

UWS STUDENTS' UNION

Society Committee Members
Feedback Survey March 2020



INTRODUCTION

This feedback is from the survey sent to UWS Students' Union Society committee members in March 2020.

There were 16 responses to the survey.

The initial target of 30 responses was not reached as a result of the impact of Covid-19. However, as some students hold positions in multiple committees, approximately half of active societies were represented in the feedback.

The Microsoft Forms survey was sent to society committee members by email and posted on the Students' Union website and Society Facebook pages.

The survey was anonymous. It was made up of a mixture of 9 written, multiple choice and ranking questions. Students were also given the option of providing additional feedback and of indicating if they would like to be part of a planning group for improving how the Students' Union will support societies in 2020/21.

UWS Students' Union: So what do you think about your society?

This year you've been involved with setting up or helping run a student society at UWS.

Now it's your chance to share your thoughts on this:

- What have you thought about your role?
- What about the support you receive from the Students' Union?

Complete the 9 quick questions below (it takes 5 minutes)

- Your society will then be entered into a prize draw to win £60!
- Your response to this is anonymous

We are asking this information for two main reasons:

- To understand how we can improve the support we provide you and your society
- To evidence the impact that societies can have on student experience (which is essential for securing our funding)

Thank you contributing towards this and for being an important part of your Students' Union.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



The main reason why students said they took on their roles in running societies was to “bring people together”. They enjoy the opportunity to take the lead on representing other students and creating their own communities within the university setting. This highlights the important role student societies play in university life. The opportunity for social engagement can have a significant, positive impact on student experience.

Gaining new members and increasing and sustaining engagement were seen as the main priority for developing societies over the next year. Achieving this was also considered the most difficult aspect of their roles. Students’ Union support for societies must focus on enabling these. Based on responses given this can be achieved by providing:

- A fully functioning Students’ Union website with a clear and easy to use society sign up process. Society committees must also be able to easily update their page and access their membership list.
- Increased and more consistent communication and promotion of events and societies through the Students’ Union social media channels.
- Safe, easily accessible spaces which are appropriate for society activities.
- More events and activities to enable increased interaction between societies.
- Continued ongoing training and funding support for societies with increased use of online services to ensure consistency across campuses.

Students identified a desire to achieve personal developments and believed they gained a variety of skills from their role. Every student who responded believed they developed their organisation and communication skills. A large majority said they also improved their leadership skills and confidence.

However, responses show a clear need for increased support and training to help students understand how to make the most of the skills and experience gained from being on a society committee. The Students’ Union can achieve this through:

- Creating and delivering new training opportunities from the new Student Representation and Training Co-ordinator.
- Increased partnership working with the UWS Careers and Skills Services.

STUDENT RESPONSES



1) Why did you decide to take on this role?

To share an interest and provide opportunities for students

- “because I thought there was a need for this society as a way to gather people together, have fun and encourage them to follow their passions too”
- “Share a passion with others”
- “I really missed dancing after so many years devoted to them and I wanted to bring a piece of home for my fellow Bulgarian friends and myself. Also to share it with whoever was interested in getting to know a culture different than theirs.”

To represent or support a group of students

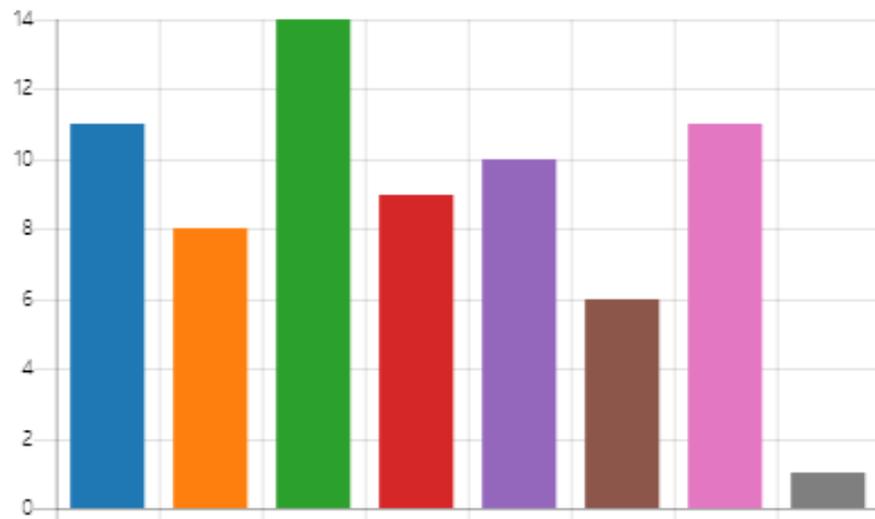
- “To represent a vulnerable group and change how they are supported within UWS
- “So I could take this new society forward and make it into to something students can rely on and trust”
- “To give more involvement to the Lanarkshire business students”
- “to make a difference “

Personal development

- “I thought it would be a good opportunity be the founder of a society“
- “There should always be someone taking the initiative”

2) What have you enjoyed within this role? (select any that apply)

● making friends	11
● learning new skills	8
● bringing people together	14
● helping others	9
● getting to enjoy my interests ...	10
● building of what I learn throu...	6
● taking on a leading role in my ...	11
● Other	1

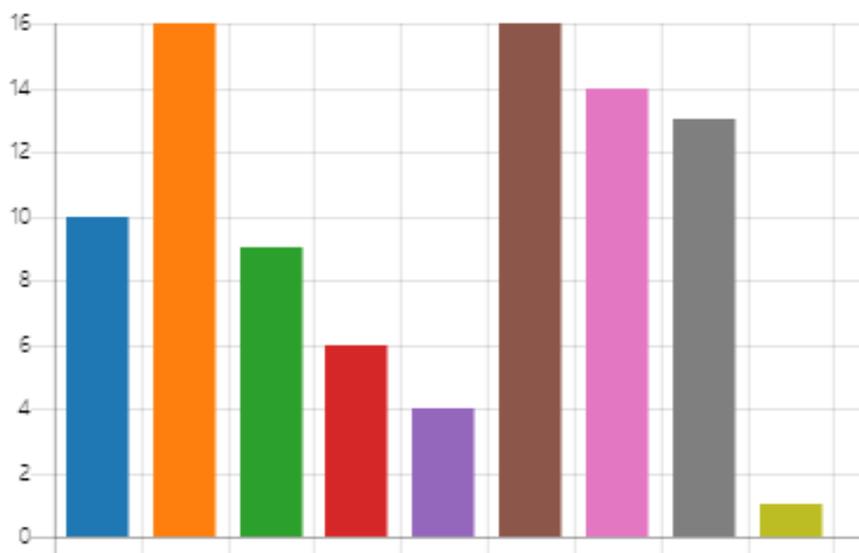


STUDENT RESPONSES



3) What skills have you gained or developed from your role? (select any that apply)

creativity	10
organisation	16
time management	9
resilience	6
empathy	4
communication	16
confidence	14
leadership	13
it's helped me with my course...	1
Other	0



4) What's been your favourite thing about your role in your society this year?

Bringing people together and supporting others

- "Being able to bring together people from different year groups. We have been able to give support and help to the years below us."
- "Bringing a sense of community and making changes for future Care Experienced"
- "The satisfaction of others"

Organising events

- "I had the opportunity to use my creativity to plan events and bring people together"
- "Getting students together to organise events"

Personal opportunities

- "Being free to organise what I liked"
- "Being the leader"
- "Meeting so many awesome new people"

Sharing an interest or passion

- "I was encouraged that people liked the idea"
- "Getting to share my passion for Bulgarian traditional dances with my new friends at Uni."

STUDENT RESPONSES

5) What's been the most difficult thing about your role in your society this year?

Keeping people engaged and getting new members

- “Trying to get students to engage with certain events”
- “participation and getting new members”
- “Encouraging new membership throughout term 2”

Organising finances

- “Working out how finances work as treasurer”
- “Managing Funds and planning for 3rd party funding”

Lack of support from UWS

- “Not having Organisational support from UWS leadership/management teams”
- “commitment from the uni”

Location and campus facilities

- “Living outside of Paisley”
- “Keeping people engaged and organising events with the union in Lanarkshire for students to engage with.”

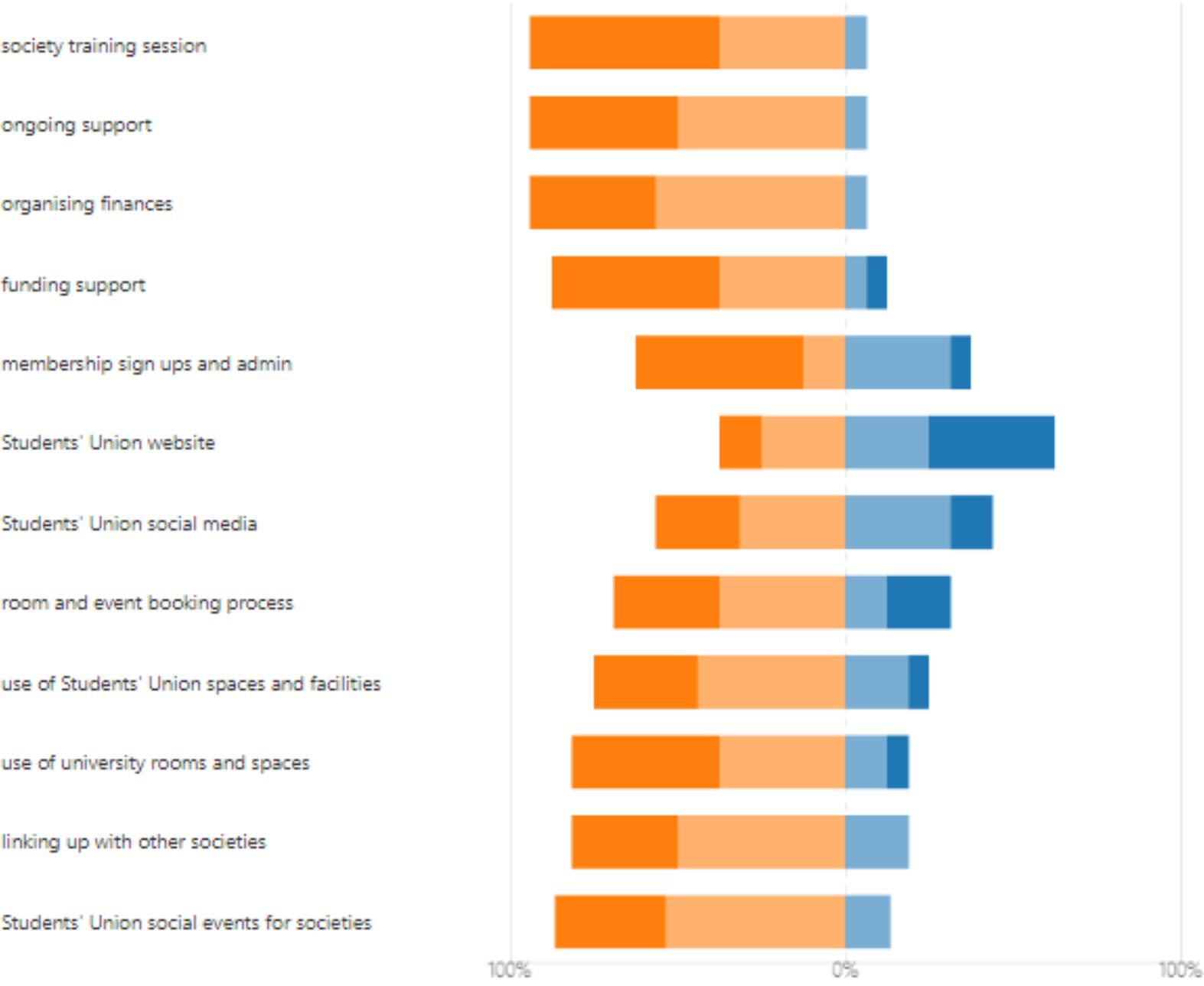


STUDENT RESPONSES



6) How would you rate these Students' Union services in relation to your society?

■ very good
 ■ good
 ■ needs some improvement
 ■ needs significant improvement



STUDENT RESPONSES



7) In what ways can we improve or change our services to better support your society?

Improve the website and better use of social media for promoting societies

- “The website is awful when you use a phone to access it. Social media can be hit or miss with regards to advertising societies and their events, sometimes with very short notice that events are happening.”
- “It might be best to change the website since I'm still confused on how to use it.”
- “improvements to the website so members can actually sign up on it to keep track”

Support interaction between societies

- “The Sports and Societies social is great but there's not much encouragement to mingle and people stick to their own societies. I would like to see more intramural activities.”
- “Create more events among the different societies so that we can enlarge our networks of friends and identify ourselves as part of a whole unity”

Improve facilities for meetings and events

- “I would love to have a nice social space for societies where we can hold our meetings and even hold events”
- “A faster direct way to book rooms”
- “Clear opening hours for the student union”
- “Providing music equipment”

8) In what ways can we improve or change our services to better support you as an individual?

I don't know / everything is great

- “not sure” “Everything is great”

Improve communication

- “More communication and liaison between parties”
- “important information in a more timely manner”
- “More information on what the student union can support students in”

Help societies organise themselves as a group

- “Helping with engagement from other students so that one person isn't having to do everything.”
- “Help support the legacy of societies beyond individuals”
- “establish a closer relationship, meeting up as friends as well as constituents of a society.”

STUDENT RESPONSES



9) What's the main development or improvement you want to see in your society over the next 12 months?

Increase in membership

- “Continued increase in membership”
- “Getting more people involved would be a great improvement, seeing more people having fun.”
- “More people joining and enjoying what we do.”

Increase engagement in events and activities

- “Get more students to engage with the activities prepared”
- “Having regular meetings and more people engaged”
- “Plan big events, promote society in all other campuses and have more members who are active”

Achieve our aims

- Growth and goal achieving”
- “A corporate parenting plan in place to support all Care Experience students”

ANALYSIS

Why students take on lead roles in societies

Students’ main reasons for taking on leading roles in their societies were to either share interests and create new opportunities not already available or to improve students’ existing university experiences through representation of their course or a disadvantaged group. Students want more from their experience than academic work and also want to have a say on how it can be improved. They enjoy the opportunity to take the lead on creating their own communities within the university setting.

Socialising with other students was seen as a main benefit to being part of a society. When asked what they enjoyed about their role, 88% said “bringing people together” and 69% said “making new friends”. 69% said they enjoyed taking on a leadership role.

Students also saw being on a committee as a potential opportunity for their personal development. However, only 50% said they enjoyed learning new skills and 38% believed they built on what they learned from their course. This suggests that more support is required to help students develop and benefit from these roles.

Views on their roles

Despite this, students identified clear benefits when asked what skills they had gained from their role; organisation 100%, communication 100%, confidence 88%, leadership 81%.

Resilience 38%, empathy 25% and helping with academic work (only one student) were the lowest scoring skills. This may be because these are less obvious skills, which would further suggest students need more guidance on how they can make the most of their role for their personal and professional development.

Students' favourite things about being on a committee were bringing people together, supporting others, personal opportunities and sharing interests; directly matching with reasons they gave for taking on their roles. Organising events was also a common answer, which indicates the desire for organising social interaction with other students.

The priority of having social meetings can also be seen through the most difficult aspects of their roles. The most common was trying to gain members and increase/maintain engagement. Location and suitability of facilities for these were also seen as a problem. Gaining input from UWS and increased support on managing finances were also difficulties for students. The impact of Covid-19 creates new challenges related to these as well as an increased need to provide societies the necessary support to overcome them.

Views on Students' Union services

Feedback on Students' Union services was largely positive. Societies training received 94% positive feedback, with 56% very good. Ongoing support (94%), finances (94%) and funding (88%) also received overwhelmingly positive feedback. The Students' Union is working to further develop these services with the aim of increasing consistency of delivery, particularly relating to online services and students at the Ayr and Lanarkshire campuses. This is especially important because of the increasing number of societies.

ANALYSIS



Views on Students' Union services

In 2019/20 the Students' Union increased focus on providing social activities specifically for society members. These proved popular and 87% considered them good or very good. Events and increased interaction between societies were common answers to how services can be improved. Provision of "nice", easily available social spaces with appropriate facilities were also common answers. 19% said room bookings needed significant improvement. There have been issues with both the university room booking system and use of Union spaces at the Ayr and Lanarkshire campuses. When adapting Union spaces in response to Covid-19 there is a clear requirement and opportunity to ensure they meet the needs of societies.

The website was the only service which received a majority of negative feedback (63%) with 38% saying it needs significant improvement. 44% said use of social media needed improvement. The Students' Union is already aware of these issues and is addressing them by re-launching the website and employing a Communications and Digital Coordinator.

Support for individuals

When asked how they can be better supported as individuals, almost all responses either said that "everything is great" or suggested how the Students' Union can improve support for their society (eg. more consistent communication). Despite personal development and benefits being one of the reasons why students took up their roles, none of the responses to this question referred to this. This again suggests that there is a need for increased support and training to ensure students understand how they can benefit from being on a committee.

Societies' aims for the next 12 months

The main developments students want to see in their societies are increasing membership and engagement. This reflects both their motives for taking on their role and the part of their role they found most difficult. Bringing people together is the main priority for societies and their most important function. Therefore, it is essential that the Students' Union continues to enable students to achieve this.