



**solent
students'
union**

Solent Student Life Report

2022/23





INTRODUCTION

Solent Students' Union is proudly run for students, with students. Our purpose is to help students own their experience while at university, by empowering them to improve their education, look after their wellbeing, enhance their employability and ultimately change the world around them.

To be a truly effective membership organisation, it is vital that we understand the lives, views, and aspirations of Solent students. Our new flagship Solent Student Life Report provides insight on the satisfaction and level of importance across more than 50 factors of student life, including teaching quality, university facilities, social life both on campus and in the community, staff diversity, student safety, career prospects, Solent Students' Union services, and more.

It is important that we constantly listen, learn, evolve and be accountable for our actions. The report will analyse the data collected from the Solent Students' Life Survey, together with other surveys conducted over the past year to May 2023, which equates to around 800 individual student responses.

We will present the key themes and trends amongst the student population as well as provide evidence-based recommendations for improvement from both Solent Students' Union and Solent University.

The data will help to develop the Union's strategic plan for 2023 onwards and how we develop our services going forward, whilst ensuring students' voices are firmly at the heart of our planning.

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Methodology

The data analysed within this report has been collected from various surveys launched over the last year, ending May 2023. The Solent Student Life Survey was separated into two phases; the first phase focused on how important aspects of university life were to the individual and their overall student experience, which we use to gauge strength of feeling. The second phase focused on how satisfied the individual is with the different aspects and how these measure in relation to their overall student experience.

Available to complete online and as a physical copy, around 800 individual students contributed to this research. This is around 10% of the student population at Solent University. Our target survey response rate was 25%, which equates to around 1000 responses. Although we did not reach this target, the respondents generally reflect the student population, based on demographic information provided to us by Solent University.

Going forward, and following the recommendations throughout this report, we will launch the Solent Student Life Survey again during a time when the student population and engagement is much higher, such as during term one and Refreshers. This should help secure a higher completion rate and more in depth data to analyse about students satisfaction and level of importance for their experience.

Within this report, it is important to note the following definition of terms used within the graphs, tables, analysis, and evaluation. These are:

- **Importance:** Shorthand for how much weight a student perceives this factor to have on their experience at university.
- **Satisfaction:** How satisfied a student is with their experience of the facility, topic, or service under consideration.
- **Gap:** The difference between the satisfaction score and the importance score. This is calculated as satisfaction minus importance, creating a positive (where satisfaction exceeds importance) or negative (where satisfaction is lower than importance), displayed as points between the percentage scores.

For factors requiring students to state their satisfaction or their perceived importance, a choice of four options were provided, which had a corresponding score:

- **Not at all important / Not at all satisfied:** 0 (zero)
- **Not so important / Not so satisfied:** 3.3
- **Somewhat important / Somewhat satisfied :** 6.6
- **Very important / Very satisfied:** 10

The 'gap' scores shown within the tables and graphs in this report were calculated by averaging the total sum of responses, using the scoring method mentioned above, by the total number of survey respondents.

The reasoning behind this calculative method was to easily display the parts of our students' experiences that are most different from their expectations, and we are conscious that satisfaction scores do not always tell the full story. This report weights a student's satisfaction alongside their indicative strength of feeling (importance) to their lived experience or expectations.

We consider this helpful in understanding true satisfaction, as the experience of those who have interacted with a service or delivery area should be weighted more heavily than those with less exposure. A caveat for this is where students have experienced a barrier towards engagement or exposure, which we will reflect in open comments if necessary.

Large negative gaps (a negative gap score which is greater than 15 percentage points of the satisfaction score) are displayed in red:

Larger negative gaps show a greater disparity between how important a student believes a facility, topic, or service is to their overall student experience and their feeling towards it. This can be simplified as areas in which students are generally less satisfied compared to their expectations.

Medium negative gaps (a negative gap score which is between 6 and 14 percentage points of the satisfaction score) are displayed in orange:

A medium negative gap shows students' experiences of this area do not quite meet expectations.

Small negative gaps (a negative gap score which is between 1 and 5 percentage points of the satisfaction score) are displayed in green):

A small gap, which we have limited by a maximum of seven points implies that students are almost content with the facility, topic, or service. This can be simplified as areas of least concern for the Solent University and Solent Students' Union and does not require urgent attention compared to the larger gaps.

Positive gaps (a positive gap score zero and above) are displayed in blue:

Positive gaps demonstrate that the facility, topic, or service is meeting or exceeding our students' expectations.

As always, the individual stories behind scores are not always obvious. Large negative gaps may occur as a result of very high expectations, even when satisfaction scores are at a point generally considered to be excellent. Likewise, a positive score could be generated by students not fully understanding what they should expect from a service or area of delivery. Nevertheless, we have produced this report with no agenda other than to better understand the experiences and views of Solent University students, share what they are telling us, and improve their time with us.

LONG TERM ASPIRATIONS

Our intention is to run the Solent Student Life Survey every year with input from at least 10% of the student population. This inaugural report presents student views in its own context, but from 2023-24 will include historical data to measure changes in importance and satisfaction over time.

We hope this will become a valued annual report for all members of the Solent University community.

DISPLAY OF RESULTS

Throughout the document, the total overall score will always be displayed first. Other tables may also be included to provide the experiences of different cohorts, such as home and international students, or how the scores are allocated by faculty. Additional information will be included if the results show information we consider noteworthy.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1			
		University demographics	Survey demographics
Faculty	Business, Law, and Digital Technologies	36.33%	36.97%
	Creative Industries, Architecture and Engineering	28.15%	30.26%
	Sport, Health and Social Sciences	23.57%	26.18%
	Warsash Maritime School	10.24%	5.39%
Home/ International	Home	64.90%	66.05%
	International	35.10%	33.16%
Gender	Men	55.14%	44.98%
	Women	44.83%	50.85%

The demographic dataset above is displayed for Solent University and the dataset collected through our Solent Student Life survey. It is important to note that the demographics supplied by Solent University of our members are extremely limited and do not break down deep enough into protected characteristics, including expanded gender-identities, sexuality, nationality, disability, and many others. As a result, our Solent Student Life Survey had to mirror these limitations to accurately compare the data and provide recommendations.

Going forward, we will be working with the university to further expand these demographics and break them into more specific parameters for the next survey launch. This will allow both the Students' Union and the university to better understand the broad range of students who study at Solent University and how we can target them more effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE OVERALL DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

Solent University

- To renew the data sharing agreement with the Students' Union to expand the range of information provided.

Students' Union

- To consider acquiring a broader range of demographic information from Solent University an enabling priority for understanding the experiences of its members.

A note about Warsash Maritime School (WMS)

The data above is representative of the student population who completed the survey for each faculty, except for Warsash Maritime School. This is due to the limited number of cadets who completed the survey to provide enough quantifiable data.

We must deliberate why this number is lower than other facilities and contributing factors could include the difference in their timetables compared to other students, their physical location, or their opinion of the Students' Union and the value of completing the survey.

This opens the opportunity to further our understanding and engagement with Warsash cadets through more targeted communications to improve the completion rate for the next Solent Student Life Survey.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE RESPONSE RATE FROM WMS:

Students' Union

- To engage differently with WMS cadets to ensure responses can be considered representative.

Home vs international

Within this report, it is important to note the following definition of terms used within the graphs, tables, analysis, and evaluation. These are:

- **Home student:** A student who studies at Solent University who is eligible for home fee status, as defined by the UK Government.
- **International student:** A student who studies at Solent University who is not eligible for home fee status, as defined by the UK Government.

According to the Solent University data, the number of international students studying at Solent is around one-third of the total student population. This is reflected in the demographic split for this area in our survey, suggesting that we are reaching a similar proportion of our members as the number studying at the university.

Gender

The Solent University dataset we use provides only 'man' and 'woman' as gender distinctions and does not record the other gender identities in which our members may identify. As noted in our recommendation around the demographic data, we will work closely with Solent University to ensure the data provided is as diverse and inclusive as possible for the next survey launch. This will help us to gain more insight into the broad range of students who study at Solent University and allow for more effective communication to better understand the needs and wants of our members.

We have experienced a disproportionate response rate from students recorded as female, compared to those recorded as male. We do not presently have any indication of how this materialised for this survey, although some research does exist¹ that recognises a higher rate of women responding to the university faculty surveys than men.

Missing data

We have not been able to acquire information detailing how many students sit in different age brackets or levels of study. Therefore, we are not able to state how representative our responses are of those segments.

Attempts were made to obtain this information from colleagues within Solent University but had not been provided in time for publication. We hope a new data sharing agreement with expanded scope will eliminate this for future reports.

¹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234742407_Does_Gender_Influence_Online_Survey_Participation_A_Record-Linkage_Analysis_of_University_Faculty_Online_Survey_Response_Behavior

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the whole, we have learned that students at Solent University have a high level of satisfaction with many aspects of their experience, albeit outpaced by their extremely high expectations and importance attached to these factors.

We see the key areas for improvement in the following areas:

Developing a richer understanding of the expectations of Solent University students

Given the high importance scores hovering around 90 percent for various *Learning and Teaching* factors, coupled with satisfaction ratings ranging between 70-79%, it is evident that there is a significant opportunity to pinpoint areas of improvement. This is based on the gap between the high expectations and the current satisfaction level among students. While it might not be feasible to find quick, effortless solutions in this domain, gaining an in-depth understanding of what students expect can serve as a crucial first step towards enriching the overall *Learning and Teaching* experience at Solent University.

By delving into the specifics of student expectations, we can identify potential areas that require enhancement or modification. This could include aspects like teaching methods, learning resources, course content, or even classroom environment. Understanding these expectations can provide valuable insights and offer a roadmap towards creating a more effective and satisfying educational environment.

Moreover, aligning these improvements with the high importance scores would ensure that we are focusing on the elements that matter most to our students. This strategy would not only boost satisfaction scores but also foster a more engaging and conducive learning atmosphere at Solent University. Hence, while the task may not present many easy wins, the long term benefits to the quality of education imparted at Solent University make it a worthwhile endeavour.

Building a greater sense of community

There is a noticeable discontent among students regarding their social experiences on campus, indicating a need for significant improvements in this area. This dissatisfaction is particularly profound among international students, who may be facing additional challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and homesickness, which could further impact their overall campus experience.

The need to enhance the social experiences on campus is not just about providing more opportunities for recreation or entertainment. It extends to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment where every student feels valued, engaged, and connected. For international students, this might involve introducing initiatives that encourage cultural exchange, language support, and integration into the local student community.

Recognising this pressing concern, the Students' Union is taking proactive measures. As part of its new strategic plan, the union will focus on improving the social dynamics on campus. This could encompass a wide range of initiatives - from organising more diverse and inclusive events, fostering peer-mentorship programs, enhancing support services for international students, to setting up platforms for open dialogues and feedback.

By prioritising the enhancement of social experiences on campus, the students' union aims to create a vibrant, inclusive and supportive community that enriches every student's journey. The end goal is to ensure that all students, irrespective of their origin, find a sense of belonging and engagement during their time with us at Solent University.

Improving the experience of international students

The experience of international students at Solent University appears to be less satisfactory compared to their domestic counterparts. Across nearly all areas evaluated, home students have expressed higher satisfaction levels, indicating a disparity that needs urgent attention.

International students bring a wealth of cultural diversity and global perspectives to our campus, enriching the educational experience for everyone. However, it seems that their unique needs and challenges might not be adequately addressed, leading to a subpar experience. These challenges could range from language barriers, adapting to a new education system, cultural differences, social integration issues, to dealing with homesickness.

Therefore, it is crucial that targeted steps are taken to enhance the overall experience of international students at Solent

University. This could involve a comprehensive approach addressing various aspects of their university journey.

For starters, academic support tailored to the needs of international students could be strengthened. This might involve offering additional language support or tutoring services, workshops on local academic practices, and more accessible course materials.

In terms of social integration, efforts can be made to foster a more inclusive campus culture. Regular multicultural events, international student clubs, mentorship programs, and platforms for cultural exchange can help international students feel more connected and engaged.

Additionally, practical support regarding accommodation, visa issues, healthcare, and part-time employment could also be enhanced to ease their transition into life in a new country.

Through these focused measures, we can work towards ensuring that international students at Solent University not only achieve academic success but also enjoy a rewarding and enriching university experience.



LEARNING AND TEACHING

Students were asked to think about eight factors concerning their experience of learning and teaching. Unsurprisingly, students told us that they considered the majority of these factors to be of extremely high importance, as in most cases this aspect of university life was the reason for joining Solent University.

We have found that while satisfaction scores are commendable, students' expectations are understandably high, resulting in sometimes quite sizable negative satisfaction gaps. These gaps should be considered as real, yet within the context of generally high satisfaction.

Table 2	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Overall teaching quality and standards	92%	70%	-22
Quality of online learning	80%	69%	-11
Quality of in-person learning	91%	75%	-16
Practical teaching time	89%	73%	-16
Overall course content	90%	72%	-18
Diversity of your course staff	73%	77%	4
Staff with in-depth knowledge and experience within your chosen industry	93%	83%	-10
External/guest speakers for your course	68%	68%	0

The table below splits the results into ‘Home’ and ‘International’ cohorts.

Table 3	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Overall teaching quality and standards	93%	70%	-23	92%	74%	-18
Quality of online learning	76%	62%	-14	84%	72%	-12
Quality of in-person learning	95%	70%	-15	89%	78%	-11
Practical teaching time	93%	74%	-19	87%	73%	-14
Overall course content	92%	73%	-19	88%	73%	-15
Diversity of your course staff	65%	79%	14	80%	76%	-4
Staff with in-depth knowledge and experience within your chosen industry	95%	87%	-8	91%	81%	-10
External/guest speakers for your course	59%	68%	9	75%	67%	-8

OVERALL TEACHING QUALITY AND STANDARDS

This factor looks at the broad provision of teaching at the University, with students stating their overall opinion.

Table 4	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Overall teaching quality and standards	92%	70%	-22

Table 5	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Overall teaching quality and standards	93%	70%	-23	92%	74%	-18

From the results, we can see that the *Overall Teaching Quality and Standards* is of high importance for our students, with a 92 percent strength of importance. This score is expected to be extremely high as our members choose to study in higher education to further their learning and expect high-quality teaching standards to best prepare them for their future careers.

The negative 22-point gap between the importance score compared to the satisfaction score may at first glance appear to be a poor result, however it should be noted the satisfaction score alone for *Overall Teaching Quality and Standards* is also very high. This shows that a large majority of our students are pleased with the *Overall Teaching Quality and Standards* of their chosen course, even if not fully meeting their expectations.

Breaking down the data further into home students compared to international students, both cohorts value the importance of their course with almost identical scores and are satisfied overall with the quality of teaching and standards.

However, there is a small negative 5-point difference between home student and international student satisfaction, with home students being slightly less pleased with their course compared to international student satisfaction. It would be necessary to undertake further research to understand the cause of this.

Student comments:

“We as a group have reached out to course leaders and lectures and have had very little assistance or change. Grading has been harsh. Hand in dates and exhibitions have been unorganised. Overall, my time at Solent has been three years of stress. I have learnt more in my own time than at the university. This experience was not worth anywhere close to £60,000.”

“Sometimes I feel a bit of an outcast in my course, I feel different to other people and found it hard to make friends. Sometimes I felt my teachers don’t understand who I am as a person but they would be there for me if I had worries”
“Please look into improving every art course, as we get bulldozed everytime we raise a concern about our course with our lecturers.”

“I would recommend Solent to my friends because I believe that they have a lot to offer in terms of facilities and teaching.”

“The lecturers tell us that all the essays are moderated to ensure tolerance, but we’ve all noticed that some lecturers mark much harder than others, we’ve raised this but have been told that it’s not an issue.”

Although the satisfaction scores are high, there is still work to be done to reduce this gap over the next academic year. Recommendations on how to potentially achieve this goal are listed below.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE OVERALL TEACHING QUALITY AND STANDARDS SCORE:

Solent University

- To ensure course staff work closely with elected Course Representatives to gather more information and honest feedback from students about what they expect from their course and the lecturers, why this has/has not been met, and how this can be improved. This can be achieved through a series of smaller surveys or focus groups with students.
- Staff could refresh their knowledge and understanding of the Course Representatives for their course and the importance of their role when it comes to creating change and gathering feedback on the course.
- Work more closely with Solent Students’ Union to ensure the feedback loop is being effectively closed and communicated back to students when change occurs or is in process.
- Review the standard and application of feedback forms at the end of each module, ensuring anonymity and encouragement for honesty.
- To review how feedback is incorporated into curriculum design.

Students’ Union

- To provide more in-depth training for Course Representative on how to gather feedback from our members and how to effectively relay this information back to the Students’ Union.
- To better support Solent University staff on Course Representative recruitment and the process. This would allow for university staff to have appropriate guidance and a better understanding on how Course Representatives are elected. This could then encourage more students to sign up and increase the avenues for more course feedback.
- To provide year-round support and contact for Course Representative to gain a better understanding of course matters arising throughout the academic year. This will allow us to identify trends easier and help Course Representative feel more supported in their role.

ONLINE LEARNING

Virtually all students will have, at some point, encountered the prospect of learning via online delivery, whether as a result of Covid-19 or the hybrid approach since the end of lockdowns. This can be impacted by various matters, such as how course content converts to an online delivery method, their technological competence or that of teaching staff, access to equipment, and internet connection.

Table 6	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Quality of online learning	80%	69%	-11

Table 7	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Quality of online learning	76%	62%	-14	84%	72%	-12

As many of our students started their university journey during the Covid-19 pandemic, and with the ease of hybrid teaching, the tools of online learning have been incorporated into students' schedules.

Therefore, it is no surprise that the *Quality of Online Learning* has a high importance score. We can recognise this as the product of many months' experience during the Covid-19 lockdowns where the unplanned transition to web video formats at institutions across the world led to an inequitable application. Students therefore understand the importance of high-quality teaching and delivery methods when learning remotely.

The satisfaction score at 69 percent creates a negative 11-point gap when compared to importance. This negative 11-point gap may appear to be an objectionable score, however the satisfaction score alone for *Quality of Online Learning* is still extremely high, implying that students are generally pleased with the practicality of online learning and still finding it beneficial to their university experience.

However, it is vital to remember that not all courses are suitable for online learning as their primary method of teaching. If Solent University lecturers are relying heavily on online learning compared to in-person learning, then students may not gain the necessary hands-on knowledge needed to be content with their course. This is an area in which recommendations can be applied to close the gap and increase the satisfaction score.

Looking at the breakdown between home students and international students and their strength of feeling towards the *Quality of Online Learning*, we see that international students are more satisfied than home students by positive 10-points. It would be necessary to undertake further research to understand the cause of this.

International students also consider online learning to be a higher level of importance to them, with a score of 84 percent, compared to home students, which has 76 percent. The comparative difference between the gap scores of negative 14-points and negative 12-points is a marginal difference between the two groups, which suggests that they feel almost the same towards the *Quality of Online Learning*. It would be necessary to undertake further research to understand the cause of this.

Although the satisfaction scores are high, there is still work to be done to reduce this gap over the next academic year. Recommendations on how to potentially achieve this goal are listed below.

Student comments:

"More time spent in University rather than online. Most importantly, more support should be given to people with long term health conditions as I have been told that Extenuating Circumstances can only be used for acute issues."

"To experience face to face teaching from 1st year to 3rd year, instead of experiencing online learning throughout 1st year which was unsuccessful in academic learning due to lack of practical participation and face to face teaching."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE ONLINE LEARNING FACTOR:

University

- To actively seek feedback on the experiences of online learning as part of course and module evaluations.
- Acquire understanding of students' preferred learning style, implementing adaptations where possible.
- Ensure online learning is as inclusive as possible (for example, ensuring meetings are recorded and captioned, and posted on the student portal for ease of access) to ensure students have appropriate access.

Students' Union

- Provide year-round support and contact for Course Representatives to better understand course matters.
- To provide more in-depth training for Course Representatives on how to gather feedback from our members and effectively relay this information to the Students' Union.

IN-PERSON LEARNING

The generally more traditional method of delivery is experienced by all students. We believe in the benefits of in-person learning in creating networks and connections with others on the course, though recognise difficulties attending through considerations such as mental health, commuting time/cost, and responsibilities outside of university.

Table 8	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Quality of in-person learning	91%	75%	-16

Table 9	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Quality of in-person learning	95%	70%	-15	89%	78%	-11

The overall level of importance for in-person learning at 91 percent is considerably higher than online learning at 80 percent. The negative 11-point gap between the two suggests students still consider face-to-face learning as a major part of their university experience. This could be due to students still feeling the fatigue of online learning from the pandemic and are eager to be on campus with more direct learning in-person from their lecturers.

Comparing the importance score against the satisfaction score, we can see a negative 16-point gap. Students still value the importance of in-person learning and we expected this score to be high due to the history of higher education being primarily taught offline through lecturers or practical lessons.

The satisfaction score is still extremely high, which shows students are pleased with the quality of *In-person Learning*, albeit with room for growth. This could suggest the teaching quality of face-to-face lecturers and lessons at Solent University has decreased since the move to more hybrid learning.

Looking deeper into the gap scores for home students against international students for the quality of *In-person Learning*, we can see that home students say they value in-person learning more than international students. It would be necessary to undertake further research to understand the cause of this.

On the other hand, international students are more satisfied with the quality of *In-person Learning*. It would also be necessary to undertake further research to understand the cause of this.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE IN-PERSON LEARNING FACTOR:

Solent University

- Enforce using lecture-capture technology to record lectures and make them available to students online. This benefits students who may miss a lecture due to illness or other commitments and allows them to review the material at their own pace, or revisit a session they attended in person.

Students' Union

- Encourage course and faculty representatives to find out the overall issues relating to *In-person Learning* to give feedback to the Solent University to work together on improving the provisions.

PRACTICAL TEACHING TIME

This factor looks at the practical and non-theory aspect of learning, which requires students to do, make, or gain experience with tools of the trade.

Table 10	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Practical teaching time	89%	73%	-16

Table 11	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Practical teaching time	93%	74%	-19	87%	73%	-14

Like overall teaching quality, online learning and in-person learning, we predicted practical teaching time to have a high feeling of importance for students. At 89 percent, this score is lower than the previous three, which could be a result of not all courses incorporating a practical element.

The gap score of negative 16-points is a result of the satisfaction score being low in comparison to students' strength of feeling towards practical learning. The satisfaction score is still extremely high overall, which indicates that students are generally fulfilled with the practical teaching time they have received so far.

Looking at the data more closely, we can see home students value practical teaching time to a greater extent than international student, but the negative 19-point gap in satisfaction is a concern. It would be necessary to undertake further research to understand the cause of this.

Similarly, international students also consider practical teaching time to be imperative to their student experience, with an importance score of 87 percent. However, this is a slight decrease compared to the strength in which home students feel this method of learning is important.

Both the gap scores for home and international students are fairly large, though there is only one percentage point difference in satisfaction levels, suggesting home and international students experience this in a similar way.

When incorporating age groups, the satisfaction level with practical teaching time dips off significantly in the 26+ age brackets, though it would be necessary to undertake further research to understand the cause of this.

Table 12	18-21			22-25			26-30			30+		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Practical teaching time	92%	77%	-15	87%	77%	-10	89%	68%	-21	86%	63%	-23

Student comments:

"About the schedule like we have classes four days in a week, which was very difficult for us to come on daily basis, putting a negative effect on our studies, I hope university will consider this, and other thing is tuition fees, university should give more flexibility to students in paying tuition fees, some student due to some reasons are not able to pay the instalment of tuition fee on time so university should give them extra time."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE PRACTICAL TEACHING TIME FACTOR:

Solent University

- Use feedback from students to ensure that all facilities regarding practical teaching time are of an adequate standard and appreciated by the students who are accessing them.

Students' Union

- Encourage representatives from courses that rely heavily on practical teaching to engage with their cohorts to provide academic and administrative staff with valuable feedback.

OVERALL COURSE CONTENT

To create distinction from teaching quality and standards, we also asked students to tell us their feelings around the actual content delivered through their course.

Table 13	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Overall course content	90%	72%	-18

Table 14	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Overall course content	92%	73%	-19	88%	73%	-15

Overall Course Content has a very high importance score, which was predicted as this is a primary factor of why individuals attend higher education and choose their course – to develop their learning through what the course can provide and how it prepares them for the next stages of their careers.

It is reasonable to see how *Overall Course Content* works in harmony with *Quality of Teaching and Standards*, for the level of importance students feel this has on their university experience, as both datasets scored 90 percent or higher. If the quality of the course content is of high standard, but if not being taught effectively, students’ satisfaction will likely decrease for both facotes as their expectations have not been met.

This factor has the second largest gap score in the table above, behind *Overall Quality of Teaching and Standards*, with a negative 18-point difference.

With this in mind, the satisfaction score is still relatively high, with a score of 72 percent. Nevertheless, it is not reaching the strength of importance expected by our members overall.

Breaking the data down into individual faculties, all students have strong feelings of the importance the *Overall Course Content* holds for their university experience.

Table 15	FoCIAE			FoBLDT			FoSHSS			Warsash
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Not enough data
Overall course content	90%	69%	-21%	88%	73%	-15%	96%	76%	-20%	

Comparing home students to international students, we can see in *Table 14* that home students consider this factor to be marginally more significant than international students, but both importance scores are still high. As we can see in the dataset, the satisfaction score is identical for both cohorts, suggesting a similar standard of experience.

Although the satisfaction scores are strong, there is still work to be done to reduce this gap over the next academic year. Recommendations on how to potentially achieve this target are listed below.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE OVERALL COURSE CONTENT FACTOR:

Solent University

- Ensure the application of robust feedback mechanisms that permit commentary on the course content.
- Endeavour to ensure that students understand why the course content is considered to help them achieve their learning objectives.

Students’ Union

- Collect data throughout the academic year from Course Representatives and the general student population to support Solent University in improving the provision of course content.

STAFF DIVERSITY

An observation we have made over recent years has been the increase in knowledge and awareness among students towards the importance of diversity and inclusion throughout society. This has been reflected in pledges by organisations such as universities to increase the diversity of its workforce, an example of which can be found in Solent University’s Race Equality Charter. Students here state their feelings around the diversity of the staff at Solent University.

Table 16	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Diversity of your course staff	73%	77%	4

Table 17	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Diversity of your course staff	65%	79%	14	80%	76%	-4

From *Table 16*, we can see that *Diversity of Your Course Staff* received a high importance score of 73 percent. However, this factor has the second lowest importance score in the dataset for the learning and teaching category in comparison to the various other factors that could impact a students’ experience at university. This suggests that students feel more strongly about the course configuration and delivery than the characteristics of those teaching.

Overall, students may not consider staff diversity to be as crucial as the course content or the methods in which they are taught, but the data demonstrates a desire for diversity in the staffing of their course.

International students have a higher feeling of importance to staff diversity with 80 percent, compared to home students at 65 percent.

The dataset also shows that although home students have a lower importance score than international students, the gap score is positive 14-points. This suggests home students are more satisfied with diversity of staff than they expected. The gap score for international students is negative 4-points. The satisfaction score is high at 79 percent but does not reach or exceed the level of importance for our EU and non-EU members. Overall, international students consider diversity of staff to be more important than home students and are also less satisfied.

Interestingly, the *Diversity of Your Course Staff* factor is the only aspect overall in this category to have a positive gap score. The satisfaction score of 77 percent has created a positive 4-point gap, which is driven by home students.

The dataset on staff diversity has created a focus for improvement and recommendations to ensure the importance score and satisfaction score are both increased throughout the new academic year.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE DIVERSITY OF STAFF FACTOR:

Solent University

- Continue to work towards the targets in the Race Equality Charter.

Students’ Union

- Ensure that SU recruitment practices are inclusive and encouraging of a diverse range of applicants.

STAFF WITH AN IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE

Table 18	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Staff with in-depth knowledge and experience within your chosen industry	93%	83%	-10

Table 19	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Staff with in-depth knowledge and experience within your chosen industry	95%	87%	-8	91%	81%	-10

Staff with in-depth knowledge and experience is the highest-scoring factor for importance in the *Learning and Teaching* category, showing that students consider it to be the most valuable factor to their university experience. The dataset demonstrates that the feeling is almost identical between home and international students, with only a minor 4-point gap between their importance scores. This factor also received the highest level of satisfaction in the category, showing students are more content with the level of staff knowledge than other aspects of *Learning and Teaching*.

Both home and international cohorts show a desire for increased satisfaction in this area, though the level of expectation is incredibly high so comfort can be taken from the excellent level of existing satisfaction.

Student comments:

“The facilities are great, lecturers have good connections to the industry or are in it themselves, overall a really nice and positive learning community to be part of.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE STAFF KNOWLEDGE FACTOR:

Solent University

- Seek to maintain or improve the recruitment, retention, and reward of staff with high levels of knowledge of their subject area.

Students’ Union

- Undertake further research to learn how satisfaction in this area is concentrated across the academic portfolio.

EXTERNAL SPEAKERS

Finally in the *Learning and Teaching* section, students were asked their feelings on their experience of external speakers. These are specifically related to the course rather than any extra-curricular arrangements such as those made by students’ union societies.

Table 20	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
External/guest speakers for your course	68%	68%	0

Table 21	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
External/guest speakers for your course	59%	68%	9	75%	67%	-8

In the *Learning and Teaching* category, the *External Speakers* factor demonstrates the highest level of relative satisfaction between home and international students. While the actual satisfaction rate is roughly the same between these two cohorts, international students report that *External Speakers* are much more important to their experience than do home students.

This could suggest that *External Speakers* represent a more significant aspect of the university experience in overseas markets, or the higher level of fees leading to higher expectations.

In comparison, home students have a positive 9-point gap between their importance score and satisfaction score. Their importance score is only just above average with 59 percent. This suggests that home students have an almost neutral feeling of importance to external and guest speakers.

Student comments:

“I wish we had big lectures and invited professors to come speak on psychology. I feel this would inspire a lot of students and was one thing I expected to have at university and it hasn’t happened once.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE EXTERNAL SPEAKERS FACTOR:

Solent University

- Review the provision of external speakers, making sure they are tailored for students that value this form of learning.

Students’ Union

- Support our societies in inviting external speakers to their events.



FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Supporting Solent University’s ability to deliver learning and teaching are the ‘professional services’, providing functions that cater to other aspects of a student’s experience.

Table 22	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Catering services on campus	64%	75%	11
University-provided student support	82%	79%	-3
University-provided career support	78%	71%	-7
Solent Library	84%	81%	-3
Spaces to work/study on campus	84%	81%	-3

Table 23	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Catering services on campus	56%	75%	19	70%	75%	5
University-provided student support	76%	81%	5	86%	78%	-8
University-provided career support	70%	75%	5	84%	69%	-15
Library	80%	81%	1	87%	81%	-6
Spaces to work/study on campus	78%	82%	4	89%	81%	-8

CATERING SERVICES ON CAMPUS

Students were asked their feelings regarding catering services on campus, such as East Park Deli, Costa, and The Dock.

Table 24	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Catering services on campus	64%	75%	11

Table 25	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Catering services on campus	56%	75%	19	70%	75%	5

Of the non-teaching service delivery areas of university responsibility, catering services is the only factor to achieve an overall positive satisfaction gap, with a score of 11-points.

The gap increases when we look exclusively at the home student cohort, though international students do also report satisfaction at a higher level than they have expectations.

These scores have been helped in part by the lower-than-average level of importance reported by home students. Catering services are generally more important to international students, though both cohorts state the same level of satisfaction at 75 percent.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE CATERING SERVICES FACTORS:

Solent University

- Continue the mystery-diner programme to receive insights from students on price, service, quality, and range.
- Establish additional means of obtaining customer feedback.
- Understand the needs of students who are not currently customers.

UNIVERSITY-PROVIDED STUDENT SUPPORT

Students were asked to consider their experience of accessing student support such as that offered through the Student Hub.

Table 26	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
University-provided student support	82%	79%	-3

Table 27	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
University-provided student support	76%	81%	5	86%	78%	-8

University-provided Student Support, especially around mental health, is extremely vital and while the satisfaction gap is relatively small in comparison to some others, as is mentioned later in the report, mental health is a huge priority for students. International students feel student support is more important than home students do but report being much less satisfied than home students.

In *Table 27* we can see that international students report a significant negative satisfaction gap of 13-points compared to home students, linked to the very high level of importance placed upon this service. While the satisfaction score is very respectable, it is three-points lower than for home students yet much more important.

Table 28	1 st Year			2 nd Year			3 rd Year + (UG)			Post Grad		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
University-provided student support	82%	73%	-9	79%	79%	0	69%	66%	-3	89%	85%	-4

As seen in *Table 28*, first-year undergraduate students report the greatest negative satisfaction gap compared to other year groups, based on a high level of satisfaction. Postgraduate students report a higher level of expectation in this regard.

Also in *Table 28*, it can be noted that students state a reduction in importance as they progress through an undergraduate course. This could be down to students attaining an improved level of self-support during their time at university.

Student comments:

“Lots of support from student hub etc available with mental health, supportive atmosphere.”

“Having the ability to be supported and counted as a part of a team! Solent is a very chilled and relaxing university from my experience till now. I love being here honestly where I feel heard and included.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE UNIVERSITY-PROVIDED STUDENT SUPPORT FACTOR:

Solent University

- Target students at the start of their education so they are aware from day one the types of support they can receive.
- Work closely with Solent Students' Union to share identified trends and provide a joined-up approach to provision of student support.
- Endeavour to understand the different expectations or requirements of international students seeking support, compared to home students.

Students' Union

- Empower our Sabbatical Officers to run mental health campaigns with support from Solent University, so students are aware of where they can be signposted towards.
- Work with our societies based around international communities so that they can correctly direct students to the correct support that they need.

UNIVERSITY-PROVIDED CAREERS SUPPORT

Supplementary wording for students encouraged them to think about their experience of *University-provided Careers Support*, such as that offered by Solent Futures. It is reasonable to expect that students might also have considered careers support provided by their course team.

Table 29	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
University-provided career support	78%	71%	-7

Table 30	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
University-provided career support	70%	75%	5	84%	69%	-15

Table 31	1 st Year			2 nd Year			3 rd Year + (UG)			Post Grad		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
University career support	74%	73%	-1	71%	70%	-1	70%	69%	-1	87%	70%	-17

University-provided Careers Support has the largest satisfaction gap in this category, and the lowest satisfaction overall. Despite this, the satisfaction score is still strong overall.

The gap could be down to a number of factors, including potentially a lack of knowledge or accessibility, not yet feeling they need such support, or not reaching the expectations that students had set for the career support they wanted.

We can observe a substantial disparity in the relative experiences of international and postgraduate students compared to home and undergraduate students, the former of which report a negative 15-point gap versus a positive 5-point gap. This tells us that international and postgraduate students are most keen to see changes that positively impact them in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE UNIVERSITY-PROVIDED CAREER SUPPORT FACTOR:

Solent University

- Undertake research with international and postgraduate students to determine how they are experiencing the service and implement improvements based on findings where possible.

Students' Union

- Assist however possible with understanding the expectations and experiences of international and postgraduate students on the topic of career support.

SOLENT LIBRARY

Students were asked of their experiences with the Solent Library as a whole, rather than any specific aspect of the service or building.

Table 32	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Solent Library	84%	81%	-3

Table 33	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Solent Library	80%	81%	1	87%	81%	-6

Table 34	1 st Year			2 nd Year			3 rd Year + (UG)			Post Grad		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Solent Library	83%	80%	-3	79%	80%	1	80%	82%	2	89%	81%	-8

Table 35	Age 18-21			Age 22-25			Age 26-30			Age 30+		
Solent Library	79%	80%	1	82%	82%	0	94%	83%	-11	90%	79%	-11

The library is rated as the most important facility alongside study spaces, so it is important to ensure it is fully equipped to cater to students' needs. This is especially the case for students who fit within the 26+ age groups and postgraduate students, who have the greatest satisfaction gaps for Solent Library.

Broadly speaking satisfaction for the Library scores well across the board, but the importance scores of circa 90 percent demonstrate how critical students consider the facility.

Student comments:

“Please please could you improve the chairs in the library? They’re not as ergonomic as they appear especially for short people and my back always suffers. Back, arm and height support are a serious problem with the majority of the chairs.”

“The library chairs aren’t great for people’s backs. We need better ergonomic style chairs especially for those who struggle to study at home and do long hours in the library.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE SOLENT LIBRARY FACTOR:

Solent University

Undertake research with mature, international, and postgraduate students to determine how they are experiencing the service and implement improvements based on findings where possible.

Increase online resources for students who may struggle to access the library in person.

Students’ Union

Assist however possible with understanding the expectations and experiences of mature, international, and postgraduate students regarding the library.

SPACES TO WORK/STUDY ON CAMPUS

This factor relates to non-teaching areas which can be used for studying or project work.

Table 36	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Spaces to work/study on campus	84%	81%	-3

Table 37	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Spaces to work/study on campus	78%	82%	4	89%	81%	-8

Table 38	Age 18-21			Age 22-25			Age 26-30			Age30+		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Spaces to work/study on campus	83%	83%	0	82%	78%	-4	92%	89%	-3	84%	75%	-9

Study spaces on campus have been rated the exact same as the library regarding satisfaction and importance overall, with postgraduate, mature and international students also showing a larger satisfaction gap than their counterparts. Other than the library, there are limited dedicated and equipped study spaces on campus which could affect students who do not have dedicated study spaces at home.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE SPACES TO WORK/STUDY ON CAMPUS FACTOR:

Solent University

- Invest into spaces which are ‘student-owned’ and suitable for casual work/study.
- Add study spaces around campus such as in The Spark or the RM building.

Students’ Union

- Work with the local community to find study spaces that students can access spaces to work when Solent Library is not open.



COMMUNITY

The student experience is impacted by much more than the fundamental aspects of teaching, learning, and campus services. We asked students to think about their experiences of a community nature, from socialising to opportunities and safety.

Table 39	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Safety and security on campus	87%	81%	-6
Safety and security within the local community	84%	70%	-14
Sense of community on campus	76%	63%	-13
Sense of community in the local area	69%	64%	-5
Opportunities to socialise on campus	74%	70%	-4
Opportunities to socialise within the local community	65%	63%	-2
Additional opportunities on campus	68%	71%	3
Opportunities within your local community	68%	61%	-7

Table 39 shows that *Community* factors received a lower overall importance score than educational and campus matters, yet are still crucial to students. Students' satisfaction is also more mixed, but the clear outlier are factors focusing on *Safety and Security in the Local Community*, and a *Sense of Community on Campus*.

Satisfaction disparity between home and international students for this category is striking, as displayed in *Table 40*. Home students report a cumulative total positive gap score of seven for this category, against a cumulative -89 gap for international students. In all but one factor, international students report a negative gap at least twice as big as home students.

Table 40	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Safety and security on campus	85%	82%	-3	89%	81%	-8
Safety and security within the local community	82%	68%	-14	86%	71%	-15
Sense of community on campus	68%	62%	-6	81%	67%	-14
Sense of community in the local area	61%	58%	-3	76%	67%	-9
Opportunities to socialise on campus	65%	73%	8	81%	68%	-13
Opportunities to socialise within the local community	52%	55%	3	75%	67%	-8
Additional opportunities on campus	57%	76%	19	77%	69%	-8
Opportunities within your local community	59%	62%	3	75%	61%	-14

Both home and international students express substantial relative dissatisfaction with *Safety and Security in the Local Community*.

International students also report a difference of negative 21-points compared to home students when considering *Opportunities to Socialise on Campus*. The theme is continued with a negative 27-point difference when answering on *Additional Opportunities on Campus*.

SAFETY AND SECURITY ON CAMPUS

Feeling safe on campus is fundamental to an excellent student experience. This topic covers not just malicious physical harm but security and safety associated to the estate and facilities.

Table 41	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Safety and security on campus	87%	81%	-6

Table 42	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Safety and security on campus	85%	82%	-3	89%	81%	-8

Table 43	Men			Women		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Safety and security on campus	84%	83%	-1	90%	80%	-10

Women students report both a higher importance and lower satisfaction for this score, creating a satisfaction gap considerably larger than that of male students. We plan to undertake more research in this area to better understand the different experiences between men and women relating to *Safety and Security on Campus*.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE SAFETY AND SECURITY ON CAMPUS FACTOR:

Solent University

- Ensure security on campus is a known and approachable presence especially during the darker months.

Students' Union

- Continue to provide personal safety equipment to students to help them protect themselves, and ensure students are aware of who to contact in an emergency (especially for international students who may not have the prior knowledge).
- Undertake further research to understand where students, especially women, feel unsafe or insecure on campus.

SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Safety and security in Southampton is outside Solent University's control, though it does have a significant impact on the experiences of students. High-profile attacks in Southampton's parks, including one targeting a Solent University student, and the increase in the city's crime rate have contributed to a concern among students for their general safety.

Table 44	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Safety and security within the local community	84%	70%	-14

Table 45	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Safety and security within the local community	82%	68%	-14	86%	71%	-15

Table 46	Men			Women		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Safety and security within the local community	82%	74%	-8	86%	67%	-19

This factor has a large satisfaction gap across all cohorts, but especially from women, who report a negative 19-point gap. There is no particular difference between home and international students, and our information shows the primary worry is from women.

Understandably this is a significant cause for concern, especially during the winter months when students will likely be travelling in darkness.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE SAFETY AND SECURITY WITHIN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FACTOR:

Solent University

- Work with the union to lobby the city council for additional safety measures in the local area.
- Provide information to students to help them make decisions that could improve their safety.
- Top-up the Students' Union's budget for Safe Solent to extend the service.

Students' Union

- Lobby the local council to increase safety measures in the city, especially at night.
- Continue to be vocal about condemning acts of violence in the city, and ensuring we are providing students with resources to keep themselves safe despite the fact it shouldn't be necessary.
- Continue to operate the Safe Solent taxi scheme to provide free journeys between Solent Library and students' home addresses.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS

Students were asked to rate their experience of feeling part of a wider community on campus.

Table 47	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Sense of community on campus	76%	63%	-13

Table 48	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Sense of community on campus	68%	62%	-6	81%	67%	-14

Table 49	1 st Year			2 nd Year			3 rd Year + (UG)			Post Grad		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Sense of community on campus	76%	61%	-15	69%	64%	-5	68%	61%	-7	83%	71%	-12

Overall we see a high level of importance but a reasonably poor level of satisfaction, which combine for a negative 13-point satisfaction gap. International students experience this most strongly, with an importance score at a similar level as they give for importance of online learning.

Home students are the least satisfied cohort, though also place a lower importance on experiencing a sense of community on campus.

When looking at the experience across level of student, undergraduate first-year students experience the greatest difference between importance and satisfaction, with a negative 15-point gap. This gap closes as the student progresses, perhaps down to an acceptance of the reality of their experience, since the importance level decreases while the satisfaction level stays roughly static. Postgraduate students also experience a large satisfaction gap (negative 12-points), which could stem from being new to Solent University.

Student comments:

“First and foremost, I very much enjoy spending time getting to know my classmates. I think since coming to university and getting to know fellow students, I’ve been learning more about what my own strengths could be as well as just being reminded that through the struggle we do still find moments to laugh and talk about. We are always talking about things we might’ve only heard about before coming to university to then actually talking about our own experiences with each other. I like how during my time at Solent University I have really been challenged by its community as to who I am, what I like, and what it is I’m better at doing. I’m getting to experience what it means getting to know myself.”

“I would like to have more events which allow students meet students from other courses and years(similar to the ones studying but not necessarily), or where you can meet people of same nationality ,interest,age without being part of a society.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS FACTOR:

Solent University

- Support the Students’ Union in creating a sense of community on campus by providing appropriate space and resources.
- Continue to run events that bring students together at a course or service level (such as accommodation).

Students’ Union

- Make ‘community’ a core theme of annual work, to help students network and bond.
- Support committees leading societies and sports groups to increase membership numbers and meet the needs of their members.
- Deliver events aimed at creating a sense of community on campus.
- Focus on new students to develop a sense of community and build activity around them for the future.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN THE LOCAL AREA

With a diverse city in Southampton, we were interested in how students feel a sense of community away from campus.

Table 50	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Sense of community in the local area	69%	64%	-5

Table 51	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Sense of community in the local area	61%	58%	-3	76%	67%	-9

This factor performs more strongly than the on-campus score, yet also has a lower level of importance from all cohorts. We can therefore understand that students prefer a stronger sense of community on campus than in the local area, though neither are currently meeting expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY IN THE LOCAL AREA FACTOR:

Solent University

- Continue to work with the City Council and local organisations to support local community-building initiatives and promote these opportunities to students.

Students' Union

- Participate more in local community-building activities and promote these opportunities to students.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SOCIALISE ON CAMPUS

A key component of building a sense of community on campus is the ability to socialise on campus. Students were asked to rate how they consider these opportunities.

Table 52	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Opportunities to socialise on campus	74%	70%	-4

Table 53	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Opportunities to socialise on campus	65%	73%	8	81%	68%	-13

The gap for socialising on campus is less than the community but is present, especially in the case of international students. It can be rare for students to be on campus unless present for a class, so it is important to devise methods for creating a thriving social environment for students who want to engage with others during their time at university.

The small overall satisfaction gap of negative four-points is the product of a positive score from home students and a large negative score from international students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES TO SOCIALISE ON CAMPUS FACTOR:

Solent University

- Create socialising opportunities that align with students' needs. For instance, hosting networking events or workshops can help students develop social and professional connections.
- Provide spaces designed to encourage socialising and able to host activities that promote this.

Students' Union

- Enhance the communication channels between students, faculty, and staff. Establish platforms where students can share ideas, organise events, or seek out social opportunities. This could be achieved through online forums or social media groups. Regularly sharing information about upcoming events, clubs, and opportunities can ensure that students stay informed and engaged.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SOCIALISE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

A vibrant city such as Southampton has a variety of establishments and public spaces available to residents and visitors, and undoubtedly is a factor in choosing Solent University as a place to study. We are therefore interested to know how the local community has affected students' experience of studying here.

Table 54	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Opportunities to socialise within the local community	65%	63%	-2

Table 55	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Opportunities to socialise within the local community	52%	55%	3	75%	67%	-8

The satisfaction gap for opportunities to socialise within the local community is smaller than it is for the on campus counterpart, although the importance level is also lower. Home students clearly place more importance on socialising on campus than in the local community, whereas both options are equally important to international students.

Although it is more difficult to affect the local area directly, it is still important that we act as a bridge between students and the local area to create a greater sense of belonging for students.

Student comments:

"I wish there were more Community based events and more sports based events that include the community."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES TO SOCIALISE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FACTOR:

Solent University

- Continue to forge partnerships with local businesses, organisations, and community groups to create opportunities for students to engage with the local community. Collaborate with these entities to organise joint events, volunteer initiatives, or workshops that encourage interaction and socialisation between students and community members.

Students' Union

- Encourage and support student-led initiatives that aim to enhance socialising in the local community. Provide funding, resources, and mentorship to students who are interested in organising events, creating community projects, or starting clubs that foster community connections. Empowering students to take the lead in shaping community engagement initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and increase participation.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ON CAMPUS

Students were asked for their feelings surrounding *Additional Opportunities on Campus* such as student ambassadors, Course Representatives, and other types of student employment or volunteering.

Table 56	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Additional opportunities on campus	68%	71%	3

Table 57	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Additional opportunities on campus	57%	76%	19	77%	69%	-8

Students on the whole are fairly satisfied with additional opportunities on campus, but international students are less satisfied with the provision of additional opportunities compared to their expectations.

This could potentially be a case of the opportunities available to students are not designed with these students in mind or that they are not being advertised to these demographics in a way that would allow them to engage the way they would want to.

Student comments:

“There’s always something going on and there’s so many opportunities for me to constantly add to my CV.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ON CAMPUS FACTOR:

Solent University

- Encourage strong collaboration between Solent Futures, academic departments, and professional services throughout the university.
- Enable faculty members to identify and promote career-related opportunities, including placements, networking events, and job fairs.

Students’ Union

- Create a centralised platform or online portal where students can easily access information about all the opportunities available on campus in collaboration with the University. This platform can serve as a one-stop hub for students to explore and apply for internships, research projects, club activities, leadership positions, community service opportunities, and career-related events.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Additional opportunities in this context refers to volunteering or employment within local businesses or organisations.

Table 58	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Opportunities within your local community	68%	61%	-7

Table 59	Home			International		
Factor	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Opportunities within your local community	59%	62%	3	75%	61%	-14

Table 60	1 st Year			2 nd Year			3 rd Year + (UG)			Post Grad		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Opportunities within your local community	67%	67%	0	59%	52%	-7	64%	50%	-14	76%	64%	-12

International students and those at advanced levels of study report dissatisfaction compared to importance for this area. Those at the beginning of their undergraduate course feel their satisfaction matches the level of importance for opportunities in the local community, but this drops off significantly over time.

While we might need to encourage the local community to increase opportunities for students as a whole, we specifically need to focus on demographic groups that are feeling a lower sense of satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FACTOR, SPECIFICALLY AMONG MATURE, POSTGRADUATE, AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:

Solent University

- Integrate service-learning programs into the curriculum, where students can apply their academic knowledge and skills to address community needs. These programs enable students to work directly with community members, fostering social connections while making a positive impact.
- Coordinate with local organisations to identify service-learning opportunities and provide support for student participation.

Students’ Union

- Actively promote local activities, clubs, and initiatives to students. This can be facilitated through newsletters, social media platforms, or dedicated community bulletin boards.
- Highlight local events, hobby groups, recreational activities, or workshops where students can participate and engage with opportunities in the local community.



STUDENTS' UNION

For transparency at the outset, this survey was promoted through Students' Union digital platforms and sabbatical officers. We believe this could have led to disproportionately favourable results towards the Students' Union.

This in no way suggests that students who already have a relationship with the Students' Union are satisfied with our provision, but it is reasonable to note that most respondents probably have some kind of participative connection to the Students' Union.

Feelings towards the Students' Union

For our own annual target setting and performance monitoring, we asked additional questions specific to how students view the Students' Union. Students were asked to what extent they agreed with each statement:

Results as an organisation	22-23 Target	Result
"Solent Students' Union plays a role in my life at university"	65%	74%
"I know what Solent Students' Union does / has done this year"	65%	71%
"I know how to participate in Solent Students' Union activities or access support"	65%	72%
"I trust Solent Students' Union to act in the interest of students"	80%	84%

We asked students to rate four statements on whether they agree or disagree with them. They are strong results overall, but the students are those that are already engaged. It is positive to see that they mostly agree, but we still need to focus on engaging the rest of the student body.

77 percent of students agree that Solent Students' Union plays a role in their life at university. This score definitely could be improved considering that the pool of students we asked for this was ones that were already engaged with us as mentioned above. This could also be due to students not being fully aware of what we are doing that affects them, which could indicate that we need to increase our branding and presence on campus.

At 71 percent, fewer students agree with the statement "I know what the Students' Union has done this year". This indicates that we need to work on advertising what we have done, utilising the Sabbatical Officers position on campus to go out and talk to students to spread the information, rather than solely relying on our online presence.

We also asked if students knew how to participate in Students’ Union activities or access support with 75 percent agreeing that they did. Again it would have been nicer to get a higher score seeing as these are our engaged student pool. This is also related to how we are advertising our services and as above, it is extremely important to make sure we aren’t just using social media to advertise and having a more personal touch.

82 percent of students trust the Students’ Union to act in their interests, which shows that while they may need more awareness of our services, they do see us in a positive light. Having something physical in or outside the office, showing students just passing by exactly what we are doing in their interests would be a proactive method to spread that message.

Student comments:

- “The friends I have made for life and the events run by Solent Students’ Union have been great.”
- “There is a very strong segregation between local students and international students. the Students’ Union has to step up and help to fill the gap between them.”
- “Keep going with the good work! I’m proud to study at Solent and the SU makes the experience 10 times better.”
- “You are doing a good job by taking care of student’s mental health...and by supporting students with the food banks.”
- “I think the SU Exchange is so helpful and so needed but it’s upsetting when I have lectures at 11am when it opens and by 12pm everything is gone.”

Table 61	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Elected student representatives	65%	78%	13
Ability to influence how the university is run	72%	64%	-8
Student-led groups and societies	67%	73%	6
Student-led sports teams and clubs	63%	71%	8
Students’ Union Advice Service	72%	74%	2
SU Exchange (food bank)	69%	75%	6
Small drop-in events on campus	65%	73%	8
Big Students’ Union events	62%	73%	11
Students’ Union social media presence	70%	77%	7

Table 62	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Elected student representatives	55%	81%	26	72%	76%	4
Ability to influence how the university is run	67%	60%	-7	76%	66%	-10
Student-led groups and societies	63%	79%	16	71%	69%	-2
Student-led sports teams and clubs	54%	73%	22	71%	70%	-1
Students’ Union Advice Service	63%	71%	8	80%	75%	-5
SU Exchange (food bank)	56%	73%	17	79%	77%	-2
Small drop-in events on campus	53%	71%	18	75%	73%	-2
Big Students’ Union events	49%	74%	25	72%	73%	-1
Students’ Union social media presence	63%	79%	16	76%	76%	0

ELECTED STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Ranging from Course Representatives to Student Council and Sabbatical Officers, the Students' Union recruits and empowers hundreds of students to represent the views and interests of their colleagues through numerous platforms.

Table 63	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Elected student representatives	65%	78%	13

Table 64	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Elected student representatives	55%	81%	26	72%	76%	4

Table 65	FoCIAE			FoBLDT			FoSHSS		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Elected student representatives	64%	79%	15	72%	78%	6	49%	81%	32

International students, postgraduate students and students from the Faculty of Business, Law and Digital Technologies all place a lot more importance on our elected representatives than other cohorts.

The high satisfaction scores are encouraging, however we would like to see the importance scores rise and for students to understand the role elected representatives play in their time at Solent University.

While we need to improve the perception of elected representatives to students as it is imperative that we make clear to all students the importance of having peers who are able to directly influence decision makers in the university.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE ELECTED STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE FACTOR:

Solent University

- Ensure that the elected representatives are invited and are made to feel involved at relevant committees and in the governance structure, so that the student voice is heard at every level.

Students' Union

- Provide extensive training for our officers to ensure they are well equipped to represent the student body in their own remit and in general national student issues that need to be addressed.
- Create promotional material to communicate the role of elected representatives at Solent University.

ABILITY TO INFLUENCE HOW THE UNIVERSITY IS RUN

Stemming from the elected representatives question is the type of role they play at Solent University - influencing decisions and how the institution is run.

Table 66	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Ability to influence how the university is run	72%	64%	-8

Table 67	Home			International		
Factor	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Ability to influence how the university is run	67%	60%	-7	76%	66%	-10

Related to the previous table, students are less satisfied in their ability to influence how Solent University is run, which may show a misunderstanding of the role of our elected representatives. It also shows that there is more work to be done with our Course Representatives to make sure that they feel empowered enough to not only speak up and be direct partners in their education, but to close the feedback loop to their cohorts so that all students feel like their concerns are being listened to and heard.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE ABILITY TO INFLUENCE HOW THE UNIVERSITY IS RUN FACTOR:

Solent University

- Increase the profile and work of our course and Faculty Representatives on course platforms.
- Encourage staff to actively engage with representatives if they are not already doing so, making sure that the students know they have opportunities to directly influence their learning.

Students' Union

- Ensure that our course and faculty representatives are trained to a high standard and have a named member of staff support them. The Student Voice Coordinator and VP Education should work together to make sure that students are aware they are both available to contact.

STUDENT-LED GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

Around 40 societies are run by students and supported by the Students' Union over the course of each academic year. Any student can start a society and these groups form a key aspect of our work to create a sense of belonging.

Table 68	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Student-led groups and societies	67%	73%	6

Table 69	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Student-led groups and societies	63%	79%	16	71%	69%	-2

As mentioned earlier it is possible that these results are unduly favourable towards the Students' Union, since some of our more engaged students are members of societies and potentially more likely to respond to our survey.

Home students are particularly satisfied with their experience of this factor, which despite having a relatively low importance score, has a strong satisfaction score. *Student-led Groups and Societies* are seemingly more important to international students than home, and are roughly level with satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE STUDENT-LED GROUPS AND SOCIETIES FACTOR:

Solent University

- Work with academic staff on promoting the creation of academic societies, especially as Solent University students feel very strongly about their education, and this would be another way to keep them engaged and constantly learning.

Students' Union

- Ensure that the process for creating societies is simple and accessible.
- Increase incentives for committee members to encourage more societies being created. These could include training programs, references for jobs or networking opportunities.

STUDENT-LED SPORTS GROUPS

Sports teams have been run university-side through Sport Solent until the time of writing, but are in the Students’ Union section as they are student-led and will come under the Union’s banner next year.

Table 70	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Student-led sports teams and clubs	63%	71%	8

Table 71	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Student-led sports teams and clubs	54%	73%	-22	71%	70%	-1

Table 72	Men			Women		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Student-led sports teams and clubs	64%	75%	11	63%	68%	5

Women are moderately less satisfied than men with the provision of the sports, despite both genders feeling a similar level of importance. Solent Sport provides a wide range of different sports, including futsal and equestrian, but information on the website is out of date and not always accessible. The website is not always clear in communicating the gender of the sports club and womens’ teams tend to be at the bottom of the page. Creating separate sections for genders may make it more accessible for women to get involved.

The website as a whole does not have up to date information, the most recent found being for the 21/22 academic year, which is a barrier for all students getting involved, especially as there are high costs related to joining these teams. If they are not kept up to date may stop students from taking part due to a worry the fees are higher than advertised.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE STUDENT-LED SPORTS GROUPS FACTOR:

University

- Improve the online information regarding joining sports clubs.
- Make it easier for women to see themselves represented in promotional materials and online.

Students’ Union

- Ensure that sports are promoted in a way which encourages participation from a diverse range of students.

STUDENTS’ UNION ADVICE SERVICE

Table 73	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Students’ Union Advice Service	72%	74%	2

Table 74	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Students’ Union Advice Service	63%	71%	8	80%	75%	-5

Postgraduate and international students feel more strongly about the advice service in comparison to their counterparts. This could be due to the fact these students are paying more out of pocket than students who can apply for student loans which cover tuition fees and living expenses, therefore will want as much support as they can possibly get to make sure that they are getting the most out of their academic experience.

We also do not extensively advertise the service beyond Freshers Fair, so other students may not be aware of this service. A focus should be put on marketing the advice service so students are aware that they can easily book an appointment should they run into any academic issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE STUDENTS' UNION ADVICE SERVICE FACTOR:

Solent University

- Confirm that all academic staff are aware of the service and how it can support their students if they are struggling.
- Advertise the service through their networks to ensure students are aware if they are not engaged with the Students' Union itself.

Students' Union

- Illustrate the benefits of using the service using anonymous anecdotes from those who have had positive experiences with using the service.
- Market the service all year round, as opposed to just during Freshers Fair, as students are likely to not remember as they are overloaded with information during their first few weeks.

UNION EXCHANGE (FOOD BANK)

Table 75	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
SU Exchange (food bank)	69%	75%	6

Table 76	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
SU Exchange (food bank)	56%	73%	17	79%	77%	-2

International students feel considerably more strongly about the SU Exchange, which is not surprising considering they make up over 85% of the membership. This is helped by the university providing free memberships for international students which in turn has helped us keep it stocked. While the satisfaction for the service is high, there is still a lot of room for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE UNION EXCHANGE (FOOD BANK) FACTOR:

Solent University

- Support the Students' Union in securing donations for the Exchange, providing things that students need.

Students' Union

- Use the data from the shop to inform how to stock it.
- Make requests to the local community for items that get used more than others.

SMALL DROP-IN EVENTS ON CAMPUS (GIVE IT A GO)

Table 77	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Small drop-in events on campus	65%	73%	8

Table 78	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Small drop-in events on campus	53%	71%	-18	75%	73%	2

This year was the first time that Solent Students' Union has put on an organised *Give it a Go* calendar and unfortunately, we did not keep track of any demographic data of who attended these events so we cannot see how accurate the results are. Interestingly undergraduate students' don't feel as strongly about these events in comparison to postgraduate students, which indicates we need to tailor these events more around these schedules.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE SMALL DROP-IN EVENTS ON CAMPUS (GIVE IT A GO) FACTOR:

Students' Union

- Ensure we are running events aimed towards postgraduate students, working around their schedules which are often different from undergraduate students.
- Collect data on who is actually attending events, and obtain feedback on what they would like to see in the future from us.

BIG STUDENTS' UNION EVENTS

Table 79	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Big Students' Union events	62%	73%	11

Table 80	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Big Students' Union events	49%	74%	25	72%	73%	1

This relates to our events such as Winter and Summer Ball, which are designed for a larger number of students to engage in compared to our *Give it a Go* calendar. Despite home students expressing a lower enthusiasm for these events on the survey, they made up three quarters of the attendees for Winter Ball. This indicates we need to regularly consult with international students to make sure that we are holding these big events in a way in which we are being fully inclusive towards our student demographics.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE BIG STUDENTS' UNION EVENTS FACTOR:

Solent University

- Provide the Students' Union with term times and exam dates across all faculties so the Union can hold the big events at an ideal time that will suit the students that value these events the most.

Students' Union

- Ensure that we are getting student feedback on the events we are running and using that to shape how we hold them in the future.

STUDENTS' UNION SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Table 81	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Students' Union social media presence	70%	77%	7

Table 82	Home			International		
	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap	Importance score	Satisfaction score	Gap
Students' Union social media presence	63%	79%	16	76%	76%	0

It was slightly unexpected to see how high students’ sense of feelings were concerning the social media, but as we did advertise the survey on there it is an accessible and popular way that many students engage with us. Currently the Students’ Union only really utilises Instagram to the full extent, occasionally posting on TikTok, but it is clear that with our diverse range of students that we need to branch out more so that we are engaging with all demographics.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SCORE FOR THE STUDENTS’ UNION SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE FACTOR:

Solent University

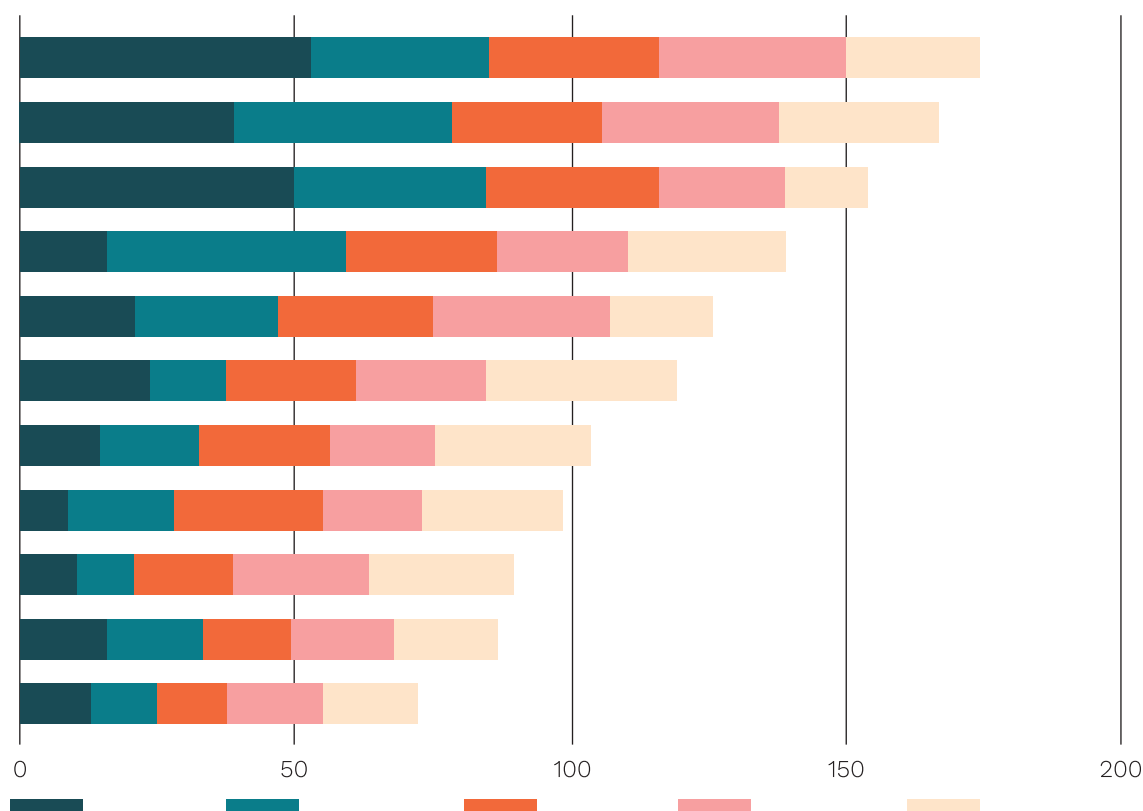
- Ensure that content from the Students’ Union is being shared on Solent University platforms, with the Students’ Union providing reciprocation.

Students’ Union

- Cultivate an online community so students who are feeling alone and are nervous to meet new people can do so in an online environment.
- Branch out to other forms of social media to increase our engagement rates.

PRIORITIES

We asked students to rank what they believe the Students' Union should be prioritising from a list of eleven factors listed below. From there we focused on the factors that students ranked in their top five, and placed them in order of popularity in the chart below.



The overall top three activities also received the highest number of first-priority votes, which are:

1. Doing things that support students' mental health
2. Offering advice and support around academic issues
3. Representing the views and interests of students at a course level

Fourth-placed 'Representing the views and interests of students at a local or national level' received the highest number of second-priority votes.

Interestingly, respondents placed a lower priority value against activities for which we normally hear the greatest demand - societies and events.

The mental health of students has unsurprisingly surfaced as the top priority from our survey. This is in line with the rising trend of mental health issues in recent years, which has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The lower interest in community involvement both on campus and in the local area could potentially lead to feelings of isolation among students. To address this, our wellbeing sabbatical officer can work with Solent University's mental health team to review current procedures and ensure we are well-equipped to support students during times of crisis.

In addition to reviewing Solent University's support mechanisms, we also need to evaluate our own efforts towards supporting mental health. This could involve improving signposting provisions or incorporating mindfulness activities into our 'Give it a Go' programme. Insights gained from this should guide our sabbatical officers in their campaigns, ensuring they place a strong emphasis on supporting students grappling with poor mental health.

The second highest priority for students is representation at Solent University and course levels. It is crucial that the students' union and academic staff maintain a robust working relationship to ensure that the services provided meet students' expectations. Our course and faculty representatives primarily handle this, but our sabbatical officers should also foster these connections to promptly address any prevalent issues.

Next, students believe we should prioritise advice around academic issues. While more details are provided in the report’s earlier section, as a Students’ Union, we must emphasise promoting this service, particularly during exams and results release periods.

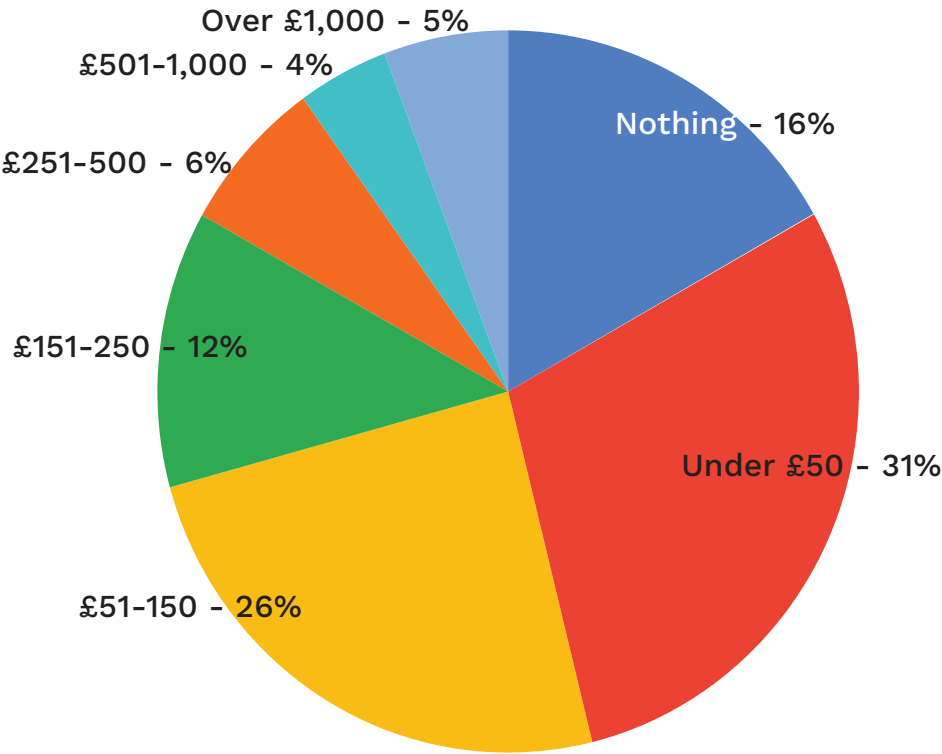
Moreover, Solent University students feel strongly about having their views represented at both local and national levels. We can engage further with students to understand the local issues most affecting them and accordingly prioritise our work. Our sabbatical officers should also focus on building relationships with local leaders, such as MPs and councillors, to communicate the issues impacting students in the local community.

At the national level, we can amplify our involvement by actively participating in joint projects with our partner organisations, addressing issues affecting all students, such as the cost-of-living crisis. We must also vocally address national issues impacting students by staying informed about student issues and collaborating with sabbatical officers to provide actionable responses.

EXPENSES

Over 90 percent of surveyed students reported facing rising costs that have put them in financial difficulty, with over half stating they are in severe difficulty. Rent and food were cited as the most significant cost pressures, with general living costs being the primary cause of financial worry. This underlines the importance of our continued efforts to support students financially and advocate for affordable living conditions.

Roughly how much do you spend per term on things for your course, such as books, materials, trips etc?

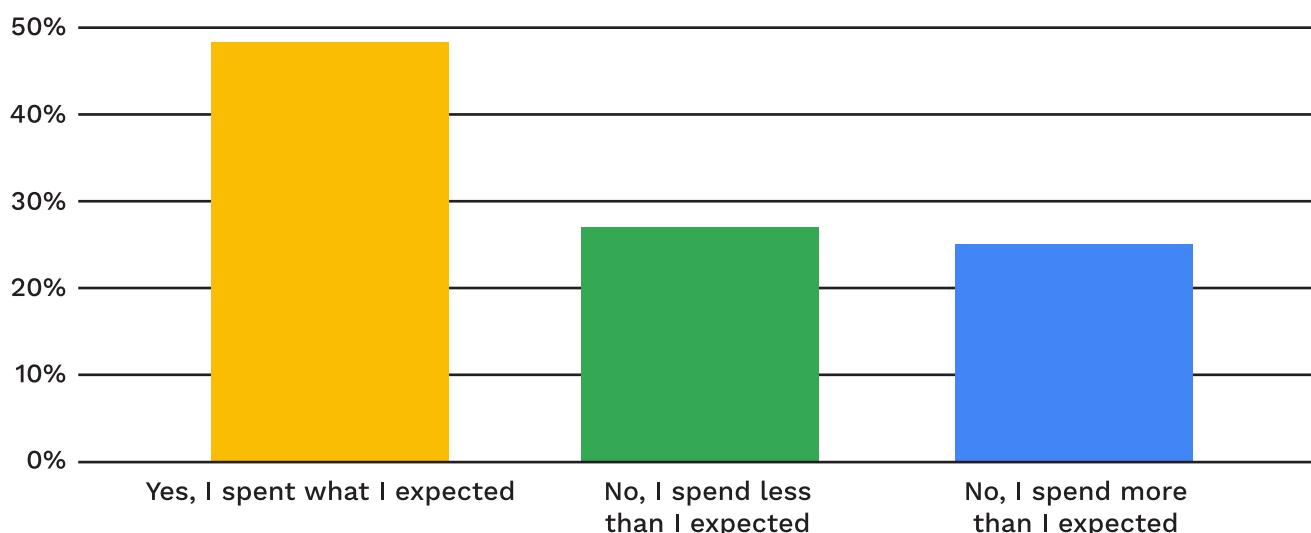


Did you start your course expecting to spend this much?

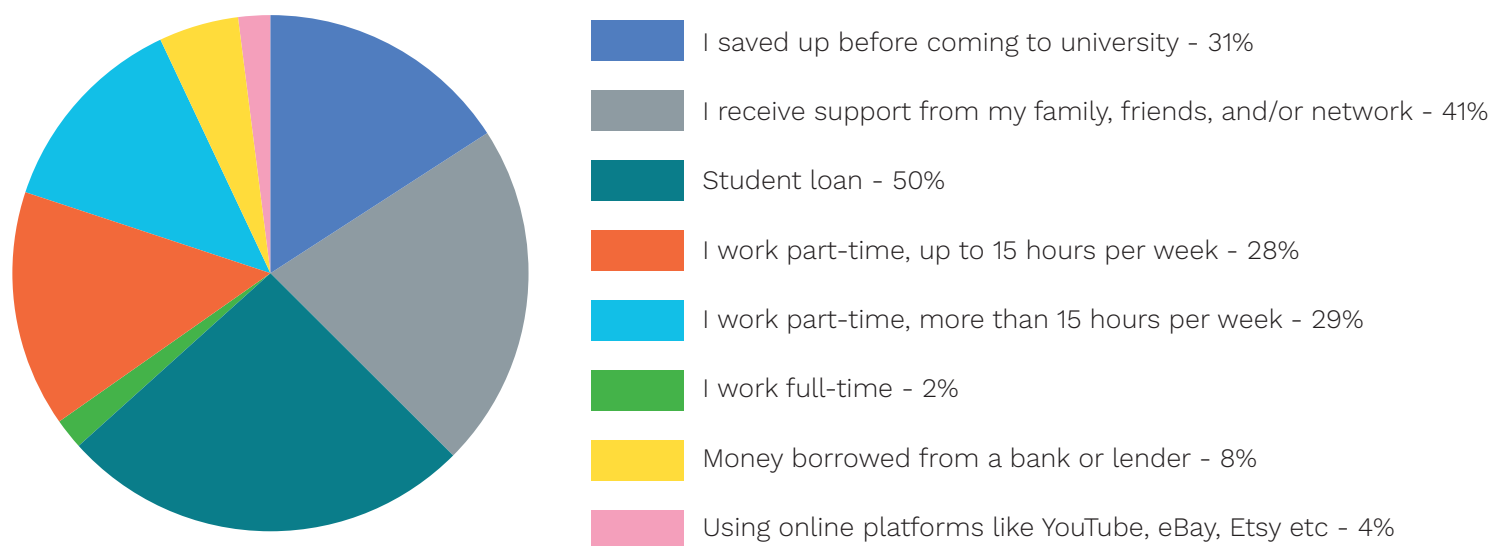
These statistics underline a pressing issue in the higher education sector. Almost a fifth of students are investing over £250 per term on course-related items. A quarter of students surveyed admitted to being caught off-guard by these additional expenses, hinting at an inadequate understanding of the costs before commencement.

The situation escalates when we consider the 6 percent of students who are spending an alarming £1000 or more per term on course costs. It's important to note the possible connection to the 5 percent of students who have resorted to borrowing money from banks or other lenders to cover their costs. This trend not only raises immediate financial concerns but also signals potential longer-term repercussions for these students.

It is clear that more needs to be done to ensure full transparency and fair pricing in course fees. Institutions should strive to provide clear and upfront information about all potential costs, so students can make informed decisions about their education and avoid unexpected financial strain.



How do you fund your studies?†



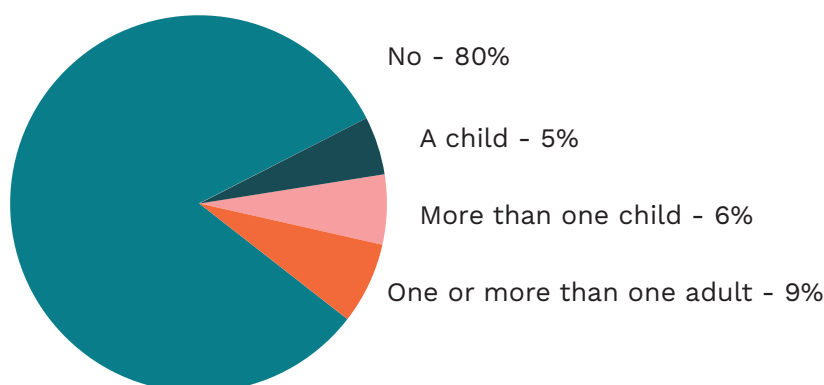
† values total more than 100% due to students using more than one method of funding their studies.

Only around a quarter of students rely exclusively on their student loans for financial support, despite a large number of students at Solent University receiving loans from student finance. This paints a troubling picture of the financial challenges students are facing.

Balancing work and studies is a reality for many students, but it can be disruptive to their academic progress. A significant 57 percent of students are working part-time, with nearly half of them clocking in over 15 hours per week. While only a small percentage (two percent) are working full time, it's concerning that any student feels compelled to take on such a heavy workload alongside their studies.

Do you have anybody who depends on you?

Furthermore, the survey revealed that 20 percent of students are juggling their education with the responsibility of caring for one or more dependents. This adds another layer of complexity to their situation and highlights the need for additional support mechanisms.



In light of these findings, it is crucial to address these issues and explore ways to better support students in managing their financial obligations, work commitments, and caregiving responsibilities while pursuing their education.

Approximately half of the student parents have reported having at least one child to take care of, which can pose significant challenges to their education. While Solent University does offer various grants and financial aid to these students, the high cost of childcare can still negatively affect their academic performance.

Those responsible for adults over 18 may also face difficulties in balancing their educational commitments with their caregiving roles. Moreover, their living situations might prevent them from receiving maximum loan benefits, further exacerbating the situation.

A striking 50 percent of surveyed students are not aware of the support services² provided by Solent University. This highlights a crucial need for Solent University and Students' Union to work together to ensure this information is widely disseminated, enabling financially struggling students to access necessary support.

The urgency of this issue is heightened by the increasing number of students whose family support may be reduced due to the ongoing cost of living crisis. Students' comments reveal the severe impact on their mental health, social life and the struggle to juggle studies and work to afford university education.

Interestingly, about half of the students advocating for more financial assistance believe that the government should provide this support.³ The remaining students either did not specify who should provide the help, suggested that Solent University should augment its hardship fund, or called for enhanced support for international students. This sentiment could potentially spark a campaign involving other local Students' Unions to urge the government to address the cost-of-living crisis more effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF STUDENT EXPENDITURE DATA

Solent University

- Increase advertisement of the grants and bursaries available to students to increase awareness and ensure all students have access to the support offered if needed.

Students' Union

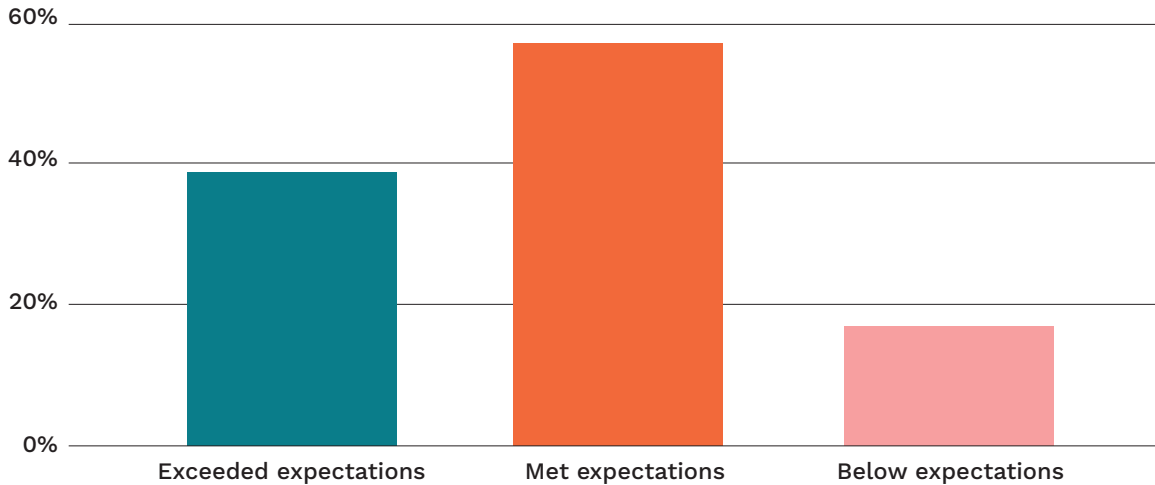
- Ensure our cost of living webpages are kept up to date with financial support available to students.

² This data comes from a Cost of Living survey run by Solent Students' Union in February 2023

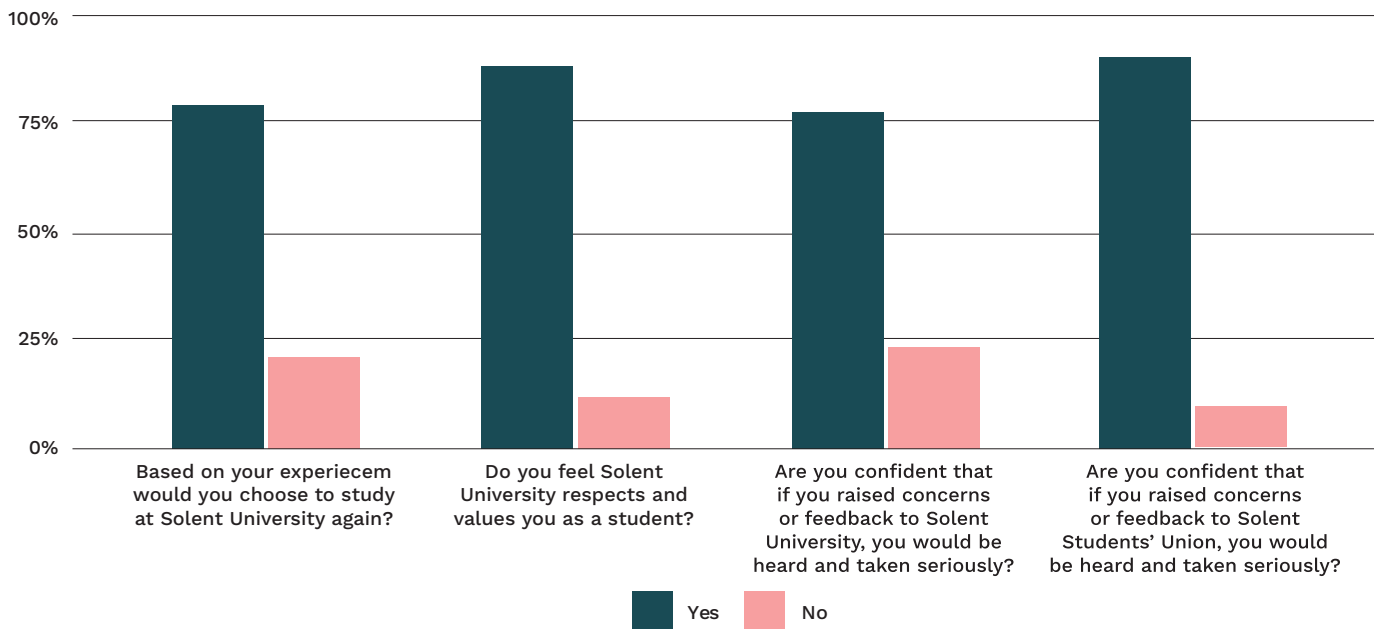
³ This is also data supplied from Solent Students' Union Cost of Living Student Impact Survey.

SENTIMENTS

Has your experience fulfilled the expectations you had before joining Solent University?



Respect and trust



While the results are generally encouraging, there's certainly scope for further enhancement. This presents a unique opportunity for the university and the students' union to jointly investigate the underlying reasons behind the negative sentiments expressed by some students.

It is heartening to see that most students feel their expectations have been met, though our goal should be to surpass these expectations wherever possible. From the moment a student is accepted at Solent University, we must be committed to ensuring they have an enriching experience. Maintaining strong communication channels between Solent University and the Students' Union can mitigate many of the issues adversely affecting students' time here. This proactive approach would also aid in retaining students who wish to continue their educational journey.

As previously highlighted, both Solent University and Students' Union should prioritise empowering student representatives. This will reassure students that their feedback is being taken seriously and actioned upon, fostering a sense of active involvement and ownership in their educational journey.

Student comment:

"The staff are very caring and great at what they do whether it's teaching or wellbeing teams or the library. It's very easy to get help and rarely have to wait a while, unlike at my old uni where waiting lists and responses were so bad."

APPENDICES

Student origination identity

	Home			International		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Overall teaching quality and standards	93%	70%	-23	92%	74%	-18
Quality of online learning	76%	62%	-14	84%	72%	-12
Quality of in-person learning	95%	70%	-15	89%	78%	-11
Practical teaching time	93%	74%	-19	87%	73%	-14
Overall course content	92%	73%	-19	88%	73%	-15
Diversity of your course staff	65%	79%	14	80%	76%	-4
Staff with in-depth knowledge and experience within your chosen industry	95%	87%	-8	91%	81%	-10
External/guest speakers for your course	59%	68%	9	75%	67%	-8
Catering services on campus	56%	75%	19	70%	75%	5
University-provided student support	76%	81%	-5	86%	78%	-8
University-provided career support	70%	75%	-5	84%	69%	-15
Library	80%	81%	-1	87%	81%	-6
Spaces to work/study on campus	78%	82%	4	89%	81%	-8
Safety and security on campus	85%	82%	3	89%	81%	-8
Safety and security within the local community	82%	68%	14	86%	71%	-15
Sense of community on campus	68%	62%	6	81%	67%	-14
Sense of community in the local area	61%	58%	3	76%	67%	-9
Opportunities to socialise on campus	65%	73%	-8	81%	68%	-13
Opportunities to socialise within the local community	52%	55%	-3	75%	67%	-8
Additional opportunities on campus	57%	76%	-19	77%	69%	-8
Opportunities within your local community	59%	62%	-3	75%	61%	-14
Elected student representatives	55%	81%	-26	72%	76%	4
Ability to influence how the university is run	67%	60%	7	76%	66%	-10
Student-led groups and societies	63%	79%	-16	71%	69%	-2
Student-led sports teams and clubs	54%	73%	-22	71%	70%	-1
Students' Union Advice Service	63%	71%	-8	80%	75%	-5
SU Exchange (food bank)	56%	73%	-17	79%	77%	-2
Small drop-in events on campus	53%	71%	-18	75%	73%	-2
Big Students' Union events	49%	74%	-25	72%	73%	1
Students' Union social media presence	63%	79%	-16	76%	76%	0

Student gender

	Men			Women		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Overall teaching quality and standards	91%	72%	-19	93%	71%	-22
Quality of online learning	80%	70%	-10	81%	68%	-13
Quality of in-person learning	90%	76%	-14	92%	75%	-17
Practical teaching time	88%	72%	-16	90%	74%	-16
Overall course content	89%	70%	-19	90%	75%	-15
Diversity of your course staff	70%	78%	8	76%	76%	0
Staff with in-depth knowledge and experience within your chosen industry	95%	83%	-12	91%	82%	-9
External/guest speakers for your course	69%	63%	-6	68%	71%	3
Catering services on campus	64%	78%	14	65%	73%	8
University-provided student support	82%	83%	1	82%	76%	-6
University-provided career support	77%	72%	-5	78%	70%	-8
Library	86%	81%	-5	83%	80%	-3
Spaces to work/study on campus	85%	81%	-4	84%	82%	-2
Safety and security on campus	84%	83%	-1	90%	80%	-10
Safety and security within the local community	82%	74%	-8	86%	67%	-19
Sense of community on campus	76%	66%	-10	76%	62%	-14
Sense of community in the local area	71%	68%	-3	69%	61%	-8
Opportunities to socialise on campus	76%	72%	-4	72%	68%	-4
Opportunities to socialise within the local community	70%	71%	1	62%	57%	-5
Additional opportunities on campus	67%	72%	5	69%	71%	2
Opportunities within your local community	70%	66%	-4	67%	57%	-10
Elected student representatives	64%	76%	12	66%	79%	13
Ability to influence how the university is run	75%	68%	-7	71%	61%	-10
Student-led groups and societies	67%	74%	7	68%	72%	4
Student-led sports teams and clubs	64%	75%	11	63%	68%	5
Students' Union Advice Service	73%	74%	1	73%	74%	1
SU Exchange (food bank)	71%	74%	3	68%	76%	8
Small drop-in events on campus	66%	71%	5	66%	74%	8
Big Students' Union events	67%	75%	8	60%	72%	12
Students' Union social media presence	71%	76%	5	71%	78%	7

Level of study

	1 st Year			2 nd Year			3 rd Year + (UG)			Post Grad		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Overall teaching quality and standards	97%	73%	-24	88%	69%	-19	95%	67%	-28	90%	76%	-16
Quality of online learning	85%	67%	-18	74%	68%	-6	79%	54%	-25	83%	73%	-10
Quality of in-person learning	92%	75%	-17	95%	73%	-22	94%	69%	-25	99%	78%	-11
Practical teaching time	93%	80%	-13	94%	79%	-15	91%	57%	-34	83%	72%	-11
Overall course content	93%	71%	-22	93%	75%	-18	90%	69%	-21	86%	78%	-8
Diversity of your course staff	70%	77%	-7	60%	77%	17	73%	66%	-7	84%	80%	-4
Staff with in-depth knowledge	93%	85%	-8	95%	86%	-9	96%	78%	-8	90%	82%	-8
External/guest speakers	62%	63%	1	63%	72%	9	65%	59%	-6	78%	70%	-8
Catering services on campus	62%	69%	7	55%	86%	31	52%	69%	17	76%	76%	0
University student support	82%	73%	-9	79%	79%	0	69%	66%	-3	89%	85%	-4
University career support	74%	73%	-1	71%	70%	-1	70%	69%	-1	87%	70%	-17
Library	83%	80%	-3	79%	80%	1	80%	82%	2	89%	81%	-8
Spaces to study on campus	86%	82%	-4	75%	80%	5	78%	78%	0	90%	82%	-8
Safety and security on campus	90%	83%	-7	84%	77%	-7	85%	73%	-12	89%	84%	-5
Safety and security within the local community	86%	68%	-18	82%	59%	-23	80%	64%	-16	86%	76%	-10
Sense of community on campus	76%	61%	-15	69%	64%	-5	68%	61%	-7	83%	71%	-12
Sense of community in the local area	66%	57%	-9	61%	52%	-9	64%	47%	-17	79%	75%	-4
Opportunities to socialise on campus	75%	65%	-10	62%	72%	10	67%	59%	-8	82%	74%	-8
Opportunities to socialise within the local community	63%	60%	-3	48%	49%	1	62%	47%	-15	76%	73%	-3
Additional opportunities on campus	65%	75%	10	55%	72%	17	60%	64%	4	80%	71%	-9
Opportunities within your local community	67%	67%	0	59%	52%	-7	64%	50%	-14	76%	64%	-12
Elected student representatives	58%	77%	19	54%	82%	28	57%	76%	19	79%	78%	-1
Ability to influence how the university is run	70%	67%	-3	64%	71%	7	72%	40%	-32	78%	69%	-9
Student-led groups and societies	64%	71%	7	64%	77%	13	57%	69%	12	76%	73%	-3
Student-led sports teams and clubs	66%	71%	5	51%	70%	-19	51%	69%	18	74%	72%	-2
Students' Union Advice Service	70%	70%	0	59%	68%	9	62%	66%	4	87%	79%	-8
SU Exchange (food bank)	65%	75%	10	56%	66%	10	62%	74%	12	82%	79%	-3
Small drop-in events on campus	62%	70%	8	56%	72%	16	52%	76%	24	80%	73%	-7
Big Students' Union events	59%	77%	-18	53%	68%	15	45%	66%	21	77%	75%	-2
Students' Union social media presence	71%	82%	-11	66%	79%	13	54%	69%	15	81%	76%	-5

Age of student

	18-21			22-25			26-30			30+		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Overall teaching quality and standards	95%	71%	-24	91%	71%	-20	93%	74%	-19	90%	69%	-21
Quality of online learning	79%	64%	-15	79%	74%	-5	89%	70%	-19	83%	71%	-12
Quality of in-person learning	95%	73%	-22	89%	79%	-10	92%	74%	-18	86%	76%	-10
Practical teaching time	92%	77%	-15	87%	77%	-10	89%	68%	-21	86%	63%	-23
Overall course content	92%	72%	-20	86%	72%	-14	92%	74%	-18	89%	76%	-13
Diversity of your course staff	66%	77%	11	77%	79%	2	84%	78%	-6	78%	73%	-5
Staff with in-depth knowledge and experience within your chosen industry	94%	86%	-8	91%	83%	-8	95%	82%	-13	91%	76%	-15
External/guest speakers for your course	59%	68%	9	75%	72%	-3	83%	65%	-18	68%	63%	-5
Catering services on campus	59%	73%	14	66%	77%	11	78%	76%	-2	61%	75%	14
University-provided student support	82%	80%	-2	81%	75%	-6	90%	82%	-8	79%	78%	-1
University-provided career support	74%	75%	1	78%	67%	-11	90%	74%	-16	77%	63%	-14
Library	79%	80%	1	82%	82%	0	94%	83%	-11	90%	79%	-11
Spaces to work/study on campus	83%	83%	0	82%	78%	-4	92%	89%	-3	84%	75%	-9
Safety and security on campus	87%	84%	-3	87%	81%	-6	91%	84%	-7	87%	73%	-14
Safety and security within the local community	82%	67%	-15	87%	74%	-13	89%	71%	-18	82%	70%	-12
Sense of community on campus	71%	62%	-9	76%	67%	-9	87%	69%	-18	76%	60%	-16
Sense of community in the local area	58%	57%	-1	71%	67%	-4	90%	71%	-19	76%	65%	-11
Opportunities to socialise on campus	71%	71%	0	74%	73%	-1	88%	76%	-12	70%	56%	-14
Opportunities to socialise within the local community	55%	56%	1	67%	65%	-2	80%	74%	-6	71%	63%	-8
Additional opportunities on campus	60%	75%	15	72%	68%	-4	83%	78%	-5	68%	60%	-8
Opportunities within your local community	62%	63%	1	71%	63%	-8	83%	65%	-18	66%	50%	-16
Elected student representatives	57%	82%	25	71%	79%	8	79%	73%	-6	62%	73%	11
Ability to influence how the university is run	68%	65%	-3	72%	64%	-8	85%	70%	-15	70%	55%	-15
Student-led groups and societies	66%	79%	13	67%	74%	7	78%	70%	-8	65%	60%	-5
Student-led sports teams and clubs	61%	72%	11	64%	68%	4	79%	81%	2	57%	63%	6
Students' Union Advice Service	67%	71%	4	72%	73%	1	90%	79%	-11	73%	75%	2
SU Exchange (food bank)	61%	72%	11	69%	79%	10	83%	78%	-5	76%	73%	3
Small drop-in events on campus	61%	71%	10	68%	79%	11	80%	76%	-4	61%	63%	2
Big Students' Union events	54%	73%	19	62%	73%	11	79%	78%	-1	70%	70%	0
Students' Union social media presence	71%	79%	8	70%	75%	5	82%	82%	0	62%	71%	9

Faculty

	FoCIAE			FoBLDT			FoSHSS		
	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap	Imp	Sat	Gap
Overall teaching quality and standards	95%	68%	-27	91%	72%	-19	95%	70%	-25
Quality of online learning	75%	71%	-4	82%	68%	-14	83%	69%	-14
Quality of in-person learning	96%	76%	-20	88%	75%	-13	96%	78%	-18
Practical teaching time	95%	68%	-27	85%	73%	-12	95%	81%	-14
Overall course content	90%	69%	-21	88%	73%	-15	96%	76%	-20
Diversity of your course staff	68%	81%	13	76%	76%	0	73%	78%	5
Staff with in-depth knowledge and experience within your chosen industry	94%	82%	-12	92%	82%	-10	95%	88%	-7
External/guest speakers for your course	66%	65%	-1	71%	69%	-2	65%	64%	-1
Catering services on campus	58%	79%	21	69%	75%	6	56%	69%	13
University-provided student support	81%	76%	-5	85%	81%	-4	78%	71%	-7
University-provided career support	77%	69%	-8	82%	71%	-11	70%	71%	1
Library	85%	81%	-4	84%	81%	-3	84%	82%	-2
Spaces to work/study on campus	86%	82%	-4	85%	82%	-3	80%	78%	-2
Safety and security on campus	86%	77%	-9	87%	81%	-6	90%	88%	-2
Safety and security within the local community	82%	68%	-14	84%	71%	-13	88%	69%	-19
Sense of community on campus	73%	63%	-10	78%	66%	-12	74%	59%	-15
Sense of community in the local area	65%	55%	-10	73%	68%	-5	65%	50%	-15
Opportunities to socialise on campus	73%	69%	-4	78%	71%	-7	65%	64%	-1
Opportunities to socialise within the local community	61%	58%	-3	71%	66%	5%	51%	50%	-1
Additional opportunities on campus	69%	73%	4	74%	71%	3%	54%	71%	17
Opportunities within your local community	61%	57%	-4	73%	62%	-9	67%	61%	-6
Elected student representatives	64%	79%	15	72%	78%	6	49%	81%	32
Ability to influence how the university is run	72%	57%	-15	76%	66%	-10	60%	69%	9
Student-led groups and societies	65%	77%	12	72%	72%	0	58%	74%	16
Student-led sports teams and clubs	56%	71%	15	68%	72%	4	56%	66%	10
Students' Union Advice Service	74%	68%	-6	78%	76%	-2	60%	74%	14
SU Exchange (food bank)	74%	76%	2	73%	76%	3	51%	71%	20
Small drop-in events on campus	66%	76%	10	71%	72%	1	50%	71%	21
Big Students' Union events	57%	76%	19	69%	72%	3	49%	78%	29
Students' Union social media presence	72%	80%	8	74%	77%	3	60%	78%	18

