



St Mary's
University
Students'
Union



Big Rep Meeting Report

November 2023

SU Bar

Feedback on current bar operations

- Current location of the bar is unclear, this is partially due to the building works and signage
- Opening times could be extended - this would mean commuting students are more able to use the space around lectures
- Lacks decoration, feels like the ref and isn't very welcoming
- Events in the SU Bar are repetitive and aren't promoted effectively
- Queues on the bar on a Wednesday night are too long, meaning sport clubs are seeking alternative venues for their social nights
- Karaoke nights work well
- Pool table and table tennis are fun and attract users to the space, but need to be maintained more effectively

Ideas for the new SU bar space

- Better advertisement for the bar space and events
- Lower prices behind the bar
- More colour and decorations within the bar space
- Better drinking awareness - drinks toppers and spiking test kits could be given out
- The first event in the space needs to be really engaging
- Needs to feel student owned with shirts/trophies up in the space
- Needs to act as a social space, not just a bar

Travel Costs and Placement

Overall trends from the feedback

- Students not knowing what support was available from the SU in terms of travel costs.
- Some students who were aware of the travel cost support had stated that the form to claim travel expenses back was “too hard and confusing”.
- Students not knowing who was responsible for organising their placements/who to get in touch with if there was a problem with their placement.

Individual pieces of feedback

- Students across the university not knowing who organises their placements.
- Students said that they didn’t know who organised their work placements, or how to get in touch with them when they had a query.
- Students not knowing what support was available in terms of travel costs.
- Students across the university (majority being education courses) stating that they didn’t know travel cost support was available from the SU.
- Other feedback included that placements can be too expensive for them to sustain without this support.
- There was also some feedback on how expensive travelling to University can be for commuter students
- Some students who were aware of the travel cost support had stated that the form to claim travel expenses back was “too hard and confusing”.
- Making sure that placements organised by the university were accessible for students.
- Students said that their placements were either too far away to afford commuting or were inaccessible to them because the placement was not near their home.
- Some students in the History course said that they had no support in finding placements and would have liked to be in contact with the placement team.
- Liberal Arts students said that students struggle with reaching placement due to the train strikes and wanted more accessible placements.
- Students on the Primary Education with QTS course said that the Ref was closed when they left for and came back from their placement days. This meant they had to spend extra money on food and travel, which they found hard without support.
- For Acting students, travel to the Exchange is not subsidised

Part-time Work

Primary Education

- Placements are unpaid and students are unable to work during the week due to this.
- Full schedules and modules constantly changing leaving students with only the weekend to work- leads to no days off during the week.
- Must work to afford basic human rights (rent, food, travel to uni) and for the many things they must buy for the course.
- Those that do work noted an effect on mental wellbeing and grades.
- Those that do work either work in retail (customer service/retail managers) or childcare which both have demanding hours.

BA Physical Education & MA Education, International Development and Social Justice:

- BA PE is affected by assessments as these are typically on days off which has a knock on effect on teaching work and part time work.
- MA Ed high international student rates so find it difficult to get jobs
- MA Ed needs clarity on what jobs to be doing for career path
- MA Ed want more work placements

Other education courses:

- Struggling to juggle time tables
- Compatible links to schools

Master's in accounting & finance, International Business Law and International Business management:

- Careers fair was good included a lot of volunteer work & paid jobs
- International students can only work 20hours
- More networking
- More help & Guidance from Career Services
- SU to network with Alumni
- Partnerships with Law firms & Businesses to offer internships for students
- More connection and inclusions with MA Students
- Tutorials on how to get part time work

BA Business Management courses:

- Lack of internships and Part time jobs for business and management
- Concerning for those looking for experience
- More on campus jobs i.e. library or with tutors.

BA Media, Communication and Marketing:

- More networking needed
- More diverse work placement options

BA Acting:

- Not much time to work as in all week 10-4:30
- Plus, those who perform have less time

BA Theology:

- Timetabling issues
- Work load is difficult to manage
- Some students are finding it difficult to work and be a university student

BA Liberal Arts:

- More work placements and job opportunities wanted

BA History:

- Lack of support for part-time work only volunteering
- More awareness on what to expect from the course.

Psychology:

- Want the ability to have work experience placements
- Stress to manage work and uni together

MSc Chronic Disease management

- Difficult to find job opportunities related to health
- Employment services helpful
- Most feel like they need to work part time

Other/Unnamed

- Part time placement should be accessible throughout all years
- Mature students need to work to afford Uni but can't afford to stop working for a placement module
- Little time to have a break
- Hospitality jobs are common which takes away study time
- Need a better commuter programme
- People working close to full time hours to survive and that feels like too much

EDI in your Curriculum

Acting degree

Marking attendance at exchange doesn't happen, and students cannot see their attendance for the year.

Primary education

Student (wheel chair user) became stuck in a lift, response services ignored emergency call for a prolonged period of time.

Theology and Religious studies

Topics are hard to talk about without feeling uncomfortable

Use of language by some lecturers has led to students feeling unable to open up and speak freely on their course.

MA Education

Module cancelled last minute with no prior notice.

International Dev and social justice – academic writing workshops not offered to part-time students, and access to induction modules was not given either.

Liberal Arts

Promote more diverse intake of non-white students as course currently only has 2/7 non-white students.

History

Lack of diversity in library collection (EDI)

No female lecturers (EDI)

Lack of female specific modules (EDI)

New spec is very euro-centric, no diversity (EDI)

Psychology

Some are unhappy with the timetable in psychology and room allocations (year 1)

Room allocation for political psychology (year 3) room is too claustrophobic

Language barrier with some students makes it difficult to keep up with some lecturers who speak quickly and may have a heavy accent themselves.

Teaching degrees

Have compulsory unit on EDI, adapted education to gain knowledge and confidence when teaching.

Teaching basics of adaptive learning in education.

General Feedback

- Feedback forms are too long
- Some lectures may not meet the needs of students (i.e., work, parenting etc).
- Pairing together students with the same language to assist each other with learning English (specific to international students who are new to the country and are struggling to fit in).
- Organise events around highlighting sexuality, e.g. bi-visibility (EDI).
- Making sure all lectures are recorded and uploaded on Moodle.
- Sharing whole university events before lectures begin, e.g., BHM events or MMH.
- Tutors creating mixed groups for group work projects.
- No transcripts for videos (Professional development).
- International students who came forward do not feel adequately supported.
- Provide an option to teach other languages in an informal setting.
- Having a night where the ref showcases certain dishes from different backgrounds (EDI).
- Integrate care leavers
- Lack of sensitivity to certain topics around race and colonialism (not malicious, just de-sensitised) (EDI).
- Not enough female readings on reading list (EDI)
- Lack of racially diverse readings on certain topics (EDI).
- Use of images in lectures to promote stem learning of race and religion (EDI)
- No transcripts available on many pre-recorded lectures across different courses.

Additional Course Costs

Primary Education:

- C.C.R.S → better collaboration within the university / external students pay more (360£ for external and 200£ for internal)
- Presentation materials are an extra cost, there is little to no coverage on extras
- Subscriptions are also an extra cost (presentation materials)
- D.B.S fees
- Placement → can spend over 200£ on transport alone
- Commuting students for placement → the ref is shut by the time they arrive from placement and have to use personal money to be able to eat.
- Printing → printing costs should be covered and or reduced for students who need to use it more often
- There were multiple complaints about placement travel costs.
- Subscriptions were also brought up a fair amount seeing as there isn't enough access to resources within the library.