

UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD STUDENTS' UNION

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE REPORT
FOR THE
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY**

SEMESTER ONE 2011/12

What is this report and why have we written it?

This report is designed to give an overview of the experiences of students within the College of Science and Technology during semester one 2011/12. Student Experience Reports have been written for each of the University's Colleges, and make use of the following sources of data:

- Student Rep statistics
- Student Rep reflective reports (semester one)
- Advice Centre statistics
- Advice Centre trends reports (semester one)
- NSS Results (2011)
- AMP data (GSU 2010/11)
- Students' Union survey results
- Sabbatical Officer reflections

As part of our work on Student Engagement, we wanted to ensure that feedback gathered by Reps was relayed to University staff at programme and school level as regularly as possible. The Students' Union's recent publication 'The Salford Bill of Students' Rights' outlines the key priority areas identified by students as vital for improving their academic experience. It is with these priority areas in mind that the Student Experience Reports have been written.

Our mission as a Students' Union is 'Enhancing Students' Lives', and we can only do this by working together with academic staff to ensure that students' views and opinions are taken into account at all stages of decision making. Our Student Reps give us fantastic positive and negative feedback about their student experience, and it is essential that this rich information is shared and used to both rectify problems and champion excellence within Schools.

We plan to write similar reports to cover semester two, so welcome any feedback about the type of information contained in this first edition, and hope the report is of genuine use in programme, School and College conversations.



Caroline Dangerfield
President



Tom Doyle
Vice President Science and Technology

The Student Representation System



The Student Representation system is a scheme run in partnership with the University but administered by the Students' Union. There are currently over 700 Student Representatives at course level.

Changes to the University's scheme of Academic Governance resulted in some changes to the Rep system this academic year. School level representatives (SLRs) had previously attended a variety of school level committees which no longer exist under the new governance scheme. The University's focus on College level governance has

meant that our SLR structure has been adjusted to a College Rep structure. In each College, there is now a College Rep for Learning and Teaching, one for Postgraduate Research and one for Engagement issues. Due to its relative size, there are two Learning and Teaching Reps in the College of Arts and Social Sciences. In the College of Science and Technology, the College Reps are:

Nikolay Yanev : Learning and Teaching
Toby Duckworth: Postgraduate Research
John O'Juola: Engagement

Students' Union Sabbatical Officers

Sabbatical Officers are the head of our Student Representation system, in that they use information and feedback from the Student Reps to campaign or lobby for changes on a wider scale. The President and Vice Presidents have regular meetings with the Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellors and School management. They also sit on committees at all levels of the University's governance structures. The three Vice Presidents are each assigned a College, and regularly communicate with Reps to help with issues or direct and signpost when required. Reps meet their Vice President at the introductory training session.



The Vice President for the College of Science and Technology is **Tom Doyle**.

Student Rep recruitment and promotion



During Welcome week, the Student Engagement team ran a 'Rep Roadshow' at various points around the campuses, encouraging students to find out more about the benefits of becoming a Student Rep. The Roadshow will be repeated in Semester two with a focus on the importance of using Student Reps to improve the experience of studying at Salford.

The Sabbatical Officers gave over 70 induction talks to new students, informing them about the Students' Union as a whole, but with a focus on the importance of representation and encouraging students to volunteer to become their programme's Rep.

Training and the new Rep Academy

Basic training on communication and meeting skills has always been offered to Student Reps, and this has been complemented this year with extra training sessions for students who wish to further develop their skills and execute their role more effectively.

In September we launched the 'Student Rep Academy', a three-tier training programme which allows Reps to choose the amount of extra commitment they wish to undertake.

Level 1

We ask all Reps to complete a basic level of training and attend their SSCMs as required. Level 1 is easily achievable through attending the introductory training session and the 3 staff student committee meetings over the course of the year. The incentive for completing this stage is a level 1 Student Rep certificate.

Level 2 and Level 3

In order to achieve the higher levels, Reps are required to attend extra training sessions and complete a short report at the end of each semester. We also ask them to attend Rep conferences with the Pro Vice Chancellor Academic, and to participate in other Union activities. Reps completing levels 2 or 3 will receive their certificates, a Rep hoody and an invitation to our Awards event in May.

We have been delighted by the number of Reps opting to work towards a higher level in the Academy. In the College of Science and Technology, we have trained 70 of the 123 new Reps, and of these, 46 have chosen to aim for a higher level of attainment.

Your help with recruitment and training

We rely heavily on programme leaders and administrators to ensure that the Rep system runs smoothly and efficiently. To avoid problems, we need your help with the following:

1. **Reps need to be recruited early in the term** and their names passed to us for training before they are expected to attend meetings. The deadline for entering Rep details to the system is the same each year – the first Friday in October. A considerable amount of time is spent chasing schools who have not updated their Rep records, showing a disregard for the importance of the system.
2. **Reps should be encouraged to attend training.** Reps who attend training will be more prepared to deal with issues raised by their course mates, will have a better understanding of the University's processes, and will ultimately be able to participate more fully in SSCMs.
3. **Staff Student Committee Meetings** should be arranged after training has taken place, and should not clash with student timetables. Reps should not have to choose between a lecture and a SSCM.
4. **Minutes** from SSCMs should be shared with all Reps in good time following the meeting, and a copy emailed to the Vice President – Tom Doyle. As well as tracking trends, we need to keep a record of the meetings and other work the Reps are undertaking.

Number of Reps by School

School	Total Number of Reps 2011/12 (to date)	Number of new Reps 2011/12 (to date)	Number of new Reps trained in semester 1
Art and Design	69	48	22
Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences	76	70	42
Media, Music and Performance	104	86	32
Salford Business School	91	78	50
Salford Law School	12	9	8
Health Sciences	68	37	10
Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work	122	63	36
Computing, Science and Engineering	79	58	32
Environment and Life Sciences	40	38	25
Built Environment	43	27	13

What do your students say?

Here is a sample of the comments Reps from the College of Science and Technology made in their end of semester reports:

I have been surprised at how much I am listened to by the lecturers and how seriously comments have been taken. Being a student rep has been a great experience so far and I feel that I have a better understanding as to how the University runs. (sic)

Biology Rep

The minute I announced I was rep I was flooded with responses from students needing help. However with three weeks remaining of term, we have yet to have a staff student committee meeting and many of the issues I need to raise will now have to wait until next term. (sic)

Zoology Rep

Because maths has recently been re-established there are a few issues to do with the course content but because the lecturers know this and are constantly asking the entire class for feedback, this problem is solved very quickly and easily. We have already made a few observations that have changed the course for the 1st years and we feel they benefit from our experience. (sic)

Maths Rep

I initially found my role a little confusing, as the first student staff committee meeting took place before I had attended the student rep training day. I wasn't quite sure at that point what exactly I was to do. However I am fully confident in my abilities to be a good student rep now I have had the necessary training. (sic)

Aeronautical Engineering Rep

I have created a facebook account just for my classmates in order to have an easy access and communication with them which is a good aspect. I also keep in touch with everyone in class so I can have a connection with all. By being a student rep, not only you have improve your skills but you feel, in a way, you are making others feel better! (sic)

Mechanical Engineering Rep

We have not had our committee meeting yet but after discussion with my class mates I am going to suggest if we could submit assignments anonymously(ID number instead of names) and same to be applied in exams answer sheet. (sic)

Biomedical Science Rep

NSS 2011: College of Science and Technology

Programme	The teaching on my course	Assessment and feedback	Academic support	Organisation & management	Learning resources	Personal development	Overall Satisfaction
AERONAUTICAL ENGINEERING	81	63	67	67	78	86	75
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND TECHNOL	76	55	75	68	78	71	62
AVIATION TECH WITH PILOT STUDS	80	23	49	47	71	82	60
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE	83	57	69	75	89	78	83
BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE	81	67	73	76	70	81	87
BUILDING SURVEYING	85	51	67	64	64	74	83
BUILDING SURVEYING (PT)	90	52	82	33	71	70	93
CIVIL ENG	67	49	60	67	75	73	75
CIVIL ENGINEERING	78	57	81	65	86	76	72
COMPUTER SCIENCE	91	73	82	76	88	97	100
CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY	79	54	69	66	84	76	88
CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT (INT)	61	46	65	53	72	92	84
CONSTRUCTION PROJ MANAGEMENT	54	22	48	70	76	76	57
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH	86	73	76	74	78	74	64
GEOGRAPHY (S)	91	64	82	82	86	86	94
HOUSING PRACTICE (PT)	72	77	70	63	75	80	78
PROF SOUND AND VIDEO TECH	94	53	75	80	92	71	100
PROF SOUNDANDVIDEO TECH(TOP_UP)	88	44	68	67	93	80	80
PROPERTY MGMT AND INVEST	65	40	57	57	77	67	70
QUANTITY SURVEYING	80	53	68	81	66	78	78
QUANTITY SURVEYING PT	67	43	59	64	63	54	72
SOFTWARE ENGINEERING	95	82	87	80	93	97	100
WILDLIFE AND PRAC CONSERVATION	63	53	78	50	67	61	67
WILDLIFE CONS WITH ZOO BIOL	78	60	68	53	82	59	80
Average	79	55	70	66	78	77	79

NSS Commentary: the good, the bad and the ugly!

It is to be applauded that in the areas of *teaching* quality and *learning resources*, the College scores extremely well, with many scores in the 80s and 90s.

There are three programmes within CSE which score 100% for overall satisfaction and two which also have no scores below 60. This is fantastic, and should be used as a case study for other programmes within the College to learn from.

Personal Development is another area where the College scores well, there are only two programmes where scores were recorded under 60.

The NSS results in the table above have been colour coded to highlight any low scores i.e. below 60. As can be clearly seen, *Assessment and Feedback* is an area that is in dire need of improvement. This is the lowest scoring NSS area nationally, but the College's average of 55 is significantly lower than the average for the institution as a whole (65). The Colleges of Health and Social Care, and Arts and Social Sciences scored 69 and 67 respectively. Programmes within the School of Built Environment are notably lower than others within this College, with four programmes scoring below 50, and one (Construction project management) only scoring 22.

Gold Star programmes

Programmes with the highest levels of overall satisfaction are:



Computer Science



Software Engineering

NSS scores and Student Representation

It is important to note that many of the issues mentioned by students in the verbatim comments of the NSS survey are issues regularly noted and commented on by Student Reps throughout the University. Issues like timetable reliability, lecture cancellations, teaching room quality etc are all common concerns among Reps.

The University quite rightly pays a great deal of attention to NSS scores and encourages schools to develop action plans to improve their scores. As a Students' Union, it is our opinion that a more effective way of improving academic experiences is by listening and acting upon comments from Student Reps throughout the year, rather than relying on an external survey once a year (which only takes into account final year students). This will ensure that 'quick wins' are achieved, and students have confidence that their views are being taken into consideration for longer term issues.

Other College news: SUEU

The Students' Union's Activities Development Unit is responsible for the administration and development of over 70 student activity groups and sports groups. Being involved in an activity group can bring numerous social and employability benefits to students, as well as providing an enjoyable extracurricular experience.

Subject or course based activity groups are an area where Salford is currently underperforming compared to other institutions, and is something that we are encouraging our Student Reps to consider this year. In the College of Arts and Social Sciences, the Law school have a particularly good relationship with the Law Society, a student activity group set up by Law students. It is this combination of Union and School support that results in a successful and productive activity group.

We have been delighted by the hard work and dedication of a new group from within the College of Science and Technology this year – Salford University Engineers Union or SUEU.










Our main focus is to develop and build more of a community spirit within the Engineering department at Salford. Through social events, industrial visits and external speakers – leading to a better rounded and more enriching experience at Salford. (SUEU Development plan 2011)

In their first semester, the group have organised six guest speakers, a networking event with industry experts and a trip to the Toyota engine plant near Chester. The group's activities have been excellently organised and well attended. The Students' Union will continue to support the group with guidance, funding and facilities as needed.

The hard work of this group of students from within your college should be commended, and we encourage all staff to support this work in any way they can.

The Salford Bill of Students' Rights

Last academic year, the Students' Union produced a document entitled 'The Salford Bill of Students' Rights', which outlined seven key areas we believed the University needed to improve in order to ensure students continued to experience an excellent academic experience.

Right	College of Science and Technology	
The right to know the full costs of a course before application		We are pleased to see that as with other schools across the University, the full costs of courses are being published on the online 'course finder'. We are surprised however that programmes in ELS do not list any extra charges, other than the generic statement used in all descriptions. We urge the school to offer full transparency about extra costs and charges.
The right to quality, constructive feedback on all assessments within three weeks		As already noted in the NSS analysis, the College fares badly compared to the rest of the University in this regard. The School of Built Environment has particular work to do in improving its scores. With the new Student Charter explicitly mentioning a three-week feedback window, turnaround time will need improving, but it is also the <u>quality</u> of feedback that needs to be ensured.
The right to relevant, high quality careers advice		We have received good feedback from Reps about career-focused activities offered by their Schools. Reps in SOBE particularly commented on the range of industry site visits and guest lectures offered.
The right to effective, independent representation at course, school and college level		There are currently 162 Reps in the College: 79 in CSE, 40 in ELS and 43 in SOBE. There are a significant number of programmes in the College without a Student Rep, and we urge programme leaders to ensure these positions are filled as soon as possible. Assistance from the Students' Union is available if required.
The right to appropriate, high quality learning resources		Although we have had one or two negative reports from Reps about IT facilities, there does not appear to be a big problem in this area. It is vital that all Schools monitor the library and computing resources available to their students and make recommendations for improvements when necessary.
The right to advice and guidance on good academic practice		In the last academic year, 25% of the University's Academic Misconduct cases came from the College, which is proportionate to the number of students. It is also commendable that in an ongoing survey, 85% of CST Reps commented that their lecturers regularly remind them about Academic Good Practice. (survey not yet closed).
The right to well managed and organised timetables		Many Reps commented about the lack of accurate timetables in the first few weeks of term. This appears to be an institution-wide issue that needs addressing urgently.

Advice and Support



The Students' Union Advice Centre offers professional, independent advice to any registered Salford student. The Advice Centre's area of expertise is that of academic advice. Due to its truly independent nature, the Advice Centre can offer advice and guidance to students in dispute with the University (e.g. academic misconduct or disciplinary cases), as well as help and support for students who are struggling (e.g. through the PMC or academic appeals processes). The following summary provides an outline of the type of work our advisors have been dealing with in Semester one, along with College-specific findings or trends.¹

Summary of Key Findings

There has been a marked increase in the total number of students seen, particularly in the postgraduates using our services. Our principal clients continue to be from the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work.

Among international students there are substantial increases from the School of Environment and Life Science (36%) and a 20% increase from the School of Built Environment.

Academic appeals continued to be the major type of advice sought by students and comprise over one third of all issues. This is followed by advice on academic work. Advice cases on complaint procedures have risen slightly and now comprise 10% of all areas of advice.

Which Schools form our client group?

In both periods, students from the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work were our principal clients. This was followed by the School of Computing, Science and Engineering and the Business School. More specifically, when comparing the semester with the same period last academic year, the following can be noted:

School of Computing, Science and Engineering: There was an increase in number of students seen from this school of 11%, making CSE the second most represented school in our case work. There was a 10% **decrease** in the number of postgraduate students seen followed by a 10% concomitant rise in the number of undergraduates seen. Thirty four percent (34%) of the students seen were postgraduates and 41% were classed as international students.

School of Environment & Life Sciences: The number of students seen from this school increased by 9%. The percentage of postgraduate students recorded **increased by 36%** and a similar percentage were recorded as international.

School of Built Environment: Although the number of students seen rose slightly, this did not affect the overall percentage when all the students numbers were taken into account. Postgraduate students seen **increased by 24%** whilst undergraduates students **fell by 23%**. Forty five percent (45%) of the students were international.

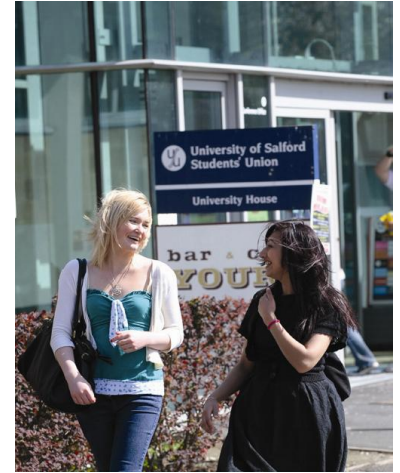
¹ The statistics quoted refer to the period 01/09/11 – 16/12/11 and are compared with the same date span from the previous academic year.

International students came mainly from the Schools of Computing, Science and Engineering, Business and Built Environment. However in this quarter, there was a noticeable presence of international students from the School of Environment and Life Sciences (36%). Comparing the two periods, the percentage of international students recorded from the School of Built Environment increased by 20%. There were modest increases for the Schools of Business and Computing, Science and Engineering of 3% and 1% respectively.

Advice sought by students

Students seek advice on a variety of issues. However the principal areas continue to be:

- Academic Appeals
- Academic Work
- Complaints
- PMCs
- Unfair means/Unfair means appeal /Disciplinary /Disciplinary appeals
- Tuition Fees
- Placement Year problems
- Fitness for Professional Practice (FFPP)
- OIA



What changes have we seen?

We recorded 36.5% more cases this quarter compared to that of semester one 2010.

International students brought 5% more of these cases compared to the last quarter.

Students came primarily from three schools but in particular from the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work.

There have been small percentage increases in the number of cases relating to academic appeals, academic work, complaints, unfair means/unfair means appeals, FFPP and OIA. Conversely there has been very small percentage decreases on cases related to PMCs, tuition fees and placement year problems.

Students from the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social work seek our help/advice primarily on academic appeals and unfair means issues.

Students from School of Computing, Science and Engineering seek our help/advice primarily on issues related to PMC and academic work.

Advice about complaints came from the Schools of Business, Computing, Science and Engineering and Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences.

Advice Centre awareness

We recognise that over-representation in these statistics does not necessarily mean that some schools have more problems than others. The differences can likely be attributed to the level of engagement with the Students' Union more generally; when a school is in regular communication with us regarding their Rep recruitment/training, or asking for opinions from the Sabbatical Officers on student related issues, they are more likely to recommend the Advice Centre to their students. Academic advice when it relates to University procedures can only be offered independently by the Students' Union, and we encourage all programme leaders and school staff to direct students to us if they are experiencing difficulties. You are always welcome to contact us if you require any information about the services we offer.

Vice President's Semester one Roundup

There has been a lot of statistics and charts in this report so we wanted to complement that with a narrative report from me, the Vice President for the College, Tom Doyle.

This has been my first full semester as a Vice President and I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the students and staff within the College of Science and Technology.

Speaking to students and Reps in the College has highlighted a number of issues both positive and negative this semester and I have summarised these below.

Making positive changes

Reps often ask me how to make an effective impact, and effect positive change for themselves and their course mates. This semester there have been brilliant examples of Reps achieving exactly that, and both they and the staff involved in the process should be commended.

There is not a single person in this University who wants to run a bad course or stop students getting the best possible results. In this College, I have found that student opinions are held in the highest regard and that staff have a genuine desire to improve the learning experience for their students.

One example comes from the Mechanical Engineering programme where a number of problems were highlighted to me in a detailed email from a Rep. Following the training he received from us, the Rep had canvassed opinion, obtained the facts and provided evidence of the impact of some of the problems. Some of the issues raised related to poor management of timetables and some classes not taking place because the lecturer's contract did not cover the first few weeks of term. Sadly, the Rep felt that his concerns were not being listened to by staff in his School, which is why he contacted me. The Rep's initial hard work meant that I could raise concerns with staff at School and College level without the need for further investigation.

Once the ball was rolling, changes were able to be made quickly, and things soon improved for the students on this course. Extra sessions were arranged for students who felt they had missed out on teaching because of the timetable issues, and safeguards have been put in place to ensure this doesn't happen again. While I am disappointed that this situation existed in the first place, I am pleased that with the hard work of a Rep, improvements have now been made. Staff across the College should seek to follow this example, and after hearing about problems or issues, take positive action to change things.

Timetable issues are not a problem isolated to this College, yet I am frequently contacted by students who have been let down by lecture cancellations, incorrect or out-of-date handbooks, and poor communication of last minute alterations. These are simple aspects of a learning experience that can quickly hamper a students enjoyment of their course. More seriously, they can impact on grades and student prospects. I urge all staff within the College to be vigilant when distributing programme material, ensuring that it is correct, and striving to ensure that changes or alterations are kept to a minimum.

Staff and students need to work in genuine partnership for the Rep system to work, and we know from experience that when this does work, students are happier and more satisfied with their programmes. Here's to a great second semester!

Contact us...

You can contact the Students' Union on **0161 351 5400** for general enquiries, or use one of the emails below:

Vice President Science and Technology:

vpst-ussu@salford.ac.uk

Students' Union Advice Centre

advicecentre-ussu@salford.ac.uk

Student Representation Coordinator

student-representation@salford.ac.uk

More information about our structure and services can be found on our website at www.salfordstudents.com

Thank you