



Student Heart Phase 2: Consultation Report

In November 2022 SMSU undertook research to provide data on student views of future development of the SU Lounge, DV Games and Student Square as part of the 'Student Heart Phase 2' project. This research included a survey, demographic and interest-based focus groups and social media polling.

Survey findings

There were 290 responses to the survey which ran from 24th October – 7th November.

Emerging themes from the survey:

- Students' overwhelmingly stated that their top priority for the new social space was the provision of "somewhere to relax with friends" (65.52%). This was then followed by "drinks after lectures" (37.24%) and "society or sport club meet-ups" (34.14%).
- The majority of respondents (58.28%) said that they would like to spend more time on campus after classes, whilst others (29.31%) responded that they might like to spend more time on campus.
- When asked for further comments, students said that they would like to see the "return of the SU bar" to give them space "to be themselves". The bar was referenced as being particularly important for commuting students and for those living in accommodations without a common room.
- Students also commented that it was important that the space felt safe and that longer opening hours (across evenings and weekends) was important to enable a sense of belonging.
- Current student car parking provision was also raised as an issue within the further comments session.

Demographic trends

- Postgraduates were most likely to use new social space for society or sport clubs (50%) and as somewhere to relax with friends (50%). Only 7.14% of postgraduate students said that they did not want to spend more time on campus.
- Mature students were most likely to use the space as somewhere to relax with friends (62.73%), followed by drinks after lectures (41.82%). 15.45% of mature students said that they did not want to spend more time on campus.
- First year and foundation year students were most likely to say that they wanted somewhere to relax with friends (69.64%) and least likely to say that they wanted a large events space (16.96%).
- Commuting students commented that seating on campus was too crowded and that there was nowhere to wait for classes or unwind on site.

Individual ideas:

- Lockable space for commuter students to store bags
- Sensory friendly space for students with learning differences to relax
- Gardening / allotment project
- Nap pods
- More prayer rooms
- Showcase more creativity
- Hammocks in the student square

Focus Groups

Emerging themes:

- **International Students**
 - Develop the student square to include hammocks, deck chairs, warm white lighting and some spaces undercover
 - Modular spaces for societies to meet – with an ability to divide areas
 - Comfortable seating including booths, coffee tables, sofas and bench seating
 - Built-in music systems with Bluetooth speakers to enable easy take-overs of the space
- **Open**
 - Soft furnishings including bean bags
 - Softer lighting
 - Range of table sizes and spacing including coffee tables and sofas, high tables and chairs
 - Large screens for movie nights
- **Sports Clubs**

- Students who live in accommodations without Common Rooms need a space to socialise
 - The SU Lounge is currently being used on a weekly basis by lots of sport clubs
 - Space needs to be accessible out of 9am-5pm Mon-Fri
 - Needs smaller break-out spaces so clubs can have their own areas
 - Sound absorption is important
 - Pub feel, with a bar to create a sense of community especially after sport fixtures
 - Clubbing space / large events is less of a priority
 - Important to have a bar on site as its safer than the local community and creates a sense of belonging, encouraging students to feel a greater part of St Mary's
- **Societies**
 - Greater opening hours, needs to be open in the evenings and on weekends to enable society activity.
 - Variety of furniture to be accessible to a wide range of people
 - Lots of natural light
 - Built-in plugs and a large screen / projector to enable film screenings
 - Seating for large and small groups
 - Add a canopy outside for rain
 - Give priority to societies to book the smaller spaces so that they're able to run events.
 - Spaces for societies to run stalls to promote their activity and host pop-ups.
 - Ability to host society fayres
- **Disabled Students**
 - Sensory issues need to be taken into account – it's very positive that there's no echo in the current space and that needs to continue.
 - Introduce cover on outdoor spaces to enable use during colder/wetter weather. Add outdoor games.
 - Open the space on weekends
 - Ensure accessibility to all the spaces on a level that is equitable
 - Include a coffee / catering outlet within the space
 - Add carpet to help with sound absorption
 - Plants
 - If there is a large screen, enable students to turn it off if they want to
 - Build in a smaller, quiet space for students who may have sensory issues