

Academic Representation: Semester 2 Student Staff Panel Summary



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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of student feedback gathered through Semester 2 Student Staff Panels (SSPs), drawing on 786 individual comments submitted across 24 Schools. Each comment made in the SSPs was coded against a set of NSS-aligned themes to identify patterns in what students feel is supporting or hindering their learning experience.

Across the University, the most frequently raised themes were Teaching on my Course, Assessment and Feedback, and for AHSS, Student Voice. Students highlighted a want for more interactive and engaging contact hours, with a preference for clear, in-depth teaching materials and smaller teaching groups.

They also highlighted practical issues when it comes to Assessment, such as the bunching of deadlines or unrealistic exam time limits. Many comments about feedback were also raised, with students wanting more in-depth and justified feedback that is ensured to be delivered before the deadline of the next assessment.

Analysis at College-level showed some differences between AHSS, BLS, and PSE. Unlike the other two colleges, AHSS experienced a high number of comments under Student Voice, which centered around representation, community, and Student Academic Representative-specific issues such as difficulty in engaging students with their work. This suggests that these issues are more prominent in AHSS.

For BLS, the Placements and Employability category was raised significantly more than AHSS and PSE. Despite these differences, all three colleges had Teaching on my Course and Assessment and Feedback as their two most raised categories, indicating that these are the two most important areas for the student body as a whole. Comments in these categories strongly emphasised the importance of digestible and engaging lectures, and clear guidance when it comes to assessments.

Following these three categories, feedback largely fell under the following three most raised themes - Organisation and Management, Learning Resources, and Academic Support, which revealed that students value timely communication, accessible learning materials, and in-depth support regarding assessments.

Introduction

This report summarises the feedback raised by Student Academic Reps at Student Staff Panels (SSPs) across Semester 2 to provide a clear, University-wide picture of what students believe helps or hinders their learning and student experience. It draws directly on the comments supplied through SSP minutes/summaries, grouped under a common, NSS-aligned set of themes and related institutional topics.

In total, 786 individual comments were recorded in Semester 2 SSP minutes and coded against 15 themes (Teaching on my Course, Learning Opportunities, Assessment & Feedback, Academic Support, Organisation and Management, Learning Resources, Timetabling, Employability, Student Voice, Placements, Wins/Positive Changes, Joint Honours, Postgraduate Issues, Overall Student Experience, and Other). Of the University's 24 Schools, all but 3 submitted at least one set of SSP minutes for analysis in this period, providing broad coverage of the student voice. The 3 schools which did not submit any SSP minutes for analysis are Biological Sciences (BIOSI), Dentistry (DENTL), and Welsh School of Architecture (ARCHI).

It should be noted that in Semester 1, some schools did not submit their SSP findings in time for them to be included in the Semester 1 SSP report. For those schools, their data from Semester 1 has been incorporated into this report.

This report is produced to ensure that the University maintains a clear and evidence-based understanding of the real time student experience. By systematically analysing Student Staff Panel feedback across as many Schools as possible, the Students' Union and University can identify emerging patterns, highlight areas where students feel well-supported, and flag issues that may be hindering learning or wellbeing.

When each school submitted Student Staff Panel minutes, the Student Voice team collated these minutes into a single spreadsheet and allocated a theme for every piece of feedback. For each comment, a single primary theme was recorded. While many issues could plausibly straddle multiple categories (for example, releasing lecture slides earlier touches Teaching on my Course, Learning Resources and Organisation & Management), we maintain a single code to retain comparability across Schools and

reduce double counting. Where a comment could not be mapped cleanly to any of the core themes, it was placed under 'Other'.

University-wide Findings

Across the institution, the single most frequent theme was Assessment and Feedback (249 comments; 31.7% of all feedback), which was closely followed by Teaching on my Course (234; 29.8%). Other notable categories include Organisation and Management (97; 12.3%), Student Voice (94; 12%), and Learning Resources (82; 10.4%). Below, Figure 1 shows the quantity of comments that were grouped into each theme.

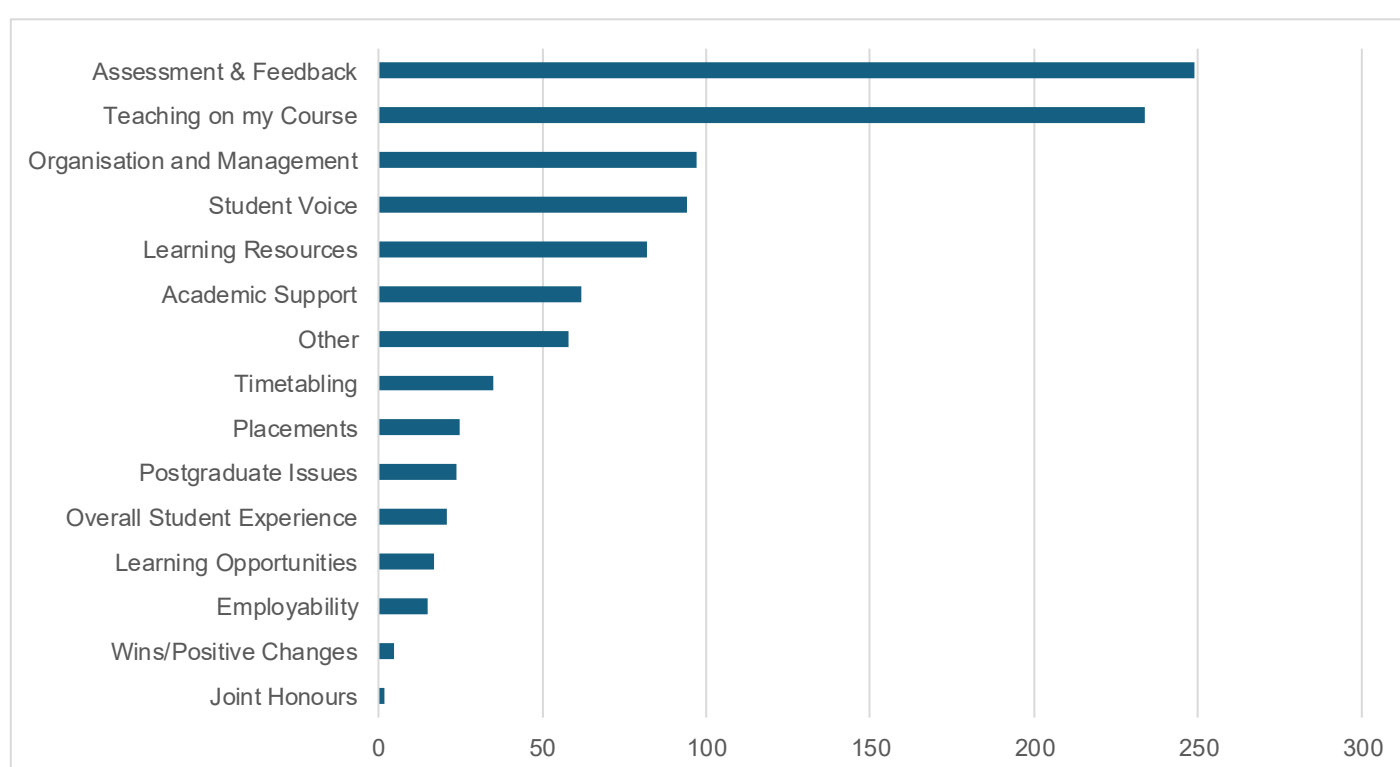


Figure 1 - Quantities of comments received by theme (University-wide)

Student Feedback under Assessment & Feedback relates to the examination experience, the nature of a module's assignments, the level of support given around them, and issues regarding feedback. Most of these comments voiced a want for more academic support around assignments, especially through more detailed briefs and feedback. Less so, some comments noted poor experiences during in-person exams, such as unrealistic time limits and poor organisation of exams causing late admissions to venues.

“The Autumn exam was difficult to complete in the time permitted”

“Students would like to see more samples of previously submitted assessments”

“Students would prefer more transparency when marking & for grades to be further explained”

Feedback categorised under Teaching on my Course commonly refers to the pace of delivery, the relationship between contact hours and independent study requirements, and the timing of releasing core materials. This was the category to receive the most positive comments. Negative comments were predominantly about ensuring lecture clarity through more discussion, slower teaching, and a quality review of teaching materials.

“Students like being challenged to take a position, with interaction focused on meaningful engagement, not just digital tools”

“Students appreciate small class sizes and interaction with lecturers”

“AI-generated teaching materials lacked clarity and depth”

“Some lecturers teach too quickly to understand content, leading some students to have to teach themselves”

Comments categorised under Organisation and Management predominantly relate to the timeliness and consistency of support information, session scheduling & room allocations, and availability of recording/AV provisions and required software. Many of the comments in this category overlapped with Timetabling, specifically in relation to inconsistent/changing locations for contact hours, unrealistic travel times, and bunching of assignment deadlines.

“Monday morning labs with exams are problematic as labs are closed over the weekend, affecting students’ wellbeing”

“Location-wise, optimisation lectures are incredibly inconsistent”

“Students are finding it difficult travelling from the various sites [...] could there be an established form of transport to the different sites?”

Comments categorised as Student Voice related to issues such as community, wellbeing, representation, and inclusion.

“Year 1 students would like to have a social group/opportunities to meet outside of class/societies”

“SAP Concur Training was held entirely in English, and the sessions didn’t give enough consideration to the Welsh Language”

College-level Findings

To understand how these issues manifest across the institution, we analysed the distribution of themes by College. Between the three Colleges, similar trends were observed, with Assessment and Feedback and Teaching on my Course receiving most comments, followed by Organisation and Management and Learning Resources. Below, Figure 2 illustrates the quantity of comments received across each theme by college. For the data in a table format, please see Appendix 1.

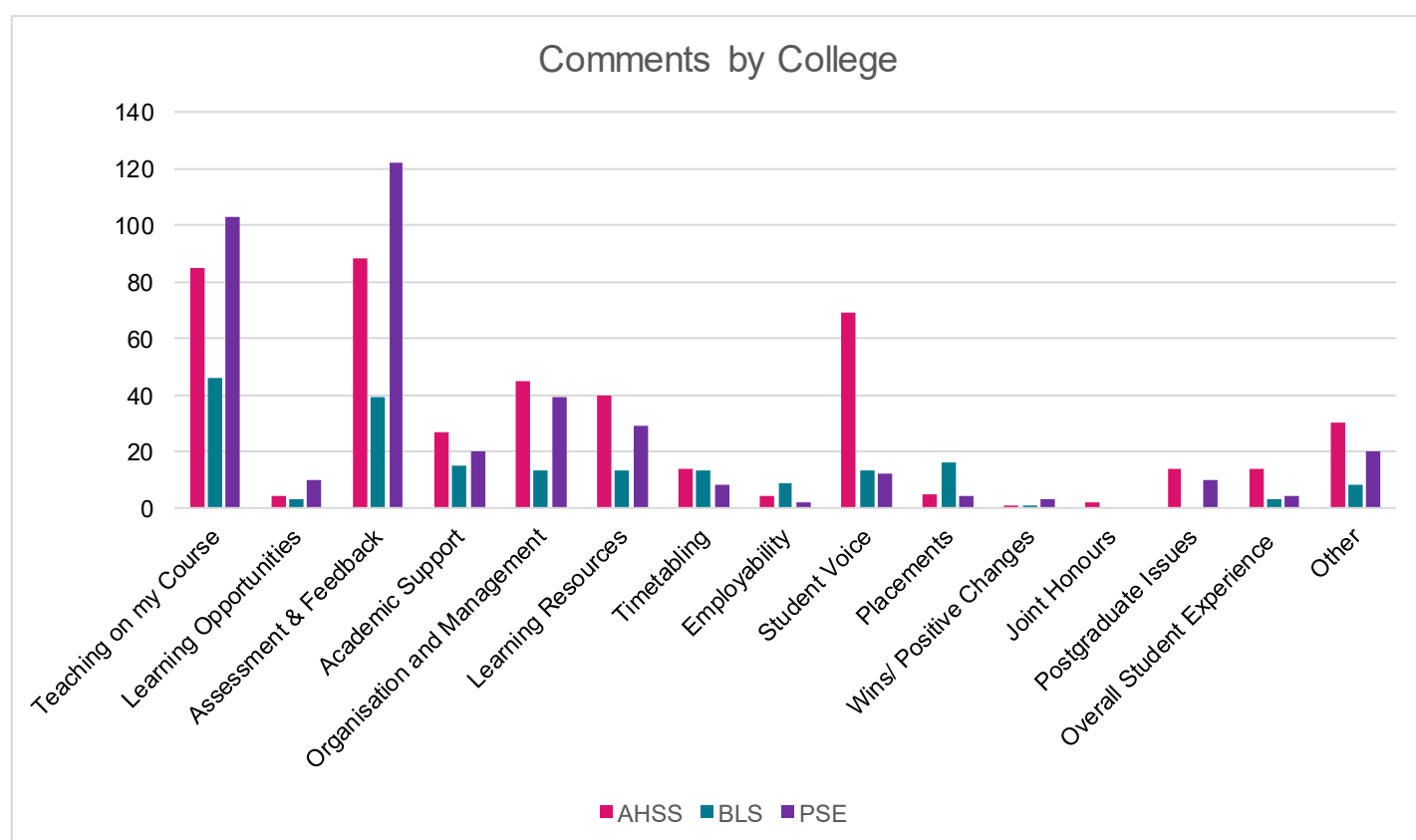


Figure 2 - Quantities of comments received by theme per college

One of the two key outlying differences amongst colleges is that AHSS submitted significantly more Student Voice comments (69 comments, 19.33%) than BLS (13 comments, 8.9%) or PSE (12 comments, 4.24%), with this category being AHSS' third most raised theme.

The other key outlying difference is that for BLS, Placements and Employability were more of a concern than for AHSS or PSE. Placements were BLS' third most raised category (16 comments, 10.96%), whilst for PSE it was their tenth (4 comments, 1.41%), and for AHSS it was their eleventh (5 comments, 1.4%).

Across AHSS, the most frequently raised themes were Assessment and Feedback (88 comments, 24.65%), Teaching on my Course (85 comments, 23.81%), and Student Voice (69 comments, 19.33%). Feedback often highlighted the lack of lecture interactivity or how students struggle to engage with them, the level of support with assessments, and the want for more community-building opportunities.

“Some lectures aren't very interactive, and the module content is very theoretical and difficult to apply in real world scenarios”

“Some lecturers stop responding to assessment questions two days before the deadline, while others provide support right up to submission, leading to confusion”

“Year 1 student would like to have a social group / opportunities to meet outside of class / societies”

Amongst the comments categorised as Student Voice, there was a notable amount of feedback regarding Student Academic Representatives struggling to engage students and collect feedback, as well as requesting for the impact of their work to be communicated more.

“Reps reported ongoing difficulties in engaging students and gathering feedback. Engagement was higher when Unitu was in use”

“More could be done to emphasise the tangible differences / changes that feedback from student reps has made, to combat the feeling some have that they can't make a difference”

For BLS' data, the number of comments per theme was more similar, indicating a broader spectrum of concerns rather than specific key issues needing to be addressed. However, Teaching on my Course (46 comments, 31.51%) and Assessment and Feedback (39 comments, 26.71%) were still the two most raised themes. Comments under Teaching on my Course were often centered around assisting students with understanding content and making lectures digestible.

“More guidance on the structure and content of practical write-ups would be helpful, particularly on how to approach sections like materials and methods”

“It would be very helpful to have a start of semester 2 induction / recap session”

It should be noted that for BLS, much of the feedback in this category was positive – especially within the school of Pharmacy.

“It's great to have a genetics series linked to pharmacology. Having examples of drugs and the enzyme polymorphisms has helped to improve understanding of why personalized treatment is so important”

“Students have praised the clear structure, organisation, and effective delivery of complex information”

For BLS, many comments under Assessment and Feedback related to dissertation support and the quality of assessment feedback.

“Students felt that there was a disparity with access to written feedback and meetings with dissertation supervisors”

“Could the dissertation workshops and writing retreats be more spaced out as very different topics were discussed from one hour's session from the previous hour”

“No formative for OPT001 – students would like feedback for the summative assessment”

“Students would appreciate clearer, more actionable feedback on how to improve their performance”

PSE experienced the most drastic difference between the number of comments in each category. Assessment and Feedback (122 comments, 43.11%) and Teaching on my Course (103 comments, 36.4%) were significantly the most raised categories, with the next most raised category (Organisation and Management) receiving only 39 comments (13.78%).

For PSE, comments in the Assessment and Feedback category often centered around practical issues such as disorganised exam experiences, difficulty accessing necessary software, and bunched deadlines.

“Utilita was horrendous [...] the venue didn’t open early enough and the signage directing students to seats was poor”

“Difficult to access some specialist software needed for assessment”

“Year 3 students reported that coursework deadlines felt too tightly clustered before Easter and suggested releasing coursework earlier”

In PSE, comments categorised as Teaching on my Course were often related to students finding lecture content difficult to understand. Reasoning for this was often either because of poor lecture delivery, or due to a lack of foundational teaching to support students’ understanding.

“The module requires coding experience, but there are no coding lessons”

“Many with expertise in General Relativity don’t understand the content. Workshops are introduced without any prior teaching”

“Mechanics lectures are hard to follow and understand. Lecturer is too quiet and writing is poor”

Further Information

This report provides an overview of the key themes raised through Semester 2 Student Staff Panels across all Schools, excluding BIOSI, DENTL, and ARCHI, offering a consolidated picture of the factors shaping students' learning and day-to-day experience. By presenting these findings at University, College, and School levels, it supports ongoing conversations and local engagement activity without prescribing specific actions. The data shared here is intended to inform understanding, promote transparency, and underpin continued collaboration in responding to the student voice.

If you have any questions about the findings in this report, would like further detail at School or programme level, or wish to explore the data in more depth, please get in touch with the Student Voice Team. We are happy to provide additional analysis, or support with interpreting feedback to inform local student voice work.

You can reach us at: StudentReps@cardiff.ac.uk

If you would like to discuss student voice initiatives, rep development, or ways to strengthen Student Staff Panels within your School, we would also welcome a conversation.

Appendices

Theme	AHSS	BLS	PSE	Total
Teaching on my Course	85	46	103	234
Learning Opportunities	4	3	10	17
Assessment & Feedback	88	39	122	249
Academic Support	27	15	20	62
Organisation & Management	45	13	39	97
Learning Resources	40	13	29	82
Timetabling	14	13	8	35
Employability	4	9	2	15
Student Voice	69	13	12	94
Placements	5	16	4	25
Wins/Positive Changes	1	1	3	5
Joint Honours	2	0	0	2
Postgraduate Issues	14	0	10	24
Overall Student Experience	14	3	4	21
Other	30	8	20	58
Total	357	146	283	786

Appendix 1 - Quantities of comments received by theme per college



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