

University Council:

SU Student Experience Report

Meeting Date :	14th October 2024
Agenda Item & Paper Title:	SU Student Experience Report
Paper Author & email:	Daisy Watson, SU President
Introduction to main points of the paper:	To provide University Council with insight into the Student Experience at Sheffield, including latest updates from the SU.
Are the contents confidential:	No
Paper previously presented at:	N/A

Student Experience

Introduction

It is a requirement of the Education Act (1994) Part II, that the Governing Body of the University of Sheffield ensures Sheffield SU's compliance with certain conditions provided by The Act, including ensuring that the SU is operated in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances. The primary mechanism for this undertaking is the development and monitoring of a Code of Practice, which was reviewed as recently as Summer 2023 and is provided within the University Calendar.

In conversation with the University Secretary, we have agreed to provide a regular report to University Council to update on matters of compliance relative to the Code of Practice, as well as to give Council the opportunity to hear of our broader work, and indeed the wider student experience here at the University of Sheffield.

The Year Just Gone

At the same time as diving into the wonderful and hectic Welcome 2024 programme, we have taken a look back at the year just ended. Highlights include a remarkable 42,027

hours of volunteering opportunities, 4,600 pieces of casework completed to support students, 333 student-led societies, and over 150,000 attendees at our events. Our students also took the time to review our SU in the national WhatUni Student Choice Awards where we were once again named the number 1 Students Union in the UK, for the seventh year running. We were also awarded best Students' Union in the 2024 Student Crowd Awards, and were rated the top SU in this year's National Student Survey.

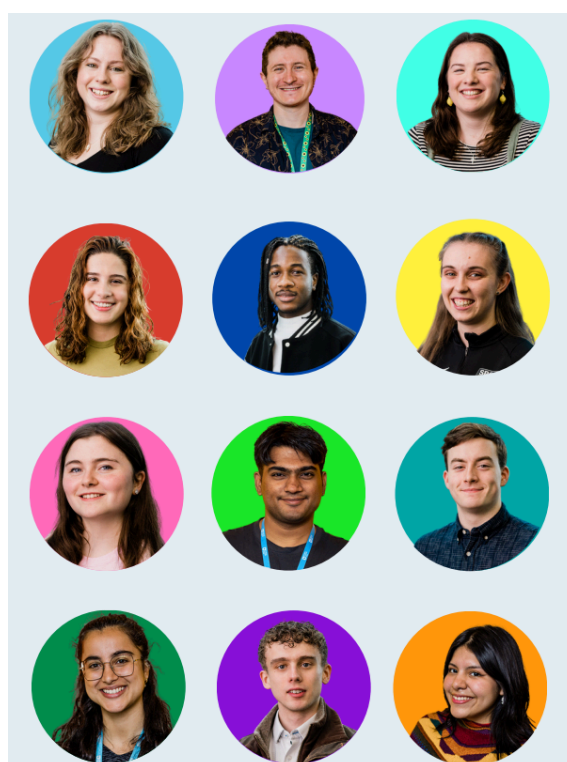
It's exciting to head into the 2024/25 academic year knowing that we are working towards our new strategic goals from such a promising place where our students support us just as much as ever.

Officer Updates

We've welcomed a new Officer Team this year, with the first ever second-year returning officers.

Freshers has been especially busy with Officers helping to welcome the thousands of students descending on the Students' Union and interacting with our 5 fairs - Freshers, Activities, Discover Sheffield, Sustainability and Ethics, and Sports.

University Council members are invited to review our objectives the '[Officer Objective Pack](#)' - our SU President, Daisy, will be presenting these to you at the meeting on October



Upcoming SU Elections: SU Council & Post Graduate Officer

The SU Council elections serve as a key indicator for the upcoming SU Officer Elections, offering insights into student democratic engagement, voice, and development. These elections act as a 'dry run' to assess what strategies are effective and where improvements are needed. A successful outcome will result in the election of 72 roles, including all SU Councillors, the Chair of SU Council, the Postgraduate Students' Part-Time Officer, and nine NUS National Conference Delegates. Voting opens at 10am on 15 October 2024 and closes at 12pm on 17th October 2024.

The SU's New Strategy: Update

A future University Council item will address this more fully, but in summary terms, work has continued to develop the SU's new strategic direction through our associated Theory of Change methodology, and our plans for communication of this new direction.

After the SU's Trustees approved the headline strategy in June, our starting point was the strategic mission statement, which is that Sheffield SU should deliver:

“An outstanding student experience”

The way in which we will fulfil this mission is by supporting, challenging and developing the experience at the SU, University, City and UK Higher Education so students feel that they simultaneously **BELONG** and have **INFLUENCE**. We refer to 'Belong' and 'Influence' as our strategic 'themes' and we refer to the four domains (SU, University, City, UKHE) as our strategic 'lenses'.

In each case we started with a vision for the two themes for each of the 4 lenses - giving us 8 vision statements in total. From there we described the outcomes that would deliver on these visions/impacts and worked backwards to arrive at the projects we need to create in order to deliver those outcomes. We will share the details of this work with the University in the coming months.

Colleagues in the SU's Digital and Marketing teams have been working hard over the summer to develop branding, assets and a new website that will help us communicate our new strategy with key stakeholders internally and externally. We are looking forward to sharing the website University colleagues shortly.

Research into Student Experience & Strategic Impact

Throughout the process of developing our new strategy we have been mindful of the necessity to be able to demonstrate the impact of our work. The data for the KPIs will come from a variety of sources. This will include research activity and analysis of data held in our various systems.

Some of the KPIs will require a rolling programme of research to generate the data we need to feed into the various measures. The research calendar, set out in the table below, lists the key research moments throughout the year. A key area to focus on are the two surveys that we are calling 'BIPS' (Belong & Influence Pulse Surveys). The timing of the

BIPS is designed to allow us to complete the data analysis and present it to the 2nd and 3rd meetings of our Student Engagement & Insight Committee each year.

The SU is adept at these large research campaigns and in the 2023 'Student Voice' survey we received responses from over 10% of the student population. We will be working closely with various contacts in the University to ensure that our research is timed sensitively so as not to clash with UoS research, wherever possible. We will report student experience research outcomes to university colleagues as appropriate, and are open to using our reach and resources to assist the University in its own research, either by including UoS questions in our surveys or by conducting research on behalf of the University.

Start Month	Duration	Research Title	Brief Description	Method	Participants
October	1st - 14th October	Analysis of Welcome	Evaluating the welcome programme, including reach and value, and comparing it to previous years.	Data review (footfall & event attendance, programmes, email open rate, society sign ups, student feedback, demographics of attendees etc.)	N/A
October	16th Oct - 7th Nov	WonkHE 1	WonkHE & Cybil Pulse Survey	Survey	1/3 of all students
November	1st - 22nd Nov	BIPS #1	Wide ranging research incorporating KPI data and other topics as required.	Survey	All students
February	24th Feb - 14th March	WonkHE 2	WonkHE & Cybil Pulse Survey	Survey	1/3 of all students
March	3rd - 22nd March	BIPS #2	Wide ranging research incorporating KPI data and other topics as required.	Survey	All students

March	3 wks	Topical Conversation 1	Qualitative research - topics TBD in response to BIPS findings	Focus Group	Several small groups of students from all levels and fee status.
April	3 wks	Topical Conversation 2	Qualitative research - topics TBD in response to BIPS findings	Focus Group	Several small groups of students from all levels and fee status.
May	9th-30th May	WonkHE 3	WonkHE & Cybil Pulse Survey	Survey	1/3 of all students
May	2 wks	City Survey	To gauge Sheffield residents' views on what students bring to the city.	Survey	TBD
July	4 wks	NSS Analysis	Analysis and summary the results of the NSS + create action plan for is use	Survey	Graduating students

NSS - Using the Data

Teams in the SU have been breaking down the NSS data to make it as useful, accessible and impactful as possible. Academic Reps and SU Council candidates will already have access to the public-facing data from the OfS, and the SU is working on resources to explain why the data matters, how School/Departments compare across the University, and how to use this data for more powerful advocacy.

Freedom of Speech

The new Government has “paused” the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2013. We have not heard further from the Government as to whether the OfS scheme will still proceed or not. Though there is some relief at the pausing of the scheme, not least regarding the increased risks of complaint and associated costs, there has also been much learning and confidence built from the preparation and policy writing, much (if not all) of which remains relevant to our duties under Education Law and Equalities Law. We do therefore intend to continue to apply the SU’s new Free Speech policy (with adjustments) and associated training for staff and student groups etc so we may demonstrate best practice in this increasingly contested and politicised area.