

Student Life Survey

By your students'
union



2025

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 ensure that we remain a Students' Union that is effective in representing our members, it is crucial to ensure that we understand their current student experience.

It is important that we are constantly listening and adapting to the needs of our students. Therefore, we have evolved our approach to our Student Life Report. This allowed us to focus on relevant themes; how work life balance and the cost-of-living crisis impacts the student experience.

The data gathered, will support us in reviewing our current practice and help to develop the unions strategic plan going forward. This will support us to develop our services whilst ensuring that the student voice remains at the centre of what we do as a Students' Union. By presenting the key themes and findings we are also able to present evidence-based recommendations for improvements to the University.

Throughout this report, the words, 'respondents' and 'students' will be used interchangeably. But this refers to the students who completed the Student Life Survey.

Solent Students' Union would like to thank each and every student who took part in the Student Life Survey, either by completing the survey or by attending focus groups. We hope that this report serves as an accurate representation of the collective student voice.

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Executive Summary

Overall, across the University students at Southampton Solent University report a positive experience, despite a high number needing to work part time to remain at university. There are clear steps to take to improve the overall wellbeing of students, though it is evident that in some areas this is already taking place. A consistent approach is needed to ensure that all students have a high-quality experience, and the impact of the cost of living is minimised.

Academic Workload

- 73% of respondents report feeling overwhelmed by their workload (Question 17a).
- 56% of students report studying and completing academic work outside of regular hours to manage their workload (Question 17c).
- 70% of students report being able to disconnect from their academic work, and highlighted deadlines and workload as the main concern. (Question 23).
- 86% of students feel that they have support from lecturers to manage their academic workload. This is supported by Focus Group 1 participants, “I do not see a gap in the support from the university, there is support is you are stuck on an assignment and support for mental health. It is clear who to speak to”.
- Those that do not, cite lack of 1:1's and low email responses as their main concerns.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- Ensure consistency with academic support for students, with clear guidance for Academic Staff on 1:1s, feedback and timely responses.
- Develop a Personal Tutor policy and framework with clear expectations and guidance for both students and staff.
- Promote academic support currently available.

Recommendations for Solent Students' Union:

- Further promote the available sessions on time management and study skills.
- Promote the Universities academic support currently offered.

Cost of Living

- 41% of students work part time outside of their studies. 33% of these students state they work over 16 hours per week (Question 26).
- 81% of students noted that employment was due to financial reasons (Question 29). This includes working to be able to “stay at university”, “to pay rent and buy food” and cover basic living costs. The main cost impact being rent (Question 30). 53% of students cited rent as being the biggest financial challenge.

- 60% of students reported concerns over rising tuition fees (Question 45c).
- Students suggested more on campus job opportunities would be beneficial (Focus Group 1 participant).
- Students who responded noted that the Exchange was an important source to combat financial concerns, “I use the Exchange, and it is so good. I am able to make really good meals from the stuff I get there”, Focus Group 2 participant. However, Question 37 responses highlight concerns with food are still present, “We need somewhere we can go when we have no food”, “Extra support with access to food, food vouchers for lower income students”.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- Further promotion of on campus student job opportunities.
- Reliable timetables, changes to be communicated as early as possible.
- Clear communication of course costs.

Recommendations for Solent Students' Union:

- Promote local and student discounts clearly.
- Provide sessions on budgeting and balancing finances in collaboration with the Student Funding team.
- To work with the Housing Team and the Volunteer Student Housing Officer to promote housing advice.
- Support the promotion of the Careers Platform.
- Ensure that the Exchange remains accessible for all students, promote the service further.

Student Experience and Wellbeing

- 44% of students responded that they participate in student clubs or societies (Question 50). The main response for not participating is a lack of awareness.
- 48% of students felt that there are not enough opportunities to socialise on campus (Question 51). The main theme identified was a demand for more events that reduce loneliness and support students to make friends. This is further supported by participants in Focus Group 2, “It would be good if the SU and Uni could provide cheap or free opportunities regularly for people to go to with their friends”.
- Student noted the impact that financial concerns have on the student experience, “Students don't really take part in volunteering or placement years because they can't afford to work unpaid”, Focus Group 1 participant.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- Support the promotion of societies, events and activities.
- Support the SU with carrying out welcome talks across departments.
- Ensure our activities and events are low costing or free.

Recommendations for Solent Students' Union:

- Further promotion of clubs and societies online and in person.
- Provide further ice breaker events to provide spaces for students to make friends and combat loneliness.
- Ensure consistency with welcome talks across departments.

University Facilities

- 93% of students responded being satisfied with the study spaces available (Question 57).
- Those not satisfied noted availability and knowledge of spaces as the main concerns (Question 58). This correlates with responses from participants in Focus Group 2, who noted that it is difficult to book study spaces due to high demand.
- 78% of respondents highlighted that the library opening hours are convenient. For those who did not, 52 students suggested that 24 hours opening times would enhance their experience. This was also noted in Focus Group 1 and 2 by participants, further highlighting the additional support that is received by the library and how this supports the cost-of-living issues previously raised, "The library being open longer times, would also allow students to know that they always have a warm safe space to go. They can get a drink and access the wellbeing area even when uni is closed. I think that is so important", Focus Group 1 participant.
- In support of this, 45% of students noted using the library for free internet and access to computers.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- Promote current study spaces around campus.
- Review current offering of study spaces.

Recommendations for Solent Students' Union:

- Support the promotion of study spaces around campus.

Methodology

The data analysed in this report has been collected from our Student Life Survey and two focus groups carried out in conjunction with the survey. The survey was launched in March and ran for 4 weeks. The survey was sectioned into 'Managing your academic workload' and 'Impact of the cost of living'.

Students were able to complete the survey using the online platform 'Jisc'. Jisc is the survey platform used by the university; therefore, students were familiar with the layout

and functionality. For this reason, we moved to this platform from survey monkey. Previous Student Life Surveys were able to complete online and on paper, however feedback from students highlighted that previous paper surveys were too time consuming and discouraged students from completing. Further, we found our online submissions from 2024 to be more numerous and accessible so we made the decision to move to online only, with options available to complete in person at stands in the university.

Promotion of the survey was carried out both online and in person, including posters, social media and email. This was supported by a weekly prize draw and pop up stands around the campus to encourage students to complete the survey.

In total, 693 students completed the survey, this is around 11% of the student population at Southampton Solent University, our target was 700- 1000 students. To try and increase responses, we reopened the survey for one week in April, however this only resulted in 1 additional response.

Alongside the survey, we carried out a focus group on each theme to provide a deeper insight into student's experience. Across the two focus groups, we had a total of 12 students engage with the opportunities. The first focus group included questions centred around 'work life balance' and the second focus groups questions around 'the cost-of-living crisis', see appendix 1 and 2 for the focus group transcripts.

Focus Group 1 comprised of nine students, and the following questions were asked:

- How do you personally define 'work-life balance'?
- Do you think students today have a harder time balancing work and personal life compared to previous generations?
- What are the biggest challenges you face when juggling studies, part-time work, and personal commitments?
- Have you ever experienced burnout/stress from trying to manage everything?
- Does Southampton Solent University provide enough support (e.g., flexible deadlines, well-being services) for students balancing work and life?
- What additional support/ policies would help improve your work-life balance?
- What are some strategies you personally use to maintain a balance between studies, work, and personal life?
- Have you found any apps, time management techniques, or habits particularly useful?
- How do you think work-life balance will change when you transition from university to full-time employment?
- What do you expect from future employers in terms of work-life balance policies (e.g., remote work, mental health support, flexible hours)?

Focus Group 2 comprised of three students, and the following questions were asked:

- Do you feel like Solent University prioritises student well-being enough? Why or why not?
- How does academic stress impact your mental health?
- What coping mechanisms do you use to manage stress, anxiety, or burnout?
- How do you maintain a healthy lifestyle alongside academic and work commitments?
- Do you feel you have enough time for exercise, sleep, and proper nutrition?
- How important is social interaction for maintaining well-being?
- Do you feel connected to a supportive community (friends, family, university networks)?
- What changes could Southampton Solent University make to improve student well-being?
- Are there any wellness initiatives or strategies you've found particularly helpful?

To capture reliable data and to avoid neutral responses with the survey, a four-point scale was used to gather responses in the survey. This includes the following scales:

- Strongly Agree- Strongly Disagree
- Very Often- Very Rarely
- Very Satisfied- Very Dissatisfied

At appropriate points in the survey, open ended questions were included for students to share their thoughts or specific examples, allowing us to gather additional qualitative data.

The Students' Union would like to thank the Business Performance Indicator Team for their guidance and collaboration on creating the Student Life Survey Report.

Recommendations for improving engagement:

Southampton Solent University

- To support the Students' Union with promotion of the survey.

Solent Students' Union

- To engage directly with the university to promote the survey.
- Utilise various locations for promoting the survey around campus to engage a broader range of students, including a permanent fixture.
- Consider methods to improve engagement online.

Aspirations

Our intentions are to continue to run the Student Life Survey annually, with a themed focus. This will allow us to gather information on relevant topics and provide an up-to-date insight on student experience. To allow us to review progress and changes in student satisfaction, we will ensure we continue to include key questions around teaching and learning allowing us to compare to historic data.

Display of Results

Throughout this report we will review the data found using the following themes:

- Managing your workload
- Your part-time job
- Impact of the cost of living
- Your social activities and preferences
- Your academic studies
- Your student experience

All results reviewed will be from the Student Life Survey 2025 and the two focus groups.

Demographics

Table 1

Academic Department	University Demographics	Survey Demographics
Art and Music	13.5%	12%
Business and Law	11.6%	9%
Film and Media	11.9%	11%
Science and Engineering	13.8%	8%
Social Science and Nursing	17.7%	18%
Sport and Health	12.3%	12%
Warsash Maritime School	18.4%	30%

Table 2

By Gender	University Demographics	Survey Demographics
Female	42.7%	43%
Male	56.7%	53%

Table 3

By Fee Status	University Demographics	Survey Demographics
Home Students	82.2%	64%
International Students	17.8%	36%

Table 4

By Course Mode of Attendance	University Demographics	Survey Demographics
Full-Time	94.5%	93%
Part-Time	5.5%	7%

The tables above provide an overview of the current student demographics at Southampton Solent University compared to the survey respondents’ demographics. It is important to note, that in the demographic data set supplied by the university, there are some limitations. This includes a lack of breakdown into protected characteristics such as gender identities, nationality and disability. To accurately compare data, our Student Life Survey had to mirror these limitations regarding demographics.

Moving forward, we will be continuing to work with the university to expand these demographics and broaden the specific parameters, ideally for the next survey launch in 2026. This will allow both the Students’ Union and the university to better understand the broad range of students who study at Southampton Solent University and how we can target them more effectively.

Recommendations for improving the overall demographic data:

Southampton Solent University

- Work with the Students’ Union to broaden demographic information.

Solent Students’ Union

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

Course Mode of Attendance

Results are as expected largely and follow a pattern of engagement present during the voting in elections. Around 94% of the university demographics is Full-time students, 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. Though it is interesting to note that several respondents questioned anecdotally if they were full-time students or not, due to the nature of when they are physically on campus being two days.

Postgraduate responses were higher than expected, but this is likely due to the locations when promoting the survey being predominantly based in the RM building, near the Postgraduate Research Centre.

Response from first year students is 42%, this is slightly below expectations. However, first year students still be far are the highest value in this area of demographics. This is to be expected as they are the most likely students to benefit from any improvements or changes made.

Academic Department

The data above is representative of the student population who completed the survey for each Academic Department. Responses from Business and Law and Film and Media were lower than expected, particularly due to high levels of engagement in other aspects such as Elections and Academic Representation. Responses from Science and Engineering are low, however this follows patterns of engagement seen throughout the academic year. In contrast engagement from Sport and Health students was higher than anticipating when considering previous engagement. Art and Music and Social Science and Nursing were high and as expected.

In contrast to previous years of conducting the Student Life Survey, we had a high level of engagement from Warsash Maritime School students. This has resulted in 207 responses, around 30% of the total responses are from Warsash Maritime School students. The reasons for such a high turnout of responses may be due to the location of promoting the survey. Many pop-up events were held in the Spark and RM building. This resulted in a high level of footfall from Warsash Maritime School students.

Due to this high level of responses from one department, we will review these results separately. HNC Nautical Science course has a higher turnout of responses than every other department combined. This will have a large impact on the data. Due to the nature of courses running in phases in this department, during the time of the survey being open, other courses may not have been on site and instead at sea. Moving forward, we will need to work closer with the Warsash department to identify a strategy to engage with students more broadly.

It is also important to note, that the experience of students studying on Warsash Maritime School courses will vary from students studying on other courses across the university. Some reasons for this are:

- Students' courses have various phases that include both time at sea and at university.
- Students are sponsored by companies to finance their studies.
- Cadets are unable to hold employment elsewhere.

Therefore, at relevant points Warsash students' responses will be extracted from the data and reviewed separately.

Recommendations on improving engagement across academic departments:

Southampton Solent University

- Academic departments to collaborate with the Students' Union to promote the completion of survey.

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- Engage with WMS to ensure responses are more representative of cadets across the department.
- Engage with Academic Departments staff to collaborate and ensure responses are more representative of students across departments.
- Schedule promotion of the survey to be spread-out more evenly around campus.

Gender

The Southampton Solent University data reporting system provides only 'male' and 'female' 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 Southampton 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 Southampton Solent University and allow for more effective communication to better understand the needs and wants of our members.

According to the Solent University data, the number of female and male students is around a 45- 55% split. 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.

Age

The university dataset does not provide a breakdown for the demographics regarding age. However, it is important to note that 36% of respondents were over 25 years old. This may impact the data as a high percentage of respondents are mature students.

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

According to the Southampton Solent University data, the number of international students studying at Solent is around 18% 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.

Commentary of Findings

Managing your Academic Workload

Students were asked to consider the impact of their academic workload on their wellbeing. A high number of students noted feeling stressed and overwhelmed by the amount of academic work they have as well as due to the tight deadlines. Table 2 shows the responses. It is important to note that almost 70% of responses note feeling stressed, overwhelmed and working outside of regular hours either regularly or very regularly. When breaking the data down, for students aged 25-34 this rises by around 10%.

Table 1	Very Often	Often	Rarely	Very Rarely
Feeling overwhelmed by the amount of academic work you have	27%	42%	25%	5%
Feeling stressed due to tight deadlines (academic work)	26%	39%	29%	6%
Working outside of regular hours due to your academic workload	27%	41%	20%	6%

When responding to the challenges that students face to manage time effectively, career responsibilities and difficulty with time management are the main concerns. Table 3 provides an overview of the challenges.

Table 2	Response
Career responsibilities	41%
Changes in personal circumstance	26%
Difficulty with time management	50%
Long work hours	25%
Lack of knowledge of time management skills	17%
Other	4%
I don't face any challenges	9%

Students also noted the following challenges to manage their time effectively:

- *“Mental health problems such as anxiety I have struggled with for a few years”.*
- *“Working while at uni”.*
- *“Assignment, part-time job, tuition fees, cost of living and accommodation”.*

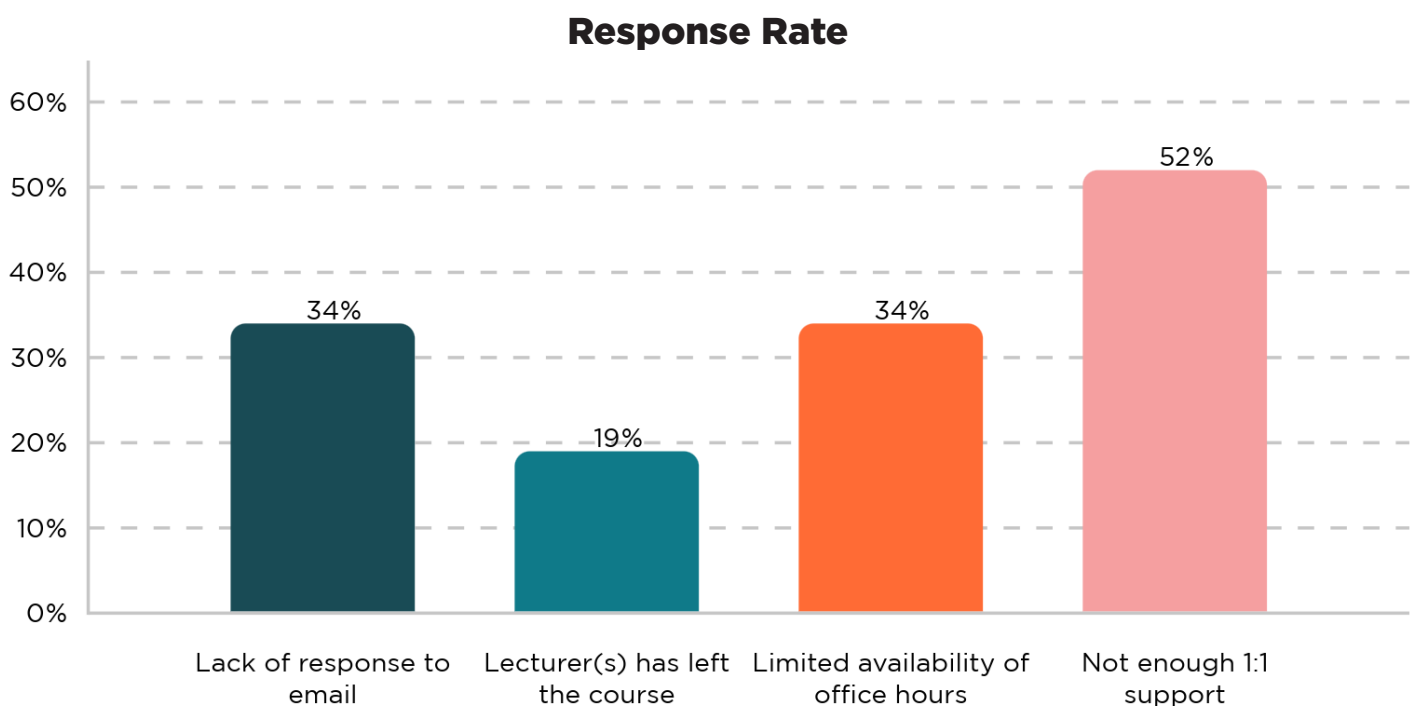
With the following themes emerging:

- Neurodiverse students facing difficulties
- Medical and mental health needs adversely impacting students
- A negative impact due to part time work.

It is positive to note that a high level of students feel supported by their lecturers to manage their academic workload effectively, with 86% of students feeling supported. The support from academic staff and the wider university was also noted in the focus groups:

- *“The university is very concerned with the wellbeing of students. They send out regular emails, asking how you are and encouraging students to check on the wellbeing of their friends too. They are constantly keeping up with what we as students want. I do not see a gap in the support from the university; there is support is you are stuck on an assignment and support for mental health. It is clear who to speak to.”- Focus Group 1 Participant*
- *“I have used the mental health services here at the uni and they are really good”- Focus Group 2 participant*

Of those that do not feel supported, Graph 1 provides a breakdown of the reasons.



The responses highlight a desire for more consistent and attainable time with lecturers to be able to better manage academic workload. The desire for more personalised support was also identified in the Student Academic Experience Survey (2025).

In addition, students shared the following feedback on a lack of support from lectures:

- “Poor organisation from module leaders”
- “Lack of in person lecturers”
- “Poor level of teaching”.

It is important to note that the comments above are from a small minority of students who completed the survey, and that their may be wider factors that impacted on their responses.

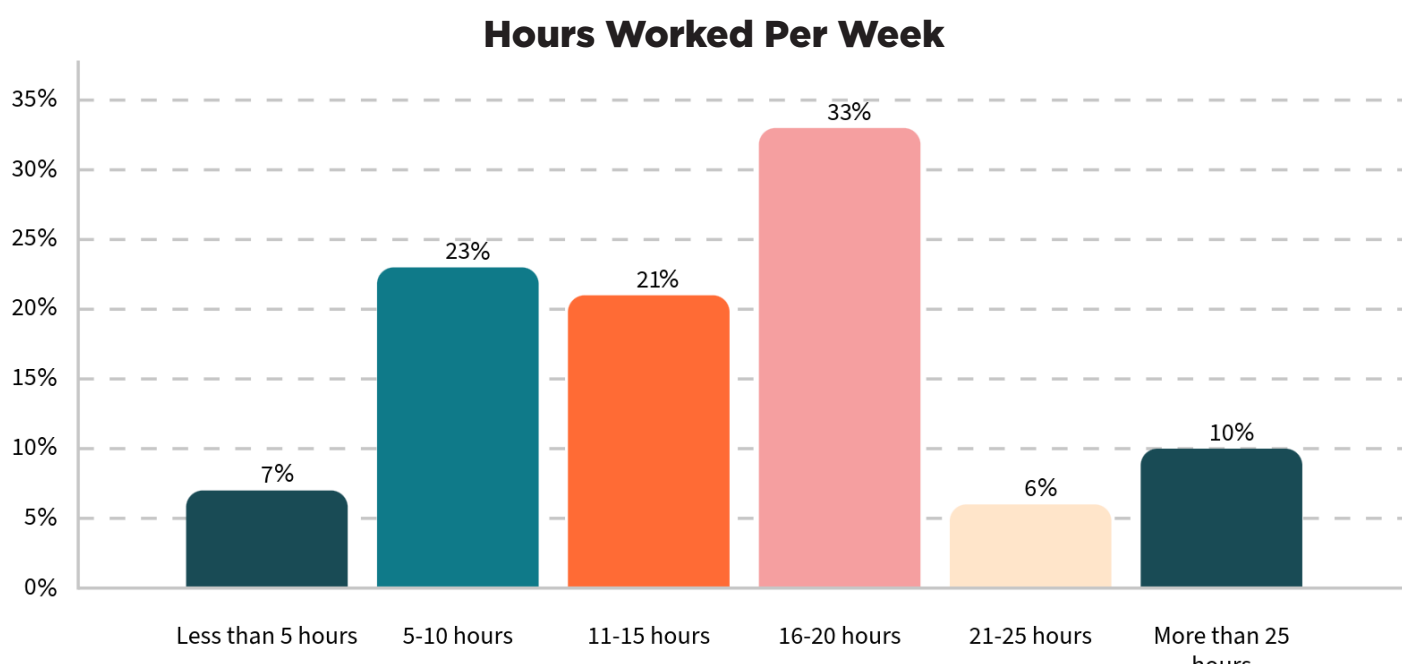
The majority of students (68%) feel that they are able to disconnect from the academic work after hours. For students who do not feel able to, deadlines and workload were noted as the two biggest barriers. Looking beyond the next academic year and the Universities transition into block teaching, careful consideration will need to be made on the potential impact of grouped deadlines. Particularly for students with part-time employment, mental health concerns or additional learning needs.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- Review the accessibility of 1:1 support from academic staff.
- Explore opportunities to promote positive work/life balance and advertise services that support extra-curricular activity.

Your Part-time Job

Students were asked to provide an insight into the impact part-time employment may have on their student experience. 40% of students responded noted that they had a part-time job, with 33% working over 16-20 hours per week. Graph 2 provides an overview of the hour's students work.



In addition, 49% of students shared that they rarely work overtime. With 71% of students citing working over 10 hours a week, this proposes that almost half of students working part time are knowingly committing to more than 10 hours of work per week. The

University currently recommend that students do not work over 10 hours per week as this can have a negative impact on their academic studies. So, considerations will need to be made into how support will be provided to students, as we aim to widen participation and increase the recruitment of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who may be further impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

When reviewing international students’ responses, 45% of cite working 16-20 hours per week. In addition to student comments such as:

- *“Making sure international students are at least utilising their 20 hours of work time to at least earn enough money for their monthly food and pocket money is crucial”*
- *“Make the course cost less so we don’t have to work as much”*
- *“The University need to be more aware that with the cost-of-living increase and spiralling rents, working part-time is essential to be able to live and function”.*
- *“Telling students that they showed that they have enough bank statements to come to study in the UK therefore you should focus more on your studying and less on jobs, works on myth not in reality while university is increasing tuition fees every year, rent is going high along with the price of groceries”.*

There are clear financial impacts on the experience of our international students, particularly with such a high percentage working 16-20 hours per week and the additional concerns on the increase in tuition fees. Considerations will need to be made on the current guidance and support available to our International students.

The majority of students (81%) working part-time cited needing extra money as the main reason for working.

Table 3	Response Rate
Experience	32%
Extra Money	81%
To build new relationships	16%
Professional Development	25%
Course Requirement	3%
Other	5%

With only 25% of students entering part-time work to support their professional development. It is important to acknowledge that Solent Careers and the wider academic teams ensure that there is sufficient support for students to enhance their academic development. The roll out of the online Solent Careers platform has provided a centralised and accessible space to tailor the professional aspirations of students and source training, events and work experience to enhance their professional development.

However, as highlighted, due to the high numbers of students partaking in part-time work due to financial pressures, the uptake in this may be low. Therefore, a collaborative approach across the university and Students’ Union to showcase the importance and flexibility of the opportunities available is important.

Students also provided the following reasons:

- “I would not be able to pay for uni or accommodation without working”
- “To pay for my course and my accommodation”
- “Helping mum with work”.

Again, evidencing the need to ensure the support available to students is reflective of the financial pressures and wider implications that may have on wellbeing and engagement.

The majority of students find working alongside their studies a positive experience and are able to manage their time well. However, a key theme identified that negatively impacts being able to balance working part-time and their academic work is timetabling, and changes to timetabling.

Students also shared the following suggestions on how the university can better support students to manage working and their study commitments:

- “Not cram all deadlines together”
- “Offer more opportunities for ambassadors”
- “Better grouping of modules to free up more days/ workable hours”
- “Have part-time work available for students throughout the university”

The core themes of timetabling, and more opportunities for part time work available for students on campus or support with finding part time work was also reflected in Focus Group 1;

“Timetabling makes it difficult to manage your work shifts.”

“The work from weekly classes, managing studies and working, makes time management really difficult. Trying to solve that is hard”

“It can make you life at work hard having to change shifts if you uni timetable changes. If you start the course and have committed days to work, and then these changes in semester 2, it really messes up the life schedule”

It is also important to recognise that in the last academic year the University employed 350 students on a part-time basis. Alongside this, the provide support to all students with writing their CVs and applying for jobs.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- To consider the impact of bunched assessment deadlines with relation to block teaching and PT working.
- To further promote the online Careers Platform and the part time work available externally and within campus.
- Promote services International students can use to help with cost of living.

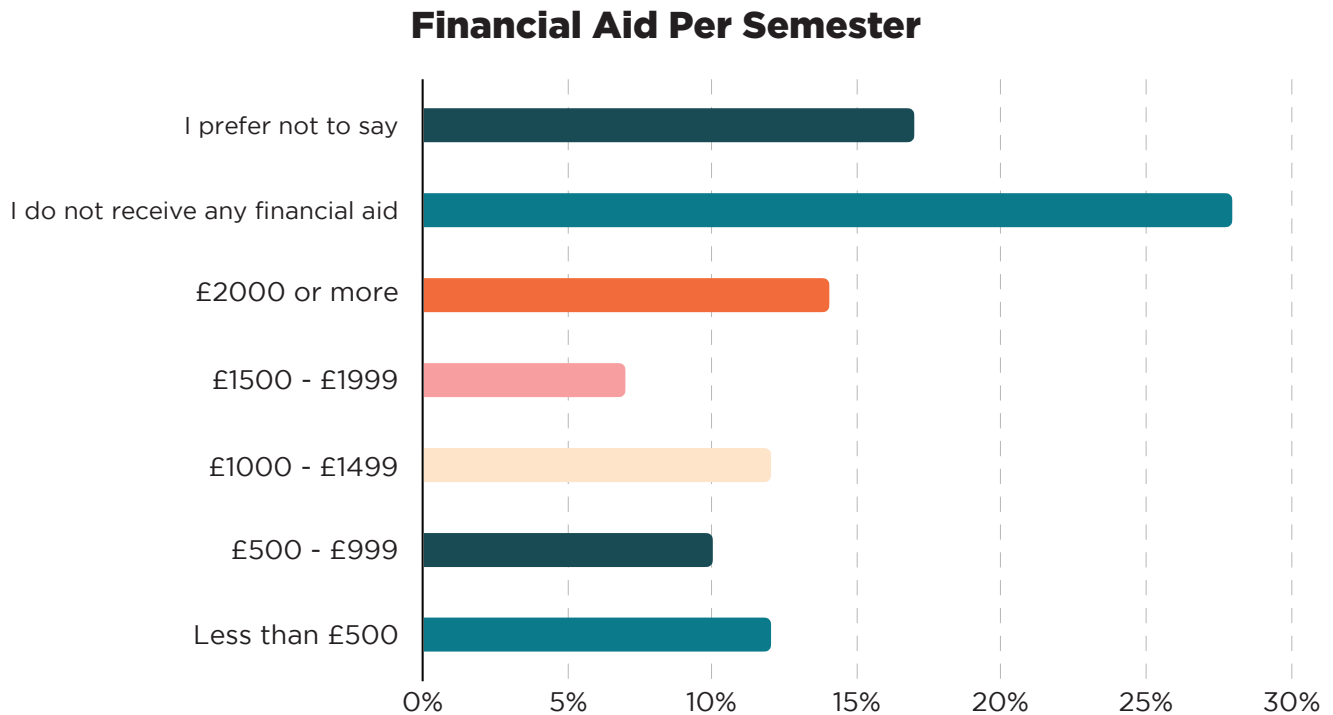
Recommendations for Solent Students' Union:

- To support the promotion and student engagement with the careers platform and how to access part time employment opportunities.

- To work with academic representatives and the education office to track feedback throughout the year pertaining to part time working and impact on student experience.

Impact of the Cost-of Living

Students were asked to consider the impact the cost-of-living crisis has on their student experience. To gain an insight we asked students how much financial aid they receive per semester. Graph 3 provides a breakdown of the responses.



A high percentage of students have cited receiving over £2000 a semester in financial aid. There may have been a misunderstanding as to what construes as financial aid which has resulted in these figures. SU staff were asked to quantify the answer with students in person who were unsure of what the question was asking. On reflection, we would reword this question and provide example of what financial aid the question is referring to.

When reviewing data specific to Home Students, 19% of students cite receiving £2000 or more per semester in financial aid. This suggests that students may have interpreted student finance loans as financial aid.

When asked whether students feel their current income is sufficient to cover their living expenses 42% of students note that it is not. With an additional 25% of students not feeling confident with managing their finances.

As expected, the biggest cost-related challenges highlighted by students are rent and food. There is a general theme from the responses that rent costs are too high and impacting on students' wellbeing and student experience. It is important for students to be able to contribute to the local economy through renting local properties, however, it is also important to ensure that students are not negatively impacted by doing so.

Concerns around student accommodation are increasing, and this is evidenced by the motion raised to create a Student Housing Officer role, to provide a point of contact for students, and to provide a platform for students to have their voices heard on concerns with student accommodation. This was also highlighted in the Focus Group 1;

- *“Living in student accommodation has a big effect on mental health. The accommodation is terrible, and nobody cares if you complain”*
- *“We need to have a dedicated team that we can speak to and people that care enough to help us”.*

It is concerning that food is cited as the second biggest financial challenge for students and evidences the clear requirement for the Students’ Unions Exchange, with memberships increasing each year.

This is further supported by comments by students:

- *“A place to go when we have no food”*
- *“Extra support with access to food/food vouchers”*
- *“I cannot afford to socialise with friends, buy food and pay rent. It’s extremely stressful”.*

In addition, there is a clear need to further support students with financial management, when asked what support students would find useful with finances and managing a budget:

- *“How to budget in general”*
- *A service for helping people budget as for some people it’s not something you have done before coming to uni”.*
- *“Suggestions for how to balance your different expenses”.*
- *“More workshops, or resources on budgeting and financial management”.*

However, it is important to acknowledge that the Student Success Team do already run a series of workshops and provide support around financial advice and budgeting. It can therefore be reflected that further awareness of what is offered is needed.

The responses from International Students highlighted additional financial challenges that impact their student experience. Mirroring the findings in the Student Academic Experience Survey (2025), the common challenge identified was tuition fees for International Students with a clear desire for changes to the way tuition fees are paid:

- *“Allowing International Students to pay the remaining fees flexibly until September would reduce the pressure to work extra hours to cover tuition costs”.*
- *“Expanding flexible payment plans or offering customised payment schedules based on students’ financial situations”.*

In Focus Group 1 participants also highlighted the barriers faces by International Students, “There are a lot of macro dynamic problems for international students. They are more likely to have to go out and get a part time job to ensure that they can pay for their accommodation as well as their fees. So, there is more pressure on a segment of the student population”.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- Continue to offer sessions around financial management and promote these further.
- Further promote services to support students in financial hardship.
- Collaborate with the Students’ Union to ensure advice and support is provided to students when choosing accommodation.

Recommendations for Solent Students’ Union:

- Promote discounts available to students in Fresher Guides and regularly throughout the year.
- Support the offer sessions around financial management and promote these further.
- Support the promotion of current support services available at the university.
- Continue to provide and further promote a variety of items within the Exchange and to provide emergency food packs.
- Collaborate with the Student Housing Officer to explore local safe accommodation offers and produce a guide for students.

Social Activities and Preferences

Students were asked to share how they typically socialise. Table 4 provides an overview of responses.

Table 4	Response Rate
Food out with friends	63%
Nightlife: Clubs	25%
Nighlife: Pubs	33%
Sports/ Societies	28%
Walking	31%
Video Games	21%
Other	7%

Students also highlighted the following ways they socialise:

- *“Spending time in the accommodation kitchens”*
- *“Cooking and baking together”*
- *“At home movie/board games”*

The data found in how students socialise in our Student Life Survey is a shift that has been seen across the UK. BBC (2025) highlighted a change in the way that young people socialise, moving away from nightclubs and opting for cheaper options due to rising costs.

“I realized how important it is to go out and meet with friends. How good it makes me feel after. In the Student Life Survey, it talks about if it is difficult to go out and socialize due

to money. This is something that is definitely true. You have to calculate everyday if you are able to go out. Most things cost money, if you want to go for coffee or the cinema. It would be good if the SU and Uni could provide cheap or free opportunities regularly for people to go to with their friends”. The UPP Foundations (2025) similarly found that the majority of students are prioritising cheaper and “less structured” ways to socialise due to financial barriers.

However, most students also noted that they felt they can socialise within their prepared budget and that the price of socialising in Southampton is fair. This data is interesting due to other responses around the cost implications of socialising. A question can be asked as to whether students are desensitised to the high costs in the surrounding areas. Particularly since most of our students are from surrounding regions.

Given the high number of students reporting financial concerns, there are low numbers of students currently using student discounts available. Students reported the following reasons as to why, an overview can be seen in table 5.

Table 5	Response Rate
I don't shop at places that offer student discounts	53%
I find other discounts or offers more appealing	18%
The discount is not significant enough	28%

Additionally, students also shared the following comments:

- “I don’t always know where offers it”
- “Don’t know where discount is available”
- “It would be helpful if the SU collated a database”.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- To work with Solent Students’ Union to promote society activity where there are shared goals (APP, Open Days, Wellbeing weeks as examples).

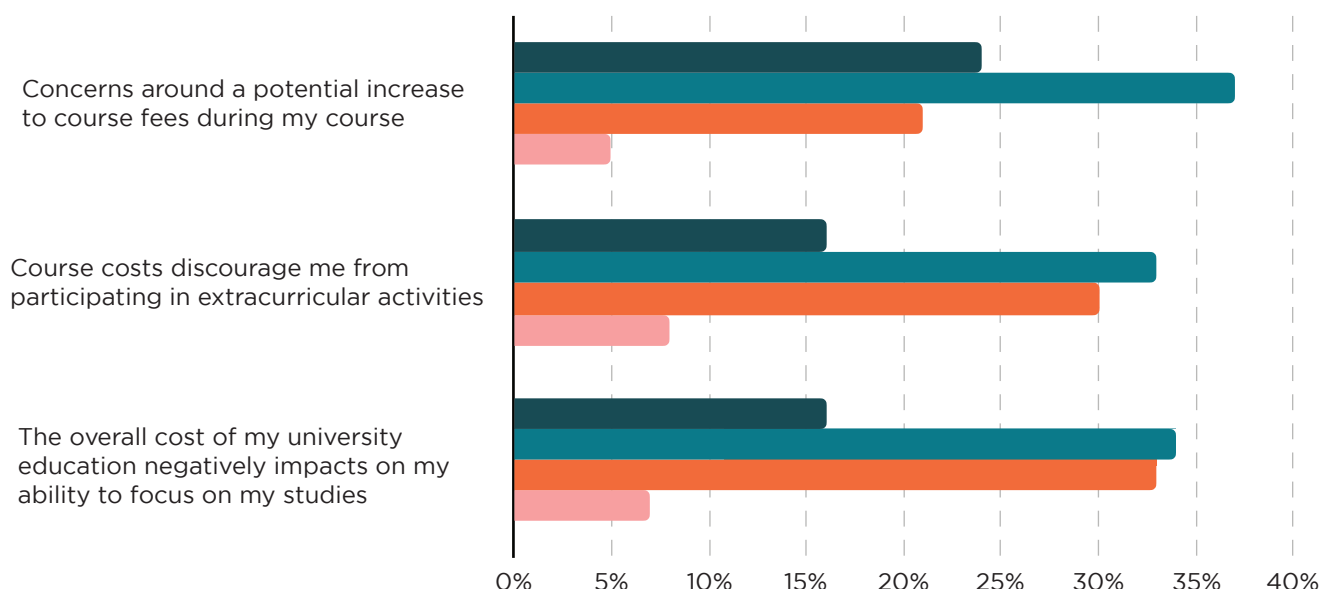
Recommendations for Solent Students’ Union:

- To collate and promote current student discounts available.
- Link with West Quay to promote information on Student Nights.
- To continue our commitment to free events wherever possible.

Social Activities and Preferences

Most students find the current University fees affordable, however, 61% of students note feeling concerned about the potential increase to fees. Graph 4 provides an overview of the impact of course fees on student’s experience.

Impact of Fee's on Student Experience



The high percentage of students concerned about the potential rise in tuition fees presents as a potential barrier from students attending higher education and may need to be considered within planning. Since these responses have been taken, on the 21st of October 2025 the government announced that tuition fees will be increasing in line with inflation from the 2026/2027 academic year. Solent, as a TEF Gold institution, will be eligible to increase fees to the maximum amount.

We would encourage the university to consider the above results and consider how an significant increase in fees could negatively impact the student experience. We would also welcome the continued opportunity to be involved in any discussions around fees via FAAF (Financial Aid and Fees committee).

Table 6 presents an overview of the types of costs for course materials that students incur.

Table 6	Response Rate
Course Trips	24%
Lab Fees	4%
Software	16%
Textbooks	22%
Transportation	23%
There are no significant costs	34%

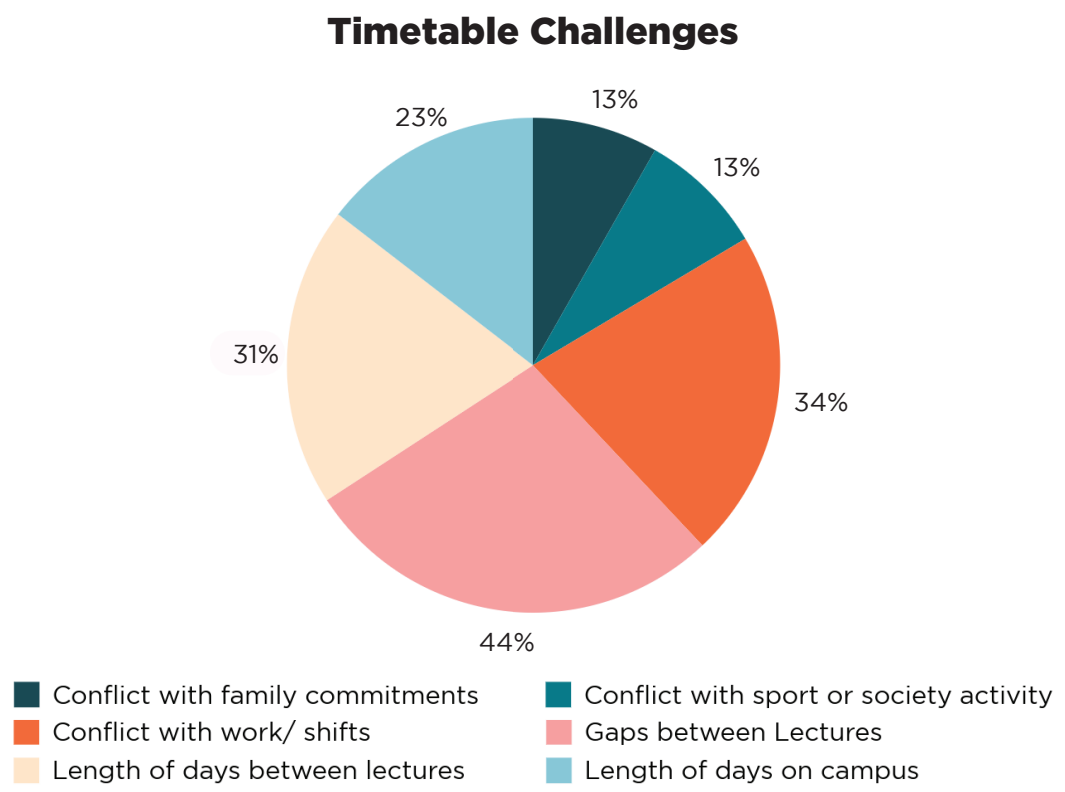
Students also provided the following types of costs that they incur:

- “Makeup and hair kit”
- “Printing”
- “Computers that are able to support software”.

A common theme identified were costs associated with creative courses. Out of the responses 46% of students identified needing to make financial sacrifices due to their course. It does evidence a commitment to learning, however we need to limit the financial impact on students to improve their student experience. The Student Academic and

Experience Survey (2025) mirrors the concerns, highlighting that students have less disposable income to purchase additional resources required for their courses, and notes the potential impact this could have on students achievement and reattainment on courses.

Overwhelmingly, 73% of students feel positive about the distribution of classes throughout the week and that it works for their schedule and students identified the following in Table Graph 5 as their biggest challenges their timetable presents.



The high percentage of students citing gaps between lectures as a challenge is an area to review, as this will impact on the opportunities for students to take on part-time work, which is widely needed by our students to remain within university. This may have a wider impact on the mental health and wider academic success of our students.

The library facilities have been highlighted as an overwhelmingly positive facility provided to students. 78% of students feel that the current opening hours are convenient for their schedule. For those who disagree, have unanimously suggested opening the library 24 hours. However, it is acknowledged that this would be unlikely to happen due to financial and operational constraints.

Table 7 provides an overview of student’s primary reasons for using the library.

Table 7	Response Rate
Access to a wide range of books and resources	63%
Free internet and computer access	45%
Research assistance from librarians	21%
Quiet study of work environment	58%

Students also provided the following commentary:

- “The fact that some PCs have 2 screens, which makes working much more efficient. More PCs in the library should have 2 screens and the benefits should be publicised to students”
- “Group projects”
- “To focus more on my studies”.

It is important to note that 45% of students note using the library due to free internet and computer access and it is likely due to financial concerns and can potentially be the catalyst behind wanting to open the library for longer hours.

Students were asked to provide an insight into how often they use study spaces, 72% of students shared that they often use study spaces on campus. In regard to student satisfaction with the current study spaces, table 8 provides an overview.

Table 8	Response Rate
Very Satisfied	37%
Satisfied	56%
Dissatisfied	6%
Very Dissatisfied	1%

Overwhelming students feel satisfied with the study spaces on campus. For those who are not satisfied, the main concerns raised were; availability, location and knowledge of spaces. There is a clear need to further promote the study spaces available to students. This is a similar theme identified throughout the year in Course Committee meetings, a desire for more group study spaces and a lack of availability. However, it is acknowledged that space on campus to provide additional spaces is low, but more work can be implemented in collaboration with the University and Students Union to further promote the spaces available.

The introduction of block teaching provides and opportunity for the university to address the issues pertaining to gaps between lecture times through block teaching. When planning block teaching, reflecting on students concerns around timetabling and time pressures there is a opportunity to mitigate these known issues. Reviewing evidence from other institutions, if we take these know issues into consideration, an enhanced learning experience can be achieved. In addition, there is an opportunity to build on the wider student experience by working with the Students’ Union to increase extracurricular activities around block teaching.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- Consider longer library opening hours around exam periods.
- Wherever possible, to ensure that lectures be timetabled in close proximity to allow for extra-curricular activity and part time work.
- Collaborate with the Students’ Union to further promote study spaces available.

Recommendations for Solent Students' Union:

- Collaborate with the University to further promote study spaces available.
- To work with the library to produce exam skills promotion/drop-in sessions close to major deadlines.
- Sabbatical Officers to continue discussions with the Library Team reviewing current opening hours.
- Sabbatical Officers to support the communication and transition into block teaching.

Student Experience

Students were asked to consider their levels of participation in student clubs and organisations. 44% of the responses highlighted that students are actively involved. Students shared why student clubs and societies are important;

“Societies give you a bit of spice in your life, with the productive distraction. You are doing stuff that makes you feel good, with good people”. – Focus Group 1 Participant

It is evident from the data that the 44% of students already engaged with social activities find them beneficial and important to their personal wellbeing. If 44% of students who completed the survey were already engaged with the Students' Union, the true indication of the percentage of students participated in social activities on campus may in fact be lower. This is concerning, as there is a known correlation between engagement with extracurricular activities and achievement and retention.

As highlighted by NUS (2018), engaging in volunteering, sports and societies has a positive impact on students increased confidence, development of skills and building relationships. The Student Academic Experience survey highlights that 18% of the students they surveyed, do not take part in sports and societies due to a lack of disposable income. The reports recognises the potential impact this can have on the mental health of students, due to the reduction in opportunities to exercise and socialise.

For those who are not currently engaging with social clubs and activities; conflict with other schedules and a lack of awareness of what is available where evident as the main barriers. The survey found that 44% of students are unaware of what is available.

However, as identified by our students, socialising is an important element to ensure student wellbeing;

“I realized how important it is to go out and meet with friends. How good it makes me feel after” – Focus Group 2 Participant.

To improve this, work could be done in collaboration with the university to find new and dynamic ways to improve this. Student responses suggested:

- A notice board in busy areas to promote events and activities
- More notice on when events are taking place

Students in Focus Group 2 highlighted the following;

“I think it would be really interesting to look into creating a support system for students. Not to help with academic work, but to help with wellbeing”.

Work has already started between the Students’ Union and the Professional Mentoring Programme to pair level 6 students with a mentor in industry and aims to help those final year students gain confidence, build connections, and enhance their employability during and after university.

Students also highlighted nighttime safety as a barrier to engaging in societies and activities;

“I do not feel safe walking back to dorms at night”.

It is important that students feel safe when travelling to and from campus, so it would be beneficial to provide further training to societies on how to remain safe during nighttime activities. Further information on how to stay safe at night should also be provided in collaboration with the Students’ Union and University, working with the Union President Communities and Wellbeing.

When considering the types of campus events that students most enjoy attending, table 9 provides an overview of the responses.

Table 9	Response Rate
Cafe Events	42%
Paid Events	17%
Pop Up	41%
Stalls/ Fairs	49%
Panels	8%

Responses highlight a lack of want for paid events; this is reflective of attendance at events for this annual year. Paid events have typically had low attendance and follows a pattern at Southampton Solent following the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been taken into consideration when planning for the next academic years events, and in our current planning for Freshers 2025.

Students were asked to consider their level of agreement as to whether there are enough opportunities to socialise with other students on campus, 73% of responders agreed. However, for those who do not agree, the key theme identified was the desire to build new friendships and combat loneliness. This was also highlighted in Focus Group 1 and 2.

“It is hard when you first come here. So, it would be good to have more opportunities to meet people and find a circle of friends.”- Focus Group 2 Participant.

“More events where it is welcoming to people attending alone”.- Survey Response

“Would like to see more solo events. Being able to turn up and make friends”. - Survey Response

Crabtree, R. (2023) also identifies that wanting to make friends is a key catalyst to wanting to join a society, but also a barrier. Crabtree, R. (2023) highlights the importance of Students' Unions supporting the transition into joining clubs, particularly for first year and International students. This can limit the anxiety associated with joining societies and activities.

It is positive to see that students would like more opportunities to engage. The Students Union will review how we promote our events, to ensure that they are inclusive of all students. We will also provide more 'ice breaker' type events, to provide a space for students to make friends.

It was also highlighted the desire for students to play sports and activities, but that there is currently no ability to do so unless part of the competitive teams, which inevitably include fees. Students discussed that it would be beneficial for students' health and wellbeing, whilst allowing a space to make friends if the Students' Union could provide opportunities to take part in sports. The UPP Foundation (2025) found that financial concerns have impacted on the ability to take part in sports clubs and societies due to the costs that they can incur, resulting in extracurricular activities that have traditionally been at the core of student social experience being deprioritised, despite a desire to be active in sports.

As a result, the Students' Union has been in contact with the Sports Complex and is in the process of arranging a dedicated weekly booking to provide this for students. In addition to this, responses highlighted the possibility of additional costs as a barrier to joining Sports Clubs, noting the high cost in memberships. It is fair to reflect whether there are any 'hidden costs' when taking part in Sports Clubs.

In addition, improving collaboration and communication with key departments across the University will allow us to increase awareness and engagement with extracurricular activities to create a greater sense of community across campus, while supporting students to develop their professional skills through their involvement in opportunities such as, academic representation, societies and volunteering.

Students already engaged in social activities were asked to consider how these could be further improved. Most of the recommendations shared by students are currently provided by the Students' Union, highlighting the need for more promotion and better signposting to the current events and activities on offer.

As highlighted in the responses, students' time is limited so ensuring that the opportunities are accessible and help to support their development is key. A consideration to how we promote opportunities should be taken, as all opportunities are key to supporting students to build their CV's and increase their employability. By working with the Careers Teams and utilising their online careers platform, we can encourage students to reflect on the importance of the extracurricular activities offered and track the development they are making by engaging. The university and the Students' Union working in partnership will allow us to continue to improve the student experience and engagement.

Recommendations for Southampton Solent University:

- Support the Students' Union with promotion of events and services.
- Collaborate with the Students' Union to provide nighttime safety information.

Recommendations for Solent Students' Union:

- Improve visibility and promotion of our services. Increase the amount of stalls we run, at least one stall every two weeks.
- Increase Sabbatical Officer visibility and engagement. Sabbatical Officers to be engaging with students daily.
- Create a consistent schedule of events to promote our activities and opportunities to make friends.
- Include information on nighttime safety during society training.
- Continue plans to create a weekly free sports session for students to support health and wellbeing.
- Review the Sports Clubs and whether there are any hidden fees creating barriers to participation.

Conclusions

On the whole, we have learned that students at Southampton Solent University enjoy their experience at university, and that both the academic experience and their wider student experience has high levels of satisfaction.

Communication and an increased awareness of the opportunities and facilities already available to enhance their experience do currently exist, and methods to increase the awareness is needed.

Solent Students' Union will work with the university on all the recommendations listed and provide updates at Student Council, AGMs and relevant University Committees. We believe that the recommendations can help to create a better solent community for students and we thank colleagues in the university in advance for supporting student experience.

Ultimately, what the student life survey 2025 has demonstrated is that Southampton Solent University has a strong commitment to enhancing the student experience as Solent and the Students' Union is proud to be a member of that community.

References

[End of hedonism? Why Britain turned its back on clubbing](#) - BBC News

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Crabtree, R. (2023). Barriers to Student Engagement: Why Don't University Students Engage?. Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal, 4(3), 28-47.
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[Impact-Plan-2018-2022.pdf](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1

Date: Tuesday 18th March 2025

Meeting: Student Life Survey Focus Group 1- Work Life Balance

Location: SU Office

Date of next meeting: N/A

Attendance:

Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hannah Piatkiewicz - LeadingStudent 1Student 2Student 3Student 4Student 5Student 6Student 7Student 8Student 9

Item No.	Item
A	Opening Remarks and Welcome
Questions No.	Question
1	Understanding Work-Life Balance
2	Challenges of Managing Work & Studies
3	Impact of University Support & Policies
4	Strategies & Coping Mechanisms
5	Future Expectations & Career Aspirations

Meeting Minutes

Item	Lead by	Information and Discussions
A	HP	Opening Remarks and Welcome HP welcomes the students to the focus group and thanks them for attending.
1		Understanding Work-Life Balance <i>- How do you personally define work-life balance?</i>

		<p>S1: For me work life balance is being able to academically achieve while maintaining a well and meaningful life.</p> <p>S7: It is about being able to do your work without sacrificing what you like and enjoy doing. Being able to do what you are expected to do whilst doing the things that you want too also. Sometimes things get too much, and you feel like you can't breathe and need to rest. So, it is important to keep a good balance to avoid this.</p> <p>S1 : Doing the things that bring you value.</p> <p>S2 : I think work life balance is about ensuring that your emotional and mental wellbeing is ok, so that means not working too much or studying too much.</p> <p>S7: Some students also need to work as well as balance studies and socialising, so it makes it more difficult.</p> <p><i>- Do you think students today have a harder time balancing work and personal life compared to previous generations?</i></p> <p>S1: Social media adds an extra layer of stress to students. This is more the case now than when I did my undergraduate degree.</p> <p>S7: Social media adds peer pressure to the mixture of trying to ensure a good work and life balance. As you get a fear of missing out.</p> <p>S8: You see other students out on a night out, and you may not have scheduled this. But then you worry you will miss out and it can make it more difficult to be strict on yourself and focus on the right things at the right time.</p> <p>S4: Agrees with this. He adds that notifications on your phone are also distracting when trying to focus.</p> <p>S4: Continues that there has been a shift from previous generations of students when regarding work life balance. Stating that students have issues with finance and may have to get a job alongside their studies, this can be harmful to your mental health. There are a lot of macro dynamic problems for international students. They are more likely to have to go out and get a part-time job to ensure that they can pay for their accommodation as well as their fees. So, there is more pressure on a segment of the student population.</p>
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		<p>S8: Adds that there are more challenges to get a graduate job. So, students feel they need to apply for jobs in the field now to get a head start. This also adds more pressure to students and stress. This makes it hard to ensure a good work life balance.</p> <p>S1: Agrees, it is so stressful trying to find a job. For me I need a job so that I can have money to be OK. Being a care leaver makes it even more pressure to financially look after yourself. There isn't any guidance on how to do it or where to find a job.</p>
2		<p>Challenges of Managing Work & Studies</p> <p><i>- What are the biggest challenges you face when juggling studies, part-time work, and personal commitments?</i></p> <p>S9: Timetabling makes it difficult to manage your work shifts.</p> <p>S7: The work from weekly classes, managing studies and working, makes time management really difficult. Trying to solve that is hard.</p> <p>S1: It can make you life at work hard having to change shifts if you uni timetable changes. If you start the course and have committed days to work, and then these changes in semester 2, it really messes up the life schedule.</p> <p>S7: You have to go online to find out about changes too, so you don't always find out with much time.</p> <p><i>- Have you ever experienced burnout/stress from trying to manage everything?</i></p> <p>S8: There is a lot of stress trying to make the most of opportunities and fitting everything in. Students don't really take part in volunteering or placement because they can't afford to work unpaid.</p> <p>S9: Shares that he decided not to do his placement year for this reason. Financial concerns pushed the decision to stay and complete university sooner.</p>

Impact of University Support & Policies

- Does Southampton Solent University provide enough support (e.g., flexible deadlines, well-being services) for students balancing work and life?

S2: I like to work in the library as I cannot concentrate at home. But the library times are really limited. The library is also really cold on the second floor, so I have to sit in my coat.

S9: For me personally, the university is very concerned with the wellbeing of students. They send out regular emails, asking how you are and encouraging students to check on the wellbeing of their friends too. They are constantly keeping up with what we as students want. I do not see an gap in support from the university, there is support is you are stuck on an assignment and support for mental health. It is clear who to speak to.

S1: The university provides good support, but I feel that it is lacking in the International Office. The unit that deals with this is very small. So, they struggle with vetting the needs of international students or people who are on adversaries or grants or whatever, trying to get that through is really slow. So, if they can increase the manpower and support within the International Team, it would be really beneficial to students.

S9: The response from academic staff is very quick. If I do not know where to get help, I know they will tell me.

S7: Inductions need to be the same across the university. Making sure that all students get access to the same information. For us, we did a scavenger hunt across campus, which really helped us to know how to access all the support available. But overtime, this gets forgotten. So, it would be good to have all the information in one space that students can access easily.

S6: It would be good to revisit important information at key points in the year, after Christmas for example.

- What additional support/ policies would help improve your work-life balance?

S1: It is hard for first year students and international students, likely moving to a new place and adjusting to a new culture to then have more stress on top. It is really important for the uni and SU to provide more information on how to access their local health centres like GPs.

		<p>You don't want your first interaction with finding healthcare to be in an emergency. So, it would be good to have more support with these things and raise awareness at Freshers Fair. Get a GP surgery or an information stand for students to read.</p> <p>S7: It would be amazing if the Student Union had jobs for students to do. Even if this was in the office or helping at events. Just being able to get involved and be paid would be amazing.</p> <p>S3: We are coming to university anyway, so it would be good to have a job that is here onsite also.</p> <p>S1: At Southampton University, they have lots of paid opportunities for students. Including setting up lecture theatres and helping in the SU. It would be amazing to create a campus that was one big central hub of student life.</p> <p>S7: This would be so cool to have a campus that was full of students, studying, socializing at societies and then working too.</p> <p>S1: It would be good to know where you can go and what you can do if you need help when the uni is closed.</p> <p>S1: Living in student accommodation has a big effect on mental health. The accommodation is terrible, and nobody cares if you complain.</p> <p>S7: I came to visit the halls and begged my parents to let me stay in private accommodation. The Uni really need to spend money to upgrade it.</p> <p>S1: The security at the halls don't help you to feel safe either. When I have needed help, they haven't checked the cameras and haven't supported me. We need to have a dedicated team that we can speak to and people that care enough to help us.</p>
4		<p>Strategies & Coping Mechanisms</p> <p><i>- What are some strategies you personally use to maintain a balance between studies, work, and personal life?</i></p> <p>S1: Get the hard bit out of the way 1st instead of doing the easy part first and then waiting to do the hard part of the last minute as you lost motivation. So, prioritising the tasks.</p> <p>S7: For me I need to get in the mindset to work. So, I have a schedule that I make sure I stick to. This plans for doing my studies in the library, time with my friends and free time. I can then set myself goals and make sure I stick to it.</p>

		<p>S2: I make sure that I have time to exercise and go to the gym. We are so lucky to have a gym here at uni, so it is easy to go when you need to. This helps to have a strong positive mental health.</p> <p>S7: I also find the gym really helpful. But for me I am part of a few societies, and these are great to meet new people, try different things out and have some time away from your studies.</p> <p>S6: Societies give you a productive distraction from studies. You can do things you enjoy with people who like similar things.</p> <p>S7: Societies give you a bit of spice in your life, with the productive distraction. You are doing stuff that makes you feel good, with good people. It gives you a break from stress and studies. So, I think we I already got the necessary training, yeah I think it would be like the same thing in the industry.</p> <p><i>- Have you found any apps, time management techniques, or habits particularly useful?</i></p> <p>S1: I use an app on my phone that locks your social media.</p> <p>S9: I also use an app that stops me from accessing my phone while I am studying.</p> <p>S7: I use alarms to remind me when I can take a break from my work.</p> <p>S6: Music apps to listen to while working.</p>
5		<p>Future Expectations & Career Aspirations</p> <p><i>- How do you think work-life balance will change when you transition from university to full-time employment?</i></p> <p>S1: It won't be too different as we will have learned self-discipline at uni. Work will be the chance to apply all the things we have learned.</p> <p>S2: I think it would be worse because at university you're protected, you've got no real deadlines as such, you know. The consequences are not the same.</p> <p>S3: If you mess up at work it is your livelihood on the line.</p> <p><i>- What do you expect from future employers in terms of work-life balance policies (e.g., remote work, mental health support, flexible hours)?</i></p>

		<p>S6: I think employers are more aware of mental health support and they give flexible hours.</p> <p>S3: There is the freedom to see what they are offering and what their priorities are and decide if that is what you want.</p> <p>S7: I feel that everything is negotiable to an extent. If you want more money, you have to spend more time traveling to London to get a higher wage. You lose time commuting. So, less time to do what you want. So, you have to decide what is important to you, as there are lots of options out there.</p> <p>S9: I currently work alongside my studies, and I find I have a good work life balance. They are very flexible and understanding, so I enjoy working there.</p> <p>S3: I think the university having paid Student Ambassadors is really good.</p> <p>S1: I would love to be a Student Ambassador, but I don't think it is easy to find information on student jobs on campus.</p>
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Appendix 2

Date: Thursday 20th March 2025

Meeting: Student Life Survey Focus Group 2- Wellbeing

Location: SU Office

Date of next meeting: N/A

Attendance:

Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hannah Piatkiewicz - Leading Student 1 Student 2 Student 3

Item No.	Item
A	Opening Remarks and Welcome
Questions No.	Question
1	Defining Student Wellness
2	Mental Health & Academic Pressure
3	Physical Health & Lifestyle Balance
4	Social Life & Support Systems
5	Improving Student Wellness at University

Meeting Minutes

Item	Lead By	Information and Discussions
A	HP	<p>Opening Remarks and Welcome</p> <p>HP welcomes the students to the focus group and thanks them for attending.</p>
1		<p>Defining Student Wellness</p> <p><i>- Do you feel like the uni prioritises student well-being enough? Why or why not?</i></p> <p>S1: The university does try to prioritise wellbeing, but I think they miss some groups of students out. Like myself being a care leaver, it would be really good if there was a support group for care leavers to join. It is a different experience at uni than other students.</p> <p>S2: I feel that there is always more that can be done to prioritise student wellbeing. I think having more opportunities to socialise on campus and take a break would be good.</p> <p>S3: I think things like the wellbeing area in the library is really good, I use it every day. Having more things like this around that all students can access would be good.</p>
2		<p>Mental Health & Academic Pressure</p> <p><i>- How does academic stress impact your mental health?</i></p> <p>S1: It can make things overwhelming. Especially if you haven't planned properly.</p> <p>S2: Things can seem very stressful and make you feel like you can't breathe. So, I really try to be careful to prioritize my mental health so that this does not happen.</p> <p><i>- What coping mechanisms do you use to manage stress, anxiety, or burnout?</i></p> <p>S2: Making sure that I have time to spend away from my studies. It is also really good to have friends to talk to that understand.</p> <p>S1: Sometimes I just need to be left to go to sleep. I can get so grumpy because I am stressed, so I need to just be left alone. But that is not always the best thing. I have heard about students who do not cope,</p> <p><i>- Are mental health resources (e.g., university counselling, support groups) accessible and effective?</i></p>

		<p>S2: I have used the mental health services here at the uni and they are really good. Once you know how to contact them it is good.</p> <p>S1: I have not used them, but I have seen emails and posters about it.</p>
3		<p>Physical Health & Lifestyle Balance</p> <p><i>- How do you maintain a healthy lifestyle alongside academic and work commitments?</i></p> <p>S2: I think it is so important to go to the gym and take time to feel good. I have a gym in my accommodation, so it makes this really easy.</p> <p>S1: I think it is quite hard to prioritise it when there is other stuff to worry about.</p> <p><i>- Do you feel you have enough time for exercise, sleep, and proper nutrition?</i></p> <p>S2: I feel that you must make time for it. Like, there are lots of factors that can stop you from doing it, and especially when you are really busy and tired, you just want to lie in bed. So you need to be educated on why is important to do these things. For some students, they also might not know about how to eat healthy. So, it would be good to have cooking classes and things like this. I use the Exchange, and it is so good. I am able to make really good meals from the stuff I get there.</p> <p>S1: I also use the Exchange and can get enough stuff to make dinner or lunch. But it would be good to have cheaper options to buy food on campus.</p> <p>S3: The food on campus is so expensive that for a lot of students, they leave and go to buy fast food away from the uni.</p> <p>S2: We should make more of an effort to provide brain food to students. Especially around the time of exams.</p>
4		<p>Social Life & Support Systems</p> <p><i>- How important is social interaction for maintaining well-being?</i></p> <p>S2: I realized how important it is to go out and meet with friends. How good it makes me feel after. In the Student Life Survey, it talks about if it is difficult to go out and socialize due to money. This is something that is definitely true. You have to calculate everyday if you are able to go out. Most things cost money if you want to go for coffee or to the cinema. It would be good if the SU and Uni could provide cheap or free opportunities regularly for people to go to with their friends.</p>

		<p>S1: Socialising is really important, but money definitely limits how much you can do this. Even in the student accommodation, the common room is rank, and the pool table is usually out of use. So, it is hard to find ways to socialize that are free.</p> <p>- <i>Do you feel connected to a supportive community (friends, family, university networks)?</i></p> <p>S2: For me personally yes, I do. But I know that not everybody has that.</p> <p>S3: I feel yes, but you have to work to find those connections. It is hard when you first come here. So, it would be good to have more opportunities to meet people and find a circle of friends.</p> <p>S1: I don't have family support, and my foster family is not able to always help anymore. So, my support is limited at university.</p>
5		<p>Improving Student Wellness at University</p> <p>- <i>What changes could the uni make to improve student well-being?</i></p> <p>S1: I think it is really important to meet with people in a similar situation to you. That is why I am trying to set up the Care Leavers Society. This will allow us to build a group of people that can have each others backs and understand your experiences. I also think that the university should look into group therapy sessions, so that we can know we are not on our own and there are other people who have the same feelings.</p> <p>S2: I think it would be really interesting to look into creating a support system for students. Not to help with academic work, but to help with wellbeing. Students joining the uni can be assigned by someone at freshers to help them settle in and find their way. That will alleviate a lot of the wellbeing concerns when starting at uni.</p> <p>S1: I agree, this would be so good to have a key person looking out for you and that you can go to ask any questions.</p> <p>S2: I think it would be good to have the library open more hours and days. It is hard to fit everything into the times that the library is open. Especially if you are at work and then need to do your studies after, but by then the library is closed. The library being open longer times, would also allow students to know that they always have a warm safe space to go. They can get a drink and access the wellbeing area even when uni is closed. I think that is so important.</p>

		<p>- <i>Are there any wellness initiatives or strategies you've found particularly helpful?</i></p> <p>S1: I have found story telling a really useful way to process feelings and cope. So, I joined the script society and found it quite therapeutic.</p> <p>S2: I know that events are put on in the lead up to exams to help with stress. But I think things like yoga etc are quite niche. So, it would be good if we could have big group study sessions arranged. So that all students can go to the library to study and then have pizza or something at the end. It would be a good way to help everyone to assign time and to focus on their work. With the SU behind it, it could be quite cool to have a mixture of people all together.</p> <p>S1: I think the counselling sessions here at uni are pretty good. But I didn't know about it for a long time. So, it would be good if they could promote these more on how to get access.</p>
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