

Student Guidance – Unitu

Your department or subject area will have introduced you to a new piece of software that we are piloting at the university in 2021/22 to support the student voice, collect student feedback and act on it in partnership with students and student reps throughout the year rather than just at the end of a unit or year.

Unitu is an online platform that allows you to post feedback about your experience– sharing problems, giving praise, asking questions and suggesting new ideas.

Hopefully you already have an idea of how to use Unitu, or have given it a go – if not, this short document covers the basics to get you started but you can also [find some online pointers here.](#)

It may also be a useful reference point if you're unsure of something like the three strike system later in the year. You can use the contents table below to find the right section to answer your question

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How to activate your account

In order to access Unitu you will need to first activate your account. This is really simple and only requires your university email address.

1. Go to theuniversityofmanchester.unitu.co.uk
2. Click 'sign in with university details'
3. Follow the account activation process
4. You will need to agree to Unitu's content policy which you can read on the webpage.
 - a. It should also have been summarised in your lecture shout out – go back to the recording if this is available
 - b. There is also a section with some more details about the policy in this document.
 - c. Any issues or further questions contact the department lead for Unitu in your area.

How does Unitu work?

The platform is a web-based tool where your student reps are there to listen to your feedback and to support you in a collaborative way to help co-create solutions and or to present representative feedback to the staff in your department where feedback needs to be escalated.

When you access the platform you will first go to the left hand of 4 sections. This 'private/student only' section is only accessible by students,, student reps and UMSU Union staff. University staff in your department cannot access this area. This is to provide you with a space to discuss and share thoughts peer-to-peer and with support from your student reps.

Students can produce a post, giving it a title and detailing their feedback. You can also add tags so that other students can find the post easily using key words so that they can add weight to the feedback should they agree with it. Once you post it other students can add comments with their own thoughts, and vote on whether they agree that this feedback should be raised to staff. You can also do the same for other students' posts. Your student reps will then be on hand to help moderate, asking for more detail if they think staff would need it and generally helping out on the board. If they can answer any questions themselves they will do so – allowing you to get an answer quicker.

If the feedback needs to go to staff and there is enough information and votes on a post your student reps have the ability to raise it to a second area where feedback is visible to assigned staff in your department or subject area. . From this point staff can see the feedback and the board admin will be notified there is new feedback to view. From here a member of the staff team will be assigned the feedback post and will begin to provide updates as your feedback progresses in the department. Once a final update is available they will share this with you and the post will move to the 'closed' folder as an archive. You will still be able to access these posts at any time.

Using the platform is intuitive, think of it a little like a social media platform with posts and comments. This short document is therefore designed to cover some of the key aspects rather than a 'how-to' as it's fairly simple once you log in. If you are having issues contact your student reps/post to ask for help on Unitu as they will have had training for their role.

Roles – Staff, Student Reps and You.

We think it's important that you are aware that both the staff members you will see on the board, and your elected Student Reps have received training in how to support your feedback on Unitu. They are there to help you get the most from the platform and will work to engage with, co-create and action your feedback as appropriate.

Unitu is not a 'solution' to problems. Unitu is a platform to improve and simplify the process of providing the feedback vital to effect change at the University of Manchester. As a student on Unitu you also serve a vital role, providing thoughts and comments that staff and Student Reps need in order to make change happen. It may not be that you have a new feedback post that you want to create, but you should engage with feedback shared by your peers. If you agree with the sentiment or have further evidence you can provide add a comment. This demonstrates that the feedback is shared by a larger number of students and is more likely to lead to change. Co-creation doesn't just mean between staff and students, working with your peers to demonstrate shared sentiment can really help departments raise your comments to a higher level.

Previous students have raised issue with feedback processes and Unitu is providing a real opportunity for change. Creating a more dynamic and simplified process which can create real change not just for the next group of students, but for yourselves in a much shorter time. Everyone has a vital role to play in making this process work, including students.

Constructive Feedback

Given how crucial your role is within the Unitu system, it's also important that you are providing constructive feedback which Student Reps and staff can move forward, co-creating change at the University. Constructive feedback should be a number of things:

- **Objective** – It should consider all the facts of the situation, providing context and perspective as to why this needs to be raised as feedback on Unitu. Don't let personal feelings impact your ability to cause beneficial change – keep your posts professional. We would suggest that if you have specific concerns with a module/seminar lead that you take them to this staff member directly.
- **Specific** – Ensure that the feedback you are posting is clear, and provide suggestions about what you think could be done about it. The more supporting detail you can provide, the less Student Reps and Staff will need to ask you to clarify, reducing the wait time for change. Unitu uses 4 categories for feedback and several will prompt you to provide suggested solutions or actions plans to support your feedback.
- **Evidenced** – Make it clear what is the cause, the issue and the impact. Providing supporting detail of what needs to happen and why can really demonstrate the need for staff input and support. Show that you have thought about why you want to raise this feedback and why something needs to be done about it.
- **Representative** – Good feedback shows that it has considered the views of all students it relates to. By using Unitu, Student Reps will be able to support you by in this by raising feedback which is shown to be representative.

What feedback should I use Unitu for? – Personal Concerns and Specific Queries

It is important to consider what type of feedback Unitu is for.

Your department/school will discuss any specific types of feedback they would like you to use Unitu for but there are some situations where Unitu is not the correct platform regardless of your department. Highly personal concerns, questions or issues would be public on Unitu and would require other students to engage with them. If you are looking for help with something of this nature, contact your Academic Advisor, Peer Mentor/PASS Leader, Student Rep, Module Lead or whoever you feel to be most appropriate for the specific query.

The type of feedback you can post to Unitu also relates to the staff who will be present on the board. Given that they will be from your department/school they are less likely to be able to answer questions related to accommodation, IT support or Sport. You can use the [A-Z of services](#) to find the best place to visit/who to contact - <https://www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk/uni-services-az/> However, if you are really unsure, posting to Unitu can allow your rep to signpost you as appropriate – it may be easier to contact your rep directly though.

It's also important for you to be considerate of staff when posting to Unitu – they are there to help you. We also suggest you avoid directly naming members of staff where unnecessary – focus on the issues that you want to raise, and relate it back to the specific module it is taking place on if it isn't across your whole programme. If you are facing issues in relation to a specific staff member's teaching/approach speak with your Student Rep directly about how to best approach this – remember they have had training to help you.

When considering whether you should use Unitu to support your specific feedback remember that you do have the option to make your post anonymous, the following section explains more about this and what you should consider when posting anonymously.

Anonymity on Unitu

Every time you upload a post or comment to Unitu you have the option of whether or not you would like to do so anonymously. There is a toggle, usually next to the text box, where you can do this. Whilst this is entirely your choice it is important to consider the pros and cons of remaining anonymous or deciding to put your name to the feedback. If you have feedback about a specific lecture, activity or event and you would be worried about attributing your name to this, we understand you would want to be anonymous. Unitu has this feature so that you can feel comfortable providing this feedback when you may otherwise choose not to mention it.

However, we would encourage you not to turn on anonymity when you are comfortable not doing so. If you are giving praise it can be fantastic to see which students are actively showing they enjoyed something. If you are suggesting an idea of how something could be improved it can be really useful for staff to know who had the idea so that they can contact you for clarification if needed once the suggestion has been taken offline to a committee or a meeting. Additionally, if you are posting something you think many students will agree with, to see a list of names rather than 'anonymous user' can demonstrate to staff just how many people are having the same issue. It may also encourage your fellow students to contribute if they can see that somebody they know is also having the same problem.

Consider this platform as a professional development opportunity. When entering the world of work you are far less likely to experience such a platform that would allow you to provide feedback anonymously. Developing your ability to provide constructive feedback that you would be willing to have your name attached to will be a crucial skill throughout your life. Think about treating Unitu as a place to practice by posting helpful comments and feedback with your name attached to develop your ability to do so. You can toggle anonymity on every post for this reason, consider what you think is best every time you post.

Expected Response Time (ERT)

On the platform you will see that feedback posted has an 'expected response time' (ERT) for both Student Reps and Staff to begin engaging with your feedback. What is key to understand that this is not an expectation of a finalised answer or action based on your feedback. The first ERT is for staff and Student Reps to engage with your feedback, at which point the ERT will reset. Within each ERT you should expect to receive an update from the relevant Student Rep or staff member, which will again lead to a new ERT being set. This will continue until a final update is provided highlighting the outcome of your feedback.

In regards to expected response times it should be understood that whilst Unitu is a dynamic platform, Student Reps and staff will not be present 24/7 to engage with your feedback. Initial posts in the private student area need time for comments to be added and voting to occur, at which point a Student Rep has a better understanding of shared sentiment relating to the post. Staff will need time to identify appropriate answers or to contact relevant offline staff members where needed. ERTs are designed to ensure that engagement takes place with your feedback, but not instantly. There is still a need to wait for a response, but Unitu will help to reduce this time in a number of situations and will continuously help towards closing the feedback loop.

Content Policy

As mentioned previously, when activating your account you will need to agree to the Unitu content policy. If you would like to review this again in full you can do so here - <https://unitu.co.uk/content-policy>. In general all content posted to Unitu should contribute to a constructive atmosphere. The platform is an opportunity to discuss both the positive aspects of your academic experience as well as suggestions for how to improve those things that need further work or are not working as you might like. You must be mindful of how you raise complaints and issues and these are outlined in the Content Policy. Calmly raising an issue using appropriate language is always encouraged. Any content which contradicts the content policy can be reported by other users and a 3 strike policy could lead to your removal from Unitu.

NOTE: Whilst you have the ability to post anonymously on Unitu at all times if your account is suspended due to violations of the content policy and university policies Unitu have the right to waive your anonymity. They will always do so in a manner that only Unitu and appropriate University staff will know your identity, but do be aware that this can happen. Please keep reading for more detail on reporting content and the strike policy

Reporting content

As a user of Unitu you are expected to support the constructive environment by reporting any content you believe to be in violation of the policy. To do so select report content next to any post or

comment. When you report content you must select a reason as to why and are able to provide comment. After reporting it will be hidden immediately and sent to staff and student reps to be moderated. They can choose to either remove or reinstate the content but must provide a reason as to why the decision has been made. As the reporter of the content you will receive an email informing you of the outcome.

Three Strike Policy

Should your content be reported and moderated as inappropriate the moderator may choose to attach a strike to your account. Unitu operates a three strike policy in the following way:

- 1. First Warning:** As this is the first time content of yours has been reported and removed, we will only issue a warning.
- 2. Anonymity Disabled:** Your ability to post content anonymously will be instantly removed.
- 3. Account Suspension:** Your Unitu account will be suspended and you will no longer be able access your account.

Remember should your account be suspended following three strikes Unitu have the right to waive your anonymity.

We hope that no one will reach this level and will appreciate how to use Unitu respectfully to help improve your University experience. If you do notice anything inappropriate on the boards please do report immediately in order to help ensure such an environment remains.

Fitness to Practice

If you currently study on a programme with concerns around 'fitness to practice' and have to consider how you present yourself on social media, this would also apply to Unitu. It's important that you are thoughtful when writing any feedback on Unitu – not only to ensure the constructive environment remains but also for yourself and your professional appearance.

As a student studying on such a programme these details will be provided through your department or subject area. It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with these requirements, as they apply to all aspects of your studies, whilst also applying the policy to your interactions with Unitu.

Questions?

There are lots of people involved with Unitu who you can contact for support

- Your Student Reps
- The staff on your Unitu board (especially the board admin)
- The Students Union
- If you are looking for another channel to speak to about Unitu you can contact the 'Transforming Teaching Together' team by contacting daniel.bayes@manchester.ac.uk