

# **Student Union Impact Evaluation**

**Project Report**

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# 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This research was commissioned by the Student Union in August 2011. The project aims were to find out more about the students at The University of Northampton, what offer they feel the Union is providing and what they want from the Union, as well as set benchmarks for future evaluation projects.
- 1.2 The research involved discussions with Union staff and completion of an online and paper survey of students during International and Freshers' Week. One hundred and seventy one students completed the survey. Following completion of the survey, a group interview was held with four participants discussing the issues raised.
- 1.3 The key findings of the research are as follows:
  - The majority of students see the Union mainly as a source of entertainment, though qualitative results and the group interview suggest that the Union should give more focus to non-alcoholic forms of entertainment.
  - There is a lack of knowledge of other areas of Union responsibility, particularly surrounding campaigns, advice, Sabbatical Officers and Course Representatives.
  - Postgraduate students rarely use the Union and are uncertain as to whether its services are for them.
  - International students appear to want more support than students from the UK and Ireland, with qualitative results suggesting help with English and organisation of trips.
  - Students appear to be interested in the Union and want the Union to actively take an interest in their welfare (qualitative results), with the group interview indicating that periodic research should be undertaken on students' opinions of the Union, its services and facilities.
- 1.4 The highest response rate of the survey was to question 9 asking whether students understood what Sabbatical Officers do, with 84.2% (N:144) stating they did not understand. The highest positive response was to question 20, with 81.9% (N:140) saying the Union was contributing positively to their experience at University. Interestingly, however, the only other question to come close to this was question 11 (on whether students were planning on attending events during Freshers'), with most affirmative responses to survey questions limited to 60% or less of respondents.
- 1.5 As a result of the research, this report makes five recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Based on the research, the Union needs to focus on the promotion of itself and its activities. Particularly areas of weakness are who SAB Officers and Student Representatives are and what they do, how to feedback to the Union and the Union's accountability.

Recommendation 2 – Progress recommendations/actions from students at the group interview (see Appendix Seven), particularly in relation to the Student Representatives’ process.

Recommendation 3 – Tailor specific packages to international and postgraduate students.

Recommendation 4 – Follow up research should be undertaken periodically, but particularly at the end of the academic year.

Recommendation 5 – Feedback the results of the research project to the students through their preferred communication means (social media and email) and indicate what action the Union will take as a result of the project.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 This research was commissioned by the Student Union in August 2011. The original project outline prepared by the Union is available at Appendix One.
- 2.2 Following discussion between the researcher and the client, it was agreed that the project should aim to answer the following questions:
  - Do students know who Sabbatical Officers are?
  - Have students noticed new buildings and renovated buildings around the University?
  - How many students know about student representatives?
  - How much are students aware of accountability of the Union and its Officers?
  - How should the Union canvas opinion?
  - How much do students understand the role of the Union and what it provides?
  - What is the Union doing right and what could it do better?
  - What do students want from the Union?
  - Are students aware of advice available from the Union and how much emphasis would they like placed on this role?
- 2.3 The agreed project outline is available at Appendix Two.
- 2.4 The research methods involved meeting with Officers of the Union, Sabbatical Officers, a paper and online questionnaire on the Student Union targeted at the student body and a group interview with some of the students who answered the questionnaire to go into the issues raised through the questionnaire in more detail.
- 2.5 This report will set out the methods employed (section 3), identify the results (section 4), analyse the results alongside the aims of the project (section 5), make recommendations as a result of this (section 6) and draw conclusions (section 7).

### **3. Methods**

#### **Extensive Research**

- 3.1 Initial extensive research involved talking to the Avenue Venue Manager about the entertainments programme for Freshers' Week, familiarisation with Union facilities and reviewing the Union's online presence (Twitter, Facebook and website).
- 3.2 An attempt was also made to obtain a copy of University of Leeds Union's Student Union Impact Evaluation, but staff at Leeds appeared unwilling to assist. They suggested that each Union is different and Northampton Union should focus on what its students want.
- 3.3 Informal discussions were also held with the University Chaplain and with random students during Freshers' Fair.

#### **Intensive Research**

- 3.4 Following this, intensive research was undertaken during one day of International Students' Week (20 September) and two days of Freshers' Week (Tuesday 27 September at Avenue, and Wednesday 28 September at Park, Freshers' Fair). The research involved completion of an online and paper survey of students at these events. A copy of the questionnaire is available at Appendix Three. The survey was promoted by the Union using its online presence. One hundred and seventy one students completed the survey.
- 3.5 The questions asked reflecting the key objectives of the research, regarding what students are aware of and what students want from the Union during their time at University. Participants were selected at random.
- 3.6 As part of the survey, students were asked whether they would be willing to help in future research through participation in a group interview. Ninety students indicated they would be willing to assist with this.
- 3.7 Following completion of the survey, students who volunteered to help with future research were invited to a group interview (see copy of invite at Appendix Six). Four students attended the group interview on 21 October. The aim of the group interview was to make recommendations to the Union on areas they could focus or improve on.

## **4. Results**

### **Response rate**

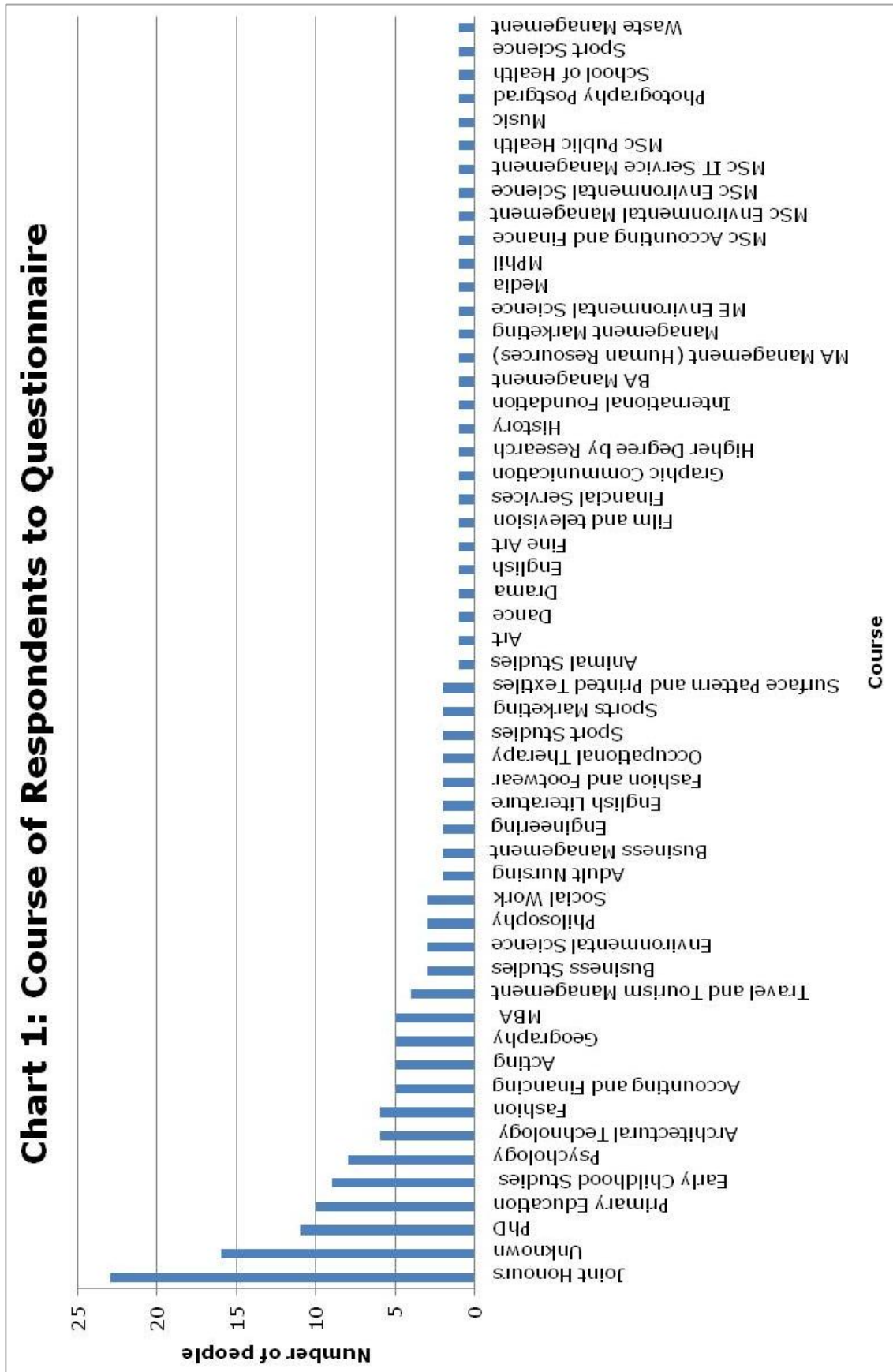
#### **Survey**

- 4.1 The survey was completed by 171 students.
- 4.2 The nationality of respondents was predominantly UK and Ireland, with 69% of respondents (Number:119) from here. 25% of respondents (N:42) were international students. 6% of respondents (N:10) were of an unknown nationality.
- 4.3 In terms of sex, 58.5% of respondents were female (N:100) and 41.5% male (N:71).
- 4.4 With regards to year of study, 63.2% of respondents were in their first year (N:108), 14% second years (N:24), 6.4% third years (N:11) and 16.4% postgraduate students (N:28).
- 4.5 Mature students were fairly well represented through the survey, with 31.6% of responses (N:54) from such students. The remaining 68.4% (N:117) did not class themselves as mature students.
- 4.6 Students were from a range of courses, as can be seen from the bar chart (Chart 1) on page 7. Those students whose course is recorded as 'Unknown' left this answer blank on their paper survey.

#### **Group interview**

- 4.7 Ninety students indicated they would be willing to assist with further research in the form of a group interview. All were invited to participate, but only four students attended the group discussion.
- 4.8 These students ranged in age from 23-29 and included one undergraduate and three postgraduate students.

**Chart 1: Course of Respondents to Questionnaire**



## Survey results

4.9 Appendix Four contains the quantitative results from the survey, whilst Appendix Five contains the qualitative results.

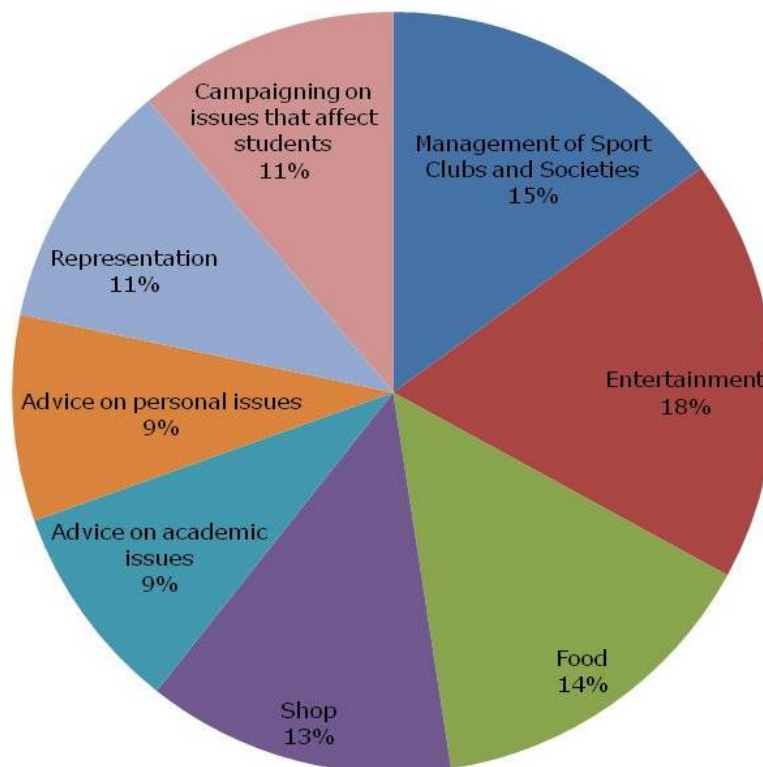
4.10 The highest response rate of the survey was to question 9 asking whether students understood what Sabbatical Officers do, with 84.2% (N:144) stating they did not understand. The highest positive response was to question 20, with 81.9% (N:140) saying the Union was contributing positively to their experience at University. Interestingly, however, the only other question to come close to this was question 11 (on whether students were planning on attending events during Freshers'), with most affirmative responses to survey questions limited to 60% or less of respondents.

### By question

#### **Question 1: What do you think the Union provides for its students? Please mark all that apply.**

4.11 Chart 2 below shows response to question 1. Students mostly thought the Union focused on entertainment, management of sport clubs and societies, food and a shop.

**Chart 2: Question 1. What do you think the Union provides for its students? Please mark all that apply**



### **Question 2: Are you aware of Union clubs and societies?**

4.12 81.29% of students were aware of clubs and societies (N:139), whilst the remaining 18.7% (N:32) were unaware.

### **Question 3: Do you know how to join the clubs and societies?**

4.13 The number of students who know how to join a club or society is lower than the number who are aware of Union clubs and societies. 49.1% of respondents (N:84) said they knew how to join them, whereas 50.9% (N:87) said they didn't know.

4.14 The results show that 40% of respondents who were aware of clubs and societies didn't know how to join them.

### **Question 4: Have you ever contacted the Union for help and advice?**

4.15 The majority of respondents had not contacted the Union for help and advice (72.5%, N:124). Approximately a sixth (15.8%, N:27) didn't know the Union offered such help. The remaining 20 respondents (11.7%) had contacted the Union for help and advice.

### **Question 5: Do you feel it's easy to get help and advice from the Union?**

4.16 Respondents generally thought it was easy to get help and advice from the Union (53.8%, N:92), though a significant proportion didn't know the Union offered such a service (30.4%, N:52). The remaining 15.8% (N:27) didn't feel it was easy.

4.17 Of those who had been to the Union for help and advice, 80% (N:16) felt it was easy to get such help and advice and 20% of them (N:4) didn't.

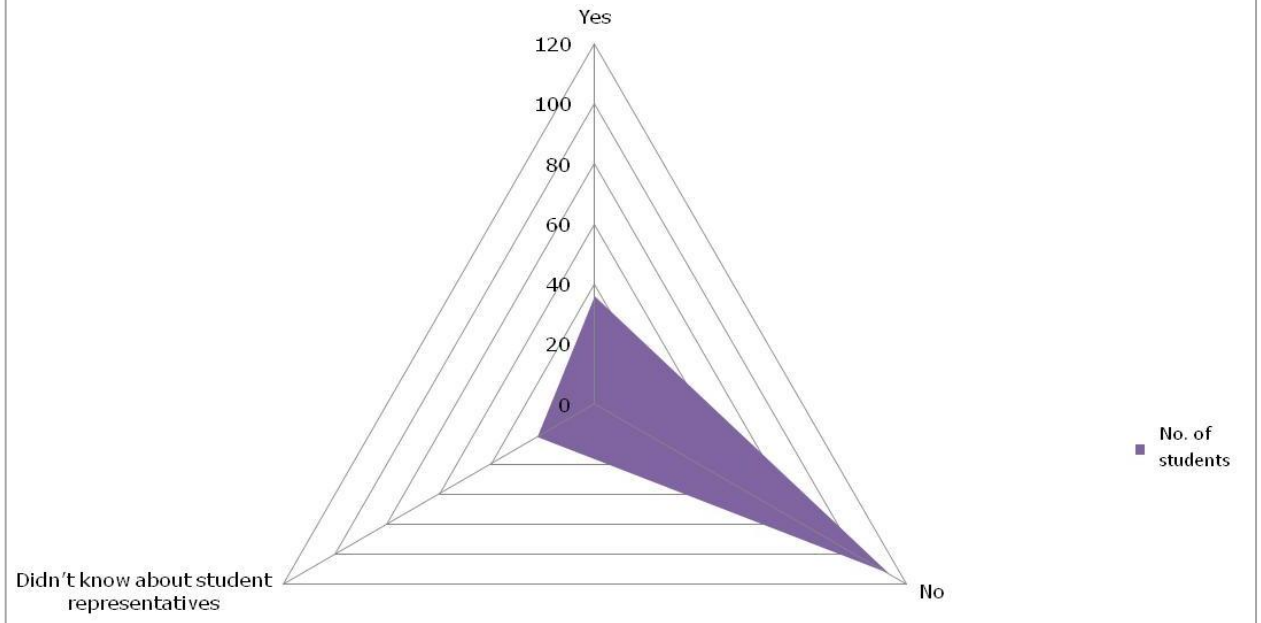
### **Question 6: Do you feel the Union campaigns on issues that affect you?**

4.18 Of the responses to this question, 47.4% (N:81) felt the Union campaigned on issues that affected them, 27.5% (N:47) didn't know the Union ran campaigns and 25.1% (N:43) didn't feel the Union campaigned on issues that affected them.

### **Question 7: Do you know who your student rep is and how to contact them?**

4.19 A significant number of respondents answered 'No' to this question (66.1%, N:113), as can be seen from Chart 3 on page 10. 12.9% (N:22) didn't know about student reps and 21.1% (N:36) did.

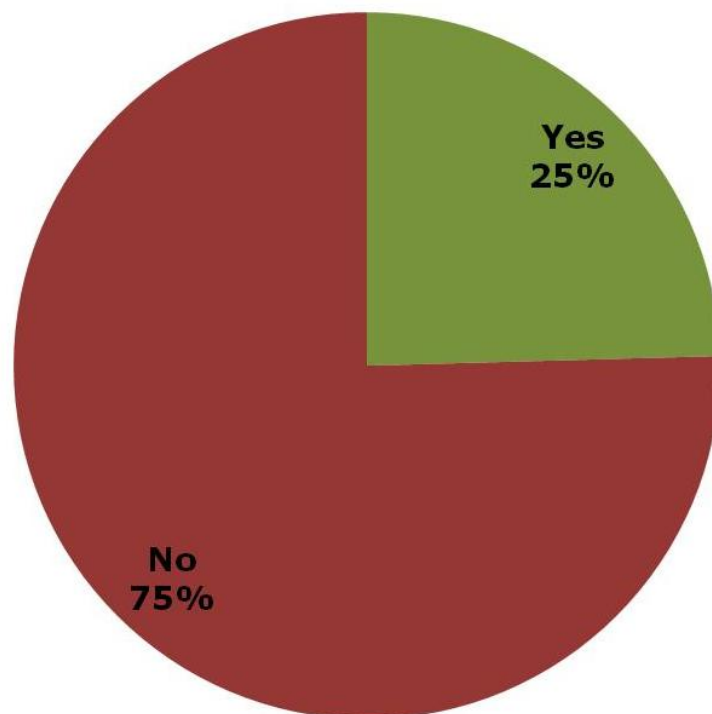
**Chart 3: Question 7. Do you know who your student rep is and how to contact them? Please mark one answer.**



**Question 8: Are you aware of the Sabbatical (SAB) Officers?**

4.20 Chart 8 below shows that overwhelmingly students were not aware of Sabbatical Officers.

**Chart 4: Question 8. Are you aware of the Sabbatical (SAB) Officers? Please mark one answer.**



**Question 9: Do you understand what SAB Officers do?**

4.21 The number of respondents who understand what SAB Officers do is even lower than those who are aware of SAB Officers. 84.2% (N:144) do not understand (the highest percentage of any question in the survey), and 15.8% (N:27) do.

4.22 Almost half of those who are aware of SAB Officers do not understand what they do (45.2%, N:19).

**Question 10: Have you heard of events going on during Freshers' Week?**

4.23 Most respondents had heard of events occurring during Freshers' Week (78.4%, N:134). The remaining 21.6% (N:37) hadn't.

**Question 11: Are you planning on attending any events during Freshers'?**

4.24 More students were planning on attending events during Freshers' Week than those who had heard about events, with 81.3% (N:139) planning on attending and 18.7% (N:32) not planning on going.

**Question 12: What do you think of the University buildings and facilities?**

4.25 Generally, students liked University buildings and facilities (73.1%, N:125). A small percentage hadn't noticed them (5.3%, N:9) and some (21.6%, N:37) felt they could be improved.

**Question 13: Have you looked at the Union website? Please mark one answer.**

4.26 Of the respondents, 105 students had looked at the Union website (61.4%), while the remaining 66 (38.6%) hadn't.

**Question 13a: If you answered yes to question 13 above, did you find it easy to use? Please mark one answer.**

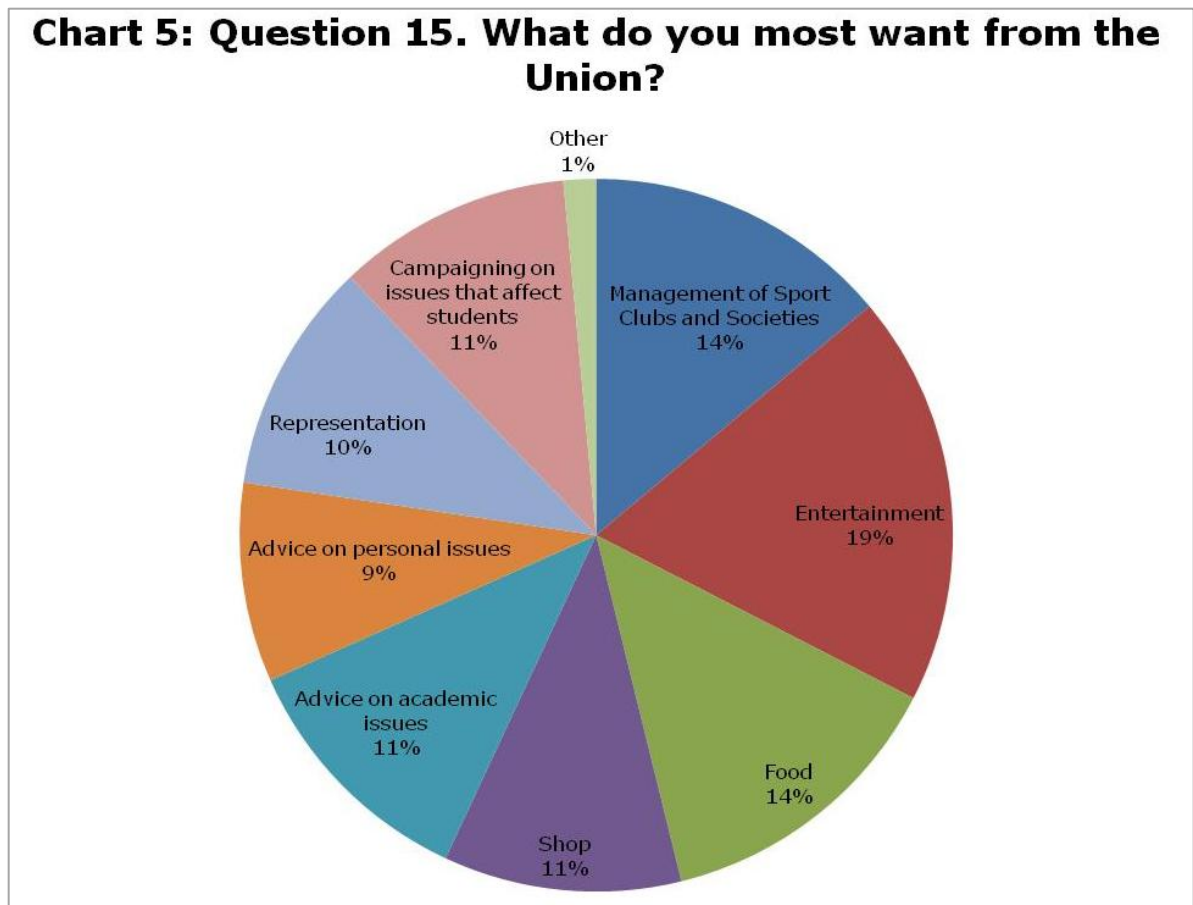
4.27 The survey found that generally those who used the website found it easy to use (73.3%, N:77), with the remaining 26.7% (N:28) saying they didn't find it easy to use. Qualitative responses to the survey and informal discussions with random students indicated that the website lacked key information, particularly regarding clubs and societies. Another example is the page for NU Media which requests volunteers to complete a box if they are interested in working in any part of NU Media, but there is no box to complete.

**Question 14: If you are a returning student, how frequently do you use Union buildings? Please mark one answer.**

4.28 The majority of students used the Union buildings on a weekly basis (34.1%, N:28), though daily use and never having used the buildings rated quite highly. Further information can be found at Appendix Four.

**Question 15: What do you most want from the Union? Please mark all that apply.**

4.29 Chart 5 below shows what respondents want the Union to provide.



4.30 When comparing the results of question 1 (what do you think the Union provides?) with the results of question 15, there is little difference between what students think the Union provides and what they want it to provide.

**Question 16: Do you feel you have a say in how the Union is run? Please mark one answer.**

4.31 By a slim majority, students felt they didn't have a say in how the Union was run (53.8%, N:92), with 43.3% (N:79) feeling they did.

**Question 17: Do you feel you have a say in how the University is run? Please mark one answer.**

4.32 A slightly larger majority (when compared to question 16) felt they didn't have a say in how the University is run (56.7%, N:97). 43.3% felt they did (N:74).

**Question 18: Do you feel it's easy to submit an idea to the Union for how to make the Union, University or town of Northampton better for students? Please mark one answer.**

4.33 More respondents felt it was easy to submit an idea, 58.5% (N:100) when compared to those who didn't feel this to be the case (41.5%, N:71).

**Question 19: Do you know who the Union is accountable to? Please mark one answer.**

4.34 Most respondents didn't know who the Union was accountable to (71.3%, N:122), with the remaining saying they knew (28.7%, N:49).

**Question 20: Do you think the Union is contributing positively to your experience at university? Please mark one answer.**

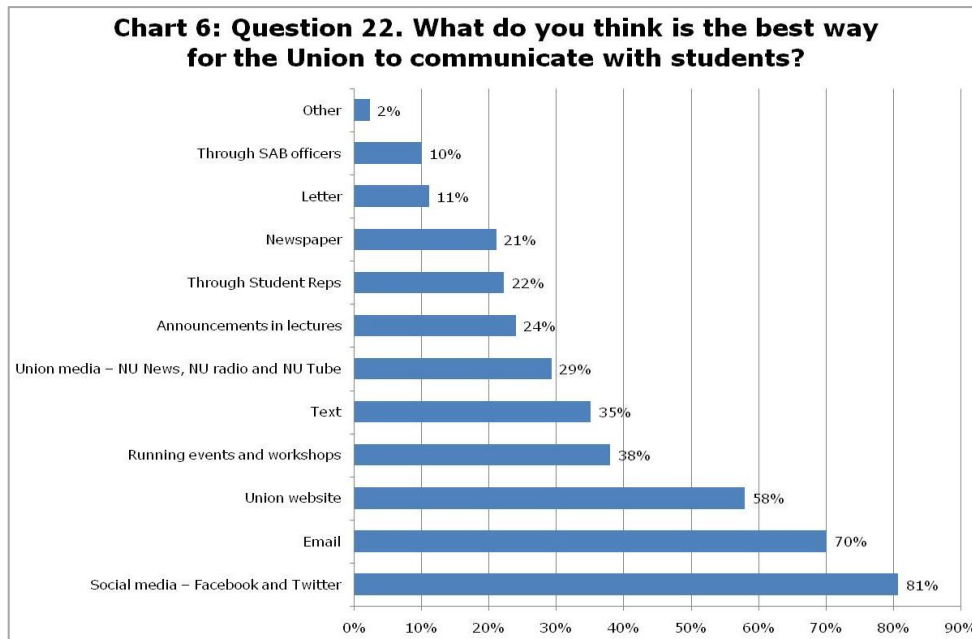
4.35 A large majority of students felt the Union was contributing positively to their experience at University (81.9%, N:140). A small (but significant) minority didn't feel this to be the case (18.1%, N:31).

**Question 21: Do you know how to give your feedback on the Union? Please mark one answer.**

4.36 Most students didn't know how to give their feedback to the Union (65.5%, N:112), with the remaining 34.5% (N:59) saying they did.

**Question 22: What do you think is the best way for the Union to communicate with students? Please mark all that apply.**

4.37 Chart 6 below shows how students responded to this question. The most popular methods were by social media and email.



4.38 For question 23 (Is there anything more you would like the Union to do to support you during your time at university?) and the follow on question (if you have anything further to add in relation to the survey questions, please provide your comments here), the answers are given in Appendix Five. Answers were broad and ranged from making it easier to contact the Union, more advice on academic issues and helping international students get better at English to axing the Stallions.

### **Comparison between different student groups**

#### **Sex of respondent**

4.39 Male respondents were slightly more aware of how to join clubs and societies when compared to female respondents (56.3%, N:40 of males, compared to 44%, N:44 of females).

4.40 More men than women had contacted the Union for help and advice (18.3%, N:13, compared to 7%, N:7 of women).

4.41 Women are more likely than men to have looked at the Union website (65%, N:65, compared to 56.3%, N:40 of men).

4.42 Men are more likely than women to use the Union buildings on a daily basis (33.3%, N:14, compared to 12.5%, N:5 of women).

#### **International students**

4.43 Generally, responses to the survey by international students were broadly similar to those students from the UK and Ireland. Differences are highlighted below. Questions not discussed showed no difference in response when compared against nationality.

4.44 Exceptions include, question 15 (what do you most want from the Union?) where 82% (N:97) of UK and Ireland students wanted 'Entertainment' (with the next highest being 'Food', N:68 and then

'Management of clubs and societies', N:63). Only 56% (N:29) of international students wanted the Union to focus on entertainment. Issues such as 'Campaigning on issues that affect students' (N:25) and 'Advice on academic issues' (N:24), as well as food (N:24) ranked highly with international students.

4.45 With Question 16 (Do you feel you have a say in how the Union is run?), 53.8% (N:28) of international students said they did, where as only 42.9% (N:51) of UK and Ireland students felt this to be the case.

### **Year of study**

4.46 There were some differences in response to questions when looking at the year of study of the respondent. These are set out below. Questions not discussed showed no difference in response when compared against year of study.

4.47 The response rate for third years is quite low (N:11) so results here may not reflect the views of the year.

4.48 Generally undergraduates and postgraduates thought the Union provided (and wanted the Union to provide) the same things, though postgraduates were more keen to have the Union focus on campaigning on issues that affect students (79%, N:22, compared to 50%, N:56 of first years, 25%, N:6 of second years and 45%, N:5 of third years).

4.49 First, second and third years were, in the overwhelming majority (72%, N:123), aware of clubs and societies, whilst postgraduate students were less likely to be aware of them (42.9%, N:12).

4.50 Most students understood the Union to offer help and advice, though most had never approached the Union for this. Second years, however, were more likely to be unaware that the Union offered help and advice (50% didn't know, N:12).

4.51 Whilst the split was fairly even as to whether respondents thought the Union campaigned on issues that affected them, there was a noticeably negative response from third years with 73% (N:8) saying they didn't think the Union campaigned on issues that affected them.

4.52 Postgraduates were noticeably below the average in terms of whether they had heard of events going on during Freshers', with 50% (N:14) saying they had, compared to an 84% (N:120) of first, second and third years. The overwhelming majority of first years had heard of (86.1%, N:93) and were planning on attending (91.7%, N:99) events during Freshers'.

4.53 Fewer second year and (more particularly) postgraduate respondents had looked at the Union website (second year 54.2%, N:13 and postgraduate 25%, N:7).

- 4.54 A further difference across year groups was the frequency of visits to Union buildings. First years tended to use these daily (44%, N:12), second and third years weekly (50.5%, N:12 and 54.5%, N:6 respectively), whilst half of postgraduate students never used Union buildings (50%, N:10).
- 4.55 Another difference across the years was that generally first years felt they had a say in how the Union was run (58.7%, N:57), when compared to the majority of second and third years and postgraduate respondents who said no (88%, N:56). Third year respondents also overwhelmingly felt they had no say in how the University was run (81.8%, N:9).
- 4.56 Generally, first years were more positive when answering questions 16, 17 and 18 (concerned with their perceived influence of the Union and University), with a higher number of respondents answering yes to these questions.

### **Age of student**

- 4.57 A greater number of mature students were unaware of clubs and societies (40.7%, N:22).
- 4.58 A higher number of mature student respondents had contacted the Union for help and advice (22.2%, N:12, compared to 6.8%, N:8 for non-mature students).
- 4.59 A greater number of mature students were not aware of Sabbatical Officers (92.6%, N:50, compared to 67.5%, N:79 of non-mature students).
- 4.60 A greater number of non-mature students were planning on attending events during Freshers' Week (89.7%, N: 105, compared to 63%, N:34 of mature students).
- 4.61 Non-mature student respondents were also more likely to have looked on the Union website (75.2%, N:88, compared to 31.5%, N:17 of mature students).
- 4.62 Mature students were more likely to want advice on academic issues and campaigning from the Union (52%, N: 28), whereas non-mature students wanted entertainment and management of sport clubs and societies (86%, N:101 and 59%, N:69 respectively).
- 4.63 Mature students were more likely to feel that the Union was not contributing positively to their experience at University (31.5%, N:17, compared to 12%, N:14).

### **Course**

- 4.64 Respondents were from a mix of courses, but there was no predominance of course. As a result, no attempt has been made to analyse responses on the basis of course.

### **Group interview results**

4.65 There were some positives of the Union brought out during this interview, notably the campaign to get students exempt from bus fare when travelling between Park and Avenue campus.

4.66 The following are the key points made by the participants of the group interview (with a copy of the document, agreed by the participants, reflecting discussion available at Appendix Seven):

1. Greater **publicity** required from the Union. Need greater communication of events in SU (e.g. with the Avenue re-opening an email was only sent round on the day of the opening). NILE and the Careers Centre were held up as good examples.
2. Greater **clarity** (and publicity) concerning what the Union does. For example, most people understand the Union to be "dance floor at top, shop at front and bar at back", what more does it do? What help does the SU provide that's not available from Student Services?
3. Improvements in the **Student Representative process**. Need a space where Student Representatives can meet students, greater understanding of how communicate to course who SR is (announcements in compulsory lectures?) and how to contact them, greater communication between SR and Union. Could have a board of SRs who report to Union on issues.
4. Greater **diversity of activities**. Union is seen by participants to focus on entertainment, but want more intellectual activities (such as outside speakers, including authors of course books and politicians, want debates). The University has a variety of students with different needs and the Union should try and cater for these, not just focus on entertainment.
5. **Engage** with students through advertisements in the library, restaurant, having a big board outside the Union, more bulletin boards, more TVs (such as in library) around campuses advertising activities, get individual mails. Thought the book on the Union sent to Freshers was good.
6. **Campaign on issues that affect students**. Should be able to go to Union, tell them issue and they talk to the University. Issues raised during the group interview were: 1. Printing costs are very high, need more information about how to print in a way to save paper (and money), such as booklets or advertisements. Northampton College offers students limited number of free pages, could look into that; and 2. Restaurant prices have also drastically increased, even though run by the University. Should have a range of price options available. Pleased that the Union successfully campaigned to have free buses between Avenue and Park and would like to see more like this.

7. **Run campaigns to students**, such as health awareness, home electrical awareness, recycling. SU should be focused on making the University a better place.
8. In terms of communication with students and finding out issues, the Union should **conduct more research like this** periodically. It should do quick, on-the-spot surveys of people on campus (particularly where they may be idle, such as in the library or the restaurant), should give students piece of paper to write down issue and give to the Union.
9. The participants asked **how the Union will take forward the findings of the research and how they will feedback** both the research findings and their resultant actions to the student. Would be good to have some communication on the basis of "You said...we did..." just in general..., as the students come and go but many of the issues stay the same.

## **5. Analysis**

### **Limitations of the research**

- 5.1 The group interview was done with a very small number of students when compared to the number who completed the survey (4 students at interview, compared to 171 responses to the survey), whilst the response to the questionnaire was also limited when compared to the size of the student body, which is approximately 14,000.
- 5.2 In addition, the youngest participant of the group interview was 23, meaning that the younger student population (18 year olds) did not have their views presented in as great a detail as the more mature students.
- 5.3 Sabbatical Officers weren't interviewed as part of the project, despite this being one of the project's aims. There is potential here for this to be a focus of future research.
- 5.4 Many students felt they did not possess sufficient knowledge to complete the survey, feeling it was aimed at existing students. They felt they would have been better able to answer the questions once Freshers' was over.
- 5.5 It should also be considered that those willing to assist with completion of the survey may be those who are already easier to engage with. It should be considered how to better investigate the needs of students who are harder to engage.

### **Key areas**

- 5.6 The Union should continue to focus on its entertainments programmes, as this is a key area of interest for students, particularly first years. However, it should have a well-rounded programme that caters for the full range of students' needs.
- 5.7 It was interesting that, during the group interview, participants focused on the Union's entertainments programme, with this seen as the main focus of the Union. Participants did not seem aware that the Union ran campaigns. This links in with comments regarding the perceived paucity of publicity and communication from the Union. Students are not aware of what the Union provides, particularly in terms of advice and representation. The majority of respondents to the survey did not know that this was one of the Union's functions, whilst just over half (52%, N:89) were aware that the Union campaigns on issues that affect students.
- 5.8 The Union should publicise its other areas of provision, notably advice, representation and campaigning on issues that affect students. Greater publicity is also required on how to join a club and society as more people were aware of clubs and societies than knew how to join them. Whilst this could be because students are not

interested in joining clubs and societies, it would be worth promoting the joining process.

- 5.9 It is clear from the results that Student Representatives and Sabbatical Officers are not very well understood, in terms of who they are, what they do and how to contact them. More needs to be done to ensure student reps and SABs publicise themselves, are more of a presence and speak to the student body so they understand what they do and how to contact them.
- 5.10 Many of those who responded to the survey are not sure who the Union is accountable to and how to give their feedback to the Union. More should be made of the message that the Union is for and about the University's students, including greater emphasis on how students can get involved in the Union's operation and decision-making.
- 5.11 More effort should be made to reach postgraduate students. The survey reveals they are less likely to be aware of events, clubs and societies and use Union buildings. Qualitative results indicate that they are not even sure that the Union is for them, reporting that they go to the Graduate School in the Knowledge Exchange if they have an issue.
- 5.12 Special measures might also be of benefit to international students, such as trips, language courses and an area to relax in that doesn't serve alcohol (informal discussions with the University chaplain indicates that many international students use the chaplaincy as a relaxation space). This corresponds with quantitative and qualitative findings, which show that international students want different things from the Union when compared to students from the UK and Ireland, with less of a focus on entertainment.

### **Project outcomes**

- 5.13 In terms of the key questions for the project, the answers are as follows:
- Do students know who Sabbatical Officers are?  
Only a quarter of students surveyed know who Sabbatical Officers are (24.6%, N:42), with even fewer understanding what they do (84.2%, N:144).
  - Have students noticed new and renovated buildings around the University?  
Most students had noticed the University buildings and the majority liked them (73.1%, N:125).
  - How many students know about student representatives?  
Most students did not know who their student rep was and how to contact them (66.1%, N:113).
  - How much are students aware of accountability of the Union and its Officers?

Students surveyed were generally not aware of who the Union was accountable to (71.3%, N:122).

- How should the Union canvas opinion?  
Most students wanted to be contacted via social media and email, though the group interview said periodic surveys should be made to canvas opinion, through talking to students in the library or restaurant for example.
- How much do students understand the role of the Union and what it provides?  
Students mostly understand the Union to provide entertainment, but its role as an adviser and campaigner are less well known.
- What is the Union doing right and what could it do better?  
The Union is generally contributing positively to students time at University, but more should be done to publicise itself and its activities and find out what specific students want.
- What do students want from the Union?  
Generally students want entertainment, though postgraduate and international students are more likely to want campaigns on their behalf and a different form of entertainment to undergraduates.
- Are students aware of advice available from the Union and how much emphasis would they like placed on this role?  
Students are aware of the availability of help and advice from the Union, but the group interview highlighted how the Union should communicate how this help and advice differs to that provided by Student Services.

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1 Based on the findings of the research project, this report makes five recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Based on the research, the Union needs to focus on the promotion of itself and its activities. Particularly areas of weakness are who SAB Officers and Student Representatives are and what they do, how to feedback to the Union and the Union’s accountability.

Recommendation 2 – Progress recommendations/actions from students at group interview, particularly in relation to the Student Representatives’ process.

Recommendation 3 – Tailor specific packages to international and postgraduate students.

Recommendation 4 – Follow up research should be undertaken periodically, but particularly at the end of the academic year.

Recommendation 5 – Feedback the results of the research project to the students through their preferred communication means (social media and email) and indicate what action the Union will take as a result of the project.

## 7. Conclusions

- 7.1 This research was commissioned by the Student Union in August 2011. The project aims were to find out more about the students at The University of Northampton, what offer they feel the Union is providing and what they want from the Union, as well as set benchmarks for future evaluation projects.
- 7.2 The research involved discussions with Union staff and completion of an online and paper survey of students during International and Freshers' Week. One hundred and seventy one students completed the survey. Following completion of the survey, a group interview was held with four participants discussing the issues raised.
- 7.3 The key findings of the research are as follows:
- The majority of students see the Union mainly as a source of entertainment, though qualitative results and the group interview suggest that the Union should give more focus to non-alcoholic forms of entertainment.
  - There is a lack of knowledge of other areas of Union responsibility, particularly surrounding campaigns, advice, Sabbatical Officers and Course Representatives.
  - Postgraduate students rarely use the Union and are uncertain as to whether its services are for them.
  - International students appear to want more support than students from the UK and Ireland, with qualitative results suggesting help with English and organisation of trips.
  - Students appear to be interested in the Union and want the Union to actively take an interest in their welfare (qualitative results), with the group interview indicating that periodic research should be undertaken on students' opinions of the Union, its services and facilities.
- 7.4 Based on these findings, five recommendations are made for action by the Union.

## Appendix One: Original project outline

### Postgraduate Research Placement Scheme

#### Company details

<b>Company Name</b>	<b>University of Northampton Students' Union</b>
<b>Address</b> (including postcode)	Boughton Green Road Northampton NN2 7AL
<b>Telephone</b>	01604 892 2818
<b>E Mail</b>	<a href="mailto:hannah@northamptonunion.com">hannah@northamptonunion.com</a>
<b>Website</b> (if applicable)	<a href="http://www.northamptonunion.com">www.northamptonunion.com</a>
<b>Named contact</b> (Please indicate if you are open to informal enquiries from potential applicants)	Dr. Hannah Mossman  Open to informal enquiries
<b>Short description of Company/organisation</b>	<p>The aim of the Union is to support and enhance the educational, social, cultural and recreational activities of the student body, and to provide a channel of communication for students with the University, NUS and other bodies in line with the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students have the same rights to educational, social, cultural, recreational and welfare opportunities.</li> <li>• The Union is owned by and operated for the benefit of all student members.</li> <li>• The Union aims to satisfy the needs of its student members and to have due regard to their representational, social, welfare, career and physical requirements based upon the provision of appropriate activities and opportunities.</li> <li>• The Union strives to be organised and operated in a manner that efficiently and effectively achieves the aims of the organisation.</li> <li>• The Union recognises the need to establish and develop appropriate relationships, both internal and external, in order that student, institutional and community concerns can be recognised and acted upon in a way that is beneficial to students.</li> </ul>

## Vacancy details

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Impact Analyst</b>
<b>Location of vacancy</b>	Avenue Campus and Park Campus
<b>Job Description</b> (brief details)	<p>As the Union prepares to embark upon the Students' Union Evaluation Initiative (SUEI), it seeks immediate evaluation on the level of positive impact it has upon its members.</p> <p>Focusing upon the periods preceding, during and proceeding Freshers' Week, the successful candidate will be asked to consider the range of events and projects the Union facilitates and investigate their value to the student experience.</p> <p>The researcher shall consider and contextualise the project in regards to the Union's strategic plan, core aims and charity registration, and produce a project that is relevant to the Union's intended activities for the 2011/12 academic calendar, as well as provide well as provide an indication for further areas of research.</p>
<b>Person specification</b> (brief details)/ <b>Degree requirements</b>	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of impact models and performance indicators</li> <li>• ability to select appropriate criteria for evaluation</li> <li>• initiative to locate and survey different groups of students, principally those who are engaged with Union services and those who are not</li> </ul>
<b>Pay</b>	Postgraduate Researcher Placements are paid as a bursary at the rate of £10 per hour. Maximum time is 60 hours spread over a negotiated period.
<b>How to apply</b>	To apply send your <b>C.V.</b> and a <b>covering letter</b> stating why you are interested in the position and why you are suitable to <a href="mailto:Catherine.Klimes@northampton.ac.uk">Catherine.Klimes@northampton.ac.uk</a> and <a href="mailto:Daniela.Bultoc@northampton.ac.uk">Daniela.Bultoc@northampton.ac.uk</a>
<b>Starting Date</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> September 2011</b>
<b>Hours of work</b>	60 hours
<b>Closing date for vacancy/ongoing?</b> (If details are not provided, the vacancy	<b>Midnight 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011</b>

will be advertised for one month)	
<b>Interview date</b>	TBC
<b>If appropriate, is own transport required?</b>	N/A

## **Appendix Two: Agreed project outline at commencement of project**

### 1. Project Objective

To understand more about the students at The University of Northampton, what offer they feel the Union is providing, what they want from the Union and set benchmarks for future evaluation projects.

### 2. Data Collection

Data will be specifically collected from the following:

- A. New students (Freshers)
- B. Existing students
- C. International students
- D. Sabbatical Officers

From this data, it should be distinguished who the different groups of students are. It may also be determined whether there is a difference of opinion amongst them.

### 3. Key Indicators

- Do students know who Sabbatical Officers are?
- Have students noticed new buildings and renovated buildings around the University?
- How many students know about student representatives?
- How much are students aware of accountability of the Union and its Officers?
- How should the Union canvas opinion?
- How much do students understand the role of the Union and what it provides?
- What is the Union doing right and what could it do better?
- What do students want from the Union?
- Are students aware of advice available from the Union and how much emphasis would they like placed on this role?

### 4. Outputs

- A. Quantitative and qualitative results
- B. Benchmarks for future projects

### 5. Likely methods

- A. Questionnaire for completion during international students' week and Fresher's Fair
- B. Focus groups from voluntary participants
- C. Interactive event at Fresher's Fair

6. Likely expenses

- A. Would like to offer students chocolate/sweet for completion of questionnaire
- B. Would like to be able to enter all participants into prize draw to win £15 (First Prize), £10 (Second Prize) and £5 (Third Prize) voucher for participation in survey

7. Materials required

- A. Printing of questionnaires
- B. Table at International Week and Fresher's
- C. Materials for interactive session (display board, Post-its or star-shaped coloured card and pins)
- D. Digital voice recorder for focus groups

## Appendix Three: Copy of questionnaire

### UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON STUDENT UNION EVALUATION PROJECT

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your participation in this project is really appreciated and will help improve the Union for current and future students.

There are 24 questions in the survey (with mostly yes or no answers), it should only take about five minutes to complete. You do not have to complete all questions in the survey, but the more information you provide, the better the Student Union can meet your needs. All data collected will be anonymised, nobody will be able to identify you.

1. What do you think the Union provides for its students? Please mark all that apply
  - Management of Sport Clubs and Societies
  - Entertainment
  - Food
  - Shop
  - Advice on academic issues
  - Advice on personal issues
  - Representation
  - Campaigning on issues that affect students
  
2. Are you aware of Union clubs and societies? Please mark one answer.
  - Yes
  - No
  
3. Do you know how to join the clubs and societies? Please mark one answer.
  - Yes
  - No
  
4. Have you ever contacted the Union for help and advice? Please mark one answer.
  - Yes
  - No
  - Didn't know the Union offered help and advice
  
5. Do you feel it's easy to get help and advice from the Union? Please mark one answer.
  - Yes
  - No
  - Didn't know the Union offered help and advice
  
6. Do you feel the Union campaigns on issues that affect you? Please mark one answer.
  - Yes
  - No
  - Didn't know the Union ran campaigns
  
7. Do you know who your student rep is and how to contact them? Please mark one answer.
  - Yes

- No
  - Didn't know about student representatives
8. Are you aware of the Sabbatical (SAB) Officers? Please mark one answer.
- Yes
  - No
9. Do you understand what SAB Officers do? Please mark one answer.
- Yes
  - No
10. Have you heard of events going on during Freshers' Week? Please mark one answer.
- Yes
  - No
11. Are you planning on attending any events during Freshers'? Please mark one answer.
- Yes
  - No
12. What do you think of the University buildings and facilities? Please mark one answer.
- I like them
  - Hadn't noticed them
  - They could be improved
13. Have you looked at the Union website? Please mark one answer.
- Yes
  - No
- 13a. If you answered yes to question 13 above, did you find it easy to use? Please mark one answer.
- Yes
  - No
14. If you are a returning student, how frequently do you use Union buildings? Please mark one answer.
- Daily
  - Weekly
  - More than once a month
  - Once a month
  - Every six months
  - Never
15. What do you most want from the Union? Please mark all that apply.
- Management of Sport Clubs and Societies
  - Entertainment
  - Food
  - Shop
  - Advice on academic issues
  - Advice on personal issues
  - Representation
  - Campaigning on issues that affect students

Other (please specify).....

16. Do you feel you have a say in how the Union is run? Please mark one answer.

- Yes
- No

17. Do you feel you have a say in how the University is run? Please mark one answer.

- Yes
- No

18. Do you feel it's easy to submit an idea to the Union for how to make the Union, University or town of Northampton better for students? Please mark one answer.

- Yes
- No

19. Do you know who the Union is accountable to? Please mark one answer.

- Yes
- No

20. Do you think the Union is contributing positively to your experience at university? Please mark one answer.

- Yes
- No

21. Do you know how to give your feedback on the Union? Please mark one answer.

- Yes
- No

22. What do you think is the best way for the Union to communicate with students? Please mark all that apply.

- Social media – Facebook and Twitter
- Union website
- Email
- Letter
- Text
- Running events and workshops
- Newspaper
- Union media – NU News, NU radio and NU Tube
- Announcements in lectures
- Through SAB officers
- Through Student Reps
- Other (please specify)

.....

23. Is there anything more you would like the Union to do to support you during your time at university?

.....

.....

.....(feel free to write more on the back of this sheet)

If you have anything further to add in relation to the questions above, please provide your comments here:

.....  
.....  
.....

ABOUT YOU

Are you:

- Female
- Male

Are you in your:

- First year
- Second year
- Third year
- Or a postgrad

Please state your

course.....

Are you a mature student? Please mark one answer.

- Yes
- No

What is your nationality:.....

-----

PRIZE DRAW

Please provide your contact details to be entered into a free prize draw for Union food vouchers. First Prize is a voucher worth £15, Second Prize is a £10 voucher and Third Prize is a £5 voucher.

Name:

.....

E-mail:

.....

Phone:

.....

If you DO NOT wish to take part in further research on the Student Union please tick here

Your contact details will not be passed to any third party and will be used for the purpose of this project only.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.

If you have any further questions about the research, please contact:

Dr. Hannah Mossman  
Student Support Officer  
University of Northampton Student Union  
Park Campus  
Boughton Green Road  
Northampton  
NN2 7AL  
Telephone: 01604 892818  
E-mail: [hannah@northamptonunion.com](mailto:hannah@northamptonunion.com)

Miss Rebekah Ryder MRTPI  
PhD Research Student  
Knowledge Exchange  
University of Northampton  
Park Campus  
Boughton Green Road  
Northampton  
NN2 7AL  
Telephone: 01604 892512  
E-mail: [rebekah.ryder@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:rebekah.ryder@northampton.ac.uk)

## Appendix Four: Quantitative Data from Survey

1. What do you think the Union provides for its students? Please mark all that apply

Management of Sport Clubs and Societies	120	70.18%
Entertainment	144	84.21%
Food	117	68.42%
Shop	105	61.40%
Advice on academic issues	71	41.52%
Advice on personal issues	70	40.94%
Representation	85	49.71%
Campaigning on issues that affect students	89	52.05%

2. Are you aware of Union clubs and societies? Please mark one answer.

Yes	139	81.29%
No	32	18.71%

3. Do you know how to join the clubs and societies? Please mark one answer.

Yes	84	49.12%
No	87	50.88%

4. Have you ever contacted the Union for help and advice? Please mark one answer.

Yes	20	11.70%
No	124	72.51%
Didn't know the Union offered help and advice	27	15.79%

5. Do you feel it's easy to get help and advice from the Union? Please mark one answer.

Yes	92	53.80%
No	27	15.79%
Didn't know the Union offered help and advice	52	30.41%

6. Do you feel the Union campaigns on issues that affect you? Please mark one answer.

Yes	81	47.37%
No	43	25.15%
Didn't know the Union ran campaigns	47	27.49%

7. Do you know who your student rep is and how to contact them? Please mark one answer.

Yes	36	21.05%
No	113	66.08%
Didn't know about student representatives	22	12.87%

8. Are you aware of the Sabbatical (SAB) Officers? Please mark one answer.

Yes	42	24.56%
-----	----	--------

No 129 75.44%

9. Do you understand what SAB Officers do? Please mark one answer.

Yes 27 15.79%

No 144 84.21%

10. Have you heard of events going on during Freshers' Week? Please mark one answer.

Yes 134 78.36%

No 37 21.64%

11. Are you planning on attending any events during Freshers'? Please mark one answer.

Yes 139 81.29%

No 32 18.71%

12. What do you think of the University buildings and facilities? Please mark one answer.

I like them 125 73.10%

Hadn't noticed them 9 5.26%

They could be improved 37 21.64%

13. Have you looked at the Union website? Please mark one answer.

Yes 105 61.40%

No 66 38.60%

13a. If you answered yes to question 13 above, did you find it easy to use? Please mark one answer.

Yes 77 45.03%

No 28 16.37%

14. If you are a returning student, how frequently do you use Union buildings? Please mark one answer.

Daily 19 11.11%

Weekly 28 16.37%

More than once a month 10 5.85%

Once a month 6 3.51%

Every six months 3 1.75%

Never 16 9.36%

15. What do you most want from the Union? Please mark all that apply.

Management of Sport Clubs and Societies 94 54.97%

Entertainment 126 73.68%

Food 92 53.80%

Shop 73 42.69%

Advice on academic issues 77 45.03%

Advice on personal issues 61 35.67%

Representation 71 41.52%

Campaigning on issues that affect students 72 42.11%

Other 10 5.85%

16. Do you feel you have a say in how the Union is run? Please mark one answer.

Yes	79	46.20%
No	92	53.80%

17. Do you feel you have a say in how the University is run? Please mark one answer.

Yes	74	43.27%
No	97	56.73%

18. Do you feel it's easy to submit an idea to the Union for how to make the Union, University or town of Northampton better for students? Please mark one answer.

Yes	100	58.48%
No	71	41.52%

19. Do you know who the Union is accountable to? Please mark one answer.

Yes	49	28.65%
No	122	71.35%

20. Do you think the Union is contributing positively to your experience at university? Please mark one answer.

Yes	140	81.87%
No	31	18.13%

21. Do you know how to give your feedback on the Union? Please mark one answer.

Yes	59	34.50%
No	112	65.50%

22. What do you think is the best way for the Union to communicate with students? Please mark all that apply.

Social media – Facebook and Twitter	138	80.70%
Email	120	70.18%
Union website	99	57.89%
Running events and workshops	65	38.01%
Text	60	35.09%
Union media – NU News, NU radio and NU Tube	50	29.24%
Announcements in lectures	41	23.98%
Through Student Reps	38	22.22%
Newspaper	36	21.05%
Letter	19	11.11%
Through SAB officers	17	9.94%
Other	4	2.34%

Are you:

Female	100	58.48%
Male	71	41.52%

Are you a mature student?

Yes 54 31.58%  
 No 117 68.42%

Are you in your?

First Year 108 63.16%  
 Second Year 24 14.04%  
 Third Year 11 6.43%  
 A postgraduate student 28 16.37%

Please state your course:

Joint Honours 23  
 Unknown 16  
 PhD 11  
 Primary Education 10  
 Early Childhood Studies 9  
 Psychology 8  
 Architectural Technology 6  
 Fashion 6  
 Accounting and Financing 5  
 Acting 5  
 Geography 5  
 MBA 5  
 Travel and Tourism Management 4  
 Business Studies 3  
 Environmental Science 3  
 Philosophy 3  
 Social Work 3  
 Adult Nursing 2  
 Business Management 2  
 Engineering 2  
 English Literature 2  
 Fashion and Footwear 2  
 Occupational Therapy 2  
 Sport Studies 2  
 Sports Marketing 2  
 Surface Pattern and Printed Textiles 2  
 Animal Studies 1  
 Art 1  
 Dance 1  
 Drama 1  
 English 1  
 Fine Art 1  
 Film and television 1  
 Financial Services 1  
 Graphic Communication 1  
 Higher Degree by Research 1  
 History 1  
 International Foundation 1  
 BA Management 1  
 MA Management (Human Resources) 1  
 Management Marketing 1  
 ME Environmental Science 1

Media	1
MPhil	1
MSc Accounting and Finance	1
MSc Environmental Management	1
MSc Environmental Science	1
MSc IT Service Management	1
MSc Public Health	1
Music	1
Photography Postgrad	1
School of Health	1
Sport Science	1
Waste Management	1

Please select a country to describe your nationality:

United Kingdom	93
England	24
Irish Republic (Eire)	1
Wales	1
Bangladesh	1
Bhutan	1
British Indian Ocean Territory	1
China	4
France	2
Germany	2
Greece	1
Hungary	1
India	3
Jordan	1
Latvia	1
Mauritania	4
Morocco	1
Nepal	1
Netherlands (Holland)	1
Nigeria	8
Pakistan	1
Poland	1
Somalia	1
Sri Lanka	1
Turkey	1
Britain/Carribbean	2
Netherlands/Somalia	1
England/Spain	1
Unknown	10

## **Appendix Five: Qualitative Responses from Survey**

### **What do you most want from the Union?**

- A place to chill out
- A proper principled stand in conjunction with trade unions such as UCU. Not a cop-out watered-down 'tow the New Labour line' attitude that is unrepresentative and ultimately careerist.
- activities for the uni's non drinkers and people that just want to have fun without the rowdy drunks around, but I'm asking too much.
- communication and visibility social events
- Faster service at the bar
- I'm a mature student living a long way off campus so don't use the facilities much.
- more awareness of the needs of part time students.
- provide of uju commz

### **What do you think is the best way for the Union to communicate with students?**

- notice boards/displays
- Phone facility - not 08 please.
- posters around campus
- regular public meetings

### **Is there anything more you would like the Union to do to support you during your time at university?**

- Axe Stallions
- Beach soccer
- Bigger events at Avenue SU
- Financial support get involved in more sports
- Help me learn English
- I didn't get a welcome pack telling me anything about the Union
- I feel the international students should be given school branded souvenirs like hoodies, pillows, bedsheets etc. I suggest school should make provision for the general set-up in each hall of residence so that students can be able to be listening to news like CNN. Also to know things happening within and outside the community.
- I want them to always contact me and know about my wellbeing
- Invite speakers in (not mainstream politicians but proper activists such as Northants Save Our Services, Wellingborough Independent Socialists and Northampton Socialist Party).
- Is the Union there for PhD students? Not sure if we have our own route to raise concerns...have previously raised concerns through knowledge exchange
- Last year, there was a week during exam time at Park campus with relaxing activities. This should be done again!
- Make contacting people within the SU easier, and make sure when responses are given they are clear and prompt
- Maybe some football match would be better

- More advice on academic issues.
- I'm doing a joint honours in Law/Psychology and I'm still not sure in which one I should major in. Some advice would be welcome.
- More individual helpers walking around Freshers'
- More organisation on clubs. tried to look at archery last year, emailed and asked people but got nothing back. was disappointed. language courses as well would be nice also, like korean and Japanese etc
- Nope, happy with everything
- Offer easier and more society and club nights at the union.
- Organise outings and visits to places in the UK
- Provide evenings that do not involve going out and getting drunk.
- Remember that it is not just about dredgers and 18 year olds - there are lots of mature students and postgrads who need support too, and their needs aren't necessarily the same.
- Since I am new to the University, I felt that there was no one to tell or inform me about Student Union - so I feel that there should be someone at Student Union should allocate at least one group for the new joiners/student who can take a session with all the students (new) and brief them about what things do they do and how an individual can contact them if they face any problem. It will be great if new students could be guided properly and should at least help students to meet their course mates and tell more about themselves
- the union does not really represent part time students as they do not seem to realise that many cannot attend during the day, so miss out on the organisation side of things, and the chance to be involved at more than a consumer level.
- The union should support us by campaigning for beddings and pillow in our room for the International Student. The Union should help to support living in school hostels/halls to have a communal parlour.
- There are things missing from the Union website

If you have anything further to add in relation to the survey questions, please provide your comments here

- I feel that in the last year there has been far too much emphasis on making money through sports clubs and also there has been a lack of communication to all who are on the committee within the club.
- I'm not sure of my answers from question 17 as I am a Fresher most of these answers are 'no' because there has never been any real communication with me.
- No mention of the way to contact the union, or opportunity to get more involved.
- Most if not all contacts with the student union are arranged during the day, which of course suits those able to attend at this time, and the staff who do not have to attend evening meetings. Just once or twice it would be good if the staff, and the union would arrange meaningful meetings that all could attend
- No Parking is awful, students don't pay £3500 to be turned away from a car park and just told that it looks like they're going to have

to find parking elsewhere obviously. If there was ample parking we would spend more time at uni and not only come in just for lectures/seminars.

- The new Beans cafe is great
- Union building is grotty and unwelcoming.
- There aren't many clubs, and student media doesn't publicise itself very well.
- Where are the pictures that are taken at union events? And how do we get them :)?
- Would like to be a help in whichever way I can - my feedback may not reflect the actual facts since it's been just 2 days that I landed in this country and already being trying to absorb a lot of info. I am certain I have heard more about the Union, but it's just that it hasn't registered yet.

## **Appendix Six: Copy of email sent to group interview invitees.**

Hello,

You recently completed a survey on the Student Union and said that you would be willing to do further work to help the Union better itself.

I am going to have a group interview on these issues next week and would really appreciate if you could attend. I have included a link to a scheduler so that I can work out the best time for everyone. If you could put the first part of your email address and whether you would prefer Park or Avenue campus (i.e. for me, it would be 'Rebekah.ryder, Park'), then I can see who is taking part and where they would like the interview to be held. I only need 5-10 people, it shouldn't take more than an hour and all those who participate will receive a £5 Union food voucher.

From the group interview, I want to get 'ten commandments' for the Union. These might be things the Union should focus on, things they are doing well or things they could improve upon. It will focus around whatever issues you want to raise, but will be loosely based on what the most important thing is to get from the Union, how the Union communicates and Union services and facilities.

If you are interested in participating then please complete the scheduler and I will then confirm the meeting and we can take things from there.

Thanks for taking the time to participate in this survey and I hope you feel able to help the Union understand your needs better through the group interview.

Thanks again,

Rebekah

## Appendix Seven: Results from Group Interview

Student Union Evaluation Project  
Group Interview  
21 October 2-3pm, KE104

Four participants:

25 year old male, PhD Genetics

27 year old male, MBA

23 year old female, JH Economics and Marketing

29 year old female, PhD Business

Participants were told beforehand that the purpose was to get: *'ten commandments' for the Union. These might be things the Union should focus on, things they are doing well or things they could improve upon. It will focus around whatever issues you want to raise, but will be loosely based on what the most important thing is to get from the Union, how the Union communicates and Union services and facilities.*

The participants came up with the following key issues:

1. Greater publicity required from the Union. Need greater communication of events in SU (e.g. with the Avenue re-opening an email was only sent round on the day of the opening)
2. Greater clarity (and publicity) concerning what the Union does. For example, most people understand the Union to be "dance floor at top, shop at front and bar at back", what more does it do? What help does the SU provide that's not available from Student Services?
3. Improvements in the Student Representative process. Need a space where Student Representatives can meet students, greater understanding of how communicate to course who SR is (announcements in compulsory lectures?) and how to contact them, greater communication between SR and Union. Could have a board of SRs who report to Union on issues.
4. Greater diversity of activities. Union is seen by participants to focus on entertainment, but want more intellectual activities (such as outside speakers, including authors of course books and politicians, want debates). The University has a variety of students with different needs and the Union should try and cater for these, not just focus on entertainment.
5. Engage with students through advertisements in the library, restaurant, having a big board outside the Union, more bulletin boards, more TVs (such as in library) around campuses advertising activities, get individual mails. Thought the book the Union sent to Freshers was good.
6. Campaign on issues that affect students. Should be able to go to Union, tell them issue and they talk to the University. Issues raised during the group interview were: 1. Printing costs are very high, need more information about how to print in a way to save paper

(and money), such as booklets or advertisements. Northampton College offers students limited number of free pages, could look into that; and 2. Restaurant prices have also drastically increased, even though run by the University. Should have a range of price options available. Pleased that the Union successfully campaigned to have free buses between Avenue and Park and would like to see more like this.

7. Run campaigns to students, such as health awareness, home electrical awareness, recycling. SU should be focused on making the University a better place.
8. In terms of communication with students and finding out issues, the Union should conduct more research like this periodically. It should do quick, on-the-spot surveys of people on campus (particularly where they may be idle, such as in the library or the restaurant), should give students piece of paper to write down issue and give to the Union.
9. The participants asked how the Union will take forward the findings of the research and how they will feedback both the research findings and their resultant actions to the student. Would be good to have some communication on the basis of "You said...we did..." just in general..., as the students come and go but many of the issues stay the same.

Rebekah Ryder, October 2011.