

“I’d Like to Represent Myself”

Developing Part Time Officers For Academic
Communities

First off, who are you?

Hi, I'm Demi (they/them)
I work at ARU Students'
Union
My role is in student
democracy and
campaigns





Fair warning:

This gets a little data heavy for a minute
or so

Background on ARU



HEMS

Health, Education,
Medicine, and
Social Care



AHSS

Arts, Humanities,
and Social Sciences



FBL

Business and Law



FSE

Science and Engineering

Background on ARU



HEMS

10,698 students
1 officer



AHSS

2721 students
1 officer



FBL

5964 students
1 officer



FSE

6360 students
1 officer

Electing these students



HEMS

10,698 students
1 officer

Nursing students - 2987
Midwifery students - 628
Allied health students - 889
Medical students - 427

Total NHS students - 4931

47%

Electing these students



HEMS

10,698 students

1 officer

**‘Hard To
Reach’
Students**

Spectrum lines

I know who the 'hard to reach' demographics are at my institution.

Spectrum lines

I have worked on widening participation initiatives for 'hard to reach' students.

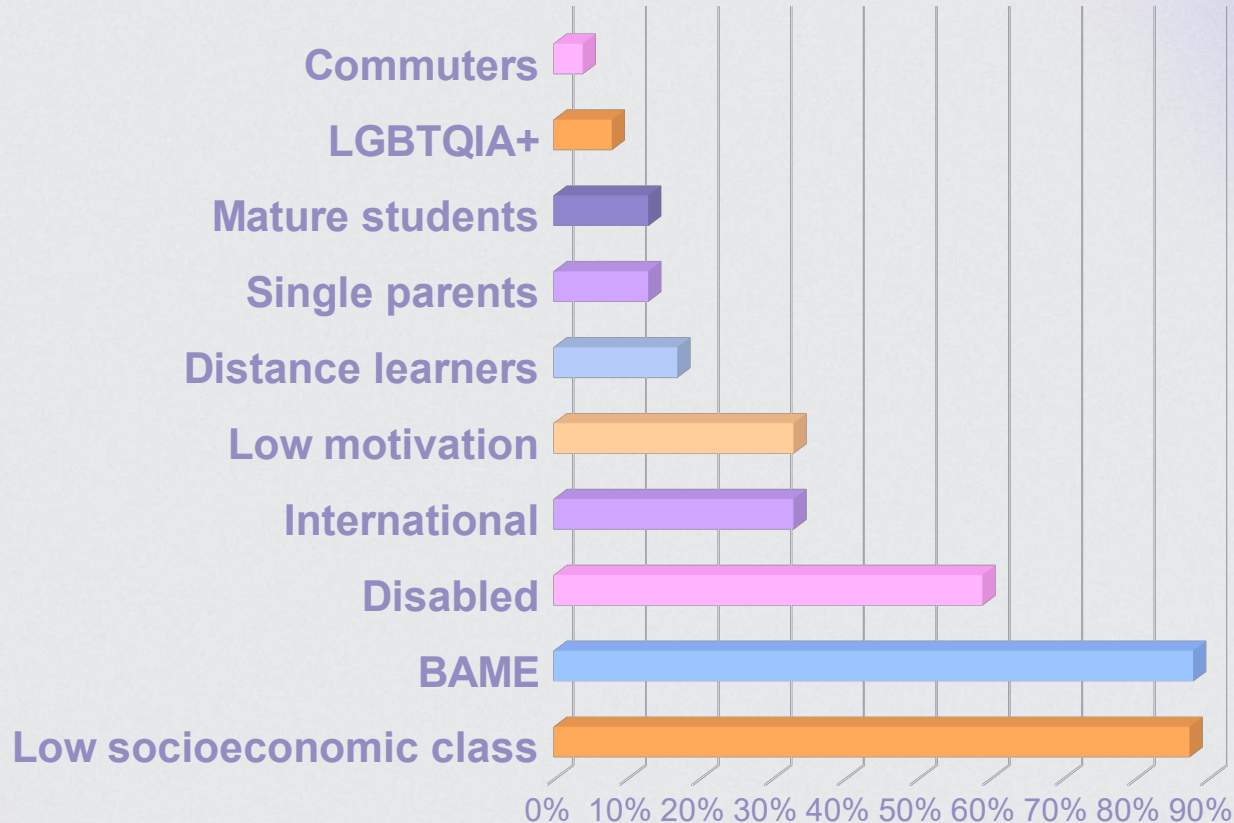
Spectrum lines

**These initiatives have
largely worked.**

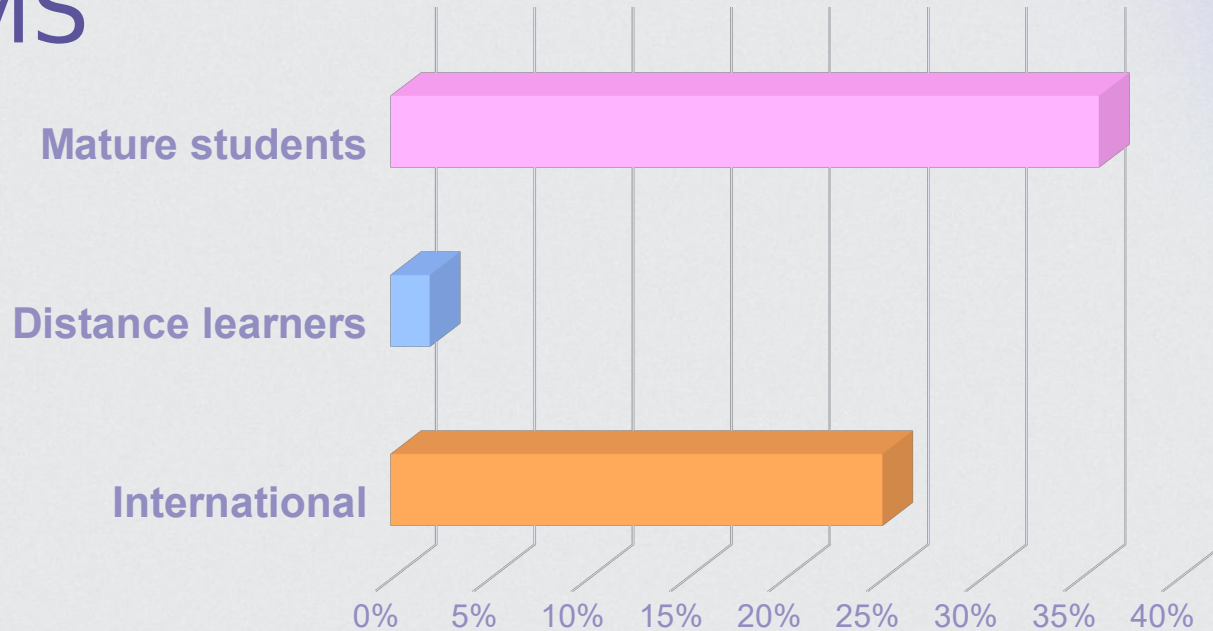
Hard To Reach students

**Did you find you had many
in common?**

Hard To Reach students



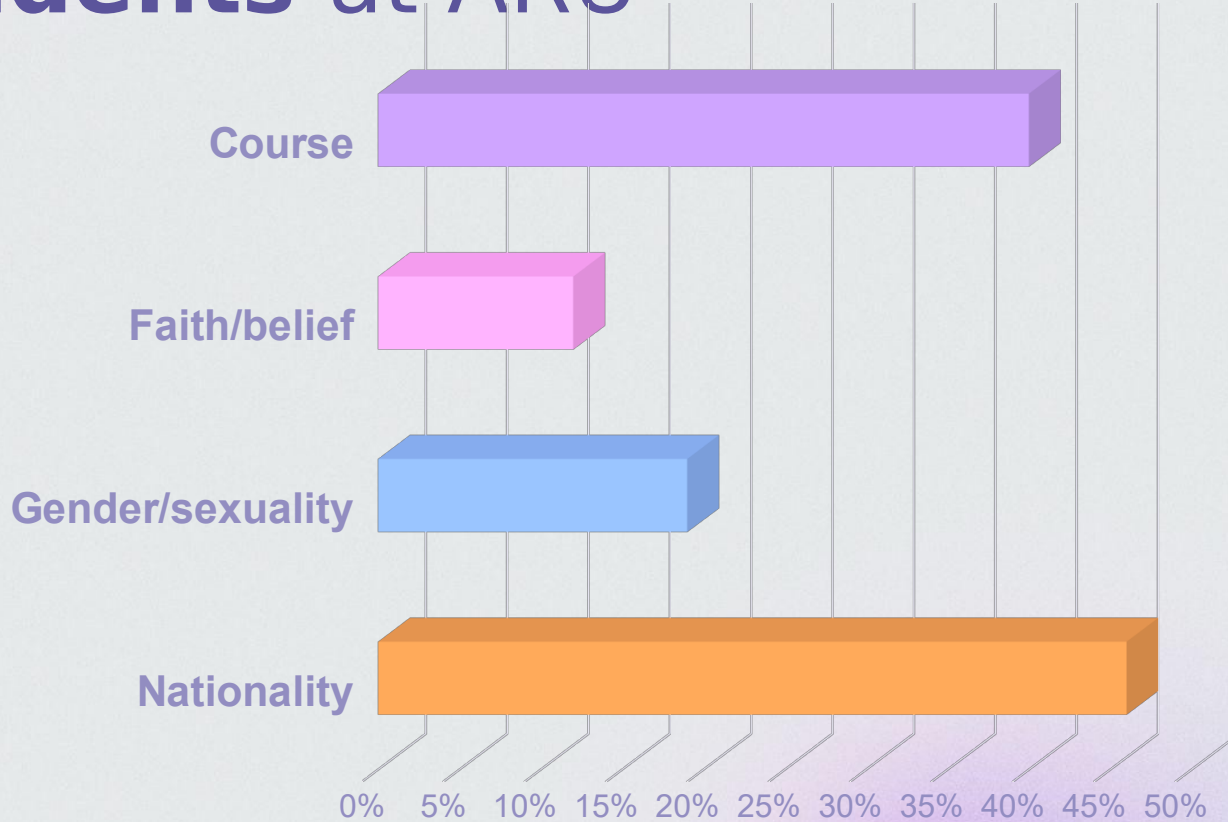
Hard To Reach students... in HEMS



Labels

Take a minute to think of three labels that you would choose to define yourself - these can be absolutely anything, as long as it's important to you!

Students at ARU



Background on ARU



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So what's the issue?



Candidacy

Lots of NHS students ran for part-time voluntary positions but not full-time - why?



Representation

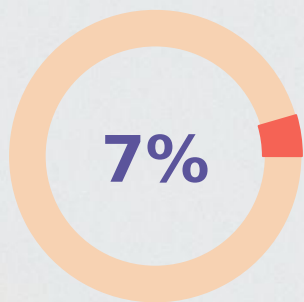
We were lacking voices from almost 50% of our students in our biggest faculty - and it showed.



Feedback

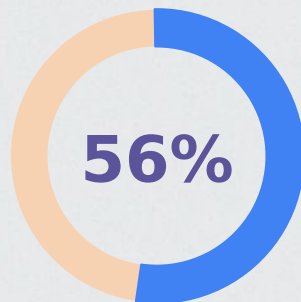
Our democracy review showed that students valued academic representation - so where were they?

The stats of our candidates



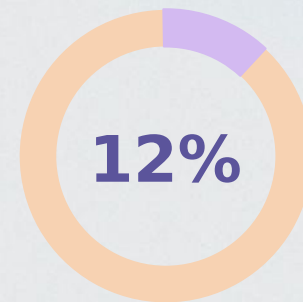
Full Time

Between 2016 and 2020 there were 14 candidates for HEMS Vice President.



Part Time

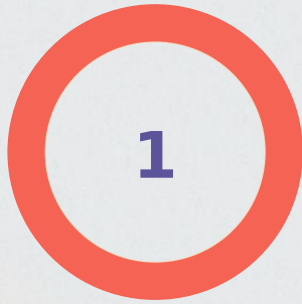
In that same time, 41 students ran for HEMS Faculty Rep.



Overall

For any position, only 12% of our candidates were in HEMS.

What could we do?



Students

What would actually make them run for a full time position?



Structures

What would we have to change to make that happen?



Funding

Unfortunately, we were gonna need money.

What could we do?



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A black smartphone is centered in the frame, displaying a white screen. At the bottom of the screen, there is a purple speech bubble with a white outline and a tail pointing to the right. Inside the speech bubble, the text "Hello busy student" is written in white, sans-serif font. The background of the image is a soft, out-of-focus bokeh of various colors including blue, purple, pink, and orange.

Hello busy student

A black smartphone is centered in the frame, displaying a white screen. On the screen, there are two purple speech bubbles with white text. The background of the entire image is a soft, out-of-focus bokeh of blue, purple, and orange colors.

Hello busy student

Wanna come to a focus
group?

A black smartphone is centered in the frame, displaying a white screen with three purple speech bubbles. The background behind the phone is a soft-focus bokeh of blue, purple, and orange light. The first speech bubble contains the text "Hello busy student". The second speech bubble contains the text "Wanna come to a focus group?". The third speech bubble contains the text "It'll improve democracy at your SU!".

Hello busy student

Wanna come to a focus
group?

It'll improve democracy
at your SU!

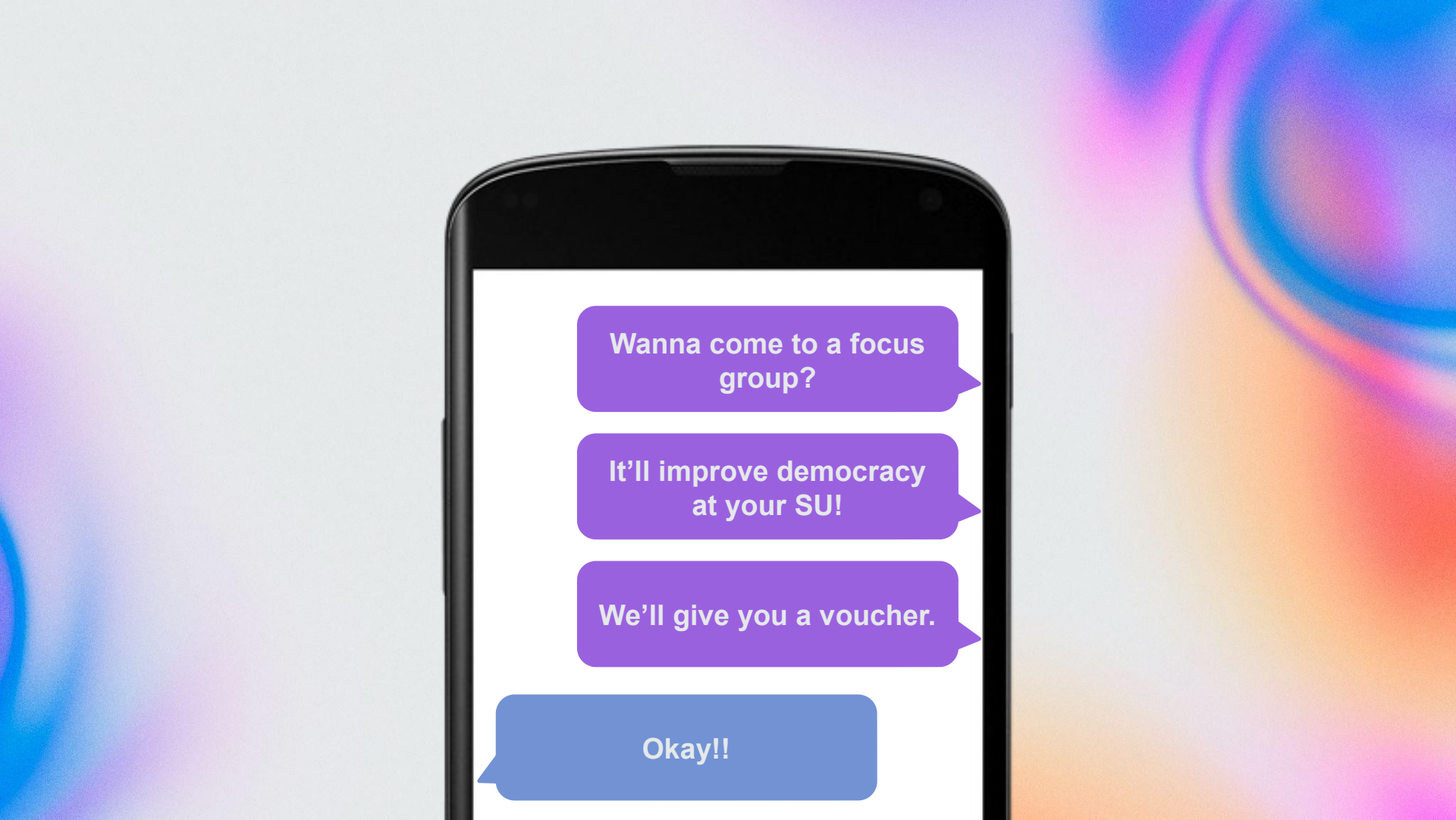


Hello busy student

Wanna come to a focus
group?

It'll improve democracy
at your SU!

We'll give you a voucher.



Wanna come to a focus group?

It'll improve democracy at your SU!

We'll give you a voucher.

Okay!!

What students want

Experience

- Students want a good understanding of their course that includes the overview of the curriculum and the relationships between modules
- They don't know how to support themselves in a competitive environment
- A challenge is to start them on a path to be on 'soft' skills we support
- A chance for them to get involved in interdisciplinary learning processes

What students want

Advocacy

- Understanding of their unique studentships
- Someone to support and signpost them
- Someone supportive outside their course teams

Experience

- A role that looks good on a CV in a competitive field
- A chance to build 'soft' skills
- A chance for interdisciplinary learning

Awareness

- Students want to know more about the SU but don't know where to start
- They want to be on equal footing in democratic processes

What students want

Experience

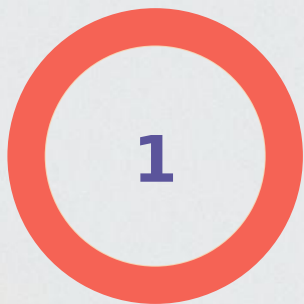
- A good understanding of their own course and about the university
- A chance to build relationships with staff and other students
- A chance to support competitive staff
- A chance to be on 'soft' or supportive skills
- A chance to be on 'hard' or supportive skills
- A chance to be on interdisciplinary processes
- A chance to be on democratic processes
- A chance to be on interdisciplinary learning

What students want

**An
Officer
Role**

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What could we do?



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Sabbs in 2022



VP HEMS

Full time
Paid
Whole faculty



VP AHSS

Full time
Paid
Whole faculty



VP FBL

Full time
Paid
Whole faculty



VP FSE

Full time
Paid
Whole faculty

PART TIME

**WORTHWHIL
E**

SPECIFIC

PAID

NHS
REJECTED
officer?

Medical
REJECTED
students
officer?

Nurses
REJECTED
officer?

Placement
REJECTED
is officer?

Vice-President Healthcare Practice

Governance – surprisingly easy?

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- The proposal for a new officer position went to exactly one exec meeting where it was presented to sabs, faculty reps, and campaign reps.
- Perhaps due to the time of year it was presented to a non-quorate committee.
- The proposal passed unanimously after online voting.

TRUSTEES

- The proposal went to trustee board, from where it would head to HR committee and appointments committee.
- They agreed to a trial period introduction of the role for an academic year...
- ... As long as it was at no cost to the Union.

An orange speech bubble with rounded corners and a tail pointing towards the bottom right. Inside the bubble, the text '£?' is written in a bold, dark blue font. The background of the slide is a light blue gradient with abstract, colorful bokeh-like patterns in shades of blue, purple, and pink.

A solid blue circle containing the text 'ARU SU' in a black, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in two lines, with 'ARU' on the top line and 'SU' on the bottom line.

Why You Will Love This New Officer Position



Why You Will Love This New Officer Position



**Oldest
medical
school in UK**



**First medical
school in Essex**



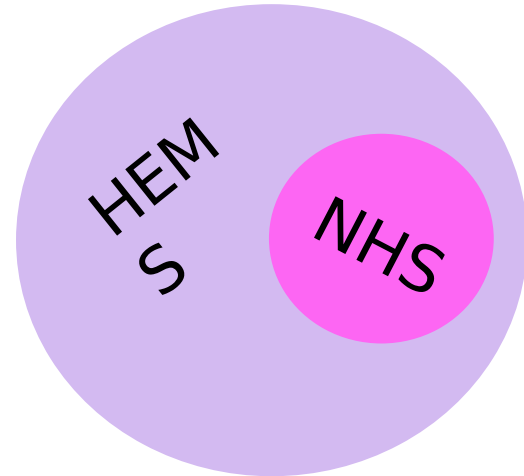
**Largest nursing
HE provider in
England**



**Largest medical
school in UK**



- **UNIQUE SELLING POINT**
- **GREATER STUDENT VOICE**
- **BETTER REPRESENTATION**
- **MORE RELEVANT CAMPAIGNS**
- **STRONGER STAFF-STUDENT-STUDENTS' UNION PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**



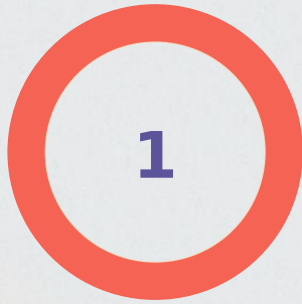
£?

HEM
S

£!

HEM
S

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So,
What Then?

Run an election of course!

We launched the election with the new role available for a select number of courses – both for candidacy and for voting.





**MIDWIFE
RY**



NURSING



NURSING



MEDICINE



NURSING

Sharmeen Jawad



Sharmeen was elected with manifesto promises of;

- Championing the placement student voice
- Creating a sense of community among placement students
- Advocating with the university on behalf of placement students

All of which were ongoing issues the SU were hoping to combat with this role.



**So,
What Now?**

We are now in our second year of having a VP Healthcare Practice.

The HEMS faculty agreed to fund a second 'trial year' of the position.

The role is undergoing a robust review involving student focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and reports to university and SU SMT.

We are hoping to embed the money for the role into our block grant next year.

We are looking into further changes to our sabbatical and executive structure based on the success of this role and another democracy review (catch us at MSConf next year if you wanna hear about those!)



Key Takeaways



Key Takeaways

- Focusing on the student perspective of our officers allowed us to step outside of ingrained structures.
- A lot of this would have been impossible without a strong partnership with our sister institution; though they weren't always 100% positive, they were also encouraged by what we had planned for the role.
- Arrange ways to embed any new positions in existing structures and meetings; this will not only give them something to do immediately but make people outside the SU aware of them and their remit.
- Don't worry if a position starts with small numbers of candidates or voters – students haven't spent the same amount of time immersed in it as you!

“Ideally I would like to **represent myself** – someone who understands our **unique** problems and perspective”

—**ARU** Student

Do you have any questions?

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