

ANNUAL EDUCATION REVIEW

2022-23

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' UNION

ACADEMIC
REPS

Contents

VP Education's Foreword	2
Overview	4
The Rep Scheme in Numbers	5
Methodology	6
Thematic Feedback	7
Faculty-Specific Reports	14
Recommendations	24

VP Education's Foreword

In October, we set out to ensure a **world class education** for our students and have used that idea to guide our educational advocacy activity. This academic year has been one unlike any other (just like every year since 2019). We've been hit by the cost-of-living crisis, a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Student Submission, industrial action and AI.

At Lancaster, Academic Reps make change possible.

Within these pages, you'll find an overview of the key issues faced by our students, as reported to us through the Rep Scheme's structures, as well as positive collaborative working undertaken by our Faculty Reps and University Staff.

I could've asked ChatGPT to write this foreword, however, I'll instead direct you to the work our phenomenal Voice Team did this spring which made a bit of a splash in the wider HE Sector. It was a perfect, if I do say so myself, example of how HE policy or guidance can and should be co-created with the people it effects – students.

In preparing for the TEF submission, I realised that a fully revitalised Rep Scheme meant that we needed to be more proactive and wider reaching in talking about Academic Reps. To this end, we've redesigned the Rep website and invested in reusable water bottles for all our Reps. I've championed the socialisation of the Academic Rep Scheme, and the wider representational work that the Students' Union does, directly to staff. This year I pioneered the now regular *Strengthening the Student Voice* talks which take place in the final week of each vacation period and is open any and all staff (both academic & professional services) who want to hear what we do on our side of the Senate Partnership Scheme. We've woven our biggest learning from the TEF submission into this review and took it as a learning experience into our work this year and beyond.

Although this review isn't about my personal achievements but about the work that we have done as a collective, one of the biggest wins we secured for the student voice here at Lancaster was a core manifesto point of mine. Co-Chaired by the VP Education and the University Associate Academic Dean for Students, the **Student Feedback Committee** brings together all of our Faculty Reps together with key staff in Faculties and central University teams to bring key issues to the fore from all levels. This committee was student designed from its inception, with the idea first coming from Bee Morgan VP Education 2019-21, and is significant in its nature with an SU Officer in the chair of a University committee. As it continues to evolve over the coming years, we see SFC as playing a core role in LU's representational structures. As aimed for in the University's strategy to 2026, I see SFC as a concrete example of the commitment to "deliver a distinctive Lancaster curriculum that places students at the heart of our work".

LU is in the first stage of Curriculum Transformation, we are steadfast supporters of the initiative and agree that there is something fundamental that isn't working for our members. However, for CTP to be worth the millions of pounds that are being invested, we're adamant that reading weeks must form part of LU's transformed curriculum, alongside semesterisation and January exams¹...

This year has seen the return of an almost fully in person Academic Rep cycle from the Students' Union – we brought back our Rep Training Conference. Our sole online element has undergone a refresh too, thanks to a collaboration with LUMS, we have successfully launched the induction training on the new MS Sway platform. Revitalising the Rep Scheme was a core part of my manifesto and I'm quite confident in saying that it has been achieved.

Being your VP Education has been an immense privilege. It's been a year of highs, lows, and many in-betweens, but I can confidently say that I've loved every minute of it. I set out this year writing that "I've lived, laughed, and LUSUed more than I may care to admit" but I now proudly say it with my chest.

Lancaster, thank you, it's been a pleasure.



Noah Katz,
VP Education 2022-23

PS, you haven't quite seen the last of me x

¹ As called for in the 2018 AER

Overview

This report represents an annual commitment by your Students' Union to highlight your academic interests, say what students really think, and help shape your educational experience. This review is distributed to students and staff alike, helping to bridge the gap between all involved so we can work together to make learning at Lancaster University the best it can be.

Lancaster University's Top 10 status is something that we at the Students' Union are immensely proud of and we view it as our job to continue to hold the University to account to maintain and better this status. We share good ideas and suggest how to make your Lancaster experience even better.

In this document we've taken your feedback and used it to represent the views of students and lobby for change.

We consulted students from all levels of study across all faculties throughout the year. Taught Reps from all the faculties come together in regular forums and a significant amount of the information here comes from them, speaking on behalf of the students they represent. We also spoke to Research students from across the faculties, and their feedback is in a separate section.

In this review you'll find an overview of what students have been talking about this year.

The Rep Scheme in Numbers

The Students' Union supports, facilitates, and empowers Academic Reps from every level of study (UG/PGT/PGR) and every Faculty (FASS, FHM, FST, LUMS). In 2022/2023 we had:

380

Academic Reps registered with the Students' Union

FASS 123 (32.4%)	LUMS 104 (27.4%)	FST 107 (28.2%)	FHM 46 (12.1%)
----------------------------	----------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------

40

Faculty or Lead (Department) Reps

20

Student-led Faculty Forums in 2022-23

47

Reps continued in-post from 2021-22

77.8%
Reps scored Faculty Forums
4/5 or 5/5

60%

UG and PGT Reps attended in-person training, including a session led by an external facilitator

47.9%

UG and PGT Reps completed the brand-new online training

We compiled the information in this report from what thousands of students told us via their Reps as well as from surveys about their experiences this year.

Methodology

Our data for this review is the sum total of hundreds of insights across multiple sources, including the TEF Student Submission 2023, National Student Survey (NSS) 2022, Faculty Forum feedback, Rep reports and more! Some of these sources have come through Students' Union activity and some through university-wide schemes and surveys. All of these have been collated and analysed by the Academic Rep Admin Team to produce this review. By drawing from a wide range of sources, we have sought to develop a deep and detailed picture of academic practice at Lancaster this year.

Much of this review is based on previously unshared data. Some of this information has previously been presented at our termly 'Strengthening the Student Voice' events where we've offered updates and insights from the Rep scheme.

Our data sources:

Data Source	Owner	Medium	Profile
<i>National Student Survey 2022</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Online Survey</i>	<i>Final year UGs</i>
<i>Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)</i>	<i>Lancaster University</i>	<i>Online Survey</i>	<i>PGT Students</i>
<i>Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)</i>	<i>Lancaster University</i>	<i>Online Survey</i>	<i>PGR Students</i>
<i>Teaching Excellence Framework Student Submission</i>	<i>Students' Union</i>	<i>Report</i>	<i>All Students</i>
<i>Student Faculty Forums</i>	<i>Students' Union</i>	<i>Facilitated discussions</i>	<i>Academic Reps</i>
<i>Academic Rep Reports</i>	<i>Students' Union</i>	<i>Reports</i>	<i>Academic Reps</i>
<i>Advice Service Casework</i>	<i>Students' Union</i>	<i>Casework</i>	<i>All Students</i>

Thematic Feedback

Teaching

Lectures

Generally, students are happy with the standard of teaching and enjoy having access to recorded lectures as a revision tool. Students are still requesting that lecture content be uploaded to Moodle promptly.

Whilst lectures are usually considered interesting and engaging, feedback from some Reps has highlighted some less good pedagogical practice wherein lecturers solely read from slides word for word as if it were a script which results in student disengagement and, occasionally, poor comprehension.

Strikes

Clear communication was very well received by students especially around strike disruptions to teaching yet there is still more that could be done to improve University communication. However, replacement lecturers were not as well received, feedback suggested they were considered poorly implemented, often repeating already covered content, leaving gaps in learning, or causing confusion as to what would be assessed.

Workshops

Workshops have been highlighted in Rep feedback as having inconsistent practice of delivery leading to uncertainty amongst students. Reps reported that a lack of the interactive elements in a teaching session that is expected to be interactive leads to a drop in engagement with modules.

In person vs remote

Overall, students are very happy with the return to in-person on-campus learning. They reported being unhappy with blended learning plans and **asked the University to encourage departments to return to pre-pandemic teaching practices whereby all content is delivered in person.**

The Engineering Lead Rep was made a member of their School's Undergraduate Teaching Committee which they liked as it allowed for more insight and better student representation.

Careers and Placement Support

Students appreciate having access to career and employability support. They would like to see these services more frequently highlighted and enjoy seeing the practical applicability of their learning.

Management students were delighted that more careers events were scheduled in direct response to Rep feedback.

Students feel it is crucial to make placements accessible both in terms proximity and affordability, especially where placements are compulsory. International Placement Year students have struggled this year with lack of communication and would like clearer guidelines from their department.

Assessment and Feedback

Assessment and feedback provoked a lot of comments from our members this year, below are the key areas they highlighted:

Deadline bunching

Students at all levels of study reported feeling stressed by bunching of assessment deadlines as they suggested it stopped them reaching their full potential, dividing their attention across too many projects.

Multiple assessment deadlines falling immediately after vacation periods was also flagged as an issue as students reported this having an impact on their wellbeing as they found it hard to have a break with the shadow of deadlines looming.

Feedback

The four (term time) week mark turnaround window for assessment feedback is still not being met across the board.

Students feel that although feedback can be helpful, this is not always the case. Reps have reported dissatisfaction with feedback that was either not comprehensive, difficult to find, and/or did not have areas flagged for clear improvements for future assessments. This will not come as a shock as LU consistently scores poorly in the NSS on timeliness of assessment feedback

Exam and coursework communication

Unclear communication around exams has been a significant source of stress this year, particularly in FST. Students have often come across key information about their assessments by rumour before any official communication from their department. Revision workshops were appreciated where provided.

The arrival of easy-access AI tools is a concern for students, especially with regards to how this will affect assessments. There is also concern about having authentic work flagged as AI generated by Turnitin and Students would appreciate guidance on how to avoid this. Coursework guidelines were also raised as a concern by some Reps. When they are unclear it leads to increased student stress. Reps have suggested to make sure that coursework guidelines are clear and include exemplar answers.

Academic support

Academic advisors

Reps reported dissatisfaction with the inconsistency in Academic Advisor system(s). Faculty Forum discussions identified that there were pockets of good practice across the faculties but overall, this was inconsistent. A poll revealed that whilst most Reps knew who their Academic tutor was, a worrying number did not know who theirs was or if they had one. Students want a consistent Academic Advisor system with good practice established across the board. Some students report that the Academic Advisor system can result in meetings feeling formulaic if their advisor is perceived as treating their role as a tick box exercise for which they do not care.

LAEL masters students reported being very satisfied with their academic tutors who were helpful and took a genuine interest in their issues and studies. BLS also reported that their tutors were very helpful.

Joint honours

Students on joint honours programs face unique challenges with the Academic Advisor-system. Only having an Advisor from one department can often result in confusion and a lack of-support from the other.

Joint honours students in LAEL have Academic Advisors in each department-which is very well received and would be a welcome practice to implement for all joint honours students.

Organisation and management

Timetabling

Students are keen to see Wednesday afternoons protected as time for extracurricular activities ensuring as well-rounded education that is not focused exclusively on academic achievement. This year has seen our first Roses win on York soil in 38 years. We are of the firm belief that students will thrive academically if they're enabled to live extracurricular-ly.

The Cost of Living Crisis means more students are having to undertake part time work than ever before, not having the guarantee of protected time during the week makes securing part time employment incredibly difficult.

Communication

Students really value clear communication from their departments especially when it came to the strike action this year and the changing landscape with exams. Students were keen to be kept in the loop concerning these big topics, even if there was no progress to report as at least knowing this was less frustrating than being kept in the dark.

Internal communication methods came up as a point in feedback. Moodle and emails were the most successful way to reach students but there is frustration around the lack of streamlined information with students often receiving multiple emails and announcements containing the same information. Furthermore, Moodle pages were sometimes reported as difficult to navigate and Reps feel there would be benefits to having a standard layout to Moodle across departments ensuring information is easy for all students to access.

We strongly welcome the active use of Lancaster University social media platforms to speak directly to current students that has begun this year.

Learning Resources

Accessibility of resources

The cost-of-living crisis has made having accessible resources even more crucial. Reps reported frustration around the lack of core reading materials for some courses with there often being limited physical copies available in the library.

We call on departments to strive to ensure sufficient digital copies of core resources.

There was also frustration around hidden costs in courses where students were asked to purchase materials or textbooks as a compulsory part of the course with no financial support.

Placements

Placements were also seen as an issue. Whilst students greatly value the ability to put their learning into practice, some placement locations were a barrier due to their distance. These kinds of placements create travel expenses that bursaries often do not fully cover, particularly for the latter years of the MBChB, thus limiting their accessibility.

Learning community

Students highly value feeling part of a learning community. They find this identity in having access to subject specific space within departments' space as well as department specific societies. Students are keen to see more of these across all the University.

Reps from Natural Sciences and LEC appreciated the creation of the new Natural Sciences society and other department social clubs such as LEC netball.

Mental health support is a source of worry for students with many struggling to get the extenuating circumstances provision they needed, often due to a seeming lack of understanding around their situations.

Students have been frustrated by last minute room changes and use of lecture theatres that are too small for their class. A lack of study space has also left many disappointed.

Rep Inclusion

Rep feedback

Whilst some departments were praised for being receptive to students' feedback, there was a general feeling from Reps that greater receptiveness to feedback would be appreciated. Where Reps experience a lack of reception, this caused disenfranchisement and frustration.

Medicine and Economics students felt their voices were always heard by their departments, who were receptive to feedback and welcomed student suggested solutions to problems.

History and ELCW Reps reported that they received the official minutes from each of their SSC meetings. This allowed Reps to track any progress made and ensure issues did not get lost.

In general, departments engage with reps and make changes, and there is generally a productive relationship. However, there are certain issues where there's no movement. There are some recurring issues every year; sometimes temporary solutions offered each year, or sometimes change is very slow, promised in several years' time. For example, curriculum changes. A lack of change can frustrate Academic Reps, particularly continuing Reps in FST, who observe a lack of change being made across the years despite the same topics coming up year after year.

Faculty-Specific Reports

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)

Rowan Mckillop – FASS UG Faculty Rep

Faith Maghori – FASS PGT Faculty Rep

Throughout this academic year, the FASS Faculty Reps have focussed on the cumulative effect of strike action on the student academic experience, the way in which students engage with staff, and the need for reform of the Academic Advisor system. It is from these findings there has been the ability to engage with both Academic Reps and staff alike about what can be done to improve these areas as well as what is working well and can be developed upon.

As there has been a large amount of strike action throughout the last few years at Lancaster, and nationally, what is now coming to light are the long-term effects of industrial action on the educational experience and learning of students. Although strikes are unfortunately inevitable, due to the state of the HE sector's funding model, and there are regulatory considerations in place when it comes to assessment, students are still feeling some adverse consequences. As learning builds upon what has been learnt in previous years, students feel that there are gaps within their learning that aren't being accounted for. Faculty Reps have been given the opportunity to discuss this with staff and work towards a solution that goes beyond exam rigour and towards the enjoyment and learning of content and ideas.

Student-staff engagement has undoubtedly suffered because of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the rise of online learning creating distance between the students and their departments. Students feel dissociated from their departments and the physical spaces they occupy. It can be recognised that some departments in FASS have made great efforts to improve engagement by running academic events and talks. Yet overall, communication is low but shall hopefully improve with time and the return of in-person learning as well as the continuation of department-led events.

The Academic Advisor system is one that could benefit from great improvement and reform. Opinions and feelings about how the system is working, or not, and its benefits is mixed within the departments, with some students being clearly aware of who their Advisor is, how to connect with them, what they can provide and the benefit they bring, but a large proportion are not. There appears to be a feeling that the system is about 'checking boxes' or running through a list of required questions, rather than genuinely engaging with students. Furthermore, it has been brought to the attention of the Faculty Reps that some Academic Advisors, are not aware of where to signpost students to, if they themselves are not the appropriate person to deal with the matter at hand. Academic Advisors should be there to help guide students or make recommendations to them, but this is often not the case, this inconsistency means that some students' concerns are not being addressed.

Within FASS there are three key areas in which students would like to see improvements: a more positive and open dialogue between staff and students; and a greater knowledge about the processes and accessibility to extensions; and ILSPs.

A more positive and open dialogue between staff and students about departmental and Faculty goings on is something for which students have a clear desire. In a year of such uncertainty, there would be great benefit to a clearer, more lines of communication as students within the Faculty have often felt left in the dark. Whilst it is recognised that departments may not want to discuss situations such as the Marking and Assessment Boycott and leave that to university guidance, there is a consensus that students tend to feel as though they cannot talk to staff about wider issues because of this apprehension. Students feel disengaged from their departments when not in learning spaces and tend to have an apprehension about going to the spaces within the university that their department occupies as they often feel unwelcomed or as though they shouldn't be there. Linked to this, students would like to see greater staff-student engagement beyond the realms of learning material and made to feel welcome-within departmental spaces. Improved communication is about more than students simply receiving more emails but is also about the tone and style of this communication.

Students would like for staff to be more understanding and sympathetic about the implementation of requirements as set out within their ILSPs and the granting of extensions. Students have felt there have been instances in which they have been ignored or not accommodated for. A consistent example throughout the department of this is the lack of subtitles on online recorded lectures. Students also feel they would benefit from staff being able to signpost the correct way in which to have an extension granted or to ensure their ILSP is being accounted for.

Students would like to see an end to feedback that is simply negative rather than constructive; there needs to be an end to discourteous language within feedback as it simply creates low morale for students and does not help them improve. Such comments are linked to a students' lack of desire to engage within their departments more, even though they would like to. Students do not want to feel disrespected and unmotivated due to the use of unpleasant language in feedback.

Lancaster University Management School (LUMS)

Sonya Pasricha – LUMS UG Faculty Rep

Mihaela Timpau – LUMS PGT Faculty Rep

During the academic year, several Reps expressed their concern regarding the lack of advance notice of the timetabling process. During the academic year, several students expressed their concern regarding the preference of in-person classes over online classes, especially for modules that require additional material to be covered. They felt that in-person teaching was essential for a better learning experience and that online classes did not provide the same level of interaction and engagement with the course content. The faculty needs to further work for ensuring that students were provided with in-person teaching for modules where it was deemed necessary.

Together with the LUMS Quality Assurance & Enhancement Manager, the Faculty Reps formed a working group to explore the variation in the delivery, nomenclature, the perceptions, and expectations of different teaching modes. The group has decided to create a brochure with general definitions, desired outcomes, and characteristics of different types of learning activities. Further work is still to be done to complete and then actively promote the brochure in time for next academic year.

Most of the students we polled found their Academic Advisors helpful, although 10-15% ~~don't~~ weren't aware of their Advisor's existence. Those who do know about advisors said that they were helpful with module choices. The Faculty needs to ensure that there are enough Academic Advisors for the number of students the university has.

LUMS Reps feel that work needs to be done to ensure that students are not adversely affected by industrial action and receive support to catch up on missed content.

During a Faculty Forum, an ad-hoc survey was conducted, which found that nearly 2/3 of LUMS students experienced duplicated content in their course material. They suggested that departments should look at the breadth of content taught on a programmatic (rather than modular) level to avoid further content duplication in the future.

During the academic year, many students raised the concern that there was a lack of opportunity provided by the Faculty to network and learn outside the classroom. They believed that extra-curricular networking events would be a valuable addition to their learning experience, allowing them to connect with industry professionals, alumni, and like-minded peers. Directly responding to Rep feedback, ENTS acknowledged the importance of extra-curricular events and several extra-curricular networking events were organised.

Faculty of Science and Technology (FST)

Joshua Chooyin – FST UG Faculty Rep

Dylan Bahia – FST PGT Faculty Rep

There is inconsistency in how often academic advisors meet the students. Some meet regularly, while others never arrange to meet. Uncertainty about the purpose of academic advisors and their relevance differs across departments; sometimes students are assigned academic advisors with a different research area and it is unclear how they are meant to support students.

There is little consistency across and within departments regarding extensions. Some lecturers are more generous than others. Sometimes, widespread use of extensions is used as an alternative to learning support and change of fundamental issues which lead many students to ask for extensions.

Evidence thresholds for extenuating circumstances are inconsistent across departments. For example, can be easier to receive extension for ILSP than for death of family member. Furthermore, students generally unhappy with evidence required for death of family member, students feel it is disrespectful.

Generally, students with ILSPs are supported without delay. However, lectures are not always aware that students have ILSPs, leading to delays in support. Furthermore, some lecturers are aware but do not offer students their legally required support.

In general, the relationship between Reps and the departments are good, but there are individual cases of lecturers not responding well to feedback.

There is some inconsistency in department meetings; with currently either too many or too few compulsory meetings depending on the department. Getting additional meetings can be difficult due to timetabling.

The flow of information regarding exams was slow and left students feeling uncertain. Often the information is given too late and there is uncertainty about off-campus exams. Whilst issues with exam timetabling have been resolved to an acceptable level, the initial issues were a source of stress for many students. The general observation is that Saturday exams are unpopular.

Whilst timetabling is outside of department control and generally difficult, it is our most raised issue. Sometimes there are issues with timetabling of lectures, meetings and exams. For example, not everyone gets Wednesday afternoons off. Many students have most of their contact hours within a short period of time, for example some students have most of their contact hours in a single day. Similarly, the timetabling of one event per day is logistically inconvenient for students who live off campus.

Academic Reps have worked well with some departments to improve formula sheets; these new, useful notes sheets are popular, but some lecturers are resistant to the change and more departments should consider the transition

The use of anonymous marking is generally effective but can be undermined by convenors requiring students to add names to coursework. Departments should look carefully at the balance of academic fairness and improved learning through more personalised feedback.

Faculty of Health and Medicine (FHM)

Charles Seddon – FHM UG Faculty Rep

Academic Advisors

FHM students have very mixed opinions on the Academic Advisors due to the vast variation in support from different academic staff members. Some students feel that their Advisors “don’t care... and were only filling out a form as it is required of them”. Other students feel wholly supported as their Advisors offer a more holistic approach asking students how they are “coping both academically and mentally with the pressures of uni”. Some of this dissatisfaction exists as some students “don’t really know what the role” of the Academic Advisor is. We believe that, with proper training for staff and a proper description of the role, the Academic Advisor system could be a brilliant form of support for **all** students.

Strikes

Whilst students are supportive of our striking lecturers, the issues surrounding strikes were quite concerning. Students weren’t fully aware that content that has not been taught due to strikes cannot be assessed. If strikes are going to be taking place, the expected impact of them and mitigations in place should be widely advertised to students. This will hopefully calm students concerns and reduce a lot of the stress surrounding staff strikes.

Moodle consistency

Students expressed a struggle with how various modules on Moodle are mapped out differently, causing confusion for students e.g. when they can’t find where to submit an assessment as it changes for every module. Students all agreed that there should be a standardised Moodle page for each module within a department. This will mean less time spent on navigating an unoptimised Moodle page to find lectures/submission points and allow for more time studying.

Extenuating Circumstances

Students were unsure about what was needed to complete a form for Extenuating Circumstances (ECs). Students weren't aware that mental health issues and acute illness could qualify them for ECs. Furthermore, students felt that having to gather evidence for ECs can be time consuming and expensive. Students are expected to explain how their issues have disrupted their studies, many felt this to be insensitive as students would need to explain their reasons and sometimes have to relive experiences which could have a damaging effect on their mental health. Students believe that a review of ECs should take place in order to improve the process. Students also feel signposting to the relevant documents and what constitutes exceptional circumstances should be more widely advertised so more people who may qualify can benefit from them.

Assessment marking

Students find that feedback from academic staff is not consistent. Some staff provide really constructive comments, however in most cases feedback is bare bones and doesn't tell students how they can improve. Students are annoyed by this as they are wanting to succeed but if they aren't given the appropriate guidance then they don't know how to improve.

Postgraduate Research Students

Felipe Sanchez Burgos – FASS PGR Rep

PhD researchers are a large and vibrant part of the LU community that often feel left out and underrepresented. There have been discussions around the relationship between PGRs and LUSU, Graduate College, the different Faculties, and the Doctoral Academy, amongst others.

Regarding Graduate College, some of the issues persist, although it should be noted that they have made a concerted effort to engage with PGRs. The early implementation of the College cupboard and the family room have been well received, but there is a feeling that Graduate College is more focused on PGTs than PGRs, on-campus students rather than off-campus, and on single students rather than researchers with families. PGR community spaces have improved but the loss of the Graduate College bar is very much still felt by PGRs.

The work of members of staff has been key to further develop this relationship such as Corinna Peniston-Bird in FASS. The RTP has seen improvements but best of all, there is a clear willingness to listen to PGRs needs and help provide solutions to their research development needs. It has been suggested that further focus could go towards more open-ended topics in shorter modules or talks, that could foster a more integrated learning experience and foster interdisciplinary knowledge exchange amongst PGRs.

Lastly, the Doctoral Academy has been struggling as it is often underappreciated and extremely underfunded. There is little awareness of what their role is, who they are, and how to join. There is general agreement amongst PGRs that the Doctoral Academy needs more funds and support. The Doctoral Academy is seen as a powerful ally for PGRs but one that is struggling to do even the simple administrative stuff due to lack of human and material resources. It has been seen as a quintessential space for PGRs that has been extremely neglected and need to be brought back into life.

Recommendations

1. Reading weeks should be built into the structure of the academic year.
2. Institution-wide adoption of the FASS bunched deadline extension policy.
3. Review the timetabling policy to ensure the protection of Wednesday afternoons for **all** taught students.
4. More openness to students' feedback.
5. Publishing of minutes of Student-Staff Committees in sufficient time, in line with other University committee practice, and equal treatment of Academic Reps in these meetings.
6. Consistent Academic Advisor system.
7. Earlier release of exam timetables.
8. Review of Extenuating Circumstances & extensions processes.
 - a. To include upskilling of relevant staff.
9. Better staff awareness of ILSPs.
10. Students' Union Officer inclusion in the ongoing review of student communications.

ACADEMIC REPS

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' UNION