

Changes in student/staff attitudes to sustainability 2015-2018

1. Introduction

This report explores changes in student and staff attitudes to sustainability 2015 – 2018, it draws on six surveys (participants and survey details are outlined in Table 1). The significant drop in response rate between years has arisen due to restrictions on survey distribution to ‘all’ email accounts. Note: comparisons between years use different samples of the student and staff population, they do not compare individual cases.

Table 1 Summary of Questionnaire responses

Student Survey 2016	1214 respondents
Staff Survey 2016	508 respondents
Student Survey 2017	271 respondents
Staff Survey 2017	180 responses
Student only – Values and Attitudes 2015	1,374 responses
Student only – Values and Attitudes 2016	2,041 responses

2. Results

2.1 Knowledge of ‘Sustainability’ activities on campus

Table 2 indicates there has been a general increase in student and staff knowledge of onsite sustainability activities between 2016 and 2017 with the exception of our handling of re-cycling electronic waste. Staff generally have more knowledge of onsite activities than students. Both staff and students have much greater knowledge of recycling of glass, plastic and paper than other activities.

Table 2 Knowledge of sustainability activities

Activity	Student 2016 % Knowing a lot or a fair amount	Student 2017 % Knowing a lot or a fair amount	Staff 2016 % Knowing a lot or a fair amount	Staff 2017 % Knowing a lot or a fair amount
Recycling of glass, plastic and paper	56.7%	61.3%	73.3%	75.6%
Recycling electronic waste (e.g. mobile phones)	18.3%	17.8%	27.0%	24.6%
Disposing of food waste	42.3%	44.7%	37.0%	41.3%
Donating unwanted items	24.5%	27.7%	25.7%	27.3%

2.2 Rating of University of Worcester’s efforts to tackle sustainability issues

Student and staff ratings of the University’s efforts to improve sustainability on campus have fluctuated between 2016 and 2017 (Table 3), whilst ratings have tended to improve amongst students (increase in 5 out of 8 ratings), staff ratings generally declined (reduction in 5 of 8 ratings). Overall the areas of increased awareness are greatest for both staff and students in the three areas of transport; encouraging bus, cycling and car share. This may be due to special offers with First bus, the promotion of the bike shop and bike repair on campus and the publicity campaign to increase car share.

It is unclear why the staff’s rating of ‘campus maintenance being conducted in an environmentally friendly manner’ have declined to this extent. The reduction in staff assessment of activity to conserve energy and

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tackle greenhouse gas is also difficult to interpret. This may be a result of increased awareness of climate change and the need for action.

Table 3 Ratings of university campus sustainability initiatives

Activity	Student 2016 % Rating efforts as good/ very good	Student 2017% Rating efforts as good/ very good	% difference 2016-2017	Staff 2016 % Rating efforts as good/ very good	Staff 2017 % Rating efforts as good/ very good	% difference 2016-2017
Conserve energy	52.8	59.7	+6.9	60.2	53.4	-6.8
Encourage bus use	40.9	51.2	+10.3	43.9	54	+10.1
Encourage cycling	43	55.9	+12.9	53.5	63.4	+9.9
Promote car share	32.6	40.8	+8.2	42.3	58.6	+16.3
Promote recycling	64.5	71.2	+6.7	73.6	69.2	-4.4
Promote food from sustainable sources	36.4	34.7	-1.7	40.5	33.5	-7
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	32.9	31.2	-1.7	40.3	32.4	-7.9
Maintain campus grounds - environmentally-friendly manner	58.4	60.1	+1.7	59.7	47.5	-12.2

This University's sustainability efforts were further explored in the student values and attitudes surveys 2015 and 2016. These show a decline in agreement with statements relating to the University's positive sustainability impacts (figure 1). This indicates a need to further promote the University's sustainability credentials within the student populations and use methods appropriate for this audience.

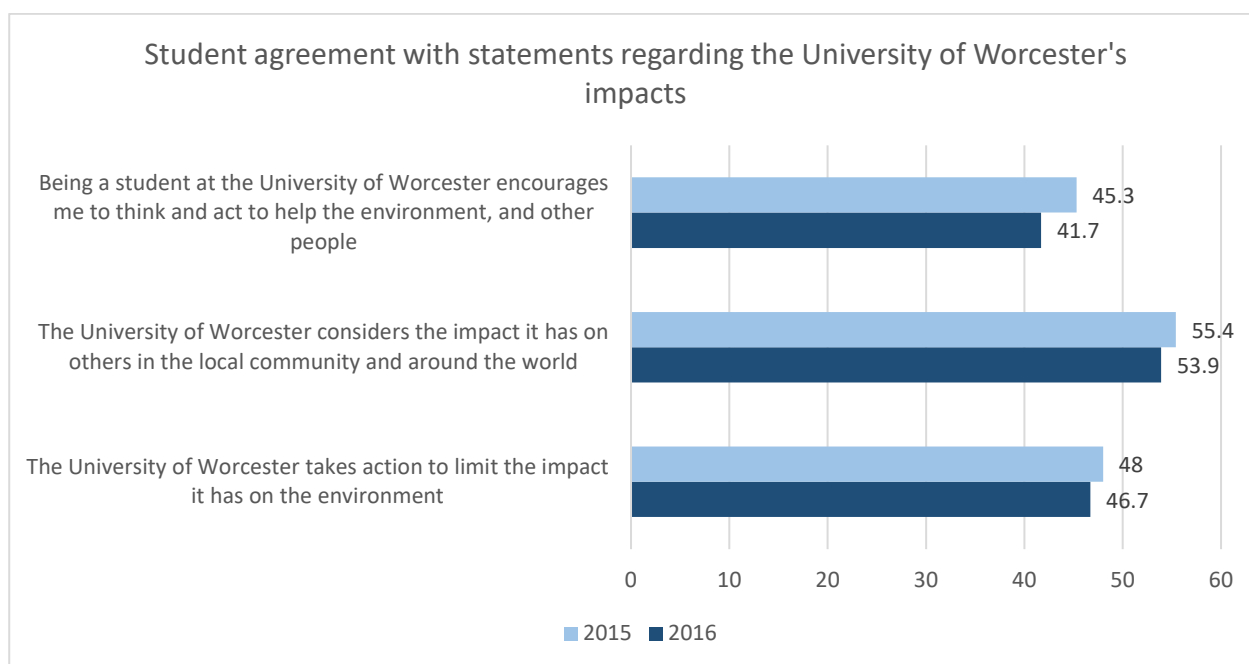


Figure 1: Student attitudes towards University of Worcester

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2.3 Individual commitment to sustainability

Student participation in sustainability activities has shown a small increase over the course of two years, with greatest increase in the area of community volunteering (see Figure 1). This may be attributed to the growing popularity of the Worcester Award and the significant efforts of the SU to promote volunteering amongst students. Progress with integration of sustainability into the curriculum is also evidenced with a 2.1% increase in those recognising this as a feature of their course.

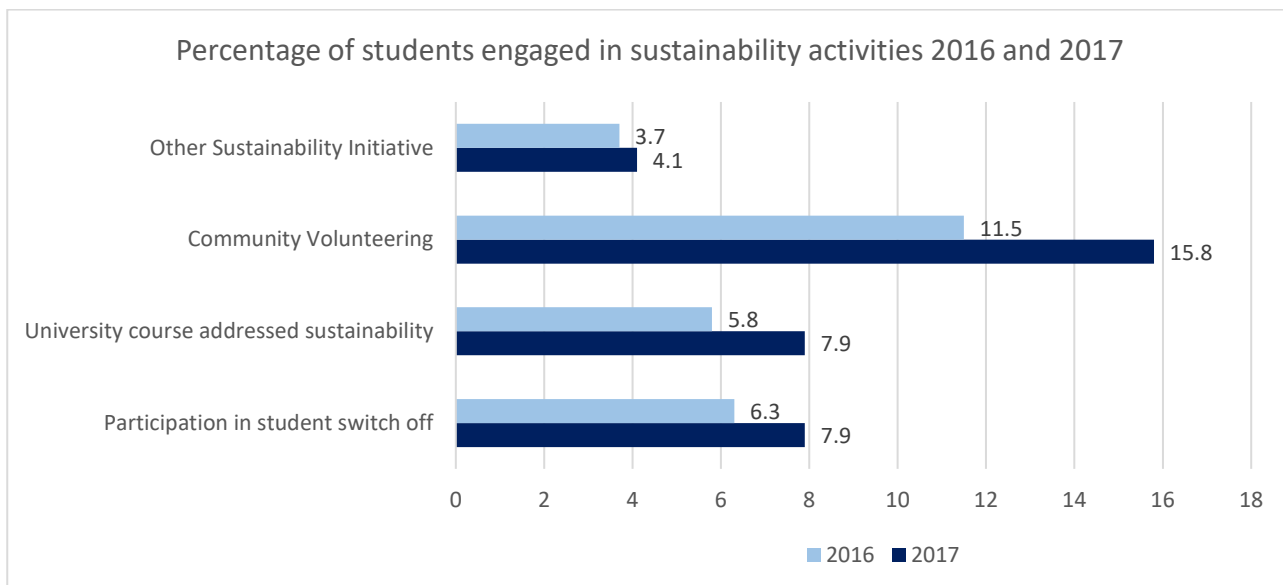


Figure 1: Student engagement in sustainability activities 2016 and 2017

There has been little shift in students’ response gauging their personal commitment to sustainability (see figure 2). However, there has been a substantial shift amongst staff (24.6% increase between 2016 and 2017) in those stating they were ‘very committed’ to sustainability (with a total of 60.9% now in this category).



Figure 2: Student and staff commitment to sustainability

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The small shift in student commitment to sustainability over time was also picked up in the 'Values and Attitudes' surveys (2015 and 2016, figure 3), although 4% more students agreed they saw it as important to limit the impact of their lifestyle on the environment in 2016.

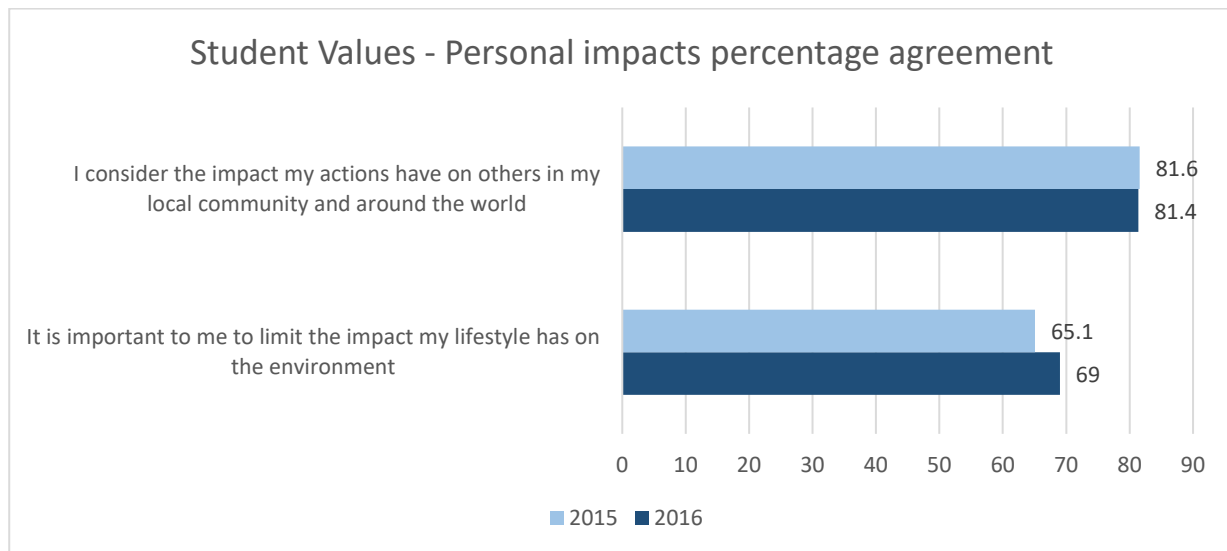


Figure 3: Student values regarding personal impact of actions.

2.4 Individual action for sustainability

The stated commitment to sustainability by staff is evidenced in their responses to frequency of carrying out a selection of sustainability activities (Figure 4). Staff have generally increased the frequency of carrying out sustainable actions between 2016 and 2017 (10 of 12 activities). The largest increases were in 'Purchasing something second-hand from a charity shop or from an online site such eBay or Gumtree', 'Checking recycling labels on products before deciding which bins they should be deposited in' and 'Printing double-sided to save paper'. Whilst causality cannot be proven, the latter two may be attributed in part to on campus campaigns to encourage waste separation and recycling and save paper.

Unfortunately, the number of students carrying out a selection of sustainability activities (Figure 4) all or most of the time has generally remained stable or dropped. The largest drop was in the number of students using double side printing (6.5% reduction).

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Percentage of students and staff who carry out sustainability activities always or most of the time

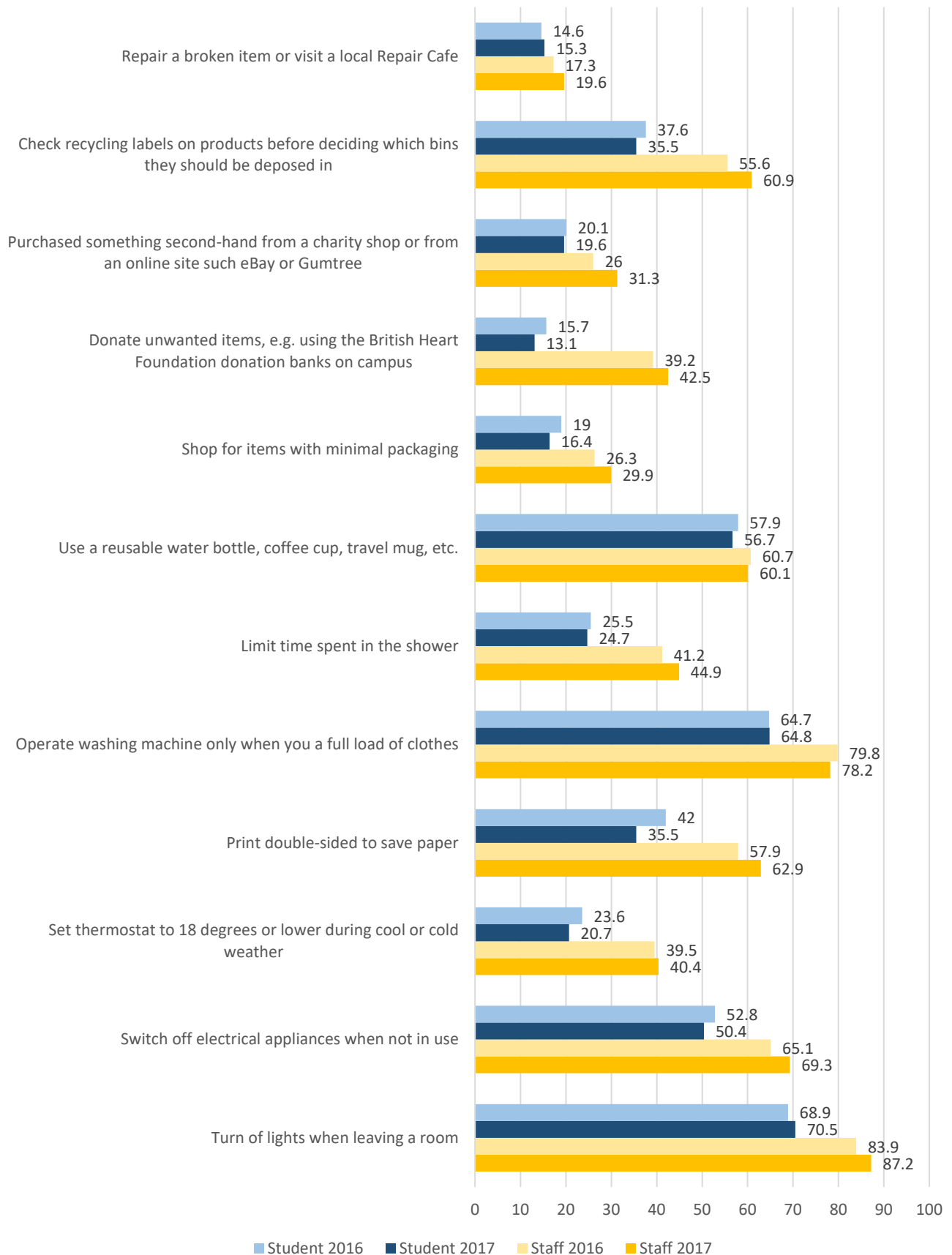


Figure 4: Staff and student - sustainability actions 'always' or 'most of the time' 2016 and 2017

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2.5 Transport and sustainability

When asked about most frequent transport used (figure 5), the data evidences a small increase in bus use (3.6%) amongst staff and reduction in their individual car use (4.2%). For students there is a noticeable drop in individual car use (12.9% reduction to 26.1%) and marked increase in walking on foot (16.1% increase to 49.2% overall). This is encouraging in the light of University of Worcester transport campaigns.

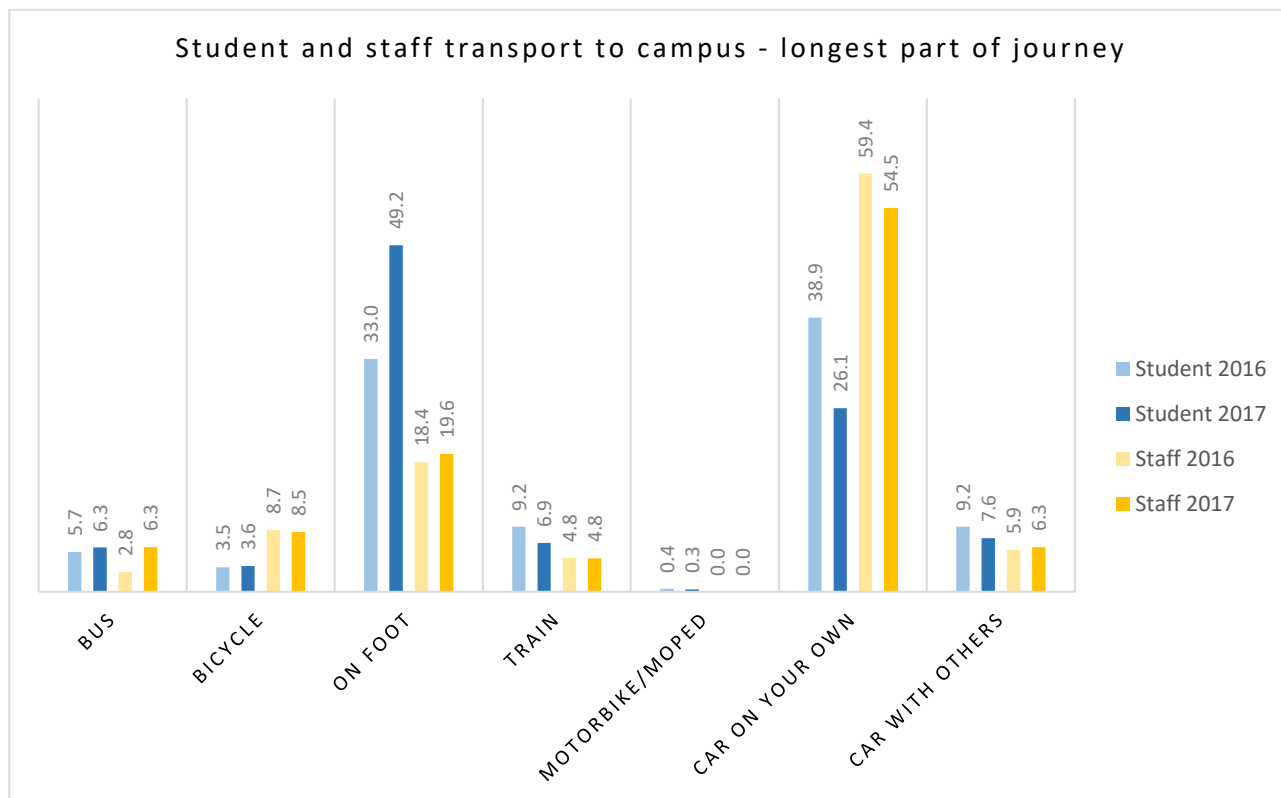


Figure 5: Staff and student transport to campus – longest part of journey

In 2016, 57.3% of staff stated it was feasible to use public transport to get to the University for work, this dropped to 45% in 2017. Despite the reduction in feasibility the figures show that there are still opportunities to reduce staff car use.

Figure 6 indicates levels of awareness of different transport schemes operating at the University. Note: the measures of these were slightly different between years with 2016 responses combining the categories 'I know a lot' and 'a fair amount'; whilst 2017 responses combine the categories 'I use it' and 'I've heard of it know how it works/what it is'. Overall the table supports the finding that awareness of sustainable transport options on campus has increased.

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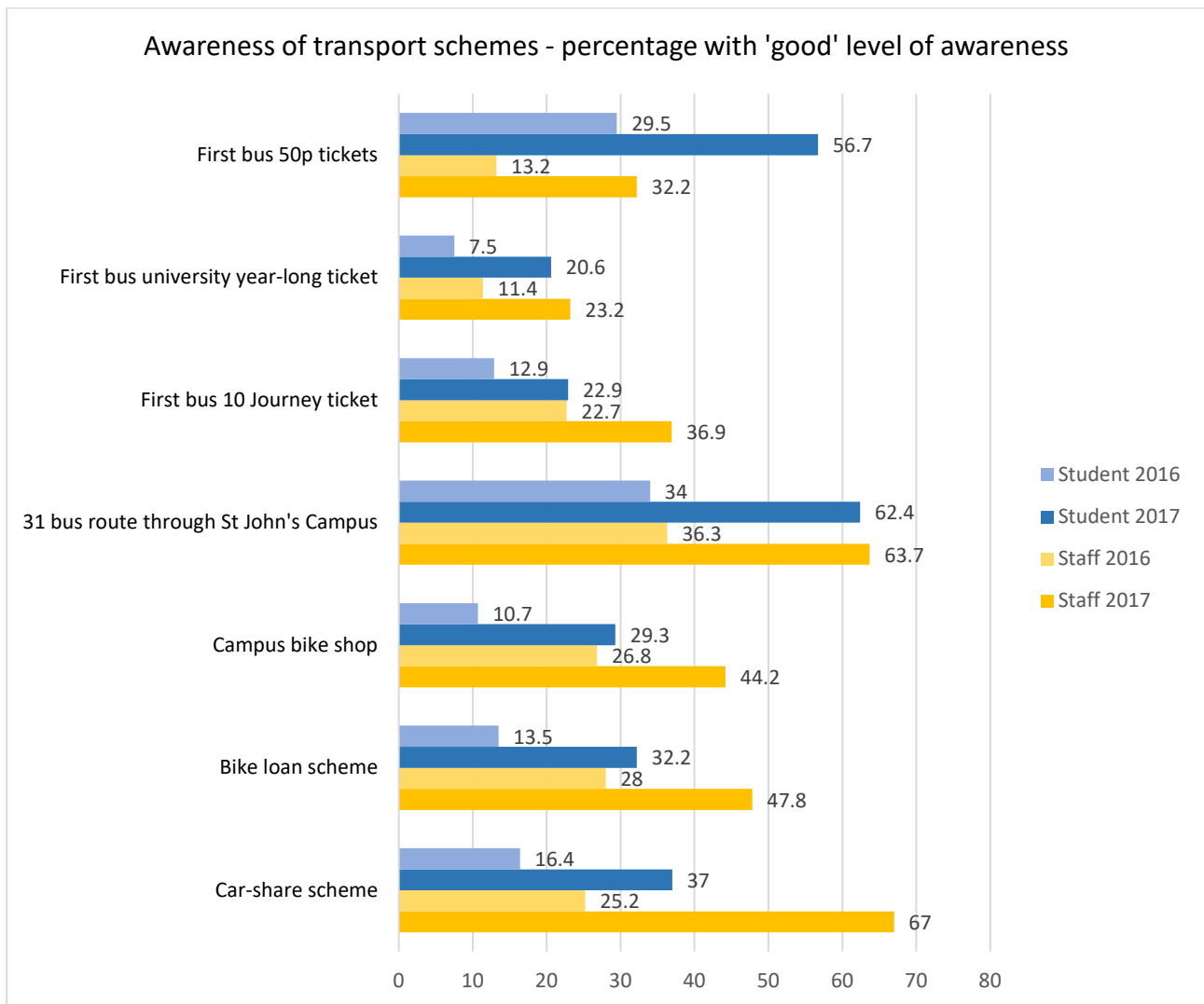


Figure 6: Staff and student transport to campus – longest part of journey

3 Conclusion

The evidence presented suggests that staff and student perceptions of sustainability on campus are generally positive and have mostly improved over the academic years 2015/6 through to 2017/18. It appears that transport campaigns have been effective in raising awareness of varied sustainability schemes and that there is an increasing trend towards choosing more sustainable transport options. The report has also identified a number of areas for improvement in motivating behaviour change for sustainability e.g. increasing staff and student awareness of the University's engagement in carbon reduction, and supporting individual behaviour change to accompany this. It has also highlighted the need to more powerfully publicise and market the University's strategic strength in this important area amongst students and staff.

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4 Actions

The following actions have been implemented in response to the results of measuring over time students and staff sustainability 'culture' on campus.

Activity	Responsibility	Date
Additional recycling receptacles encouraging segregation of food waste, in key locations dining room, city campus, Students Union	Campus services	Summer 2018
Review possibility of having regular monthly repair café's on campus	Sustainability Department	September 2018
Additional campus bike and bus events at open/visit days	Communications and Participation and sustainability department	March 2018
More supplier and grower events promoting locally grown and sustainable food	Hospitality	Summer 2019
New Energy officer post	Estates	April 2018
Students' Union Sustainability Awards	Students' Union	September 2017
Refresh social media communications to ensure relevant to students	Students' Union & Sustainability department	August 2017
Revise sustainability strategy in line with new strategic plan mapped to the Sustainable Development Goals	Sustainability Committee and Responsible Futures Working Group	Ongoing from 2016

March 2018