

Review of University-Wide Survey on Protest

Introduction

This is a review of the university-wide survey on protest which was conducted by the Centre for Human Rights in Practice. The survey was open to all staff and students at Warwick between 15 and 30 January 2015. It was undertaken primarily in response to events surrounding protests at Warwick in December 2014.

The following questions were asked by the survey (all questions allowed respondents to produce their own free text responses):

1. Please tell us about any concerns you have in relation to protest on campus, including those relating to recent events.
2. Please tell us if there is anything you would like to see done differently in relation to protest in the future.
3. Do you have any questions that you would like to see addressed at the summit?
4. Who would you like to be involved at the summit to address any issues that have been raised?
5. Do you have any other comments?

There were 579 responses to the survey. Respondents were asked to identify themselves as academic staff, administrative staff, undergraduate student, postgraduate student or other. The breakdown of respondents was as follows:

- 207 undergraduate students
- 124 academic staff
- 104 postgraduate students
- 99 administrative staff

There were 25 who described themselves as 'other roles', and 20 individuals who chose not to specify their role at the university. Below we review the responses to the survey, categorised in terms of questions 1-4 above.

1. Key Concerns

We first analysed responses to the survey in order to identify key concerns which emerged, and then undertook further more detailed evaluation of each type of concern to better identify the nature of the comments being made.

Three main areas of concern were expressed within the survey:¹

1. 403 responses raised concerns about the police and/or university reactions to the protests
2. 204 responses expressed concerns about the protests/protestors themselves.
3. 62 responses raised broader concerns about the university connected to the protests.

¹ The same respondents often had more than one concern, so the total number of concerns exceeds the total number of respondents. This is also true of the more detailed breakdowns of complaints set out below.

22 responses did not raise concerns because of lack of knowledge of events surrounding the protests. 13 respondents indicated they had no concerns at all.

A. The Reaction to the Protests

There were 403 responses that were critical of the reaction to the protests. (53 of these responses also raised concerns about the protests themselves – see section 1.B. below). The majority of respondents appeared to focus upon events in December 2014, although a number of respondents raised broader concerns. Concerns about the reaction to the protests were raised by 80% of academic staff, 76% of postgraduate students, 66% of undergraduate students, and 51% of administrative staff who responded to the survey.

Some respondents only raised their concerns in general terms. The following is a breakdown of the most widely-held concerns of respondents who addressed more specific issues:

270 responses raised concerns about the police actions on campus on 3 December 2014. Many voiced their concerns in general terms only. Specific concerns included:²

- 172 responses explicitly raised the issue of excessive/disproportionate use of force/violence/aggression by police officers.
- 14 responses criticised police for lack of professionalism and/or overreacting to events.
- 6 responses were critical of a lack of communication with protestors.
- 17 responses raised more general concerns about police behaviour, and fears about police behaviour in the future.

Of those respondents who went into more detail:

- 40 responses criticised the use of pepper spray/CS gas.
- 24 responses were critical of the use/presence of taser guns.
- 10 responses questioned the excessive numbers of police who were on campus to deal with the protests.
- 9 responses were critical of the treatment by police of a particular female student.

There were 232 responses that were critical of university management's handling of the protests. Many voiced their concerns in general terms only. Specific concerns included:

- 160 responses raised concerns about the erosion of freedom of expression/the right to protest on the university campus and/or university management's failure to protect freedom of speech/the right to protest.
- 155 responses were critical of the statements/emails from the Vice Chancellor in relation to the incidents in December 2014. More specifically:
 - 38 responses were critical of the failure to support students.

² A number of respondents raised more than one from the list of issues set out below. This is true for all subsequent categories.

- 38 responses criticised the lack of evidence/proof to support claims made, particularly those relating to an alleged assault.
- 35 responses found the emails lacked neutrality or were inaccurate.
- 29 responses were critical of the failure to condemn police violence.
- 10 responses were concerned that communications were damaging to the university's reputation.
- 129 responses were critical of university management's level of communication and dialogue with protestors.
- 35 responses criticised the use of injunctions/bans/legal actions in relation to protestors and/or called for these to be removed.
- 5 responses were critical of university management's lack of communication with frontline staff in terms of how they should handle the protests.

154 responses were critical of the reaction of campus security; the fact that they were unable to deal with issues in December 2014 internally, and/or questioning of the appropriateness/necessity of calling police onto campus. In addition, the following more specific concerns were raised:

- 23 respondents queried security staff treatment of students in terms of level of force utilised/failure to intervene to protect students from police violence and/or failure to communicate with protestors effectively.
- 19 respondents had more general concerns about campus security including heavy presence, hostile/intimidating attitude, their relationship with police and whether their functions were outsourced to private companies.

16 responses were critical of the Students Union:

- 6 responses criticised the types of activism/activists supported by the Students Union.
- 5 responses criticised the statements put out by SU officers in relation to the protests.
- 5 responses criticised the SU more generally in terms of its effectiveness.

B. Concerns about the Protests Themselves

204 responses raised concerns about protests and/or protesters at Warwick University. The majority of respondents appeared to focus upon events in December 2014, although some raised broader concerns. Concerns about the protests/protestors were raised by 55% of administrative staff, 36% of undergraduate students, 29% of postgraduate students and 16% of academic staff.

Some respondents only raised their concerns in general terms. The following is a breakdown of the most widely-held concerns of respondents who addressed more specific concerns:

82 responses expressed concerns about disruption to working life and educational activities on campus. Many voiced their concerns in general terms only. The most common specific concerns were:

- Complaints about Senate House as the site of protests (33 responses). This is a particular concern of postgraduate students working in the building. A number of respondents questioned the appropriateness of protesting outside Senate House, as it is no longer the home of any key university officials.
- The occupation of the Rootes Building was also an issue of concern for 23 respondents, including disruption to commercial activities and loss of pay to staff who were working there at the time.
- Most other responses discussed disturbances to work without mentioning specific locations.

62 responses raised concerns about personal safety. These included:

- 32 responses who described themselves or others as feeling intimidated, fearful or threatened as a result of the actions of protestors.
- 11 responses raised concerns about the alleged assault on a member of staff.
- 19 responses made more general comments about the importance of ensuring that staff/students/visitors do not feel threatened or intimidated by protestors.

There were also concerns raised **about protestors who were not members of the university** (39 responses), with a number of respondents raising questions about whether it was appropriate for them to be allowed to protest at Warwick. Many of these responses suggested such protestors were exacerbating the situation. 10 responses criticised the **wearing of masks** by some protestors.

33 responses raised concerns about protestors damaging university property. Many voiced their concerns in general terms only. Specific concerns included:

- 13 responses specifically referred to vandalism of Senate House, particularly in relation to the doors of the building.

C. Broader set of concerns about the university

62 responses identified the protests as symptomatic of **wider concerns about fragmentation of the university community** (and such concerns could be seen as implicit in many other responses). Specific concerns raised included:

- 22 responses expressed concern about increasing divisions between university management, staff and students.
- 16 responses raised concerns about the university's lack of meaningful engagement with students and/or involving them in decision-making processes.
- 18 responses raised issues about differing core values across the university.

2. What do Warwick Staff/Students want in relation to protest in the future?

There were many general suggestions that followed directly from concerns raised in the survey including less violence and confrontation in relation to protest, appropriate policing, better communication between key actors, more transparency and more

objective reporting on events. Below we concentrate on the more specific ideas and recommendations for change raised by respondents.

119 responses called for increased dialogue between university management/‘the university’ and student protestors and/or the wider student community in relation to (a) protest and (b) the underlying issues of concern raised by students.

82 respondents recommended less police presence on campus in future. This included 21 respondents who argued that police should not be dealing with issues relating to protests at all. 16 respondents argued that police should not be called onto campus unless the situation was particularly serious. 8 respondents argued that police should never be allowed onto campus in any situation. On the other hand, 4 respondents argued for more police presence in future.

74 responses called for the university to do more to allow/support/promote protest on the university campus. On the other hand, **41 responses advocated limitations on the right to protest** including restricting the space in which protests are allowed (14), not allowing protests in buildings (12) and allowing only university students to protest (10). 7 responses suggested more police/security presence. 4 responses suggested protest on campus was inherently undesirable/should be stopped.

Other specific recommendations included:

- 34 responses suggested a code of conduct/protocol/guidance should be developed for protests to which police, security and/or the student body signed up.
- 20 respondents argued that there should be (better) training for security staff to handle issues in relation to protests on the university campus.
- 15 respondents called for an apology from the university in relation to police actions against protestors.
- 6 responses argued there was a need for better information about protests for frontline staff dealing with them.

3. Question Raised by Survey Participants

There were a wide range of questions which were either explicitly asked, or were implicit within concerns raised in the survey. Questions raised by Survey Respondents relate to four main areas:

- A. Key events in relation to the December 2014 protests
- B. The response to, and aftermath of the December protests
- C. The policies and practices relevant to protests generally
- D. General principles about protests and debate on campus

A. Questions about Key Events in relation to the December 2014 protests

Many respondents wanted to know more detail about what happened in relation to the events on 3 December 2014, and in relation to the protests more generally. The questions asked can be summarised as:

Events in Relation to 3 December 2014:

1. Was a member of staff assaulted?
2. If so, what were the injuries sustained by the staff member?
3. Has anyone been charged for an assault?
4. Why were the police called?
5. Who called the police?
6. What was told to the police and what were they asked to do?
7. How many police officers attended the university?
8. Why were police armed with tasers and pepper spray?
9. Were the reactions of police proportionate?
10. Why did the students resist the police in making an arrest?
11. Was any support offered to the student(s) who were sprayed/assaulted?
12. Why hasn't the CCTV footage of the incident been released?
13. Has an independent investigation into the events been commissioned by the university?
14. Will a full account of what happened be published, and if so, when?
15. What will the university do if students are found to have been wrongfully abused or detained?

Broader questions about December 2014 protests:

16. Why were Senate House and the Rootes Building the focus of protest?
17. Why did protestors occupy the Rootes Building?
18. How many protestors were from outside the university, and why were they involved?
19. Were any staff threatened/intimidated by students?
20. Why did some of the students wear masks?
21. What has been the cost of protest for the university?

B. Questions about Action Taken in Response to the December protests

Questions were also raised about actions taken after the protest. They can be divided and summarised as:

Action taken after the protest

1. Have there been any disciplinary actions against (a) students (b) security staff (c) other university members?

2. Have any students been barred from the university as a result of the protests?
3. What was the Student Union's response to protests and how was it formulated?
4. Have any police officers been suspended/sanctioned/disciplined?
5. When will any internal and external investigations be completed?

The University's Legal Actions in relation to protest on campus

6. Why was an injunction sought and what are its terms?
7. How much did the injunction cost – why was this preferred to dialogue?
8. Has the university taken any other legal actions in relation to protest/protestors on the university campus?

The Vice Chancellor's Emails/Statements in relation to the protests

9. Who was responsible for drafting the emails about the protests?
10. How was evidence collected to inform those emails?
11. Why did the Vice Chancellor's 4 December email support security staff and police action rather than await a full inquiry?
12. Why did the statement not question the actions of police?
13. Does the university plan to issue any further statements in relation to this issue?
14. When will the evidence promised by the Vice Chancellor about events be forthcoming?

General

15. What actions have been taken to ensure there will be no repeat of scenes seen during the December protests?
16. What protests have happened since and how have they been addressed?

C. Questions about the policies and protocols in place regarding protest

Many questions were also asked concerning the general policies that exist relating to protests and security issues. They can be divided as:

Policies relating to Security and Policing

1. Is there a code of conduct/protocol for security staff regarding protest and interaction with students and if so what does it say – what powers are they given?
2. Who are the members of Warwick Security and are they all employees of the university?

3. Who is responsible for Security operations and how are security staff held accountable?
4. What training/support is provided to security staff in relation to dealing with student protests?
5. What policy exists for the university in its dealings with local police?
6. Do the police have any code of conduct/protocol for how they respond to (a) events on university campus generally (b) issues relating to protests?

Policies relating to other university staff

7. Is there a protocol for University staff to follow in the event of student protest?
8. How does the Dignity at Work policy apply in this situation?
9. What communications strategy is in place for (a) informing frontline staff about protests happening on campus and their effects (b) communicating to the wider Warwick community on issues of protest?
10. Is there advice provided about mediation techniques when staff are faced with protests?

Policies/practices relating to protest

11. What spaces/mechanisms are there within the university for debate about issues of concern (a) generally and (b) in relation to university policy?
12. What is the university's current policy on protest and how it is managed?
13. Does the university have a policy in relation to how it will deal with future 'occupation' protests? Are occupational protests banned?
14. Is there a student protest policy and, if not, how does the Student Union engage with protest at the university?
15. Does the Student Union monitor outside involvement in campus protest?
16. What other forms of protest/engagement have been tried by protestors before occupation?
17. Are the protestors from Warwick for Free Education representing views that are widely held among the student population? Does this matter?
18. What legal advice/help is available for protesting students?

D. Questions About Principles that *should* govern protest in the university

Questions of a more general nature were also raised about student protest, the management of the university and what kind of university Warwick was and wanted to be.

Policing on campus

1. Should police have a presence on campus for protest and if so when and how should that be triggered?
2. What should be the limits of security staff operations on campus?
3. How should protests be 'policed'?

Protest and debate on campus

4. Should there be a mutually agreed code of conduct/protocol for protest, and should it cover (a) security staff (b) other university staff (c) police and (d) students?
5. Would any protocol that covered the actions of protestors undermine the very nature of protest itself?
6. Should protestors have the right to disrupt the work of other people on campus?
7. What does peaceful protest entail? Should there be a 'right to protest' on campus, if so what should this entail?
8. How should freedom of expression be ensured on campus?
9. How can peaceful protest be facilitated?
10. Should occupational protests be allowed?
11. Should anonymous protestors (through concealment of identity) be tolerated?
12. How should the university balance (a) allowing protests with (b) protecting other important interests including staff safety?
13. Should non-Warwick people be allowed to take part in protest on the campus?
14. How should the university protect staff who feel threatened or harassed by protestors?
15. What should be considered reasonable protest?

Engagement and dialogue and broader concerns

16. How can dialogue be best achieved between protestors and university management?
17. How can students be more involved in decision-making on campus?
18. How can a balance be struck between all constituencies in decision-making?
19. What are the university's core values and how 'corporate' should we allow the university to become?
20. Are protests symptomatic of the changing nature of universities?
21. What are the Free Education protests about?
22. What lessons have been learned for the future?

4. Participants at the Summit

A wide range of people, either named individuals or representatives of particular institutions, were suggested as possible participants. The most requested were:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. The Vice Chancellor: | 123 |
| 2. Student representatives: | 117 |

3. A Police representative:	94
4. Student protestors/WFE:	86
5. A representative of Warwick Security:	85
6. Registrar/Admin representative:	70

Representatives/individuals in all of the above categories have accepted invitations to participate in the summit.

Less frequent were requests for various different staff representatives (52); Human rights organisation/lawyers (27); Staff affected by protests (13); and representatives from academic departments (13). There were many other suggestions ranging from SU sabbatical officers (7) to representatives from government or political parties (7) to the communications office representative (7) to the residential life team representatives (4) to representatives from the University Council (3). Some requests were made for named other individuals including Thomas Docherty (5), the University Chancellor (2), the University's Legal Counsel (2), and Russell Brand (1).