academic processes they are more satisfied, however some question the lack of dedicated staff support. Over the past year, partnership with the University Advice Team has remained strong, and monthly catch ups have allowed us to not only share information about academic and welfare campaigns, but also to note any common problems that the Students' Union and the Advice team may be encountering.

So far this year we have had requests for support for thirty three academic contention issues, seventeen attendance review panel requests and five Fitness to Practice Panel requests.

Additionally we've had students asking our Vice President Welfare and Community officer for advice on different issues such as housing or bullying, requests so far equalling thirty three, who were signposted to the Accommodation Service or University Advice Team where appropriate. The total number of support instances up until 1st June 2015 is ninety three, an increase on 2013-14 year's fifty three. A full breakdown with a comparison to last year's figures can be seen below.

<u>Type</u>	<u>2013/14</u>	<u>2014/15</u>
Academic Offence	11	4
Review and Appeal	2	5
Student Conduct	1	0

Fitness to Practise Panels/Concerns Meeting	4	5
Student Complaints	28	21
Attendance Review Panels	N/A	17
Housing Concerns	Not recorded.	33
Extenuating Circumstances	7	3
Withdrawal Queries	0	5

Figure 14: Table of support/Advice requests over academic year of 14/15 in comparison to 13/14.

In April, our Board of Trustees approved a budget including an Advice Centre for 2015/16. We have now recruited a manager who will lead on giving independent advice on academic issues in compliment with the University Advice Team. This student service will be launching in September.



Theme - Representation

Democracy Review

This year the President identified a need for the students' unions decision making to evolve so more students can be engaged with it, and to improve its effectiveness as it has not changed in several years, even though the union has expanded and the number of elected reps has also expanded in that time. To lead this work the President created a working group of elected representatives whose characteristics were demographically representative of the student population, i.e. 50% of the group were women etc. They reviewed the current system, evidence from other student unions and nationally from National Union of Students, in particular their 'Democracy is dead, long live Democracy' report. The key recommendations passed by Student Council were:

- The creation of a zone structure within the union. Where elected officers can work on key issues within their areas as now there are more students elected and this work, often involving partners from the university needs a better space to be conducted than it is currently given.
- An International Vice President for the 2016/17 academic year has also been approved which would improve the representation of international students across the university.
- The implementation of an online ideas system is due for Christmas 2015 to introduce more direct and accessible democracy to the union's decision making. This will be used to gauge which issues elected representatives should be discussing and working on.
- We will conduct further research on how to improve postgraduate representation over the 2015-16 academic year

Introduction of Postgraduate Rep System

This year saw the implementation of the PG representation system. Before there were postgraduate reps however they were classed as course reps, elected, trained and supported in exactly the same way as undergraduate reps were. We understand that postgraduate representation needs to reflect the differences in postgraduate experience

unique compared to undergraduate experience and these changes, implemented in line with the university Representation Charter are an attempt to start addressing this. The main changes have been:

- To elect postgraduates as either Postgraduate Research Reps or Postgraduate Taught Reps by school rather than by course. This came from concerns about the scale of running postgraduate representation by course in some schools where those courses are very small.
- For the Business School however we have continued to elect by course where there is a large cohort and this has been positively received by the Student Engagement Champion.
- To give PG Reps separate training from Undergraduate Reps in partnership with the Graduate School.

12. Do you know who your Course Rep or Postgraduate Rep is?

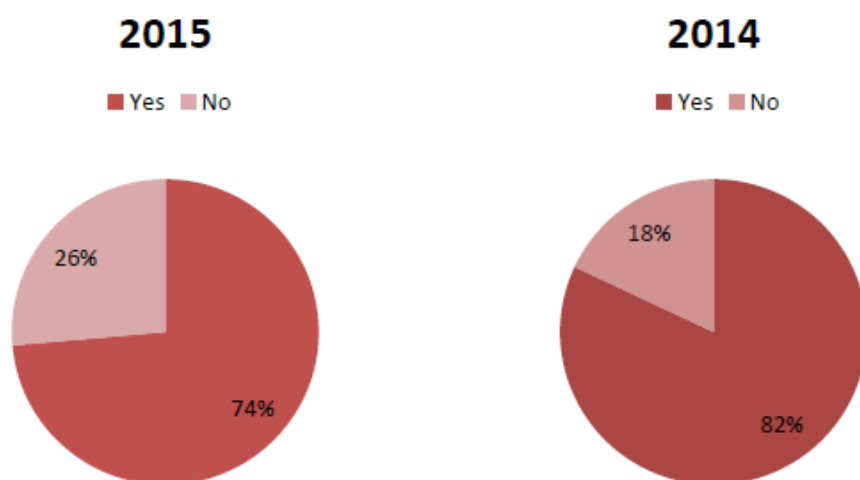


Figure 15 : Annual Membership Survey Q12: Do you know who your Course Rep or Postgraduate Rep is?

2015

Demographic	Yes (%)	No (%)
Undergraduate Students	73%	27%
Postgraduate Research Students	88%	13%
Postgraduate Taught Students	74%	26%

as
key

2014

Demographic	Yes (%)	No (%)
Undergraduate Students	83%	17%
Postgraduate Research Students	40%	60%
Postgraduate Taught Students	77%	23%

from
emphasis on

MS

results showed that some of positive perceptions of the Rep system's effectiveness have reduced by almost four percent. The Rep System's success is driven by communication, accountability, and reliability, which cannot be achieved if Reps are unknown and unused.

14. 'The Course Rep system is effective.'

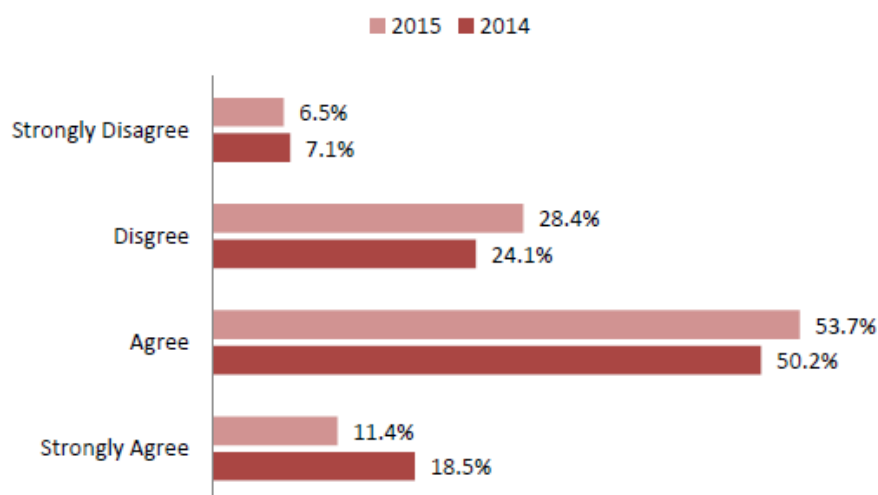


Figure 17: Annual Membership Survey Q14: 'The Course Rep system is effective.'

Students were asked in the AMS whether they felt that the Union represents student views effectively to the University. This year 'don't know' responses were removed and when these have been converted into 'agree' and 'disagree' responses, more moved to the former, preferable response. Continued improvement can be obtained by more determined efforts to publicly complete the feedback loop on successes and impact via our online channels and through Sabbatical Officers' interactions with their networks of students, video blogs and an increase in post campaign planning.

6. 'I feel the Union represents student views effectively to the University.'

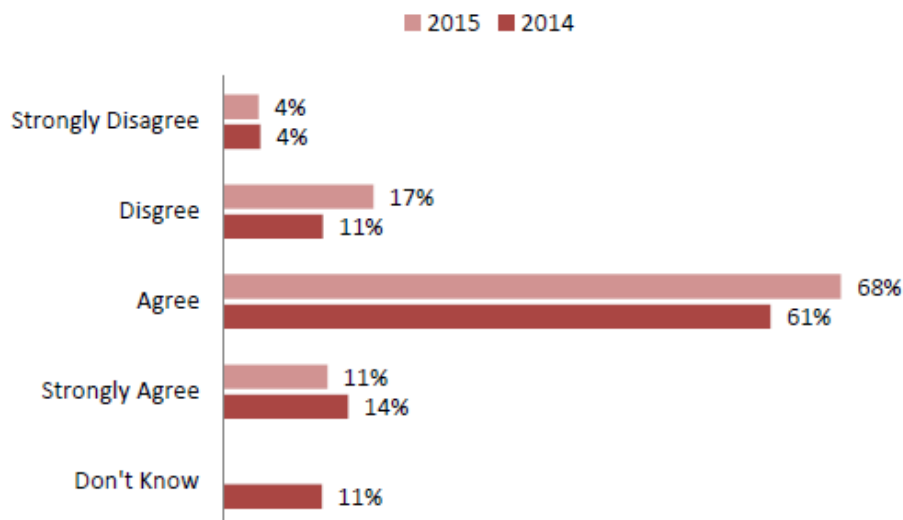


Figure 18: Annual Membership Survey Q6: 'I feel the Union represents student views effectively to the University.'

Recommendations to improve Representation

- Continue to promote Rep wins with the introduction of Rep branding and segmented communication
- Increase ability of all members to influence what the union does and complete this feedback loop
- Increase support for PG reps

- Tighter timescale for PG Rep elections in September/October
- Improved training which is more focused on PTES/PRES results.
- Development of an increased skills based training programme for student reps
- Creation of PG Rep booklet to support them through the year
- Review of leadership of PG Reps within the union as identified in the Democracy Review.
- PG Rep hoodies similar to Course Rep hoodies.
- More emphasis on rep to student communication in Course Rep training
- Create space for Student Engagement Champions and the School Rep to work with course reps on the school NSS Action Plan in Course Rep training
- Increased visibility of reps through posters of course reps in subject areas
- Increased promotion of rep wins to the student body

Academic Societies

As mentioned above, this year the Students' Union has planned a new democratic structure. In the Activities Zone, an Academic Societies Officer has been elected with the aim to improve support for academic societies and encourages their growth. Academic Societies at universities such as Leeds, Surry and Exeter have been an area of growth and development. The Lincoln approach to the future of academic societies has come from elected officers working with relevant societies and the elected academic reps to create the following aims:

- To build a strong partnership between the school and society
- To create an automatic connection between the students and society, becoming the 'norm' for students to join

Using our Societies Zone, we have researched into this area and what we have found from Academic Societies is that they want more support tailored to them. They have identified different needs, priorities and networks which other societies would not have or would not

prioritise. Additionally Academic Representatives were supportive of the idea of linking academic societies and academic representation together. However where applicable, typically when running events. However the academic representatives did have concerns about how we would ensure that Academic Societies reflect their social purpose rather than a representative function.

Over the course of the next year, we plan to:

- Engage key stakeholders including the Heads of Schools, Academic Representatives and the Academic Society committee members. To ensure we all share the same aims and are communicating effectively to avoid confusion about are different roles in building a stronger student experience.
- Meet regularly with the Society and Academic Representatives to discuss the possible partnerships. This could include trips to exhibitions, arranging study groups and attending conferences.
- The relevant Academic Representative is invited to the society committee meeting. Their role on the committee would be to identify potential areas of partnership finding ways to link the activities of the society with those of the school. They would also be able to use the society's usually strong communication methods, to disseminate information.