



# **Bolton Students' Union**

## **Quality and Standards Review Student Submission**

| 2019

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### **Preface**

The Quality and Standards Review Student Submission is an excellent opportunity to reflect on the partnership of Bolton SU (SU) and the University of Bolton to create change leading to positive outcomes for its members. Bolton SU welcomes the chance to contribute to this institutional review.

Although independent from the University and a charity in its own right, the SU plays a key role in students' lives and works hard to ensure students 'Love Student Life.' Over the past few years the SU has increased and developed new opportunities for students ranging from:

- Skills development in order to increase employability prospects.
- A vastly improved Student Voice system to ensure the student voice is heard at all levels throughout the University.
- Social opportunities to complement studies.
- New ways for students to interact with the SU, thereby giving students the means to have the best experience they can at the University of Bolton.

The SU is resourced by means of an annual Block Grant from the University and a small trading income from its SU Shop and licensed Café Bar, The Vista Meet and Eat.

Different to the majority of other SUs, Bolton SU is led by one elected officer the President, who represents a diverse population of 6,000 students.

The Widening Participation Agenda of the University means that it is one of the most ethnically diverse universities in the UK and one of the best universities for social inclusion. Consequently, there is a higher than average proportion of students on campus that might for many reasons such as ethnicity, disability, age and socio-economic background need extra support to overcome the attainment gap and successfully progress in their academic life. Bolton SU works in partnership with the University to provide this extra support so students leave the University having been able to successfully fulfill their academic potential.

Bolton SU's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 states as one of its key priorities over the next 3 years is to continue to maintain its close relationship with the University and continue to work with the University to support its students. This submission is a constructive opportunity for Bolton SU to further its objectives.

**Ansh Sachdeva**

**Bolton SU President 2019-2020**

## **Methodology**

### **Feedback Resources**

The President, SU General Manager and the Academic Engagement Coordinator created this Student Submission in consultation with the wider student membership and after reviewing a wide range of available resources.

The following resources were reviewed:-

<b>Evidence Used</b>	<b>Year</b>
SU AQR (Annual Quality Report)	2017 and 2018
University AQR Action Plan	2017 and 2018
SU on Tour Feedback	2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/18
Course Rep feedback	2017/18
NSS Results	2018 and 2019
Senate Minutes	2018 and 2019
Senate Student Focus Group Minutes	2018
Student Led Teaching Award Nominations	2017/18 and 2018/19
Speak Week Feedback	2018/19
Open Feedback Sessions for students	2019
University of Bolton Complaints and Appeals Report	2017/18

When deciding on how best to write the submission, a decision was taken to use historical pre-existing data rather than carry out a cross-campus survey. This decision was made after reviewing the guidance provided and taking in to account both the timing of the submission and resources available to the Students' Union. However, in order to have some quantitative data for Q2, it was necessary to undertake additional research, therefore, the SU conducted an Admission and Enrolment survey of new students, the results of which are included in this report.

The submission is written in sections pertaining to each of the four sections under review. Each section will review what the University of Bolton does to ensure it meets the core practices and how Bolton SU contributes. The submission will also look at how the University works in partnership with or supports the Students' Union in each of the areas.

## **Q1     The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admission system**

Bolton SU recognises that the University of Bolton has a thorough admissions process. Although the SU can only provide a restricted view on the reliability and fairness of this due to its limited involvement in this area, the SU is unaware of any student complaints pertaining to admissions. The SU is aware that the University has a Complaints and Appeals Process for applicants available on its website in the Student Policy Zone, this is fully accessible to prospective and enrolled students.

In order to streamline the admission procedure and ensure new students are in possession of relevant information prior to enrolment, the University sends out information through the post and email. It also has a dedicated webpage 'Uniasitshouldbe' which covers all aspects of enrolment. Students can enrol online, upload their photograph for their ID card, download their timetable and get information about their enrolment date, welcome and induction sessions. The instructions are clear and user friendly. There is a separate section for international students.

The University clearly displays the terms and conditions of enrolment for undergraduate, postgraduate and all other students enrolling with the University of Bolton on its website in the Student Policy Zone, again this is fully accessible to prospective and enrolled students.

The University holds multiple events for perspective students, ie Open Days, Course Advice Evenings, Summer Schools and Get Ahead days. These events allow students to have an insight into how the University functions and how students are supported by the services on campus. Student services such as the Life Lounge, services for disabled students, financial advisors, academic staff and Student Ambassadors are also available on campus to answer any questions prospective students may have. Get Ahead days are great opportunity for students to experience the University and meet current students before they commence University. Prospective students participate in activities and gain an understanding of what to expect when studying at the University of Bolton. The SU is also present at these events to ensure students are aware of the services the SU provides.

### **Induction and enrolment**

The SU acknowledges that the University, in particular The Student Experience Team, are constantly working to make the welcome and induction process easier and smoother for students. A working group of senior university staff involved in welcome and induction activities meet throughout the year and conclude with a review meeting to ascertain how well the processes worked and to seek recommendations for improvements for the following year, the SU President and General Manager are members of the working group. The SU also works in partnership with the Student Experience Team to source appropriate literature and samples for welcome bags which it subsequently distributes to enrolees. The SU is also on hand to greet new students to ensure a friendly welcome to the University. After enrolling, students are required to attend a University Welcome Talk where the Heads of School, the Director of Student Life and the SU President welcome students to the University and give a brief overview of the University and university life. The President gives an overview of the SU. This working partnership shares information and resources to improve the admissions procedure for students.

Recruitment and Admissions organise late enrolment sessions in the week following main enrolment, this is to capture those students who for various reasons are unable to attend the main enrolment and

induction sessions. Student Services also operates with extended opening hours during the first few weeks of term to ensure students have the opportunity to speak to a staff member if required.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate quotes from SU Admissions and Enrolment Questionnaire 2019

*“I thought the day was very well organised, information was readily available and the staff and students were all really helpful and friendly”*

The SU publicises its welcome information and social events through its social media platforms and its website so information is available to prospective and enrolled students. A hard copy is also sent out via the Student Experience team after A Level results are published to all confirmed students.

*“Lots of information and advice were posted”*

In the academic year 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 the University piloted a ‘Quiet Enrolment’ session. This initiative was targeted at students who had pre-disclosed a disability to the University and who may have benefited from enrolling at a time when campus was not as hectic as it would be on the main enrolment and induction days. Although this initiative has not been continued, the SU believes that with some modifications and streamlining, this event would be beneficial for some students as it reduces anxiety and stress.

In order to ascertain students’ views on their enrolment and induction, the SU undertook an Admissions and Enrolment Survey in September 2019. Overall, there was a 4% response from the September 2019/20 intake.

Information was collected from Postgraduate (PG) and Undergraduate (UG) students. It should be noted that the majority of responses received were from UG students. 38 students enrolled on to undergraduate programmes and 6 students on to postgraduate programmes responded. The questionnaire provided valuable feedback and insight and highlighted the fact that the majority of students found the process to be a positive experience, commenting that their induction was easy to follow, welcoming and information was generally easy to understand.

However, the questionnaire also found areas that could be improved. Timetabling was an issue, with students stating that timetables were not available at the time of enrolment, although the library did provide an area for student enquires on timetabling this may have been missed by some students as signposting was minimal. Communication was another issue for some students. Students commented that they had felt lost or could have received certain information earlier. The University should look at increasing signage on Induction days to sign post students to services available

*“I had gotten lost a few times and didn't know what I was supposed to be doing”*

## **Admissions and Enrolment Questionnaire 2019**

### **Q1. How did you find the application process when applying to the University of Bolton?**

	Result
<b>Undergraduate</b>	
1 – Hard to understand	
2	
3	3
4	10
5 – Easy to understand	25
<b>Postgraduate</b>	
1-Hard to understand	0
2	0
3	1
4	1
5-Easy to understand	4

#### **UG Comments:**

- The attached document to the email was really easy to follow.
- Very simple and quick response.
- Very simple online enrolment process.
- It should've said in the email that you can only access it from desktop devices, not mobile devices. Would've saved me a lot of trouble and made it easier.
- A lot easier after speaking to the course leader.
- It was an ok process, sometimes there were times you didn't hear from them for a week or two but everything was sorted out in the end.

### **Q2. Did you find the admissions process easy to understand?**

	Yes/ No	Result
<b>Undergraduate</b>	Yes	37
	No	1
<b>Postgraduate</b>		
	Yes	6
	No	1

#### **UG Comments**

- As above. Very clear.
- Great day.

**Q3. Were you given enough information about the admissions process and your induction day?**

	Yes/ No	Result
<b>Undergraduate</b>	Yes	30
	No	
	Unsure	8
<b>Postgraduate</b>		
	Yes	4
	No	1
	Unsure	1

**UG Comments**

- Lots of information and advice was posted.
- Online process so no induction this year.
- After informative discussion.

**Q4. Were you given the information you needed for admission and inductions in a timely manner?**

	Yes/ No	Result
<b>Undergraduate</b>	Yes	35
	No	3
<b>Postgraduate</b>		
	Yes	5
	No	1

**PG Comments**

- Yes indeed, the staff were friendly and smiley face. I found them very helpful.

**UG Comments**

- Slightly different process but emailed with plenty of time to enrol.
- The timetable is still not final.
- I wasn't told I needed a valid form of ID to enrol so I had to pay £177 to get my passport renewed last minute.
- Would have liked to know what was going on sooner.

**Q5. How did you find the overall induction day?**

	Result
<b>Undergraduate</b>	
1-Hard to understand	
2	
3- Neutral	6
4	11
5- Easy to understand	21

Postgraduate	
1- Hard to understand	0
2	1
3-Neutral	2
4	1
5-Easy to understand	5

#### PG Comments

- It was excellent, the way it was conducted very cool.

#### UG Comments

- Not attended yet.
- Didn't attend this year but previously was really good.
- I had gotten lost a few times and didn't know what I was supposed to be doing.
- Welcoming and very organised.
- Good overall induction.

#### Q6. Overall how would you score the admissions process and experience?

	Result
Undergraduate	
1- Poor	
2	
3- Neutral	4
4	13
5- Excellent	21
Postgraduate	
1- Poor	
2	1
3- Neutral	1
4	1
5- Excellent	3

#### PG Comments

- As a new student, it's expected to experience some issues. However, it was handled professionally and made my job easy.

#### UG Comments

- Really organised and flowed really well.
- I thought the day was very well organised, information was readily available and the staff and students were all really helpful and friendly.
- Should be given timetables and induction week dates much sooner.
- The only difficulty I encountered was UCAS. Once I bypassed them it was a whole lot easier!
- Excellent.



**Q5. The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.**

The SU works in partnership with the University of Bolton to ensure student engagement is active and relevant by means of representation, feedback, social experiences, activities and student surveys. Bolton SU actively engages with the student population in both an academic and non-academic capacity. Students also have an opportunity to attend top level University committee meetings, ensuring the student voice is heard at all levels. The SU President and General Manager also have regular meetings with the Assistant Vice Chancellor and the Senior Management team SU Liaison the Assistant Vice Chancellor – Office for Students.

*Academic and Recreational Societies*

Bolton SU encourages students to join and create academic and recreational societies. Academic societies are an excellent way of ensuring students feel part of an academic community by offering activities to support student learning including talks from invited speakers from practice or alumni, study advice and connections to local and professional organisations as well as giving opportunities to socialise with likeminded individuals. Recreational societies allow students to meet a whole range of new people with different interests outside of their course and accommodation. It gives students a break from their studies, a chance to unwind and recharge. All societies are open to all students so students have an opportunity to nurture their interests outside of assignments, tasks and grades.

*SU on Tour*

The objective of SU on Tour is to collect feedback by speaking to individual and groups of students in a non-classroom setting. Bolton SU organises visits to every campus (visits are extensively publicised beforehand) where it actively asks individuals or groups of students for both positive and constructive feedback regarding their University experience. Students also have the option of completing an online form or calling into the SU office if they wish to bring an issue to the attention of the SU. Feedback ranges from students requesting improved classroom facilities, issues on courses and teaching to students saying how much they enjoy their course and their lecturers. One outstanding benefit of SU on Tour is that students are able to see improvements implemented and lecturers enjoy receiving positive feedback. See the partnership section for a further understanding of how Bolton SU and the University work in partnership with SU on Tour.

*Speak Week*

A new initiative introduced in March 2019, Speak Week aimed to get an overview of Bolton SU and its services by asking students pertinent questions about Bolton SU. Bolton SU collected over 700 responses and the information was analysed in order to help identify areas of good practice and areas for potential improvement. Bolton SU aims to carry out a Speak Week three times per academic year covering different topics concerning both the University of Bolton and Bolton SU.

*Student Led Teaching Awards (SLTAs)*

The SLTAs exist to reward outstanding teaching and student support across the University. They are a unique opportunity for students to acknowledge and thank individuals and to recognise the exceptional











contribution of teaching and non-teaching staff to their education at Bolton. The awards are organised and hosted annually by Bolton SU and rely entirely on student feedback.

### Student Representation

- Course Representatives (Course Reps)
- School Board
- Bolton SU President

### Course Reps

Student voice is a well-established system that operates at various levels throughout the University with Students' Union support, specifically the Student Engagement Team. Course Reps are student volunteers, elected by their cohort for one academic year to represent the views of their fellow students to their departmental staff at Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC). Course Reps act as the first point of contact for their fellow students to raise any constructive or positive feedback regarding their course. Course Reps are able to influence how courses are taught or run in the long term. In the academic year 18/19 Bolton SU recruited nearly 400 students across courses taught on campus:

School	Recruited	School	Recruited
 Art	50	 Engineering	37
 Health	95	 Postgraduate	9
 IOM & Law	30	 Off campus	21
 Creative tech	46	 Sport & Biology	26
 Education & Psychology	80		
 Target 350 -> Total Achieved 394			

Course Representative recruitment for 2019/2020 is currently underway and the SU is expecting similar numbers to 2018/19 to be in place and trained in time for the first SSLC meeting which will take place from November 2019.

### School Board

The Academic Engagement Coordinator interviews and recruits School Board Reps for each school; School Reps are very similar to Course Reps, but identify and act on the key issues affecting students within a particular school. School Reps attend meetings at a faculty level, then feedback information to Course Reps, the President and students so that they are aware of any changes/solutions being put into place or any issues that need addressing. The School Board is fully supported by academic staff and the University.

School Reps also focus on encouraging their peers to complete the National Student Survey (NSS) so that feedback within their School is as comprehensive as possible. They also help to promote certain SU events throughout the year, for example the Students' Union Leadership Race and the Student Led Teaching Awards.

### SU President

The student body elects the SU President. The President holds the University of Bolton to account on decisions made which affect students and represents their views when sitting on University committees and working groups. The President engages with the student population through a variety of means; social media, SU on Tour, social events, Speak Weeks, pledges and general representation. The door of the President's office is always open to students. The SU President works in partnership with the University to support positive changes which are evidenced in the partnership section.

### **Partnership**

- Annual Quality Report (AQR)
- SU on Tour
- Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ)
- SU President
- Student Staff Liaison Meeting (SSLC)
- Student Reps

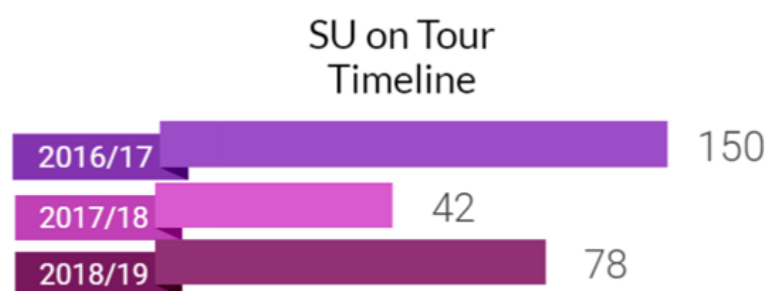
### AQR

The AQR offers recommendations to the University in order to improve the student experience. The AQR is written by the Students' Union and evidenced from SSLCs, SU on Tour, Speak Week, SLTAS, Course Rep feedback as well general student interactions with the SU. The AQR highlights areas where students have raised issues together with recommendations to address those issues. Examples of which are teaching on courses, learning resources, academic support, student voice and wider university issues. The AQR is presented to the Education Committee, the committee reviews each recommendation and creates an action plan, and these actions are worked on throughout the next academic year. The AQR is a report that works in partnership with the Students' Union and the University to ensure that students' issues which have been reported are resolved via the action plan which outlines actions and deadlines to the relevant departments.

### SU on Tour

Previously mentioned, SU on Tour is a Students' Union initiative whereby the President and the SU engagement team tour all areas of the University to speak to students at an informal level to get their feedback both positive and constructive on their University experience. Students can raise an issue or give positive feedback about their course, lecturer or student experience via SU on Tour and remain anonymous if they wish to do so, which students have found to be greatly beneficial.

Student feedback (positive and constructive) is passed on to the relevant department and the student is continually kept informed as to the progress and resolution of the issue. The University places a high value on SU on Tour and issues are generally resolved promptly and staff enjoy receiving positive feedback. The table below highlights a few examples of student issues resolved at an informal level resulting in positive changes for students.



### **Examples of resolved SU on Tour issues**

Date	Issue	Date	Resolved
17/18	Main lecture theatre had facility issues e.g broken chairs, no left handed desks.	18/19	Chairs have been replaced and there are now left handed desks.
17/18	No student car park - students were struggling to park around the main University campus	18/19	Student car park was built behind the NCME building
17/18	Students requested a space away from classrooms and computers; a place to relax and do other activities	18/19	The SU president 17/18 worked with the University to find a student 'chill out' space. This was completed in Semester 1 in 18/19 and The Loft was officially opened in February 2019.
18/19	Printing credit could only be topped up at the main library.	18/19	Introduction of an online system, students can now top up their printing credit online .
18/19	Fine Art MA students were struggling to complete work due to Mac licenses not being up to date.	18/19	Issues resolved, licenses were updated to allow students to complete their work.
18/19	Fine Art students requested the full installation of the machinery in the	18/19	Complaint resolved, funding obtained and equipment has been installed.

	metal workshop as students were unable to use it.		
19/20	On-going issues with student car parking on campus		Second car park opened for students behind the I-Zone

### Course Reps

Course representation has developed over the past academic year 18/19 with the initial reward and recognition system selecting a rep of the semester. However, Course Rep feedback highlighted issue that students may not be aware of who their rep is and do not necessarily feel valued. *“I think that its vital to introduce the class of who their students reps are and who they need to go to for help ,and advice. No one really knows who the reps are so it needs to be looked at, showing who the reps are will provide a vital link communication wise”*- Course rep feedback 18/19-

*Course Rep Feedback 18/19:*

*“By providing awards like best course rep at the end of every year or term or something. To encourage other students in taking up this role”*

*“By creating awareness around the campus that students voice is valued and that they should speak out rather than keeping quiet when they need something.”*

In 2018/2019 just under 400 of course reps were recruited, with this knowledge the University has furthered helped support the SU. Introducing a new reward system for 2019/2020 with the University funding T-shirts and hoddies for reps as part of the rewards scheme to increase visibility on campus. In doing evolving the Course rep system and rewards scheme. This progression is in line with the AQR 2017-18 action plan recommendation 23 *“The Academic Engagement Coordinator (within budget guidelines) will create a recognition and reward structure for Course/Student Reps to reward achievements and actions”*.

### *Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC)*

SSLCs meetings are held twice an academic year. Lecturers, support staff, senior academics, Course Reps, SU staff the academic administrator and other University services are in attendance. These meetings are encouraged by the SU and the University to ensure that students are able to give feedback directly to staff about their course, whether that be positive or negative. Staff gain first hand feedback as well as the opportunity to engage directly with students. These meetings are designed to ensure that the student voice is heard at all levels. This working partnership ensures the SU is supported by academics when trying to recruit Course Reps and the University supports Student Voice through organising and facilitating the SSLC meetings.

It is noted that SSLC meetings are occasionally postponed or rescheduled, sometimes at short notice. When meetings do need to be rearranged at short notice it would be good practice to consult with student reps regarding their availability for the proposed new date thus ensuring that students are represented at the meetings at all times.

## MEQ

MEQs are questionnaires in which students are able to give feedback about their course, quality of teaching and general feedback. The MEQs are a way for the University to improve individual courses as well as allowing students to have direct engagement and influence.

MEQs are completed at the end of each module on every course; Course Reps are responsible for distributing, collecting and returning the questionnaires to the Standards and Enhancement Office to ensure complete confidentiality. The AQR 17/18 facilitated changes with the MEQ process as students had conveyed issues with anonymity, therefore, Course Reps now collect completed MEQs, improving the trust in the process. Training is provided for Course Reps so they understand the importance of the MEQ's. The 2019 NSS results display that the University has improved overall with student voice with percentage increases in all sections. Above benchmark (73.66%) and received 78.77% for student voice. Exemplifying the working partnership between the SU and the University, NSS reflects that students have ample opportunities to provide feedback.

NSS Results 2019	OFS 2019 Benchmark	University of Bolton (Taught) results 2019	NSS Results 2018	OFS 2018 Benchmark	University of Bolton (Taught) results 2018
<b>Student Voice</b>					
<b>Overall</b>	74.37%	78.77%		75.43%	80.35%
<b>23. I have the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course</b>	84.41%	85.65%		86.77%	84.75%
<b>24. Staff value students' views and opinions about the course</b>	75.72%	81.11%		81.99%	76.66%
<b>25. It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on</b>	63.03%	69.68%		71.96%	64.86%

## Student feedback NSS 2019

*"I have actually enjoyed my time in uni. The staff try their best and try to do so much, give as much support as they possibly can and also listen to feedback from students and try as much as possible to work with the feedback".*

**“In general, the sense of community and I do believe that some of the lecturers are very keen on seeing the feedback and improving the course for the future”.**

*SU President working in partnership with the University*

The SU President works alongside the University to act on feedback received from students to improve student social and academic experience. The SU President is the Student Voice when attending senior level board meetings such as Senate and Governors meeting. Over the last three years, numerous improvements have been implemented:

Year	Improvements
2016-2017	Launched Student Jury
2017-2018	
	Microwaves and kettles Queens Specialists Building
	New student social space - The Loft
	Employability, Enterprise and Apprentice Strategy launched
	Presenting at Executive Board
	A review of assessment processes to improve consistency of feedback
	Additional specialist computers made available in the library with 24hrs access
	Group learning spaces in the library study area
2018-2019	
	Microwaves and kettles across campus
	Significant investment in improving graduate outcomes
	Online library card top-up
	New student car park opened
	The Loft social space – open to students

**Committees and panels**

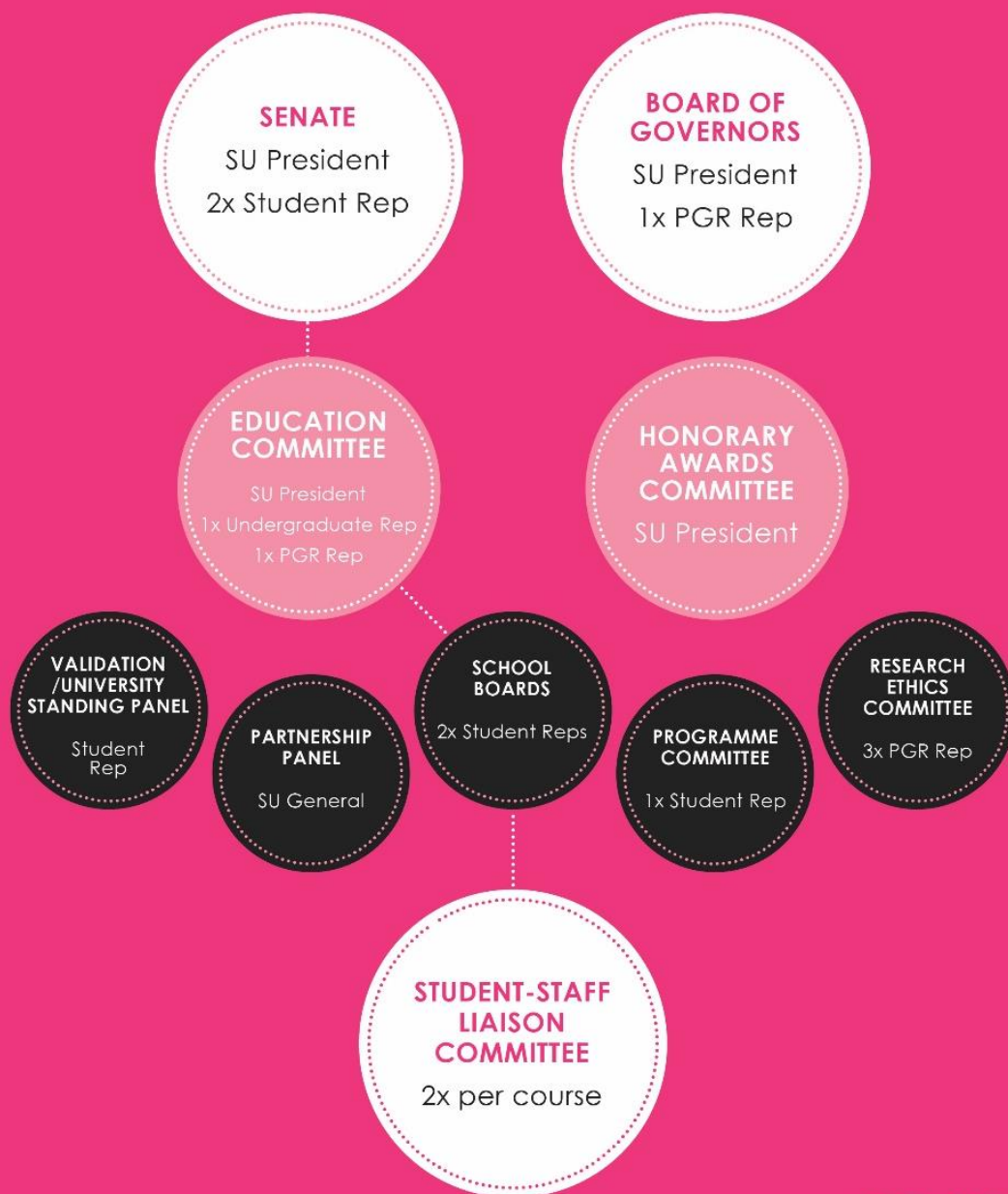
- Education Committee
- Senate
- Validation Panel
- Honorary Awards Committee

- Research Ethics Committee
- Board of Governors

Bolton SU recognises the variety of panels and committees that operate throughout the University at different levels of seniority. These panels and committees aim to have student representatives at all levels to ensure that student voices are heard, and are supported by the SU through its recruitment and selection process. Student representatives are recruited from a pool of Course Reps and from students who have a keen interest in student voice. Students are either interviewed or selected by the SU President and the Student Engagement Team. The working partnership highlights the level of commitment, support and opportunities provided by the University to ensure that student voice is active and present at the University of Bolton.



# Committee Chart



## **Q6 The provider has fair policies and procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students**

The University Complaints and Academic Appeals Procedures enables students to bring matters of concern about their learning experience or decisions relating to their learning or learning experience to the attention of the University, and provides mechanisms through which those concerns may be resolved.

Regulations, policies, procedures and forms pertaining to Complaints and Academic Appeals are available to view and download from the University website. Policy guides signpost students to the SU for help and advice.

The SU has no involvement in the Complaints Procedures and Academic Appeal Procedures once a student submits their form and is, therefore, unable to comment on the efficiency of these procedures. However, the SU is unaware of any major issues with either of the procedures.

Policies and procedures are reviewed by the Standards and Enhancement Office and it should be noted that the University consults with the SU when carrying out a revision of any student policies and procedures.

Correspondence sent to students from the Standards and Enhancement office will always signpost students to relevant services and support at the University, including the SU.

Bolton SU works in partnership with the University to help students through the process ensuring confidentiality, fairness and clarity. This is explained further below:

### **SU Role**

The SU offers free, impartial and confidential advice and guidance to all University of Bolton students. Advisors will:

- Support students through all stages of academic appeals and complaints by informing students about the procedures, what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Assist students in drafting their statement, deciding on the evidence they need to collect and putting together a strong case.
- Accompany students to any meetings they are required to attend.
- Chase up communication from the University to the student.
- Give follow up advice after the complaint/appeal has been concluded.
- Advise students on how they can take their complaint or appeal forward outside of the University if they are not satisfied with the response from the University and they have been issued with a 'Completion of Procedure' letter.

### **Complaints**

The Complaints procedure has three stages

1. Stage 1 - The Early Resolution/Informal Stage
2. Stage 2 - The Formal Stage
3. Stage 3 - The Review Stage

The SU initially aims to de-escalate complaints before they are escalated to Stage 2 – The formal stage. The SU will encourage a student to talk or write to the person concerned with the complaint and give help in drafting a statement. A member of staff will also accompany the student to a meeting if required. If the complaint is escalated, the SU will guide the student through the procedures; what to expect and what is expected of them, assist in drafting a statement, deciding on the evidence they need to collect and help put together a strong case. The SU is able to support students during any panel meetings they may be called into, however, the SU presence is mainly there to support the student.

The SU, with the support of the University, will try to resolve complaints at an informal level wherever possible, aiming for complaints to be handled quickly, politely and with the appropriate redress so that the complainant can continue with their studies without undue worries. The SU will support the student through stages 2 and 3 if required.

Students can also raise concerns about any aspect of their student life via SU on Tour. As previously mentioned in this report, SU on Tour is an informal process whereby students can raise an issue and get it resolved quickly in an informal way. Again, this initiative is fully supported by the University who values the student feedback and works to address concerns and instigate change if necessary. If a student was unhappy with the outcome of a complaint raised through SU on Tour, it would then be escalated to Stage 2, The Formal Stage. Student feedback indicates they appreciate the opportunity to raise issues informally and anonymously and that they are kept fully informed of the progress of their issue from start to resolution.

Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) are another opportunity for students to raise issues at an informal stage. Students can raise an issue with their Course/School Rep who will subsequently raise the issue at their SSLC. Again, the issue can be resolved in a quick and straightforward manner.

Evidence from SU on Tour and SSLC issues which have been identified and resolved indicate that the University is willing to listen and engage with the SU and students and identify ways to improve its services.

## **Appeals**

The University has given training to SU staff on how to advise and support students who are seeking help with mitigating circumstances and appeals.

The rules and regulations of an Academic Appeal can seem extremely complex and the SU can help to clarify the rules and regulations and advise on completing the Academic Appeal form, ensuring that students gather the correct information and evidence.

The SU will also accompany a student to meetings with the University if they require support or assistance.

If the student is unhappy with the outcome of the appeal or complaint the SU can assist in submitting an application to the OIA once the University of Bolton procedure have been completed and once a student has been issued with a 'Completion of Procedures' letter.

The University held an additional Appeal Panels in 2018. This increase in Appeal Panels was welcomed as students had more opportunities to submit an appeal. Unfortunately, it must be noted that the dates and times of these additional panels was not communicated to students or the Students' Union resulting in the SU having conflicting information and therefore difficulty when advising students. The University must

ensure submission deadline dates and Appeals Panel dates are accurate when published and that the University should make every effort to adhere to these dates. It should also ensure there is adequate publicity if there are any changes to numbers of panels, dates, times and deadlines. Students and the SU have also noted that the University academic calendar, which is published on its website, does not accurately reflect the Academic Appeals submission deadline dates and Appeals Panels dates.

The SU has noted that some academics are giving out the wrong information when advising students on their grounds to appeal. The SU has advised a small number of students who, after speaking to their tutor, thought they could appeal and were advised to visit the SU for further advice. After consulting with the SU it was evident that the student had no grounds on which to do so. Students were upset and deflated. The University must ensure academics are aware of the correct guidelines when advising students so as not to raise expectations.

Additionally, the SU has seen students who have contacted the SU for help as they have been deemed by the exam board to be 'failed and finished' during the summer period 18/19 and have been advised to contact their relevant academic to seek support. Unfortunately, during this summer period, these students were unable to contact and receive the relevant help required from their academic. The University must ensure that students are fully supported at all times, including outside of the academic year, especially if the student has been advised to contact a particular staff member.

The University's appeals process adheres to the OIA's 90 day timeframe for outcomes; the 2017-2018 Appeals Annual Report states that 66 appeals were completed within 39 days.

The University has made efforts over the past academic year to decrease the number of academic appeals by increasing the awareness of the mitigating circumstances procedure and appeal submission deadlines. The SU has worked with the university to raise awareness by publicising information about mitigating circumstances via social media and at appropriate events such as 'Mind your Mate'. The streamlining of the mitigating circumstances procedure is evident in the Annual Appeals Report 2017-2018 from 298 appeals in 2016-2017 decreasing to 223 in 2017-2018. The SU launched the 'Don't Drop Out, Drop in' campaign in 2016/2017, and it continues to be fully supported by the University. This campaign (image below) encourages student to seek help and signposts where to find it, including submitting mitigating circumstances.

## Don't In Drop Out poster examples

**DON'T DROP OUT  
DROP IN**

During exams and assignment deadlines we know you might be feeling overwhelmed and may even need support if things don't go to plan. Here are some common questions and where you can find support or the information you need.

**"I've been accused of academic misconduct"**

You can speak to your Lecturer, Personal Tutor and the Students' Union about this issue. Make sure you do so as soon as possible after the exam.

**"I am having some medical issues and don't feel I am fit to sit my exam"**

Speak your Lecturer as soon as possible about this. You may want to consider applying for Mitigating Circumstances if the circumstances are unforeseen, severe and exceptional.

**"I'm struggling with my dyslexia/dyspraxia, do I get any additional help in exams?"**

You can speak to your Personal Tutor and the Disability Service based within the Student Centre about this.

**"How do I apply for mitigating circumstances"**

Mitigating Circumstances forms can be collected from Student Services, who will also be able to offer advice on how to complete them. The Students' Union can also help.

**"Do I have an exam or deadline timetable?"**

You can find exam timetables on the student area of the University website under 'My Details'. You can also check Moodle and speak to your Lecturers about deadline dates.

Everyone has concerns when they arrive at University - it's perfectly natural. But if those concerns are making you unhappy or think about dropping out of University, we are here to help. Have a look below to see where you can drop into services, events and activities to get what you need.

**How can we help you?**

**"I'm having financial issues"**  
Students' Union, Jobshop (located in Careers Service), Student Services

**"I'm feeling homesick"**  
Students' Union, Chaplaincy, Student Services

**"I feel lonely and like I don't fit in"**  
Students' Union, Student Services, Chaplaincy, Personal Tutor

**"I'm struggling with my studies"**  
Personal Tutor, Students' Union, Library Help Desk, LEAP, Online

**"I feel like I'm on the wrong course"**  
Personal Tutor, Students' Union, Careers Service, Student Services

**"I need help with accommodation"**  
Students' Union, Student Services

**"I have a disability and need support"**  
Student Services, Students' Union, Personal Tutor

**"I need someone to talk to"**  
Students' Union, Chaplaincy, Student Services

For more information visit [www.boltonsu.com/dontdropout](http://www.boltonsu.com/dontdropout)

**BOLTON LEANS Student Life**

For more information on the support available to you visit [www.boltonsu.com/dontdropout](http://www.boltonsu.com/dontdropout)

## **Q9 The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes**

Bolton SU believes that over the last three years there has been significant investment and improvement in these areas. This section of the report is split in to two to look at both Academic and Professional outcomes. Initiatives employed by the University and how the University works with and supports the SU will be examined.

Each year Bolton SU holds the Student Led Teaching Awards (SLTA). This event has taken place for the last 8 years and is an opportunity for students to nominate staff both academic and professional who they feel have gone above and beyond to help them to achieve. Students nominating staff in the awards are asked to write a statement to show how their nomination has gone above and beyond, winners for the award are chosen by a panel of students and are chosen based on the quality of the nomination statements not on the number of nominations received. In 2018 – 2019 the SU received almost 800 nominations from students across 8 categories:

- Outstanding Lecturer (one winner from each academic school)
- Exceptional Personal Tutor
- Supervisor of the year
- Employability Enhancement Award
- Best Support Staff
- Student Representative of the Year
- Society of the year
- Most Dedicated Society Member

As in previous years, the categories receiving the most nominations were Outstanding Lecturer and Exceptional Personal Tutor.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Outstanding Lecturer</b>	<b>Exceptional Personal Tutor</b>
<b>2016 / 2017</b>	521	162
<b>2017 / 2018</b>	482	143
<b>2018 / 2019</b>	472	126

Bolton SU believes that the number of nominations received across these award categories shows that generally students feel that University staff have a positive impact on their education to an extent that they feel they deserve recognition.

### **Academic Outcomes**

#### *Assessment and feedback*

Assessment and feedback is always a topic high on students' agendas. It is clear from the NSS (2019) results that students at the University of Bolton are satisfied and happy with information given on how their work will be marked and the criteria for marking. It is also clear that once they receive their feedback they are happy with the standard of feedback given, the NSS results (2019) show that in all these areas the University of Bolton scores significantly above the benchmark.

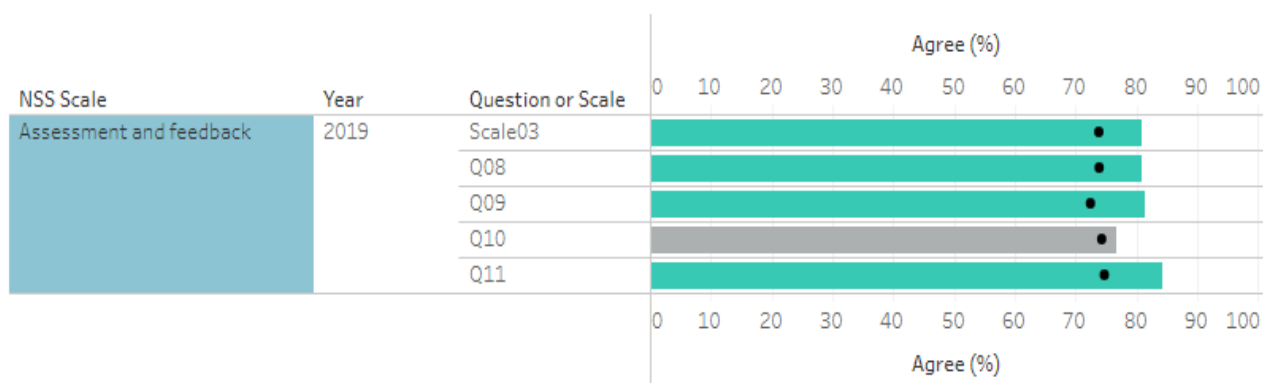
***“The marking criteria was clear ensuring the best was put into the work and the feedback given highlighted the areas that were required to be developed” -NSS 2019-***

Notes	Benchmarks for all providers	Benchmarks for one provider	Benchmark differences	Subject level
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Provider Type: ☐ Registering ☒ Teaching  
 Provider:

Year: ☐ 2018 ☒ 2019  
 Please select which you would like to view: ☒ Questions ☒ Scales  
 Significance: ☐ Not significantly different to benchmark ☒ Significantly above benchmark  
 Key: ☒ Benchmark (%)

## 2019 NSS results by teaching provider



However, although the score for question 10 ‘feedback on my work has been timely’ it is not significantly different to the benchmark, it is clear from comments that for some students feedback isn’t always received within the 15 days as expected (Assessment and Moderation Procedure).

***“The time it takes for feedback and grades to come back to students can be varied and sometimes far beyond what would be expected” -NSS 2019-***

***“Feedback from these certain staff members is insufficient and unhelpful. This leads to myself and fellow students feeling disheartened and undervalued”- NSS 2019-***



### Student Support

Students are supported by various means to achieve academic success. For example 1:1 support, group support or online learning resources.

The university allocates each student a Personal Tutor (PT) with whom they meet with on a regular basis, PTs are supported by Enhanced Personal Tutors (EPT). PTs are an integral part of student support and students report that quite often their PT has been the reason they have been so successful in their academic journey. A category included in the SLTA, is an award for Exceptional Personal Tutor. Set out below are words, extracted from student nominations, used to describe personal tutors.



EPTs also support a Peer Support programme. This is a form of student mentoring and can be both on an individual or group basis holding peer assisted study sessions (PASS).

Bolton SU feels that the development of the LEAP Ahead has been a significant step forward in helping students to feel supported from day one (or from pre arrival if they attend the LEAP Ahead Summer Schools). All new students are required to undertake a Leap Ahead Diagnostics, the results from this are formed in to a dashboard that PT's can access. Students then discuss the results with the PT and an individual action plan is created which gives the student a clear course of action. Students are recommended to complete LEAP on line modules and/or attend Leap workshops which are a series of



sessions to improve academic writing, study skills, referencing etc. Student's participation in LEAP is tracked by awarding a digital badge for each element completed. There are currently over 60 learning units available through LEAP. Information shows that over 4600 units were completed in the last academic year. The information gained from the diagnostics can be used as an indicator for PT's and EPT's to highlight those students most at risk of dropping out or who may not be as academically successful, based on this information additional support can then be put in place at a very early stage of the student journey.

It is well documented that many students, for various reasons, struggle with poor mental health during their studies. In response to this, the university created the Life Lounge. The Life Lounge houses the University's Counselling and CBT Services. The SU is pleased to say that recently provision in this area has increased, and the University acknowledges it as a key priority with significant investment in staff and resources. The SU through the President and the General Manager have been involved in the development of this by being members of the University's Mental Health Working Group.

## Library and Resources

### Library

NSS 2019 results show that there has been some improvement in student satisfaction with library resources with results showing that there is no longer a significant difference between University of Bolton satisfaction and the benchmark. The table below is taken from the Office for Students website.

Notes

Benchmarks for all providers

Benchmarks for one provider

Benchmark differences

Subject level

Provider Type

☐ Registering
 ☒ Teaching

Provider

The University of Bolton

Year

☒ 2018
 ☒ 2019

Please select which you would like to view:

☒ Questions
 ☒ Scales

Significance

Not significantly different to benchmark

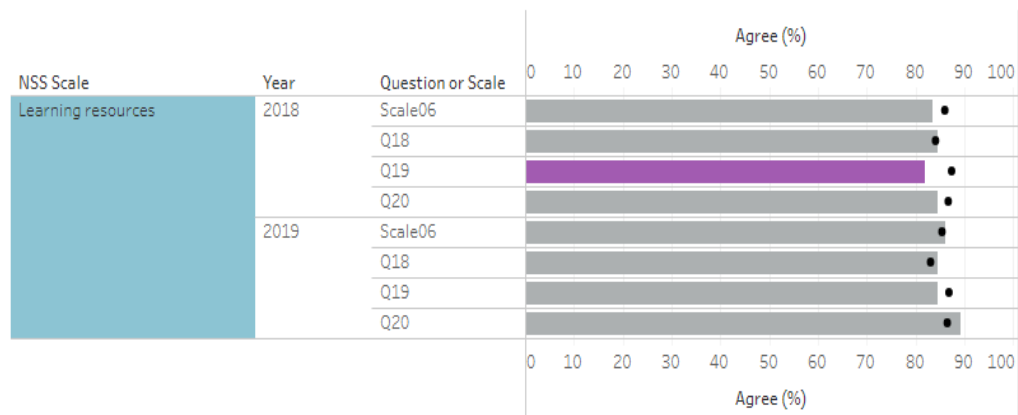
Significantly above benchmark

Significantly below benchmark

Key

• Benchmark (%)

2018 & 2019 NSS results by teaching provider



Although there has been an improvement in this area, the SU believes that this is still an area where improvements can be made. The comments below from the latest NSS results (2019) show that some students still encounter difficulty accessing the resources they need:

*“Lack of relevant library resources. Computer software is a gamble as to whether it's on there and the right version”.*

*“Library sources are out-of-date and that makes very difficult the research of information about new technologies”*

It should be noted that the University have recently invested in new laptops for the Library, this is something that students had requested through SU on Tour 2018/19

### **Partnership Working**

There are numerous ways in which the university works in partnership with or supports the SU to help students academically achieve. Below is a summary of the collaborative work.

#### SU on Tour

This initiative has been running for 5 years. The SU through its President, student volunteers and staff engage with students around campus. The aim is to give students an informal route to raise issues or concerns that may be affecting them. Once an issue has been raised it is triaged in the SU in order to find the best course of action to take depending on the nature and seriousness of the issue. The issue is then raised with the relevant department/service in the University and its progress tracked by the SU until a satisfactory resolution can be found. In the past SU has helped to resolve many issues for students through this mechanism ranging from unsatisfactory teaching rooms, heating in rooms not working, no left handed desks in the lecture theatre to changes to the minibus timetable. As well as giving students an opportunity to tell the SU about the small things that are impacting their student experience, there have also been times where larger complaints have come to light through SU on Tour. This has enabled the SU to help students to make major changes to their academic experience such as new equipment being installed to a full course review (motorsport 2017). The University are very supportive of this initiative and encourage the SU to raise issues at senior management level in order to expedite a resolution as it allows issues to be resolved quickly and informally with less of an impact on students as possible.

#### Don't Drop Out Drop In

This campaign has been run by the SU for the last three years. Its aim is to arm students with information on who can best support them on campus depending on their particular problem. Many academics, PTs and academic schools use this as a method of signposting students so that they know that the student is accessing the correct support.

#### Student Voice

Although this topic is covered in detail in Q5, it is important to mention here as well. Having a supported network of Student Reps allows for positive academic changes to be made which in turn helps students to succeed academically.

### Mental Health/Wellbeing

As previously stated student wellbeing is a key priority for the University. It is also something that the SU is passionate about. The SU supports a student society dedicated to student wellbeing called Mood Matters. In 2019 for the second year running, the SU and University supported this society to put on a conference for students raising the profile and importance of the event and the issues around student mental health.

The Presidents in 2017 and 2018 lobbied the University regarding the lack of social space for students. Students had repeatedly told the SU they wanted a space to relax in, away from the classroom environment and without computers. In January 2019 the University allocated the Students' Union with an additional space on campus to create a social space for students, this space has now become The Loft. The Loft was officially opened in February 2019 and is a place dedicated to students to take time out and relax. In addition new for September 2019, a 'Zen Den' has been created within the Loft. This is a dedicated calm area where students can head to if they need some quiet space.

### Advice

The SU operates an independent Advice Unit where trained staff give free, impartial and confidential advice to students. Advice is given in areas including:

Money – student finance problems, benefit advice, debt and university finance.

Housing – university and privately owned accommodation.

Academic issues – academic appeals, mitigating circumstances, complaints.

When corresponding with students, the University informs students they can obtain independent advice from the SU.

### AQR

Each year the SU provides the University with an AQR. This report uses data garnered from a number of channels including SU on Tour, Student Representation feedback, SSLC minutes, SLTA comments, Student Senate Focus Groups and Advice Unit cases. The AQR is presented to the Education Committee by the SU President after which the University will develop a response and action plan. The University uses data from the AQR to influence, develop and improve new initiatives, strategies and policy. University areas such as GAME – the Graduate Attributes Matrix for Employability and the Curriculum Design Guide and a new process for the issuing and collection of MEQ's have been influenced using AQR data. This evidence gives the SU confidence in its ability to influence and direct major changes and achieve positive results for students, it also recognises that the University values SU recommendations to improve the student experience. The AQR is also considered at Senate.

It's also widely accepted that students who engage in other activities outside of their degree are more likely to be academically successful. For the last two years Bolton SU has focused on encouraging students to create academic societies. The SU's Student Engagement Supervisor has worked closely with academics in each school to create and support student societies. This partnership has resulted in the creation of academic societies in the majority of schools. The SU and University has supported student societies to put on a number of student led conferences over the last three academic years.

Quote from Student Led Teaching Awards 2018/19

*“I'm nominating the Games Society, for how its improved from its predecessor, it has really become a kind and welcoming environment that has not only helped the three games courses become more friendly, but given a positive experience for many around the university”*

## **Professional**

Students embark on their University life with the end goal being a career in their chosen field, hopefully entering that field at graduate level. The University has recently taken steps to improve professional outcomes for students.

A new Director of Jobs for Students has recently been appointed who will be responsible for implementing and reviewing new strategies.

Comments in the latest NSS show that not all students have access to work placements.

**“ A placement should be provided while you are still studying but nothing like that is provided”**  
**“No placements half the class don't know what they're going to do after”**

Work placements give students the opportunity to gain skills specific to their industry or course choice, students acknowledge the benefit that they have on their education and job preparation:

**“Work placements are amazing. The advancement through the years to gain more specialised knowledge in each discipline offers something to look forward too”**

The SU believes that the University has already started to address the inconsistency in the provision of work placements with the introduction of the Employability, Enterprise and Apprenticeship Strategy and Plan which aims to provide increased opportunities with industry specialists, work related learning and placements. This, along with the Industry Advisory Board, gives students industry based learning opportunities which run alongside courses and modules which have been designed with advice from industry specialists.

As mentioned previously, as a result the SU's AQR the University developed the Graduate Attributes Matrix for Employability (GAME). GAME is used by each academic school to identify key skills developed by students within modules.

The University Careers Service offers a variety of careers and employability support adapted to suit individual student needs. It hold a schedule of workshops throughout the year, there is also help available in CV writing, personal statement writing and interview preparation. Although these services are in place and available, students tell us that they don't know about them, therefore the SU believes that the University needs to look at new ways of communicating such opportunities and services to students.

The Bolton Award is an extra-curricular employability programme for all undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Bolton. It has been designed to help students prepare for the world of work, as well as boosting their CVs. Students benefit from work experience, skills development and a range of enrichment activities. Participants are required to commit to a minimum of 35 hours, including 15 hours

of work experience or voluntary work. It can be completed at a pace that is convenient to the student. Students who complete the Bolton Award have it included in the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

### **Partnership Working**

Bolton SU is fully supportive of the Bolton Award and actively promotes it to its volunteers such as Student Representatives, Society Leaders, Welcome Buddies and Speak Week Volunteers. The Bolton Award Project Officer is located in the SU office enabling engagement with SU volunteers on a daily basis.

The SU and the Careers team work together to deliver bespoke workshops for SU Volunteers, making sure students fully utilise the skills and attributes they develop during their time as a volunteer. Employers want individuals who have transferable skills, soft skills and who stand out from the crowd, workshops are a great way to help students achieve success.

Over the last 12 months, the SU has collaborated with the University to verify its volunteering opportunities and get them included in the HEAR. From now on, students who meet the activity criteria set out in HEAR now have it included on the HEAR for the first time.

Bolton SU's SLTA include an Employability Enhancement Award category. The criteria for this category reads:

*"This award is for the member of staff who encourages the development of employability skills of their students. They are knowledgeable about the careers their graduates can expect to go in to and encourage real world experience such as work placements, internships and live briefs. They are a member of staff that can be approached for specific career advice."*

Students can nominate both academic and professional support staff in this category and in the past the shortlist and winners are a mixture of both. Below are some comments about staff supporting employability:

*"As well as running an employability module \*\*\*\* has taken time out of class hours to help students personally with employability skills and online marketing"*

*"For her continued support and guidance since and through the start of my course, \*\*\*\*\* has offered me extra support for filling out application forms, job interviews and further study options, often I am very busy and can not make designated appointments, \*\*\*\*has always offered me time, that is best for myself, and continues to support me via emails. An example of this is a recent internship opportunity to work for BBC radio. Amazing!"*