

NSS Qu 26 Results

This paper is under embargo until 9th August at 9:00

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2017

Introduction

Changes to the NSS question referring to the Students' Union has had a drastic change on the main focus for Students' Unions from an overall look at the offerings to how the Union benefits the academic interests of students. As Question 26 now asks:

“The Students' Union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests”

With a drastic narrowing of question, we did believe that results fluctuating would make results non-comparable from previous years. We did see large fluctuations with a few subjects, but the overall trends can be accounted for and using comparison data, we get a better understanding of the student opinion.

NSS is rated on a 1-5 scale where 1 is highly unsatisfied and 5 is highly satisfied. Percentage satisfaction is calculated by the people who score 4 or 5 over the people who answered the question. This means that people who score 3 (Neither satisfied or unsatisfied) are classed as a negative. This paper looks at both the percentage satisfaction and the individual number scores of students.

Executive Summary

This year, the Union has increased by one point to 57%. This is a drastic improvement as the sector went down from 68% (2016) to 57% (2017). This will mean that we will be ranked better than half of the Student Unions in the country. We have seen that departments that have had bad experience with Academic Societies or SSCC/Course Reps have decreased whereas Departments with good experiences with these have increased. Improvements are suggested in this report concerning comments and data so that the Union can achieve up to 70% in the following year.

The University decreased by four points to 85%. This is the second year in the row where the Institution has decreased by this much. Also, this is the first year where the Union and University haven't trended together. This can suggest that the Union is starting to be seen as independent to the University by the students.

A bad experience with the Union as a whole has been seen to give negative scores even if it is not part of the “Academic Interests” section of the Union. Multiple comments about societies and events have come to light and have hindered much larger growth.

When looking at the 5 to 1 scores, we have improved in every area except (2). This shows that more students are actively unhappy with the Union than before. Less students have marked N/A in this question, which shows that more students see the Union as part of their Academic Interest. This is another trend that the Union has bucked and is promising to see.

Overall, the Union has had a good year in NSS, even if it is not reflected directly in the percentage increase from last year. With the suggested improvements, the Union can score in the high 60's.

Benchmarking Summary

The sector wide average has decreased from 68 (2016) to 57 (2017). This means that we are sector average for this year. As the sector has decreased 11 points and we have gained This is a great start for the Union to increase for the following years.

Below is the table of scores of our benchmark.

	2016	2017	Change in position
Keele	84	73	+7
Liverpool Hope	72	69	-1
Arts University Bournemouth	67	63	-4
Chester	77	63	0
Coventry	79	63	-8
Birmingham City	71	62	-1
Leeds Trinity	62	58	0
Birmingham	75	57	-1
Gloucestershire	67	57	-2
Newman	56	57	2
University of the Creative Arts	52	57	0
Worcester	68	56	6
Aston	63	52	3
Canterbury Christ Church	62	50	8
Warwick	71	50	9
Bishop Grosseteste	68	48	-8
Cumbria	58	57	-4

Newman Student's Union has increased by 8 places within our benchmark group. In 2016, Newman was placed at 16th and for 2017, Newman has placed 8th. Newman and UCA are the only two in the benchmark to have increased their score. Leeds Trinity, who won Students' Union of the year in NUS awards have scored one point more than Newman.

This benchmark analysis shows that Newman have increased compared to their similar institutions, and local institutions. The Students' Union have a platform to increase in the coming years but have shown to the students how it supports the Academic Interests of students compared to other unions in our sector and benchmark.

Scores Summary

NSS 2017 has asked the question “What does Academic Interests mean?”. We have seen that most Unions and Institutions believe this to be the Academic Reps System. With minor research gathered from other Unions, we have come to understand that Academic Interests are:

“Any project/initiative/system that helps a student improve their course; support them with their academic needs; develop their interests that have come from their degree; and improve their employability with direct connection to their industry”

As a Union, we offer the following that fit into the above statement:

- Academic Reps System
- Skills Development Program (running 2017)
- Student Advice Clinic (open 2017)
- Academic (Course-Based) Societies
- Academic (Project-Based) Societies (running 2017)
- Student Enterprise Collaboration (starting 2017)

The research has also shown that students that are highly engaged in Union activities that aren't supporting their “Academic Interests” will still score 4 or 5 on Question 26 even if they have had a bad experience with the above projects/services.

Overall

Newman Students’ Union scored 57% satisfaction score. This is a point above the previous year of 56% (2016) but we are still lower than 64% (2015). This was when the benchmark for Unions was 68%. As the benchmark for Unions now is 57%, we are better than half the Unions in the country. Looking at the numbers scored, we have improved in mostly every area with (5) and (4) scores increasing and (3),(1) and N/A scores dropping. We have had a drastic rise in (2) scores with a 70% increase.

	2016	2017	% change
(5)	78	92	17.95
(4)	141	149	5.67
(3)	117	114	-2.56
(2)	29	46	58.62
(1)	29	24	-17.24
N/A	25	16	-36.00

This suggests that the increase in graduate students from 2016 to 2017 are actively unhappy but all other trends show that students are actively happier with the union from the previous year.

The Institution has decreased in their score from 89 (2015) to 85 (2016) to 81 (2017) with an 8% drop overall in a three year average. This is the first year that we have not followed the trend of the institution. This shows that the students do see the separation between the Union and University as they have not “trend scored”.

Department Breakdown

Looking at the department breakdown of results, we can see that half of the departments have had a decrease in satisfaction, and the rest have had no change or an increase in satisfaction. Below is the data of percentage satisfaction and a one sentence summary of the reasons behind this.

	2016	2017	% change	Summary
Biological Sciences	63	63	0.00	n/a
Business and Administration	31	60	93.55	Increase in SU involvement with enterprise & engaged reps.
Creative Arts & Design	70	59	-15.71	Problems with Academic Society & not engaged reps
Education (Not ITT)	60	55	-8.33	Problems solving Joint Honours issues
Historical & Physiological Sciences	62	36	-41.93	Problems with Academic Society & reps unknown of SU involvement
Initial Teacher Training	48	60	25.00	Engaged SSCC by staff & reps
Languages	64	59	-7.81	SSCC + SU link not publicised

	2016	2017	% change	Summary
Social Sciences	48	63	31.25	SU attendance + support in SSCC
Subjects Aligned to Medicine	65	49	-24.62	Problems with SSCC staff + student engagement

Demographic Data

Below is the data on demographics. we have seen decreases with Female, Young, Asian, White, Full-Time students. We have also seen large increases in Male, Mature, Part-Time Students. The data is below.

	2016	2017	% Change
Sex			
Female	59	56	-5.08
Male	46	61	32.61
Age			
Mature	47	55	17.02
Young	60	57	-5.00
Ethnicity (4 Way)			
Asian	60	59	-1.67
Black	57	58	1.75
Other	50	50	0.00
White	56	55	-1.79
Ethnicity (2 Way)			
Non-White	58	58	0.00
White	56	55	-1.79
Mode Of Study			
Full-Time	57	56	-1.75
Part-Time	43	61	41.86

Submitted Comments

Below are the comments from NSS that mention the “Union”, “Societies” or “Hub”. Other key words relating to union activities had no results. No positive comments were received this year.

Events/Activities Based Comments

“Typical events in Students’ Union. Not enough done to break down cultural barriers”

“The societies at Newman are lacking, there is not enough information about them and how to get involved. I feel like I have seriously missed out on an important part of university life”

“Students aren’t given much reason to socialise on campus.”

“Seem to have a number of reasons for limited number of successful and fun societies.”

“The Students’ Union should be more active. More activities around the university that are culturally diverse would be good.”

Support/Approachability Based Comments

“I haven't got any support from Students’ Union with matter such as these” - About the struggles of English as a second language

“The Students’ Union isn't approachable at all”

“Although improving, the Students’ Union is below par. Lack strong connection with students, lack communication”

“I haven't had much interaction with the students hub as it always seems fairly unwelcoming”

General Comments

“The Students’ Union is very bad”

“Students’ Union isn't active within the university”

“Students’ Union not performing their roles effectively”

Suggestions from Data

Throughout the data and comments, there are issues that have simple and complex solutions. Below are the suggestions and demographics/departments that have a low score or most students that can drastically affect the score.

Activities Improvements

From the comments and data, we can see that student groups/societies need to grow, be marketed more, and improve with their inclusivity and social/fun aspects. With this, the following improvements are suggested or being carried out already.

- SASy Socs focus on social and fun aspects of a society
- Free society model to increase society creation for support based societies
- Development of paperwork and support for paperwork completion
- Membership fees per society for accountability of society officials
- Society Guilds so that societies can work together to market themselves and develop bigger/better events
- Regular updates for website and in house marketing of societies

Other issues that can be found through the data is inclusivity and development of events for underrepresented groups of students. Through the introduction of an Equality & Campaigns Officer and the Terms of Reference changes to the Events & Activities Officer role, more inclusive and diverse events can be developed and delivered.

Approachability Improvements

The approachability and location problems of the Union has come through with this data. With this, the following improvements are suggested or being carried out already.

- Go Out And Talk To Students need to be followed and also done by part-time officers
- Introduction of a “Make Us Better” website section for students to give comments
- An “SU on Tour” initiative where officers and staff work in visual places so that the Union is known, recognised and communication occurs
- A campaign on the NSS. What do the questions mean and what does the answers that you put mean?

Academic Reps Improvements

As seen though the comments on the departmental scores and the overall trends, General academic reps improvements need to be made. The following improvements are suggested or being carried out already.

- Academic voice for Joint Honour students

- A “tiered” Academic Reps system so that feedback is heard, acted upon, SSCC is monitored, and the system is promoted.
- SSCC to be promoted as a Union system.
- Course Rep rewards for reps who are dedicated and work hard. (Travel Mug, Skills Development Program, Rep Conference, and Course Rep +)
- Engagement and buy in from Course Reps and Staff in SSCC
- Closing of the feedback loop to see improvements in real time. (YSWD: 28 DG)
- Making sure that ineffective Course Reps are removed and replaced

Academic Support/Interests Improvements

From research about the impacts of the new question, other areas rather than just Academic Reps need to be developed. Below are improvements that are suggested or being carried out already.

- Develop a funding model and strategy for Academic (course or project based) Societies so these groups can be funded by their department
- Develop support for students with complaints/misconduct/academic boards. (Student Advice Clinic)
- Work with Student Enterprise to support students with ideas from their course/interests
- Develop campaigns around academic issues that are affecting students
- Early promotion of Excellence Awards nominations
- Creating a “You’re Great” program to reward staff through student comments

Departments/Demographics

With the results being broken down, certain departments/demographics are not happy with the Union. This includes departments that have a high amount of students or a large amount of students with a (3) score which could change with a good experience of the Union.

Demographics:

- Female students
- Young students
- Asian Students
- Full-Time Students
- Joint Honours

Departments:

- History & Physiological Studies
- Faculty of Education
- Social Sciences
- Creative Arts and Design