

# **SPEAK WEEK**

**2023/24**



## Contents

1. Introduction from SRUCSA.....	2
2. Overview.....	3
3. Response Collection.....	4
4. What Students Told Us.....	6
4.1 Learning and Teaching.....	8
4.2 Facilities.....	11
4.3 Support.....	14
4.4 Staff.....	17
4.5 Finance.....	19
4.6 Community.....	21
4.7 SRUC Values.....	23
4.8 Careers.....	26
4.9 SRUCSA.....	28
5. Recommendations.....	30
5.1 SRUCSA Will.....	30
5.2 SRUC Should.....	31
Appendix 1 - Speak Week 2021/22 Update.....	0
Appendix 2 – SRUC Will 2021/22 Update.....	1

## 1. Introduction from SRUCSA

During Speak Week we ask the students two questions – what they love about SRUC and what would they change about SRUC, if they were in charge.

Speak Week provides students the opportunity to use their voices and make changes that are important for them and their fellow students. At SRUCSA we take great pride in allowing students to voice their opinions and helping to make change.

The focus from SRUCSA for this academic year was to focus on community and this is a theme that has arisen many times in previous Speak Weeks (the last report was published 2021/22). This academic year a lot of work has been done to make SRUC campuses feel like a place where students belong and where they feel able to start or join societies and clubs.

Another issue that was raised during this year's Speak Week was food and finances, which again are issues that have arisen in previous years. During this academic term we have focused on trying to ease these pressures on students, signposting them to funding and student support, providing free supplies and planning a food parcel project.

At SRUCSA we talk a lot about closing the feedback loop and encouraging SRUC teaching staff to follow suit. At the end of this report, you will find recommendations that were provided to SRUC from the 2021/22 report, the actions that were agreed between SRUCSA and SRUC, and an update on these actions. We also call for SRUC to make further updates on the areas that were raised.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to say thank you. Firstly, thank you to those students who take part in Speak Week, as without them Speak Week simply could not happen. Secondly, thank you to SRUC for considering the changes that were previously raised and for acting on these recommendations. SRUCSA is grateful to be part of an institution which values the student voice.

*Damson, Catherine, and Jerry*

SRUCSA Co-Presidents 2023/24

## 2. Overview

Our approach to gathering Speak Week data reflected that some campuses are busier than others. Therefore, the Speak Week cards were left in suitable and easily accessible areas on campus. This year's responses were collected using the online form and physical cards to allow a maximum number of students to use their voice. The online form is a useful way to capture opinions from distance learning students and those not on campus every week. Speak Week is the opportunity for students voice their opinions and let SRUCSA and SRUC know about their experiences at SRUC. The information that was collected during Speak Week has been analysed and written into this report that is constructed by SRUCSA, delivered to SRUC, and finally published to students. SRUC and SRUCSA will act on the things that students have told us about.

This year we received 205 responses from students across both the Speak Week cards and the online form. 183 responses were recorded on the physical cards and 22 responses on the online form. We divided the responses into nine themes based on the things students love about SRUC and what they want to change. We received 714 comments in total. This enabled us to complete qualitative data analysis and get a clear image of what the students were telling us. The responses are all valuable and contained an insightful image of the SRUC student experience.

Speak Week took place 20<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> November 2023, therefore unsurprisingly due to the cost-of-living crisis that is still ongoing, one of the main themes that was raised this year was finance. Finance is an issue that is raised year on year by students and we recommend SRUC take this as the most pressing theme to consider.

This year we decided to remove the theme of student experience as everything that in the students responded with fits within this theme, therefore all themes should be considered as the student experience. This is based on the sparqs' student learning experience model, as all the themes found within the responses reflect the categories in their model.

Other themes that regularly came up across all the student responses was learning and teaching and the facilities on campus. The majority of the comments within these themes are things that the students would change. As in previous Speak Week reports students have expressed frustration with regards to communication around feedback and timetabling. There are comments throughout the report that will provide further details on these issues.

### 3. Response Collection

This year's Speak Week was focused on approaching students in person, on campus. This was to increase SRUCSA's visibility and to encourage students that their voice matters. SRUCSA ensured that the team visited one of the main six campuses at least twice that week. Tables with response cards and submission boxes were set up in different areas of each campus with a SRUCSA team member covering this during the day. The response card design remained the same from previous years (Fig 1).



Figure 1: Speak Week Response Cards

Students were made aware of Speak Week through their student emails, posters around campus, and word of mouth. For those that were not on campus or are distance learners, an online version of the cards was created. This form was distributed via email to all SRUC students, a link was also provided on the SRUCSA website ([www.srucsa.org.uk/speak-week](http://www.srucsa.org.uk/speak-week)), and featured through a QR code on posters around campus.

Teaching staff at the campuses, we were unable to visit as regularly during the week, such as Glasgow Queen's Park, Aberdeen, and Elmwood, were made aware of where the collection boxes were located. This was to encourage all students throughout the week give their thoughts on their student experience.

Students we spoke with on campus were asked to be as honest about their experience as possible and think about what was important to them during their studies at SRUC.

The questions on the cards and online form remained: *"I love SRUC because..."* and *"If you ran SRUC, what would you change?..."*.

### Data Analysis

The data from the response cards was collated and themes were pulled from these, based on the categories on the cards. Nine themes were identified from these, and two more were added to cover the 'Blank' and 'Don't know' responses.

Each response was read carefully to extract and calculate the number of comments based on the identified themes. Sub-categories were pulled from comments within each theme to provide more information on specific responses.

The qualitative data analysis was conducted by Damson Ellen (SRUCSA Central Co-President).

Bias is acknowledged due to the nature of qualitative data analysis, however due to the SRUCSA Co-Presidents being representative of students, this can be considered as accurate.

## 4. What Students Told Us

To begin with we would like to thank all of the students who provided their responses for this year's Speak Week. The comments provide a crucial insight into the SRUC student experience and improvements that would make this better. The analysis and information included in this section will provide recommendations to SRUC of which areas need focus.

This section will provide an overview of the responses by theme, including what students 'love' and want to 'change'. Following this, we will delve deeper into each theme, in the order of most mentioned to least. Quotes from responses will be provided as evidence for recommendations and review.

### Overview

The theme 'Learning and teaching' had the highest number of comments, both for what students loved and want changed (Fig 2). This is similar to last year's report, with a lot of the same comments coming through. 'Facilities' had the same number of change comments, however there were less things students loved within this theme. 'Finance' was a theme we added this year due to the number of comments regarding concerns over funding, food, transport, and accommodation prices (Table 1). Notably, 'Staff' and 'Support' received a large number of positive comments which is great to see from the student perspective. It is also worth noting that the 'Blank' section consisted of missing data within the 'love' and 'change' sides of the response cards.

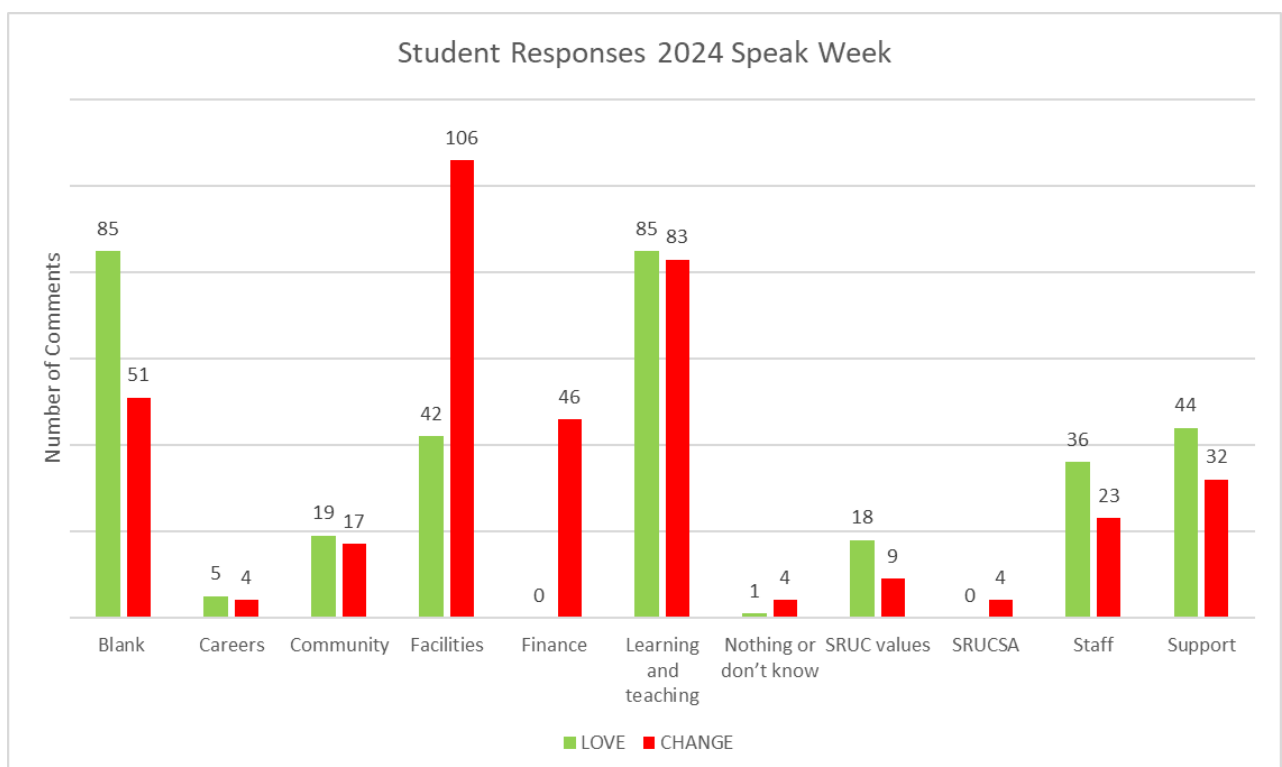


Figure 2: Student Responses (Love/Change) by Theme

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Comments by Theme

Theme	Total	%
Blank	136	19.05
Careers	9	1.26
Community	36	5.04
Facilities	148	20.73
Finance	46	6.44
Learning and teaching	168	23.53
Nothing or don't know	5	0.70
SRUC values	27	3.78
SRUCSA	4	0.56
Staff	59	8.26
Support	76	10.64

Furthermore, the number of responses we received per campus was surprising, considering the footfall of students and the presence of SRUCSA during Speak Week. The majority of responses were from Aberdeen and Barony at 32% and 27% respectively (Fig 3). Disappointingly, there were no responses received from Glasgow Queen's Park, although this isn't certain due to some anonymous online submissions. In addition, the most responses received by course were from Animal Care (25%) and Agriculture (14%) students. This may explain the high number of comments regarding facilities and learning and teaching, due the practical nature of these courses.

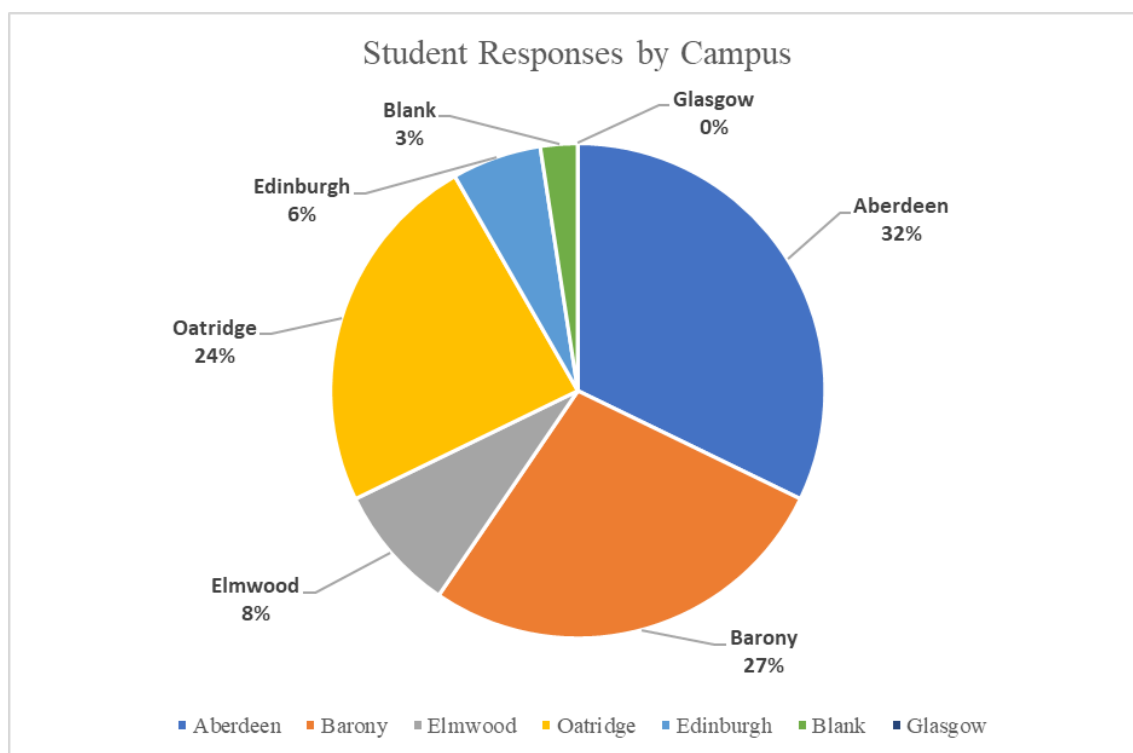


Figure 3: Student Responses by Campus



#### 4.1 Learning and Teaching

Learning and teaching had the largest number of comments in comparison to the other themes, at 23.5%. There was a marginally higher number of aspects students would change compared to what they love. We broke this theme down into sub-categories to narrow down the areas in which we can recommend changes (Fig 4).

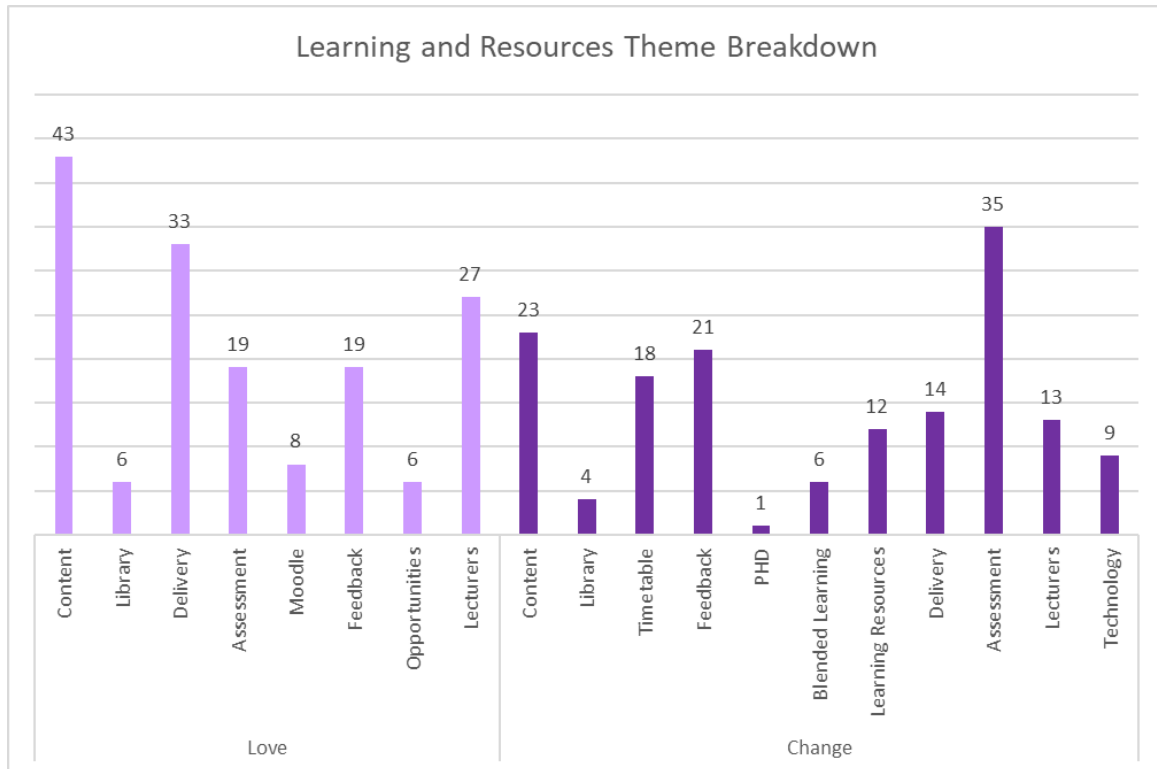




Figure 4: Learning and Teaching Sub-Categories



#### Content

Students had positive things to say regarding the course content, with one of the main things being how interesting they found it, and it provided a good platform to move into the next step academically or for career options.

<p><i>“Who wouldn't want to learn in a building dedicated to food; I think the course is well balanced”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Learning about what I love”.</i></p>	



## Assessment

There were a large number of comments regarding assessments and the difficulties students experience with the amount they receive, and the timing of feedback for these.

<p><i>“Assessments should be more split up - need more regular, small assessments rather than a few big ones; should have more than one day in person so not so many assessments at once”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Way too many assessments, Extremely Stressful”.</i></p>	



## Delivery

Content delivery is evidently important to students, although there was a split between responses on the delivery being well paced and organised, in comparison to thoughts on it being rushed and receiving an overload of information to work through.

<p><i>“Course is interesting. Delivery is organised”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“So much information to be delivered in a very short amount of time. Course feels rushed to fit everything in before exams”.</i></p>	

## Timetable

There seems to still be issues with timetabling modules in a way that makes sense to students, as well as the organisation around how many assessments are expected to be completed at once. The approach and definition of blended learning is confusing for students, particularly for the more practical courses.

<p><i>“Less rushed. All online or all in class. Stop changing the timetables so much”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“I would make changes to the amount of time we are in class; I think that we just do not get enough time to ask about our course work and get support...Review week also needs a rework, there is just not enough time for students to revise especially if they have done poorly and have multiple resits”.</i></p>	

## 4.2 Facilities

The facilities provided by SRUC contribute to the quality of student education and is extremely important to their experience on campus and delivery of content. Students value the farm equipment and animals in the Animal Care and Agriculture courses, which adds to their learning experience. The food provision is questioned, mainly from a financial point of view, but also areas where students can sit and socialise. A large number of students also feel they need assistance with transport to and from campus to be able to complete their studies (Fig 5).

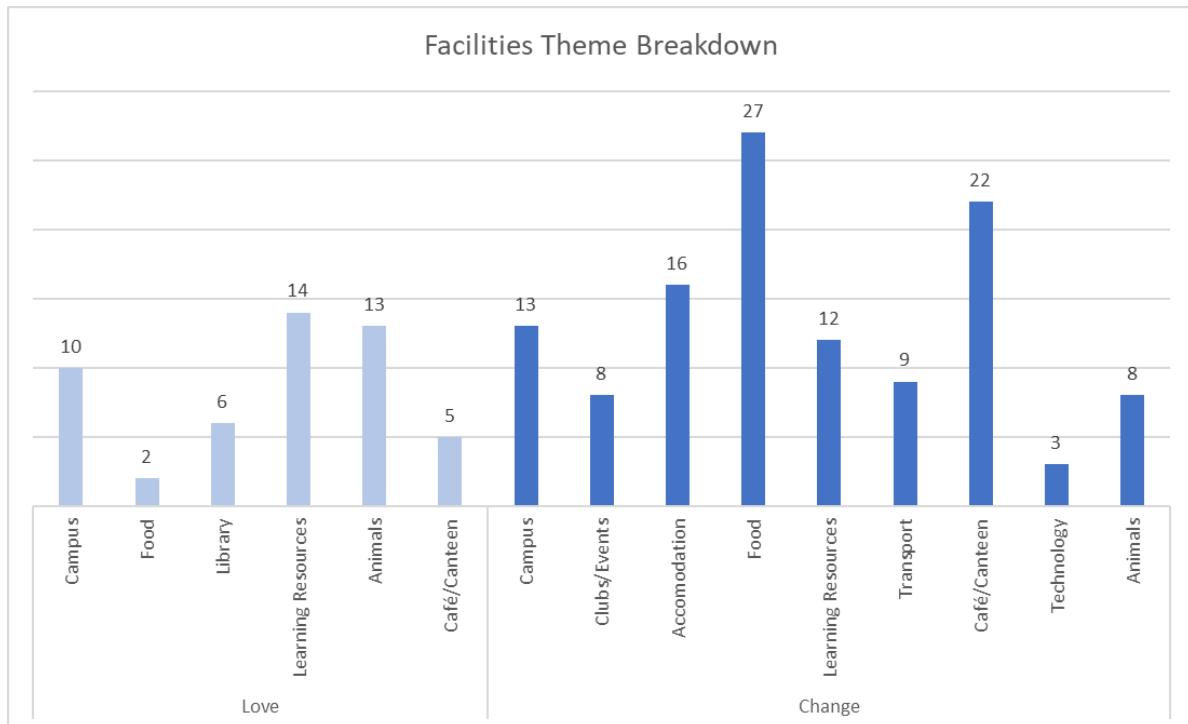




Figure 5: Facilities Sub-Categories

### Learning Resources

The resources provided to assist students in practical and classroom-based lessons have been commended. The libraries on campus were reviewed favourably for their space, and resources, with some students commenting that they would prefer longer opening times. The main focus though is on practical equipment where students can gain experience that will further their future career options. However, there are some requests for improvement.



*“Great training facilities, training with experienced instructors, great selection of trees on Barony campus and regular access to real forestry sites nearby”.*



<p><i>“Great library, computer/laptop facilities. Lots of practical field work to help gain experience”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Better tractors. More livestock practical like showing how to prep and show cattle”.</i></p>	




### Transport and Accommodation

The timing and provision of transport to campuses and accommodation is a point of contention for students, particularly at Aberdeen. There were multiple requests for more buses and a review of the bus timetable, so students are able to be flexible around the different timetables for their courses. There were also responses regarding the quality of accommodation for the price and the inability to accommodate everyone who needs it.

<p><i>“More buses to accommodation. Long gaps between classes or half days”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Bus times from halls to be more accurate - sometimes late”.</i></p>	

### Animals

The highest number of responses this year came from Animal Care students therefore animals were one of the main subcategories we identified. The comments are enthusiastic about the ability to work with different animals and enjoy the practicality of the course. Some responses featured changes they would like to see regarding the units the animals are housed in, and the different species they would like to work with.

<p><i>“I like the practical work being able to work with animals on campus”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Have a therapet zoo on campus or farm animals. Make it a dog friendly campus”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“More variety of animals - the fancy ones are better”.</i></p>	

### 4.3 Support

The support that students say they receive from staff is very positive, with responses detailing how lecturers are approachable and help them succeed academically. The majority of comments regarding support staff show how much they are valued and available to assist with personal issues. There are mentions of some staff being rude to students, and the support team also not taking them seriously, with apprehension in the responses that they are not trained to deal with certain mental health concerns. There is a call for further support for those needing more help from staff regarding a disability (Fig 6).

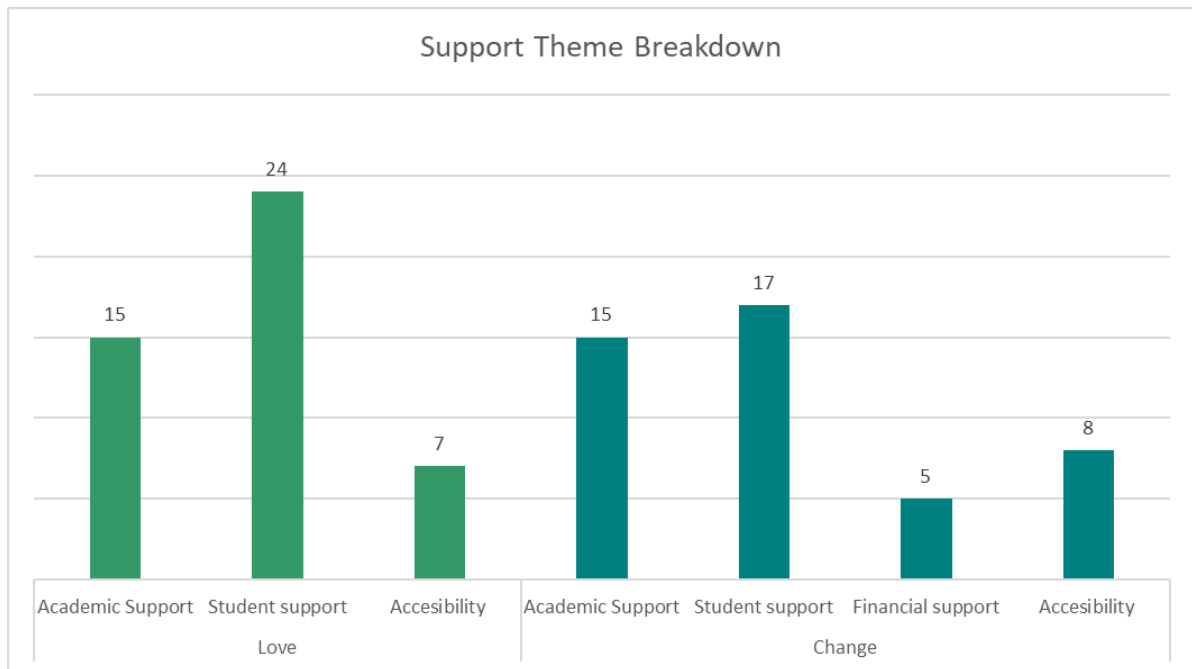




Figure 6: Support Responses by Sub-Category

#### Academic Support





Responses show that in some cases students feel strongly that their lecturers give them enough support academically and are able to approach them to ask for help. Despite this, there are suggestions for more action teaching staff could take, such as more regular meetings, being accessible by email, and that students are encouraged to reach out.

<p><i>“Close contact with lecturers who are very approachable”.</i></p>	
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<p><i>“Part-time students should have monthly 1 on 1s with year tutors rather than just once per semester”.</i></p>	
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### Student Support

The comments revealed that more students feel positively about the support staff than not, although for certain groups they think that more needs to be done to tackle individual issues they face. Every student is different and faces a separate set of circumstances that comes with studying. This can be a challenge to address. There was a comment regarding the number of support staff available to deal with the number of students facing issues, and this with other staff being made redundant is noticed.

<p><i>“I feel confident, comfortable and supported here”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Support staff are excellent”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“More consistent support for disabled students”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“I would try to offer mature students &amp; career changers more support emotionally and financially. It’s a mentally very hard to do and it’s not easy to balance coursework and a life that you’ve established”.</i></p>	



*“More understanding of mental health and social anxiety”.*



#### 4.4 Staff

Not dissimilar to the comments on support, student responses have been positive and have noticed the expertise of the helpful teaching staff. Some general comments were found that were also linked with staff being friendly and welcoming on campus. There is some room for improvement in terms of staff being approachable for academic support and ensuring communication is open with students (Fig 7).

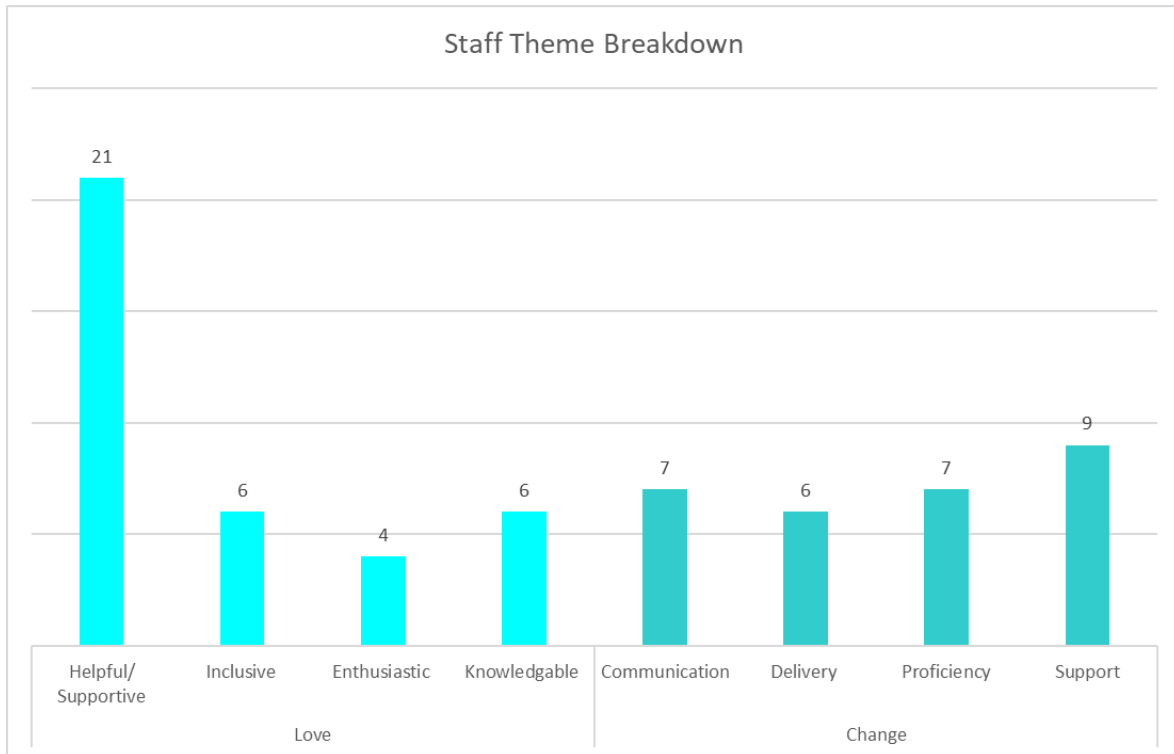





Figure 7: Staff Responses by Sub-Category

#### Helpful and Supportive

Students seem to be very responsive to the support lecturing and particularly library staff provide. It is great to see communication between students and staff during their studies. Some students were concerned with the amount of work they ‘teach themselves’ which suggests some staff need to aid with coursework. The students are aware of staff shortages, and it affects their education. It seems that there needs to be more transparency with students on the status of the college financially and an explanation why staff are leaving.




*“Lecturing staff are always helpful and knowledgeable.  
Library Staff are very supportive”.*



<p><i>“The staff are so friendly and helpful; I feel a sense of purpose whilst at college”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Better time management from staff I feel like students are teaching themselves a lot of their own course work”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“I would be transparent about making staff redundant”.</i></p>	

### Knowledge and Proficiency

Overall, students are very impressed by staff knowledge and enthusiasm towards their subjects. This has had a positive impact on many students’ responses, and also shows a dedication students and staff have to their education. There are certain responses which question staff substituted into certain modules that also doesn’t match the level being taught.

<p><i>“Its super hands-on and you can tell the lecturers are passionate about their jobs”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Lecturers are passionate about what they're teaching”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“It seems that instructors who are used to HE teaching need different selection or re-training to deliver FE”.</i></p>	

## 4.5 Finance

Finance was one of the most mentioned themes pulled from the responses, with a focus only on changes. There were multiple comments where the cost aspect of the student experience was emphasised, therefore it has to be included. Students struggle with transport costs due to campus locations, with comments on difficulties with public transport timings and personal travel prices. There is also mention of lack of financial support to help in these times (Fig 8).

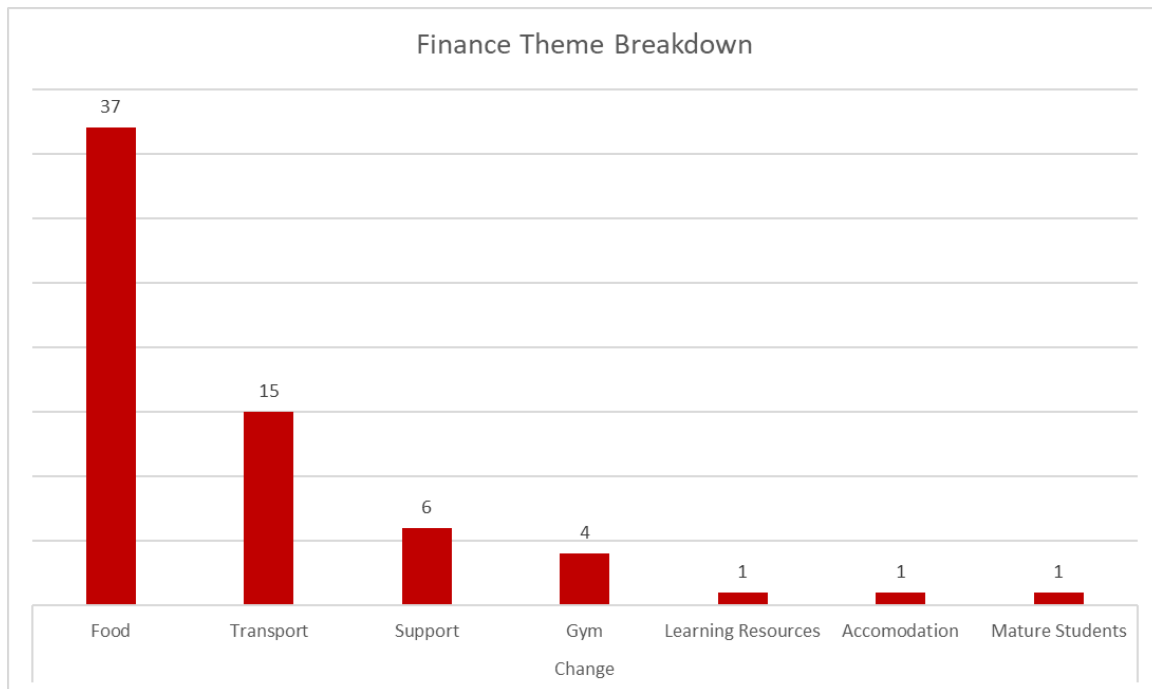




Figure 8: Finance Responses Sub-Categories

### Food

Due to where some campuses are located, one of the only options for students to purchase food is on campus. The prices have risen by 20% due to a new contract with Baxter Storey and SRUC subsidies being pulled from catering. The free breakfasts that were offered during the last academic year have also been removed, however the financial strain from the cost-of-living cannot continue to be underestimated. Students generally do not have the option to heat their own food, due to a lack of microwave facilities. There is now one for student use at KB, however this has been down to years of requesting.



*“Canteen is stupidly expensive when there is nowhere else to go!”*



<p><i>“Microwaves in the canteen - we are students and can't always afford to buy lunch, but reheating leftovers or soup esp. in winter would go a long way. I appreciate there may be issues around cleaning, maintenance, queues etc so initiatives to combat that e.g. 10p charge for use? Stationed around different points like in common room or separate area, might prevent issues with queue backlogs. Would be more affordable option for many, esp. in winter when hot meal is preferable”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“I'd offer a warm lunch if soup &amp; a roll to all students for free”.</i></p>	

### Transport

Students are aware of the fact they have to make their own way to campus; however rural public transport services can be unreliable. There is transport that is organised by campus faculty that sometimes does not run on time which causes financial strain for those having to find alternative options, such as paying for taxis.

<p><i>“It costs me £40 a day to get there. In first year, my class drove over 1000 miles between to attend class each day”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“I often miss my connecting train. It was well over an hour that I had to wait on a taxi. Now not only the journey was arduous all in all this is costing me £24/25 each time this happens. This journey is exhausting me both mentally and physically”.</i></p>	

## 4.6 Community

The responses reflect that students are positive about community feeling on campus, the majority of the time. Comments mention how friendly and welcoming other students and staff are, that there is a good feeling when they go to campus, and how lecturers care that students are successful. There were a few issues with residential students wanting more activities and events outside of their academic work and requesting that there is a connection with other SRUC campuses (Fig 9).

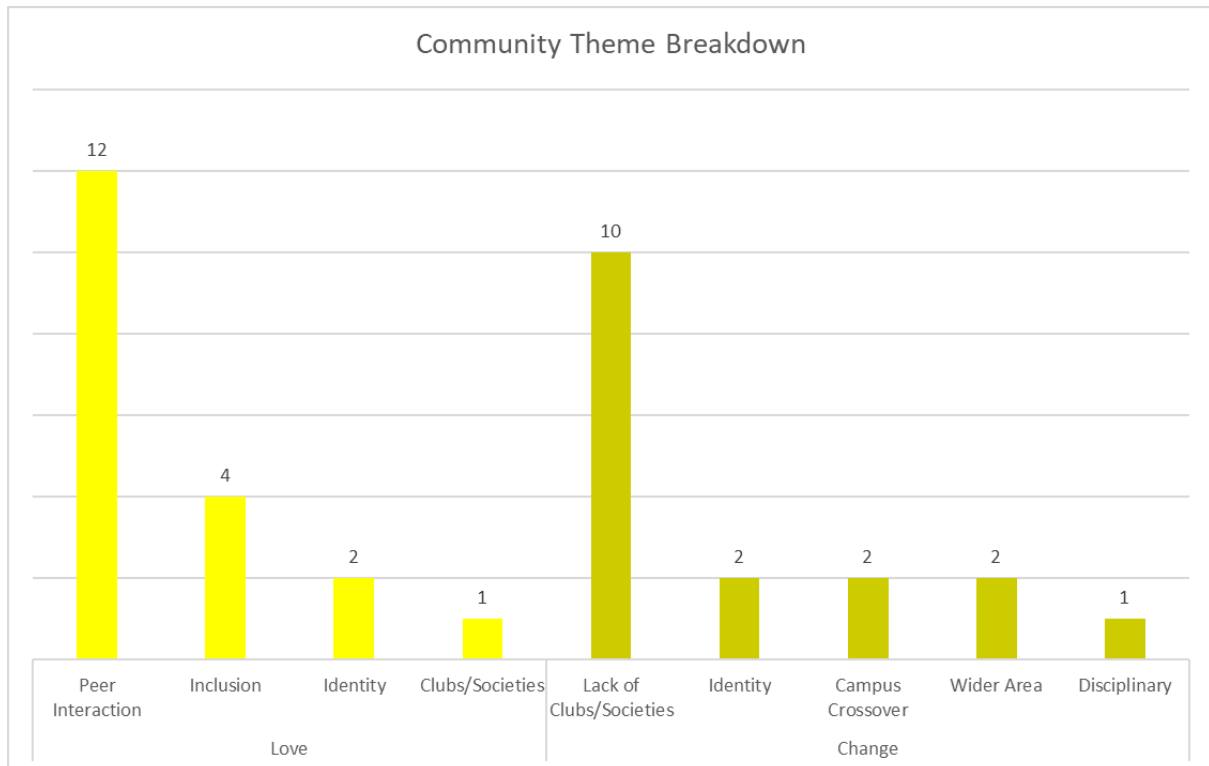





Figure 9: Community Responses Sub-Categories

### Peer Interaction and Inclusion

Students value the time they spend on campus, amongst friends and friendly staff. The comments suggest an understanding of how support is linked to academic work and is received through staff and peers. Students with additional needs have spoken out about more support and connections with others with similar issues. The provision of quiet spaces and faith rooms is expected in academic institutions for students that require them.



*“My course and my friends in my course, help and support with subjects, study areas, activities and clubs, how nice the majority of the college is”.*



<p><i>“Everyone is super friendly and understanding”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Have a meeting with the disability advocates and the disabled students from each year, to get feedback on accessibility”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“I’d want provide more quiet, safe spaces. Even faith rooms for people that would use them”.</i></p>	

### Clubs and Societies

The responses requesting more activities on campus, either for residential students or those in for the day, is high. Some comments were happy with the provision, as SRUCSA have been working hard this year to create a community amongst those with similar interests and encouraging to set up societies. The main comments were regarding the facilities not being available to use and the lack of school spirit due to this.

<p><i>“Open the gym, more activities for people on campus, more facilities on campus”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“I’d reopen the sports hall! It’s a shame it just sits there and goes to waste, I know plenty of people who’d love to go for a quick game of basketball on their lunch”.</i></p>	

#### 4.7 SRUC Values

The positive comments provided from students solidify the foundation that SRUC has tried to build over the years, particularly in terms of a tertiary education model that is unique to Scotland. The facilities and practical elements from the courses have been praised, as well as how much students feel included and a part of the college. There were a couple of responses regarding how environmental awareness could be improved on campus, considering SRUC’s focus is on a sustainable economy and education (Fig 10).

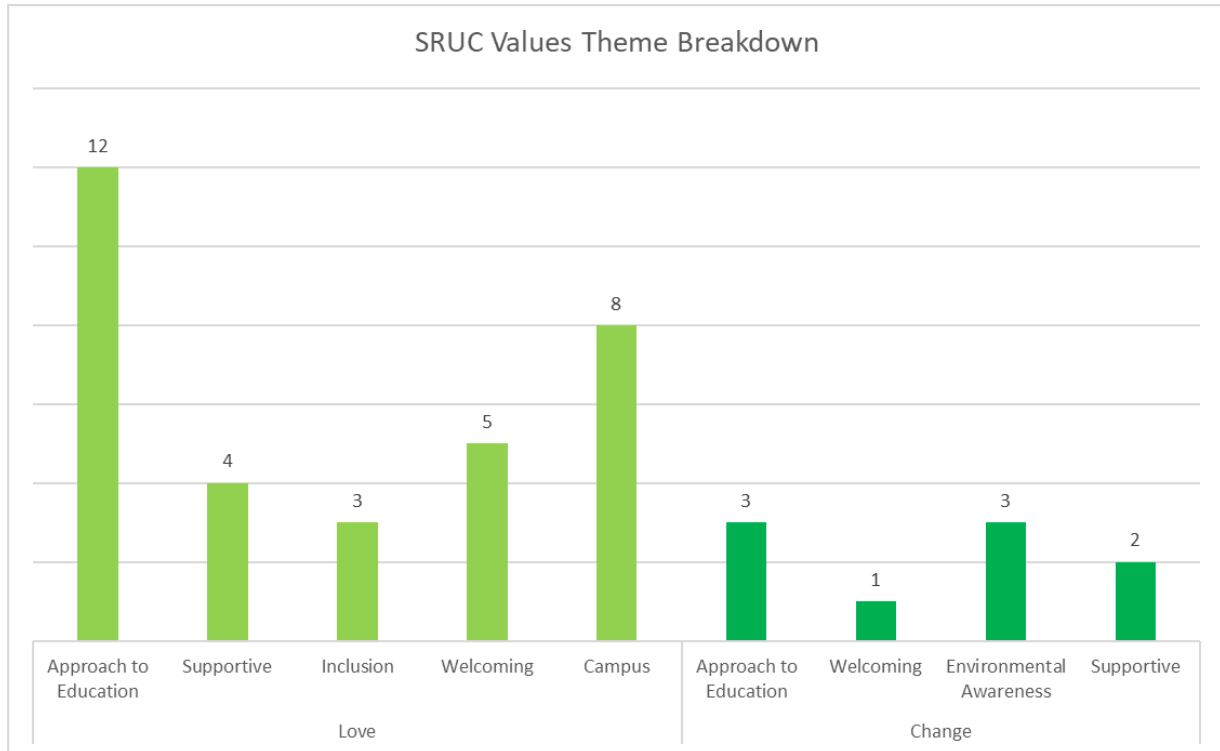







Figure 10: SRUC Values Response Sub-Categories

#### Approach to Education

It is lovely to read responses from those that see SRUC being a unique institution and offering students the courses they are unable to find elsewhere. For those that didn’t know SRUC existed before applying, this adds another element of gratitude that the college runs these courses. There were some comparisons to other universities, some positive and some looking for improvement. The comments were mainly from PGR students, suggesting more could be done within the Doctoral College, particularly with research.


<p><i>“Unique interdisciplinary facility”.</i></p>	
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<p><i>“It has a lot of courses that are outdoor based, which is far more any other Uni/ College does”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“I finally belong somewhere that gives me the additional skills for my passion”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“I think it's great that the college offers so many outdoor based courses”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“PHD students assisting with teaching - normal in other universities”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Show students more of our research - raise awareness of the practical lab facilities available. Better communication needed with Central faculty and other campuses”.</i></p>	

### Environmental Awareness

Students are calling for changes to the environmental approach on campuses. This is linked to facilities but falls under how SRUC values itself to deliver a sustainable, natural economy through responsible use of our environment. The recycling process has been questioned at Oatridge campus, the approach to climate change at Aberdeen, and electric vehicle support at Barony.

<p><i>“Increased sense of climate action within the building at Craibstone. There are no jobs on a dead planet”.</i></p>	
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*“Recycling could be improved. It's great there are all the correct bins around campus, but people aren't using them and instead there are small general bins inside the classrooms for recycling which the cleaners just empty into general waste which defeats the purpose of having them. I would remove these and just have the large ones side by side”.*



*“Install Electric Vehicle charging points in a car park at Barony, as its 10 miles out of town, and if there's an equivalent for e-bikes”.*



## 4.8 Careers

The courses being offered to students at SRUC are seen to be only as good as the careers support and provision of industry connections they receive. There are a number of positive responses regarding opportunities for networking and experience, although on some courses it seems that this could be improved in terms of guest speakers and opportunities for mature students (Fig 11).

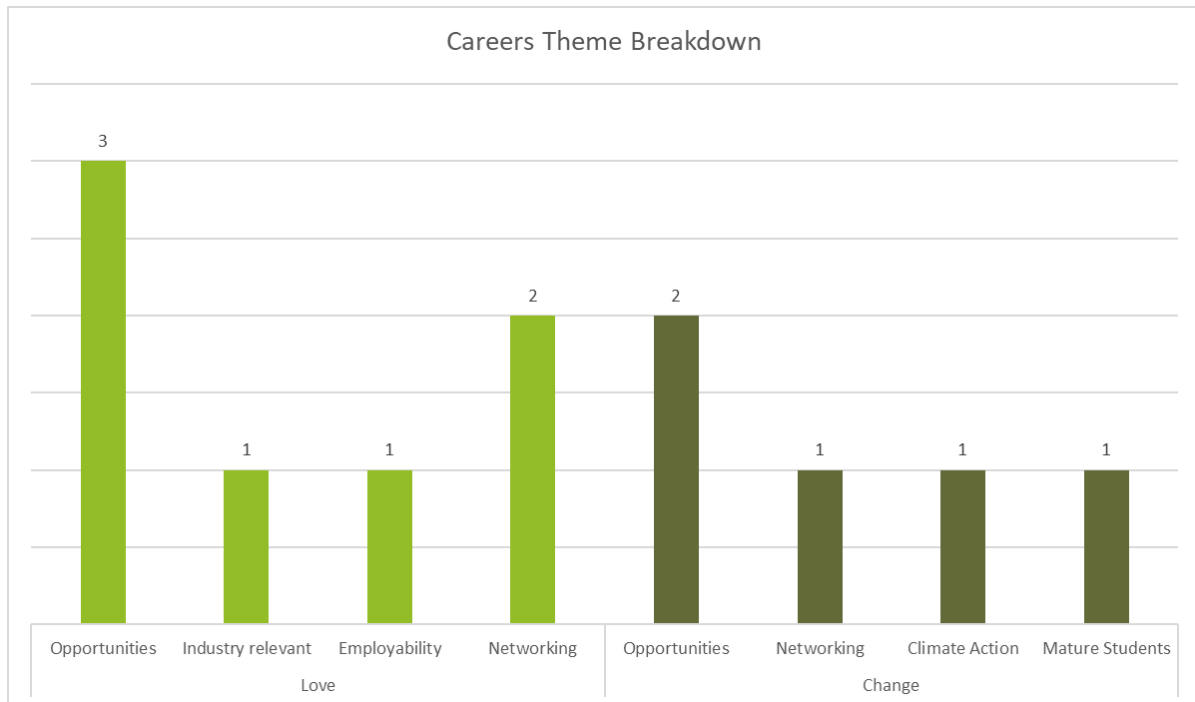






Figure 11: Careers Responses Sub-Categories

### Opportunities and Networking

Some courses seem to offer student networking opportunities better than others; however, it can depend on how practical the course is in how much experience is offered that will help students develop skills for their career. Students are positive about the course content offering them a relevant education to the industry jobs they want to pursue. There is focus on specific skills that will enhance their chances. Distance learners are a key focus on where practical delivery would be beneficial, whether that's through organised field trips or with external speakers delivering lectures.

*“Great staff, quality course delivery, lots of networking and opportunities, beautiful campus”.*



<p><i>“Content is relevant to the industry”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Lots of short courses that make students employable and industry leaders”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Provide more opportunities for support/ encourage students to reach out - make contacts well known etc”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Distance learning students especially would benefit from practical learning opportunities”.</i></p>	

## 4.9 SRUCSA

The students' association have been actively trying to encourage students to create more clubs and societies on campus this academic year. We have successfully helped set up five new ones since September which is a huge achievement and positive outcome for existing and new students. We hope to build on this in the years to come. We have also been informing students that they are able to join local clubs, and also nearby university groups. The visibility on campus has been a challenge this year due to one of the co-presidents living outside of Scotland, however every effort has been made so students feel their voices are heard (Fig 12).

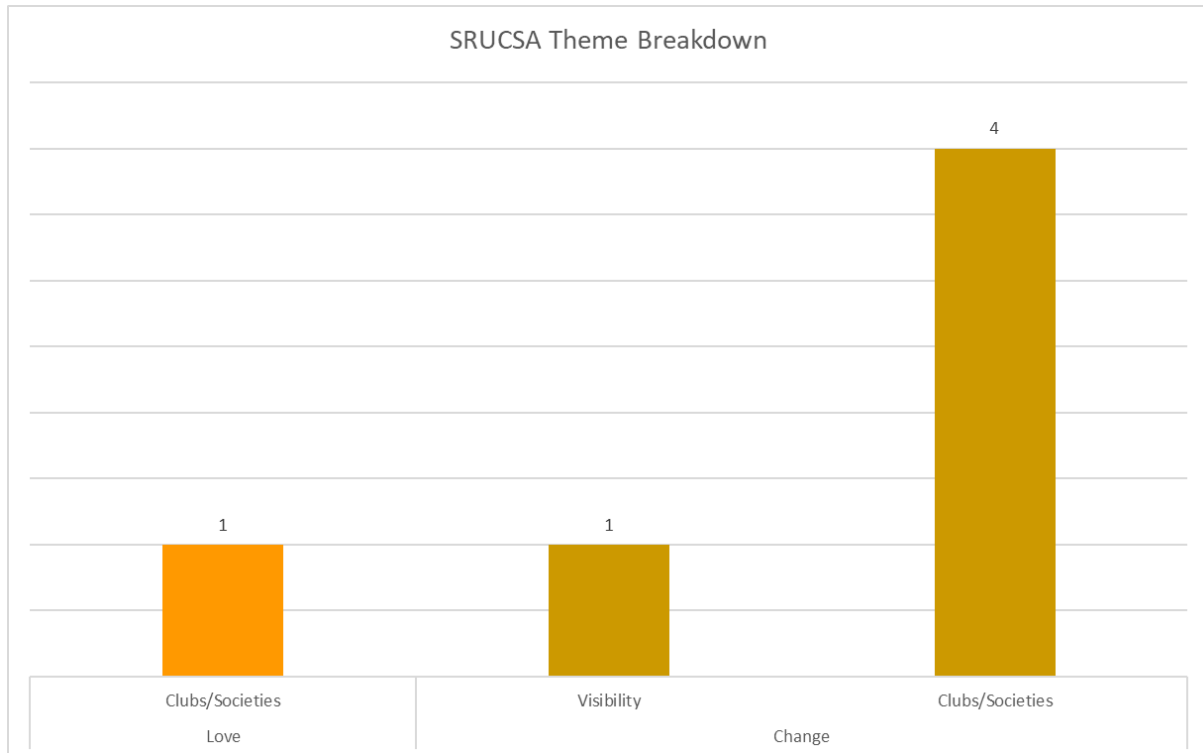





Figure 12: SRUCSA Responses Sub-Categories

### Visibility and Clubs/Societies

There was only one response which detailed students loved the activities on campus, therefore it is noticeable that some are making more of an effort to establish groups outside of their academic work. SRUCSA have simplified the process to set up a society this year and have budgeted for funding to set the groups up for success, before guiding them to fundraise themselves. The gym at Barony campus was mentioned a number of times, which should be a focus on what to improve. The only comment regarding visibility was about the Aberdeen representative. It is difficult to ensure that this is achieved this academic year due to the location of the co-president and that they were elected by the student body. We will take this into consideration regarding the next election.

<p><i>“Love: activities and clubs”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“More to do outside lecture time. Have a student association rep who is present on campus and approachable”.</i></p>	
<p><i>“Open the gym, more activities for people on campus”.</i></p>	

## 5. Recommendations

### 5.1 SRUCSA Will

**1. Work to reduce food prices and provision of microwaves on campuses.**

SRUCSA will be in discussions with Campus and Estates regarding the catering contract currently held with Baxter Storey at SRUC. There will also be food parcels, as a short-term solution, organised for those students struggling with the cost of living and the rise in café prices on campus.

**2. Work on a structure for staff led - student societies to ensure longevity of clubs and societies, and work to deliver a new SRUCSA website.**

Societies and clubs typically don't last longer than the time that specific student groups spend studying at SRUC. This results in short-lived clubs that are not continued by the next student cohort. A network of staff will be identified to 'look after' certain clubs until students choose to pursue them again. Funding has been obtained for SRUCSA to deliver a new website that focuses on empowering students to create and run societies. Training for staff on website use will be pursued which would focus on the maintenance of clubs.

**3. Work to pursue funding for an Active Campus Coordinator to focus on activities and opportunities for students.**

Students want more activities and things to do on campus, outside of their academic studies. This new role would ensure a dedicated staff member is on hand to engage with facilities currently available or in need of refurbishment on campus. They would be a signpost to external activities in the area and establishing links with other institutions that provide clubs and societies. Careers support and networking with industry is lacking for some students. The coordinator role would work with career support staff to identify contact opportunity with other organisations.

**4. Work to improve the visibility of SRUCSA and engagement with students at the Craibstone campus.**

Students are keen for a visible and approachable SRUCSA representative at Craibstone. The engagement with North faculty students needs improvement. There will be a strong push at these campuses during elections this academic year to put themselves forward to represent their student cohort. This would help promote the needs of these students and will produce a clear, effective link with SRUCSA.

## 5.2 SRUC Should

### **1. Work to take the student cost of living seriously by addressing the food price increase at all campuses and to provide alternative facilities.**

The food prices at SRUC are too high for students living on either a loan or those that don't receive one at all. This is a hugely important issue which has been mentioned year on year. The most recent contract renegotiation with Baxter Storey resulted in the removal of the subsidy for students and a 20% increase in prices at all campuses. SRUCSA were not involved in these discussions which have directly affected students. One of the biggest requests SRUCSA have received this academic year is for provision of microwaves and kettle for student use due to the unaffordability of food on campus. There has also been disregard for the communication of changes happening. We would recommend the subsidy is reinstated, free breakfast is provided again, a discount for SRUC students is introduced, and/or microwave facilities are provided at all campuses.

### **2. Work to turn unused areas on campuses into student social or activity spaces and acknowledge the importance of extra-curricular activities to students.**

SRUC is currently seeking Taught Degree Awarding Powers which would then move into getting university status. Social and extracurricular activities are a key part of the student experience, and if SRUC are looking to take this seriously then this should be a key focus. The hiring of an Active Campus Coordinator and a budget for this department will be crucial to provide these spaces for students.

### **3. Work to ensure lecturers and support staff work together to improve networking and contact with relevant industries.**

Students are seeking more opportunities to create contacts within their class time, either through guest speakers or networking days. There is a clear link missing between careers support and teaching staff where students feel they are not given enough exposure to different organisations or businesses they may want to pursue careers with. We would recommend that this becomes clearly signposted by lecturing staff and communication with careers staff is improved for students.

### **4. Work to provide clarity for students on their assessment schedules in conjunction with lecture times, either before or at the beginning of their course.**

Students have said that the timetables for assessments and lectures are confusing and change at short notice. Lecture times clash with their assessment schedules, which provides unnecessary stress during term time.

### **5. Work to build an understanding around blended learning to manage expectations of students enrolling on SRUC courses.**

There isn't a clear understanding by students of the definition of blended learning, and how teaching is delivered on courses. This should be laid out before students sign up to a course, which would allow them to organise travel, caring responsibilities, and work commitments before coming to SRUC. There should be a clear timetable on how much time will be spent on campus, in addition to the lectures that will be delivered virtually. This should be made available within the course information, both



on the website and through communications to new and returning students. Individuals will then be able to make decisions based on whether they can manage any financial strain that would result from travelling and committing to the on-campus time. There should also be clear links to funding channels on the basis of this.

## Appendix 1 - Speak Week 2021/22 Update

SRUCSA Will	Progress/Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve clubs and societies.</li> <li>- Aim to incorporate the findings of this project into strategic planning which is currently underway.</li> <li>- Liaise with SRUC departments and staff to help students know what opportunities are available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jeroen Van Herk was hired as a Student Community Coordinator for SRUCSA in the last year, which has proved hugely worthwhile for the team. There have been 4 new clubs/societies set up since starting the role, with events such as the ‘Societies Bonanza’ being held at Oatridge and KB to encourage students to start their own clubs.</li> <li>- Communications with staff and students has been successful in the last year, with frequent collaboration about upcoming events and introductions during Welcome Week. Clubs and societies started by students in certain departments have included teaching staff to help promotion to other classes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance relationships with other students’ associations to establish connections between students.</li> <li>- Partnering with other students’ associations and establishing where SRUC students can get involved will enhance social opportunities for our students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Damson has made a connection with Edinburgh Napier Students’ Association (ENSA) and various other SA’s in the Central Belt to benefit students. This is focused on clubs and societies that SRUC students can also join with these universities and learning more about how they plan events and engage with their student population. These include Edinburgh Napier, University of Edinburgh, and University of Glasgow.</li> <li>- Individual students competing at sporting events with other university students have approached SRUCSA and been awarded funding.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Find ways to be more approachable.</li> <li>- SRUCSA officers will commit 20% of their working time to direct student engagement activities like liaising with Class Reps, hosting Student Panels and speaking to individual students. This will be incorporated into our strategic plan.</li> <li>- Investigate ways to foster presence and community feel whilst working in a hybrid setting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There has been a push from this years SRUCSA officers to spend more time on campus, speaking to students where possible. Due to Jerry living in London, effort has been made to host online and termly in person meetings with students at Elmwood and Craibstone. Catherine has frequently been on campus, both at Barony and Elmwood, hosting events and interacting with students. Damson has maintained a presence on campus, mainly at KB and Oatridge. She is working with staff to host focus groups, bringing in guest speakers, and hosting extracurricular activities on campus too.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2 – SRUC Will 2021/22 Update

SRUC Should	SRUC Will	SRUCSA Will	Progress/Comments
<p>Improve communication at course and organisational level. Students told us that communication about courses can be poor (including electives), and experiences vary between courses, campuses, and subject areas. We recommend SRUC should develop minimum standards for course information (e.g., when timetables should be supplied (as raised by SRUCSA this year), and assessment schedules), and look at courses where communication is going well and develop best practice guidelines to support other courses to achieve the same.</p>	<p>We will work with staff teams to ensure relevant course information appears on the SRUC website for prospective students to explore.</p>	<p>Continue to ensure that students thoughts on course communication reaches faculty staff. The subject of timetables will continue to be raised at faculty meetings by SRUCSA to ensure students receive these before beginning their studies in order to prepare.</p>	
<p>Look into improving employability opportunities. Students told us they need more work experience and more practical skills and knowledge. SRUC has a huge potential to offer students graduate schemes and internships within SAC consulting, veterinary services,</p>	<p>We agree that there needs to be a renewed emphasis on <b>employability</b> opportunities as part of a green recovery. To this end, through the Dandelion project in 2022 we are supporting 45 student paid placement opportunities. We will continue to provide summer internship opportunities with our SAC consulting colleagues. Staff and</p>	<p>SRUCSA will work with careers advisors across campuses to ensure opportunities are presented equally across all courses. The team will work to prepare and attend careers fairs working with support staff.</p>	

<p>and within departments of the institution. It is recommended that SRUC investigate internal graduate and intern opportunities, and update students regularly of opportunities within SRUC.</p>	<p>student feedback indicates that these opportunities provide excellent insights to the sector. SRUC has a Student Ambassador Scheme, and CELT internship scheme which both provide great opportunities to develop employability skills. There are also growing Peer Support Groups such as Mucker's Nation, SEALs and Companion Plants which aim to support employability activities. We are currently reviewing where there could be opportunities across all faculties to provide a 'skills boost' towards the end of this academic year and will report back in due course.</p> <p>We are undertaking work to embed entrepreneurial and emotional skills development opportunities into delivery of learning and teaching. This area is a focus in Curriculum Review, through which a work experience, or work-integrated element will be mandatory for every programme. The focus will be on what we call the SEED competences: these are the knowledge, skills, attributes and attitudes about and towards sustainability, enterprise, equality,</p>		
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	diversity and cultural difference that enable people to work effectively in a global and interconnected world.		
<p>Improve social and leisure opportunities for students. Students told us they would like more opportunities to socialise with other students and have more opportunities within the residences at each campus. SRUC should find ways to improve residence social activities for students and ensure all 31 students have access to a gym. We recommend that SRUC consider appointing or hiring a staff member specifically dedicated to this area to ensure there are changes made and students to get those opportunities, especially considering the changes in the student experience due to COVID.</p>	<p>We are committed to, as far as is practicable, providing opportunities across all campuses for our student community. We recognise that the student voice is key to ensure relevance of any developments or improvements. We know that SRUCSA are familiar with the challenges of delivering across all campuses and will consider whether a single staff member is an appropriate solution, or whether SRUCSA led improvements are likely to be better received if aligned to regional campuses</p>	<p>SRUCSA will focus on engaging with students looking to set up their own clubs and societies, as well as reaching out to external students' associations to collaborate on activities available to SRUC students. SRUCSA hired a temporary Student Community Coordinator to boost social activities and opportunities for students. South and West Co-president has been working with staff at Barony campus to reopen the gym for students.</p>	
<p>Try where possible to ensure students get the opportunity to do practical sessions when implementing guidance and/or restrictions. Students told us how much they</p>	<p>We completely agree about the critical importance of practical and experiential learning for the majority of SRUC courses. We also recognise that some courses are appropriate for blended or</p>	<p>We will continue to promote the importance of practical sessions embedded within lectures with SRUC staff.</p>	

<p>really value the hands-on, practical learning they receive at SRUC. Continue communications about on campus activity, ensure students on practical courses complete necessary in person activity so they achieve qualification. achieve their qualifications and feel competent in their skills.</p>	<p>distance learning delivery which can have benefits in widening participation. We are now at a stage where we are reviewing faculty risk assessments for practical delivery with a view to returning to normal campus occupation levels as soon as restrictions allow. Also note in our response to point one that we are currently considering where there could be opportunities to provide a 'skills boost' to students within the current academic year.</p>		
<p>Liaise with Baxter Story to create affordable student prices. Students told us that prices in campus cafes were too expensive and, in some cases, added to financial pressures. Introducing a regular dialogue between the catering provider, SRUC and students would allow students to understand pricing and for meals to be set to student's expectation.</p>	<p>SRUC have a standard pricing menu across our campuses. Significant improvements have been made to SRUC's subsidised catering arrangements across all sites in recent years, with a 'customer led' approach based on local intelligence gathering on the 'top ten' best sellers by Baxter Storey. SRUC staff would appreciate student input to our regular performance meetings with Baxter Storey to discuss this recommendation. Student representatives have been invited to these performance meetings in the past, but we recognise that other commitments meant they were unable to attend. SRUC staff will invite SRUCSA reps to the next</p>	<p>SRUCSA have been working with campus and estates to have a say on a new catering model at SRUC which will benefit students by ensuring that prices are affordable, and the provision is adequate.</p>	

	<p>performance meeting with Baxter Storey.</p> <p>As noted above, Baxter Storey monitor feedback on site, and encourage students to feedback at the time so that they can take action as soon as possible. Feedback has prompted developments such as ‘grab and go’ options and coffee bar arrangements.</p> <p>Whilst not specifically mentioned in this recommendation, we would also like to comment on sustainability. SRUC arrange a premium service from Baxter Storey to ensure use of recyclable materials and a commitment to local sourcing and fair trade whenever possible.</p>		
<p>Improve the support academic staff provide students</p>	<p>We are committed to developing our staff and providing relevant CPD opportunities. We will continue to monitor and act on student feedback with regards to academic support.</p> <p>Through induction week activities, all students receive information on the appeals process and actions they can take if they are unhappy with an assessment result. The Moodle</p>	<p>SRUCSA have been communicating frequently with class reps from all courses to ensure that they can feedback information regarding appeals to their classmates. This is to make sure that all students are aware of the processes regarding assessment feedback and appeals.</p>	

	<p>induction site is available for student to access throughout the year should they need to refer to information on academic appeals. We encourage all students to note this information and feedback throughout the academic year so that academic staff actions can be timely and targeted.</p>		
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