Student Voice Report

The Annual Report of Student Experience at Newman University

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Foreword

Welcome to 2017-2018 Student Voice Report. We are the representation side of your Students’ Union team which consists of the President (Tom), the Academic Representation Officer (Gill) and our Membership Services Coordinator (Emma). On behalf of everyone at Newman Students’ Union we would like to highlight the importance of this report for highlighting our successes and research to improve upon the student experience.

Student experience is at the heart of this Student Voice Report, with the contents of this report made up of the views of Newman students. These views are used to formulate recommendations for the University and the Union which will result in the best possible student experience for the students of Newman. The team, led by Tom are very proud to be taking the recommendations of students and using them to enhance the student experience.

We would like to send our thanks to all those who contributed to this report, whether that be the students who filled out the ISSS and the NSS, the Course Reps who gave student views in the SSCCs and any other students who has spoken to us over the past year. This report would not be in existence if it wasn’t for these students sharing their experiences with us.

We are privileged to represent the students of Newman and are anticipating a great collaboration with the University in order to help every Newman student get the most of out of their experience at Newman University.
Introduction

The annual Student Voice Report is an informative document which outlines student feedback from the course of this academic year and makes recommendations on how the issues raised can be addressed. Improving the student experience at Newman is ingrained in the strategic plan of the Students’ Union and defines its existence. Gathering and using the student voice in this report and acting on the recommendations is how we can make student life better at Newman University.

This is our second annual Student Voice Report. This report will look at the recommendations from the first report and address whether they have been acted upon. This report has been split up into 12 short sections which have been formulated from a range of data sources. By collating the data into one report the Students’ Union and the University can form a working partnership to establish clear priorities and goals, and suggest tangible methods in which to complete these.

A Student Voice Mid-Term Report will be published early in Semester 2. This report will specifically examine the recommendations of this report and how they have been acted upon, as well as detailing the results of student experience research conducted by the SU in Semester 1.

Student feedback is essential for understanding what we do well and what can be improved. We would like to thank everyone, both staff and students, who have contributed their feedback over the past academic year.
Recommendations Update

This section provides updates on the recommendations that were made in the Student Voice Report 2016/17. The format of the previous Student Voice Report was slightly different to the format of this report, meaning that these updates are based on the format of the previous report.

Section 1: Assessment and Feedback

Recommendation 1: Continue with the development of assignment briefs and to look at including marking criteria.

Annually reviewed and updated by the Electronic Assessment and Marking group which includes three SU members and all assignment briefs since the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year have had to include the marking criteria.

Recommendation 2: Develop a standardised assignment feedback system which includes improvements and refers to the assignment brief and marking scheme.

This is good practice and is part of current advice given to all teaching staff.

Recommendation 3: Consult with academic staff and students to deliver a standardised time that all academics believe that they can keep for delivering feedback to students.

The three week deadline is being adhered to, with academic colleagues ensuring students are made aware of any potential delays and the date students can expect feedback is not part of the assignment brief for 2018/19. IT services have also developed a reminder email to Academic colleagues which automatically goes to them after two weeks to remind them there is one week left until feedback and marks have to be provided.

Recommendation 4: The University and Union to produce a report on the punctuality of assignment results and feedback which is available to students.

A report, produced each semester and annually, has been in place since 2012 and continues to be available and acted on by Academic Standards Committee.

Section 2: Support & Resources

Recommendation 5: Develop and carry out a marketing plan for Student Support and Services to promote how they can support and help students.

A range of measures has already been put in place including extending information on results letters to include those students without any fails to retrieve so all students are made aware.
Recommendation 6: Educate Academic Reps on Student Support and Services so that they can signpost students.

All Course Reps and StARs will have training on Student Support services and other support available across the University so they are able to signpost students appropriately.

Recommendation 7: The Student Advice Clinic to be set up, run, and a review to be carried out to investigate the quality of advice and how to improve the service.

A review of the case load from the academic year 2017-18 was conducted and a report written, which is detailed later in this report. Newman SU is in the process of recruiting an external advisor to assist in quality assurance processes throughout the coming year.

Recommendation 8: Investigate where bookable and unbookable group study spaces, and relaxation spaces, can be incorporated in current and new building plans.

The campus has a variety of open study spaces for students and this will be continued in any new building work.

Recommendation 9: Investigate options for having a wider range of catering facilities in the evenings for part-time course.

Discussed again later in this report.

Recommendation 10: Look at increasing water fountain access and introducing microwave and kettle facilities on campus for student use.

This has been discussed at Health and Safety Committee and concerns have been raised about having hot water on campus. Newman SU believes we have solutions for this and will continue to discuss this over the coming year.

Recommendation 11: Create a system of promoting wins from SSCC within 28 days of the meeting.

A new system of StARs feedback and 28 Days Later meetings has been set up and is being implemented successfully.

Section 3: Student Voice

Recommendation 12: Work with the Union to get successes to StARs within 28 days so promotion can be done.

Part of information on SSCC running and will be monitored this year through SSCC minutes by the Quality Office.

Recommendation 13: Investigate the opportunity to increase SSCC meeting numbers and to consult with Reps and SSCC Chairs.

Newman Students’ Union have decided that the current structure of SSCC meetings fulfils its aims, but we will be conducting a full review over the next year.
Section 4: Organisation

Recommendation 14: Research the academic engagement of commuter students and develop solutions.

Part of the work of one of the University Working Groups and being taken forward for the task Groups for 2018/19.

Recommendation 15: Investigate how the timetable affects students with caring responsibilities through a space (physical and/or online) and what they would like to see change.

Recommendations have been made by the Students’ Union in this report.

Recommendation 16: Develop solutions on supporting students with caring responsibilities from the feedback given.

There has been in place the use of a RAP by proxy; where by students with caring responsibilities may be eligible for a Reasonable Adjustment plan (for their submission dates, etc.) due to caring responsibilities. This has been available for the past 5 years but may need further advertising by the University and the SU.

Recommendation 17: Review the scheduling of deadlines within the aspect on feedback from previous assignments and timescales of reviewing and editing work to improve from previous grades.

The deadlines for work are discussed within subject and programme teams and the Quality Office will also monitor for deadlines which would not allow the feedback to be received before the next assignment is due.

Recommendation 18: Review the deadline schedule for Joint Honours students and consult with subject leads and students on how to make this schedule more effective.

Guidelines are made available to academic colleagues and also above.

Recommendation 19: Increase promotion of the HEADs programmes and deadline management support offered.

Being undertaken by the HEADs team in conjunction with support from the Students’ Union and students.
Methodology and Sources

This report has been compiled by Newman Students’ Union staff and the Executive Committee. This report is supported by a range of quantitative and qualitative research aimed at understanding and ultimately improving the student experience here at Newman University.

Data used in this report comes from a range of research including national surveys to Newman’s internal survey. The National Student Survey (NSS) gives us a broad view of the student voice and experience. These surveys give us areas to look into and research further. The Internal Student Satisfaction Survey (ISSS) is completed by 1st and 2nd year students as a way for them to reflect on their whole academic year.

Using SSCC minutes as feedback allows us to see qualitative trends across the institution from Course Reps. We use this data to look into more depth this issues that are raised and suggest where certain subject areas and departments may wish to look further at repeated concerns.

This report contains valid data from our sources as listed below along with the Students’ Union strategy of ‘GOATTS’: Go Out And Talk To Students. We have had conversations and email exchanges with a number of students over the past year; the results of which may be evident in this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Student Survey (NSS)</td>
<td>Level 6 (final year) students</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Student Satisfaction Survey (ISSS)</td>
<td>Level 4 (first year students)</td>
<td>222</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Student Satisfaction Survey (ISSS)</td>
<td>Level 5 (second year) students</td>
<td>250</td>
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<td>Student Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC) Minutes</td>
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Learning and Teaching

Student Satisfaction
Newman’s score in the 2017-18 NSS shows that in terms of teaching we are definitely moving in the right direction with a score of 85% on ‘Teaching on my Course’: above the sector-wide average of 84%. Students are largely positive about their teaching experience and frequently mention small class sizes and the individual experience they receive in these small classes.

The ISSS has produced variable feedback relating to learning and teaching. A common theme across these comments is students feeling that lectures are rushed and do not prepare them for upcoming exams and assignments.

“I enjoy my course and teachers support” (Criminology, ISSS)

“We have a good learning opportunity and we get to think for ourselves” (Business, ISSS)

Lecture Time
“The morning lectures were very rushed and did not allow time to actually gain an understanding. I do not feel confident with the Exam as I don’t understand what I am doing” (Counselling, ISSS)

“Some sessions, I felt (and so did most of the class), wasted my time and I just wanted to go home because they were not structured and I did not learn anything. I could have used that time to plan/do my assignments” (Early Childhood Education and Care, ISSS)

“My lecturers rely on last minute sessions in order to spoon feed us assessment criteria” (Studies in Primary Education, ISSS)

It is important to note the feedback given as with the new aims from the Office for Students which emphasise the value for money of the education that students receive, comments like this are disappointing to read. The students of Newman pay the maximum tuition fees and should be taught at the high standards which should reflect the TEF Silver award that Newman achieved in 2017.

The structure of modules must be student focused and the criteria must be engaging. ‘Death by PowerPoint’ is a concept that should be addressed by the institution and individual lecturers. Newman quote “We’re a friendly community of staff and students, and our small class sizes mean that academic staff can give personal care and attention to each student”. Every member of academic staff needs to ensure that this statement is followed to avoid dissatisfaction of students.
SKE Funding

Students who apply to do a PGCE may be required to carry out a Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) course in order to gain entry to the course. For example a student who studied Drama at undergraduate level may need to complete a SKE in English in order to offer extra development and ensure a basic knowledge of the curriculum and be granted a place on a PGCE course. During an interview process the individual lecturer conducting the interview will assess the need for a SKE and make recommendations to the applicant accordingly. This is usually a course to be conducted over the summer months before the beginning of the PGCE course in September.

Students who enrol on a PGCE course are informed that the Department for Education offer a bursary to help with learning expenditure of up to £1,600 for the eight-week course. The critical issue here is that the money is only released to the student once the University’s finance department receives confirmation of the student’s final degree classification. These results were only released during August, when the SKE commenced on the 5th June 2018. This means that students were without the bursary funding for almost, if not the entire duration of the SKE course.

Students also raised that some had to “take time off work” for the course in early July and they were not receiving their funding until their classification grade had been released. This has seen complaints from some students, as they were out of pocket and funding themselves, when the money should have been available for their use as the funding had been granted, but not released.

Excellent Teaching

The 2017-2018 Excellence Awards were a great success and was the most populated staff-student awards night since the awards started. We decided to make use of the recently opened St Hilda Atrium as a social welcome space. Instead of a sit-down meal we chose to serve canapes and a variety of drinks to have more a formal feel to the night, while also giving everyone chance to chat in a more relaxed environment.

The feedback we received after the event was very positive with comments overall. In order to improve these awards there were several suggestions that there should be more student-centred awards and better advertising for the event aimed at students, as it was largely staff who attended.
Recommendations

Lecture Time

1 Feedback from the ISSS should be acted upon and all lectures should be of a high quality and delivered in the time scale provided with adequate preparation for assessments.

Excellent Teaching

1 Newman Students’ Union to look into creating more student-centred awards for 2018-19 and improve their communications and marketing for the awards night.

SKE Funding

2 The University to investigate the possibility of releasing the grades of students who must undertake SKE for their PGCE course earlier than the rest of the cohort, or to release all results earlier than August.
Assessment and Feedback

Student Satisfaction
Assessment and feedback has a mixed review from students, with many issues arising from students concerning marking and feedback. Newman are narrowly behind the sector average when it comes to the NSS with a score of 72%. This has improved from the previous year’s score of 67% and we hope to see continual improvement over the coming years with the right engagement from the institution.

“Lots of different opportunities and lots of guidance on assignments” (Psychology ISSS)

Question 9 on the NSS relates to fairness of marking in which Newman is under-performing in relation to the sector average at 67%, compared to the sector average at 73%.

Assignment Feedback
“Unclear feedback at times on assignments for ways on how to improve” (English and Education, NSS)

“With some feedback, it didn’t highlight what I could have done to make it better” (Education and Counselling Studies, NSS)

Newman SU has received feedback from students claiming that some feedback has just been highlighting on a marking grid and has not had the in-depth analysis from the marker one would expect, especially at levels 5 and 6.

Feedback from lecturers must be detailed in order for the student to improve in future assignments, whether this feedback is given via Moodle or handwritten.

Newman SU have also discussed marking with students and the process that is undertaken when lecturers mark work. Newman SU has explained to students about second and external markers but there is still frequent feedback that students believe that some marking has been unfair. This may be due to the nature of the comments given by staff;

“A lot of unfair marking and a lot of negative comments and a negative vibe from lecturers. Unclear criteria for assignments/unclear communication — taking bigger steps towards unfair marking — students across the course agree with this” (Health and Social Care, NSS)

“Comments on assignments need to be fair” (Working with Children, Young People and Families, ISSS)

The feedback from assignments can have a damaging effect on the student experience, it can leave students feeling unconfident and in some cases alone when it comes to academic guidance. The quote below shows an example of this.
“Being called out on my first ever assignment for failing in front of the whole class will be something that stays with me for a while as it affected my academic confidence massively” (Education Studies, ISSS).

**Return of Assessed Work**

Return of assessed work also show a negative theme with the students of Newman. There has been confusion amongst staff and students about turnaround time for the marking of assignments, the turnaround time for the mark and feedback of an assignment should be 15 working day, rather than 15 calendar days.

“Feedback is not given on time” (Sports and Exercise Studies, NSS)

Although Newman have dramatically increased the score of question 10 (“feedback on my work has timely”) from 65% to 76%, we should still aim to keep the progression of this score positive as late feedback can affect students and their reflections can be seen through the NSS.

**Deadline Management**

Following recommendations from last year, a number of students have continued to express concerns regarding the dates of certain assignments as there have been times when assignment dates have been clumped together. This puts lots of unnecessary stress on students who have further commitments outside of university, which many of our students do.

Students are far more likely to fulfil their potential if they are given the opportunity to focus on one assignment at a time, particularly at Level 5 and 6 where these assignments are often substantial and make up a significant part of their overall degree classification.

“I think it would be an idea not to have so many assignments all running at the same time, so for example in May 2018 we have 3 assignments to be submitted all roughly at the same time for different subjects” (Health and Social Care, ISSS)

“... not having days and weeks off at a time and then suddenly having several assignments due in the same week” (ITE, ISSS)
Newman SU have analysed the External Examiner reports from 2017-18 and are happy with the overall extremely positive feedback from the individuals. However, there was an issue on one course were there was a remark for material irregularity, as well as one comment on assignment briefs:

“The assignment briefs validated by university are not student friendly and are restrictive” (External Examiner: PESS).

Newman needs to ensure that the assignment briefs are clear on what the assignment should and should not contain. Assignment briefs should act as a broad template for students to follow according to the learning outcomes and should not restrict the students’ abilities to achieve the top marks for that piece of work.

Further examination of assignment briefs and how to tackle assignments in the terms of structure and content needs to be addressed to support students appropriately.

### Recommendations

#### Assignment Feedback

3. All feedback should have a detailed written response with examples and lecturers should produce action points with constructive feedback for the students in order to improve.

#### Return of Assessed Work

4. Subject areas must ensure that work is returned within the three week turnaround time, and students are informed with adequate reasoning if the feedback surpasses the turnaround time.

#### Deadline Management

5. Subject areas to look into whether a minimum spacing of assignment deadlines can be applied across subjects to ensure that students are not completing multiple assignments at the same time.

#### External Examiner Reports

6. PESS must ensure that the feedback provided by external examiners is acted upon at the earliest available opportunity.
Support and Guidance

Student Advice Clinic

The academic year 2017-18 was the first year of Newman Students’ Union’s Student Advice Clinic, founded in September 2017.

The Student Advice Clinic offers advice on academic appeals, misconduct appeals, support for complaints and general academic advice and signposting. In previous years there had been no formal route for the SU to advise on these matters and members of the Executive Committee were often left to advise on cases informally and without training. Consequently, any Executive Committee members who were involved in giving advice were not able to sit on appeals panels and last minute arrangements were often made to ensure representation and support from the Students’ Union was present.

The creation of the Advice Clinic enables us to train dedicated advisors who are recruited based on a specific set of skills and trained with the knowledge of University processes, services and policies.

In September 2017, Newman SU recruited 5 student advisors to cover a daily drop-in clinic during term time. Students were also able to make appointments through the SU office and via email at su-advice@newman.ac.uk.

Over the course of the 2017-18 academic year, the Student Advice Clinic saw a total of 32 clients, 18 in Semester 1 and 14 in Semester 2. Table 1 shows the split between the type of caseload in each semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caseload</th>
<th>Academic Appeals</th>
<th>Misconduct Appeals</th>
<th>Complaints</th>
<th>General Advice</th>
<th>Total Advice Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following discussions throughout this academic year, from 2018-19 Newman University will be implementing personal tutors for every student. Newman SU are fully supportive of the institution’s decision as we believe that this will enhance communication methods for students concerning their work as well as issues they may face whilst they study at Newman.

Newman SU further believes that the Personal Tutor scheme will also aid retention especially from students that identify as mature as the retention level at Newman from mature students is 8% higher than the sector wide average.

The Students’ Union will also encourage students to utilise their Personal Tutors effectively. This will be done through the student charter which has been rewritten and is currently under review for its implementation for the academic year 2018-19.

Student Services

Overall, student services has received high praise from students this year and in particular, students have recognised support in the process for Disabled Student Allowance as excellent. Students have noted that the process is explained well and in detail and they feel confident with the speed at which they have received the help.
The only concern raised by students regarding student services was the presence of and access to the counselling service and the relocation of this service. Students have raised a decreased presence of the counsellor which in turn has made access to the counselling service more difficult. However, the Students’ Union also understands that this will be rectified via recruitment and therefore does not make this concern a recommendation.

In addition to this, students have stated their concerns with the relocation of the counsellor’s office space. This used to be on the lower floor of the Sturge building (where e-learning are currently based) and students found this ideal for confidentiality and had confidence to attend counselling as a result of this. Many students have expressed concerns that the move of the office into the student services area over the bridge in the library makes it difficult for them to opt for counselling sessions at the University. Students express in particular, that when attending counselling the walk through the library itself makes them feel unconfident and intimidated, and that the space is much more open and as a result, less confidential.

Support for ‘non-traditional’ Students

Mature Students

The Students’ Union has set up the ME (Mature Experience) Committee for the academic year 2018-19. This has been set up in response to the shocking statistic that one in five mature students at Newman leave the University before completing their studies. As a result, the Students’ Union have a requirement to find out what barriers, issues or concerns face mature students throughout their time at Newman and seek a constructive approach to changing this. The ME Committee will meet with University departments in order to discuss what the University offers to aid them, if this is advertised appropriately or is common knowledge within the mature student community and how the University could do more. This conversation will also happen with the Students’ Union with regards to our events, academic support, communication methods, campaigns and welfare initiatives. The students will then compile a report to be delivered to the University in order to change the mature student experience and as a result, increase retention in this group.

“I feel like being at Newman has provided me with an opportunity to develop my own voice in my academic work. The staff are incredibly supportive and encourage me to reach my full potential. I’m really grateful I chose Newman as my selected university... I really had nothing to worry about!” (Theology, ISSS)
The Students’ Union also have two family fun days planned this year in order to include the families of our mature students in our events throughout the year. We are aware that as a Students’ Union we often focus on the 18-21 clubbing events, but this year want to branch out and ensure everyone is included as much as possible, and have identified that one barrier to attending our events is that they are all in the evening and children cannot usually come along.

Mature students have also raised issues with childcare whilst being on their course. This concern is two-fold. Firstly, students who are coming into their first year at Newman do not receive any sort of timetable until after enrolment. This is usually fine for younger students, but for mature students with children, the concern is that childcare places fill up fast and trying to find childcare in September is often extremely difficult. One student reported that the nurseries they usually utilise have been pressing for dates and times and if they cannot be provided, the place for their child is given away.

Mature students have also raised concerns with childcare and the University’s signposting of facilities. Most mature students with children who asked about childcare facilities were signposted to the on-site nursery. After going over, they reported to us that the facility is neither big enough, nor to a standard they are used to.

**Part-time Students**

Our part-time students at Newman are largely concerned with two main areas: the lack of support when their lectures are out of hours, and the lack of contact and community within their course. Part-time students who have lectures after 5pm are often on a campus where most staff have gone home and most services have shut down for the day, such as the Sanctuary or Atrium Café.
The students are concerned that the only options available to them are a small coffee or unhealthy snack from a vending machine, due to the closure of the day-time services. These students do not engage with the Students’ Union or extra-curricular activities because their study times do not align with normal office hours, and therefore they also often cannot access additional support.

“As a part-time Foundation Degree student, I feel that there is more that can be developed in helping support Part-time students with their learning before the course begins...”
(Early Childhood Education and Care, ISSS)

**Commuting Students**

Our commuting students have raised one concern relating to some restrictions on lecture time. Some students have reported that if they are up to ten minutes late for a lecture, they have been refused entry to the lecture. This has caused issues for commuters in particular as some live up to 2 hours away by car, bus or train.

Therefore, if they have any unexpected delays which are out of their control, they are sometimes denied entry to lectures. This has caused concern for two reasons: firstly that they are paying for that lecture time and are missing out on valuable learning time and secondly, that this is inconsistent with some other departments who do not enforce this sort of rule.

We are aware that this is not the case everywhere, as a student in History has given us excellent feedback, reporting that they had to drop their child into school before then getting the train to University. This meant that on some days, they didn’t get to a 9am lecture until 10.15am. However, they were allowed entry and given extra support to catch up. This is a fantastic display of good practise, and should be commended and implemented across all subject areas.

**Skills Tests**

Students who apply to do a PGCE are required to take the Skills Test in English and Maths to gain entry to the course. Once students are offered a place at a University, they are expected to complete and pass both tests. Many students feel that not enough support is given to those who may struggle or need assistance with these tests. We are aware that Newman does offer a few sessions per year to prepare students for the Skills Test, however for some that is not sufficient. As a former Teacher Training College, students feel that more could be done to support those who may be struggling with a particular area of the tests, instead of students resorting to private tuition elsewhere.
Recommendations

Student Services

7 To look into the location of the counselling service and consider whether it can be moved to a more confidential location of the University with much less footfall than the library has.

Mature Students

9 For mature students with children to receive timetables much earlier. If necessary, the timetables could be released with a disclaimer of a possibility for change. However, any sort of guide would be beneficial to our mature students with children.

Commuting Students

Part-time Students

8 The University to allow the Students’ Union to have a continuous weekly stall in the Atrium from 5pm on the day where most part-time students have evening lectures. Possibly, to bring the microwave up to the Atrium at this time, with the agreement that the Students’ Union will return it to the space outside the Sanctuary that evening.

Skills Tests

11 For the University to ensure that students not being permitted to enter lectures late is eliminated in all departments, with the agreement that students who are late enter the lecture in an appropriate and quiet manor in order to minimise disruption to the learning of others, and support offered to those who will be consistently late to lectures for legitimate reasons.

12 The university to liaise with the relevant department to look into offering more skills test support sessions throughout the year, with opportunities to run additional specialist sessions if requested by students.
Facilities and Resources

New Building Work
Newman University started their £22 million Estates plan in 2016-17: a plan for the future which would give Newman facilities of the highest quality. There is an understanding from students that the project is for the benefit of the institution in the long term and the potential students. Current students have raised the point about their tuition fees being increased and they don’t feel they have got anything in return for this increase.

“Building work was inconvenient, although I understand this is to benefit future students, rather than the current” (Drama and English, NSS)

“Constant room changes, noise from the building work often disrupted sessions, sometimes the lecture recording devices didn’t work and so old yet similar content for modules was upload in its place” (Psychology, ISSS)

Although in the long term the benefits are many for future Newman students, one must address the issues that current students have faced and the increase in fees has given students the opportunity to pose the question of value for money for their course. What have students gained from the increase in course fees? Have students been compensated for the building work if it has affected their studies?

Feedback from students suggests they are very happy with the new carpark in Newman Close, but that removing other car parking spaces across the campus is not helpful for commuter students. Adequate space needs to be found for student parking during term time.

Library
Question 19 asks students if “the library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well.” The NSS result shows very positive satisfaction levels with a score of 90%; an increase on the previous year as well as being higher than the national average. The library team should be congratulated for this satisfaction of the service and we hope this continues to improve. However, when looking at comments from the ISSS and NSS it is clear to see that some students have issues regarding books in the library.

“Lack of resources in the library, I either had to order books myself or go to different libraries and the selection of books could be better” (Theology, NSS)

“Resources in the library, it can be a bit of a struggle” (History, NSS)

“Facilities are few e.g., books, journals, materials. The IT services often fail” (Theology, NSS)
These comments highlight some issues that students have with the library and its resources. However, it is also worth noting that Newman has a one book to ten students ratio, a figure that is better than other local and comparable institutions. Further to this there are other ways for students to get hold of resources including inter library loan and the book scanner. These opportunities possibly need to be advertised to students more.

Students also note frequently that they are very happy at the extended opening hours of the library until midnight all year round.

The Sanctuary

An issue that has been widely discussed over the past few years is food and drink facilities for students. For the academic year 2017-2018 Estates placed a microwave outside the Sanctuary for students to be able to heat up their own food. There has been positive feedback from this however it should be noted that students are still unaware that it exists. This is something that Newman SU needs to work to promote to students, as it can save students a lot of money to bring their own lunches rather than spending money on lunch every day.

It is clear that there is a need for more microwaves or for the microwave to be moved to benefit part-time students who are located primarily in the Atrium after 5pm. Further to this there have been discussions with students about there not being access to hot water. It would be beneficial for all students if a second microwave could be provided in the Atrium, along with a hot water dispenser alongside the existing microwave opposite the Sanctuary.

“Not enough computers. Sanctuary is expensive, not enough water stations” (Early Childhood Education and Care, NSS)

“...The food is overpriced and undercooked...” (Drama and Applied Theatre, NSS)
There are also several mentions of the Sanctuary being expensive for students. A sandwich, drink and chocolate bar will cost students an average of £5, which is considerably more than comparable meals with combined meal deals, averaging £3.

As a result, students often choose to walk to the OneStop or to drive to Asda. This takes money off campus and also is inconvenient for students. It would be hugely beneficial for students if the Sanctuary were able to provide a meal deal option for cold sandwiches so that students are able to eat a substantial lunch at a reasonable price without leaving the University campus.

**Recommendations**

**Building Work**

13 Newman University to look into the possibility of compensation for students for the building work and the disruption to learning, such as printing credits or Sanctuary vouchers.

14 For Estates to investigate other options to extend student car parking near to campus for commuting students.

**The Sanctuary**

15 Newman to install hot water dispensers and more microwaves across different areas of campus.

16 Sanctuary look at the possibility of doing a meal deal for students or alternatively setting up a loyalty scheme.

**Library**

17 Newman library to market their services more, especially in regards to what they can offer with regards to resources.
Employability and Development

The Students’ Union

In the Students’ Union annual review we have recognised that we do very little to fulfil one of our strategic promises: “we promise to prepare you for life after University.” Following conversations with a wide range of students, a need has been identified for the creation of a scheme which can be run alongside University services to provide students with additional skills which they will be able to utilise in their future study or work.

In doing this, it is important for us to not duplicate University services and for both the University and the Students’ Union to work in partnership to create and deliver opportunities for students to develop additional skills so they can leave University with an abundance of skills to carry them into their chosen careers.

Students have expressed a desire for a range of volunteering opportunities to be provided, outside of the current opportunities in representation and student voice. Following feedback from this year’s Course Rep and Society training, it is clear that students would also benefit from opportunities to enhance their skills in public speaking and project management, to name a few of the suggestions provided in feedback forms.

“My course so far to date has been very interesting and has supported me professionally through theory based learning and investigation which has helped me to develop in my job by becoming more confident” (Teaching Assistants, ISSS)

Recommendations

2 The Students’ Union should look into the possibility of creating a volunteer scheme to enable students to take part in community activities which enhance their employability and other skills.

3 The Student’s Union should provide additional optional training for all students in the form of ‘Skills Development Workshops’ which focus on developing skills such as public speaking.
Timetabling

In recent years a large amount of work has been undertaken from Registry to ensure a flexible timetable for the student body. One must understand that the timetable will not benefit all students, but it is important to understand student concerns with the timetable. These concerns are clear in the results from question 16 on the NSS (“The timetable works efficiently for me”). Newman are below the sector average (78%) with a score of 70%, with comments from the ISSS also reflecting concerns.

“Timetables need to be available sooner for parents and people who work. The Easter break did not fit with parents. I feel parents are hardly taken into account at this university and it is a shame” (Early Childhood and Care, ISSS)

“The timetable gaps were too long especially when a mature student like myself had childcare arrangements” (Studies in Primary Education, NSS)

It would be beneficial to a large number of our students if timetables could be released earlier in the summer, especially for students progressing to Levels 5 and 6, where student numbers are more stable. A number of subjects, such as Theology, already do this for their Level 5 and 6 students.

This is a particular issue for parents with young children who need to arrange childcare. A third of our students at Newman are mature students, and many of these have children of school age who need to plan childcare arrangements before the school term begins, which is usually three weeks before the university term begins. Combining this figure with Newman’s retention rates concerning mature students, where 1 in 5 of these students drop out before finishing their course, it is crucial that the university starts to look at ways to support these students and the factors which affect them outside the classroom.

The timetable has been improved over the past few years and no student should now be on campus for fewer than 2 hours per day, to take account of our high numbers of students who have to commute long distances. However, many students still feel like their long gaps between lectures are inconvenient when they have to consider childcare and other commitments. While we always encourage students to take advantage of the library and the large number of study spaces on campus during these times, it would be beneficial if the gaps between these lectures could be reduced as much as possible.
Communication
A large number of comments on both the NSS and ISSS identified communication issues as a primary source of their discontent with their courses. Students are not informed with adequate notice if their timetable is changing, if their lectures are cancelled or if there are other problems or alterations to certain parts of their course. For our commuting students in particular, who often travel up to 2 hours to campus, this is a major concern as they sometimes attend lectures that have been cancelled with less than an hour’s notice. Of course, there are some situations where this is unavoidable, but every effort should be made to ensure that changes are communicated at the earliest available opportunity.

“Communication between the university and students has been poor. The rise in fees was not officially communicated until the end of semester 1 which is incredibly disappointing. We had no choice but to accept the fees otherwise we couldn’t enrol. General communication on building work, etc. has been sporadic which still isn’t ideal. There appears to be little to no interest in the students’ opinions in the rise in fees. If it’s money related the university act alone without consideration to the students’ thoughts/opinions” (Drama and English, NSS)

School Placements
PGCE students participate in two placements throughout the duration of their year-long course. The first beginning in October, and the second in February. It has been highlighted that placement schools were not allocated to students until the last minute, making it difficult for students to arrange travel, childcare and other necessities in such a short amount of time.
Recommendations

Timetabling

18 For the University to look into making the timetable available earlier in the summer for Level 5 and 6 students.

19 For Registry to investigate the possibility of reducing the length of gaps between lectures. Newman SU suggests that we aim for a recommended maximum time of 2 hours where possible, to reduce the number of students having gaps longer than 2 hours.

Communication

20 All staff to ensure that changes to timetables or modules are communicated to students at the earliest available opportunity to reduce any unnecessary inconvenience caused as a result of changes.

School Placements

21 The University to request that the Faculty of Education to allocate school placements to students, in a more reasonable time frame. It would be beneficial for students to know where they will be placed in good time.
Academic Representation

The Students’ Union runs the Academic Representation system in conjunction with the University. This system comprises of Course Reps and Student Academic Representatives (StARs). Following feedback from Course Reps the Students’ Union have received several suggestions about how to improve the running of this system. Primarily, Course Reps commented that you felt they did not receive adequate training and often didn’t feel like they were given the support they expected. We are very disappointed to hear that students are not satisfied with the support we provide for them and this is something that needs to be rectified immediately for the 2018-19 year and beyond.

SSCCs

Student Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs) are the heart of NSU’s Course Rep system. SSCCs give student reps a professional environment to feedback the feelings of those undertaking the course. The table opposite shows the most common issues discussed in SSCC meetings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Issue</th>
<th>No of Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication/response to emails/guidance and information on modules.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar and Timetabling</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support needs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student timelines and attendance</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand in Dates</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement Issues</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation/Revalidation/MAPs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student behaviour (not attendance/time)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Parking</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Week</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing texts from the Library</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender neutral facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of water fountains</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For a small institution Newman’s main issue from students is communication;

“They don’t have time to reply to emails. The work is set but they don’t explain it. They put up PowerPoints but don’t explain it. You are left to you own devices” (Sports and Exercise Studies, ISSS)

Newman has one of the lowest student populations across UK universities with 2800 students, so communication should not be an issue as there is only one campus and class sizes that average around 30 students.

Overall feedback from SSCCs shows that the university have a positive approach to student voice and NSU commends and thanks Newman and their staff for their continued supportive approach to SSCCs. However the table still contains negative figures which SSCC Chairs and Heads of Subject need to address in order to enhance the student experience.

**Union Wins**

The following list of Union Wins lists Newman Students’ Union’s top 10 successes and projects for 2017-18.

1) We set up 5 new societies: Attitude Dance, Book Club, Newman Enterprise Support Team (NEST), E-Gaming and Cakes and Bakes.

2) Ran a successful plagiarism campaign with information postcards to educate students on plagiarism, self-plagiarism and collusion and how to avoid these.

3) Held a successful Raise and Give (RaG) Week and raised over £5000 for charities over the year.

4) Created the Book Swap: a free book case where students and staff can take a book and swap one in its place.

5) Launched the Student Advice Clinic: giving free, independent and confidential advice to students.

6) Newman were the winners of our first ever Varsity against Harper Adams!

7) Trained 163 Course Reps and created the role of StARs to support Course Reps.

8) Created the ‘Exam Stress’ campaign which saw us provide water and snacks to students after exams.

9) Supported the Free Periods campaign and supplied free tampons and sanitary towels to students from the SU and Student Services.

10) Held a successful free Family Fun Day during the Easter Holidays, providing our students with children with a free activity day on campus.
Recommendations

Academic Representation

4 Newman SU to ensure that Course Reps are provided with full training and support throughout the year, including a review of the whole system.

SSCCs

22 For staff across all departments to take account of the most commonly mentioned issues in SSCCs and create actions to improve on these over the next year.
University Recommendations

Learning and Teaching

1) Feedback from the ISSS should be acted upon and all lectures should be of a high quality and delivered in the time scale provided with adequate preparation for assessments.

2) The University to investigate the possibility of releasing the grades of students who must undertake SKE for their PGCE course earlier than the rest of the cohort, or to release all results earlier than August.

Assessment and Feedback

3) All feedback should have a detailed written response with examples and lecturers should produce action points with constructive feedback for the students in order to improve.

4) Subject areas must ensure that work is returned within the three week turnaround time, and students are informed with adequate reasoning if the feedback surpasses the turnaround time.

5) Subject areas to look into whether a minimum spacing of assignment deadlines can be applied across subjects to ensure that students are not completing multiple assignments at the same time.

6) PESS must ensure that the feedback provided by external examiners is acted upon at the earliest available opportunity.

Support and Guidance

7) To look into the location of the counselling service and consider whether it can be moved to a more confidential location of the University with much less footfall than the library has.

8) The University to allow the Students’ Union to have a continuous weekly stall in the Atrium from 5pm on the day where most part-time students have evening lectures. Possibly, to bring the microwave up to the Atrium at this time, with the agreement that the Students’ Union will return it to the space outside the Sanctuary that evening.

9) For mature students with children to receive timetables much earlier. If necessary, the timetables could be released with a disclaimer of a possibility for change. However, any sort of guide would be beneficial to our mature students with children.

10) For the University (and Students’ Union if necessary) to signpost to multiple childcare facilities in the local area.
11) For the University to ensure that students not being permitted to enter lectures late is eliminated in all departments, with the agreement that students who are late enter the lecture in an appropriate and quiet manor in order to minimise disruption to the learning of others, and support offered to those who will be consistently late to lectures for legitimate reasons.

12) The university to liaise with the relevant department to look into offering more skills test support sessions throughout the year, with opportunities to run additional specialist sessions if requested by students.

Facilities and Resources

13) Newman to look into the possibility of compensation for students for the building work and the disruption to learning, such as printing credits or Sanctuary vouchers.

14) For Estates to investigate other options to extend student car parking near to campus for commuting students.

15) Newman to install hot water dispensers and more microwaves across different areas of campus.

16) Sanctuary look at the possibility of doing a meal deal for students or alternatively setting up a loyalty scheme.

17) Newman library to market their services more, especially in regards to what they can offer with regards to resources.

Organisation and Management

18) For the University to look into making the timetable available earlier in the summer for Level 5 and 6 students.

19) For Registry to investigate the possibility of reducing the length of gaps between lectures. Newman SU suggests that we aim for a recommended maximum time of 2 hours where possible, to reduce the number of students having gaps longer than 2 hours.

20) All staff to ensure that changes to timetables or modules are communicated to students at the earliest available opportunity to reduce any unnecessary inconvenience caused as a result of changes.

21) The university to request that the Faculty of Education to allocate school placements to students, in a more reasonable time frame. It would be beneficial for students to know where they will be placed in good time.

Student Voice

22) For staff across all departments to take account of the most commonly mentioned issues in SSCCs and create actions to improve on these over the next year.
Union Recommendations

Learning and Teaching

1) NSU to look into creating more student-centred awards for 2018-19 and improve their communications and marketing for the awards night.

Employability and Development

2) The Students’ Union should look into the possibility of creating a volunteer scheme to enable students to take part in community activities which enhance their employability and other skills.

3) The Students’ Union should provide additional optional training for all students in the form of ‘Skills Development Workshops’ which focus on developing skills such as public speaking.

Student Voice

4) Newman SU to ensure that Course Reps are provided with full training and support throughout the year, including a review of the whole system.
Closing Statements

This report makes several recommendations for enhancement and change; from continuing the work has already begun over recent months and years in individual departments, to broader strategic change at a university level. We hope that our recommendations are taken on board and we would relish the opportunity to be involved in making these changes happen.

Overall, students are generally satisfied with their time at Newman University, which is evidenced by our recent scores in the NSS this year. On the whole, students at Newman feel that their voice is heard and that they are part of a welcoming community that encourages success at all levels. We will submit a mid-term report early in semester two that we hope will outline and evidence this in greater detail.

As always, we thank the University for the inclusive environment that it creates in giving students the opportunity to influence every aspect of their education and hope that this positivity and partnership continues.

We hope that this Student Voice Report has been informative and you have enjoyed reading about the journey both the University and the Students’ Union has been on over the past year. If you have any questions or comments about this report, please get in touch with Tom Ashford as Newman Students’ Union President 2018-19.