



NUS/HSBC Student Experience Report: Internationalisation



Funded and conducted in association with:



Research conducted by:



national union of students



NUS/ HSBC Students Experience Report: Internationalisation and Religion

February 2010

Date

10 February 2010

Contact:

Guy Halsey

GfK Financial

Ludgate House

245 Blackfriars Road

London

SE1 9UL

Tel. 020 7890 9475

Fax 020 7890 9222

e-mail

guy.halsey@gfk.com

www.gfknop.co.uk

Study Number: 154747

Commissioned by:

NUS/ HSBC

Table of contents

1	INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY	2
2	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
3	INTERNATIONALISATION & INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	4
4	RELIGION	17



1 Introduction & Methodology

This report discusses the second wave of a programme of research carried out by the NUS and HSBC between May and June 2009 into students' expectations and experiences of university. The research looked at a variety of areas, including accommodation, finances, assessment, teaching and resources.

The research programme comprised both quantitative and qualitative approaches, which were combined to ensure both depth and breadth in the findings. The quantitative phase consisted of an online questionnaire, which ran between 2nd and the 24th of June 2009. A total of 1187 students took part in the survey, meeting a variety of interlocking quotas including year of study, institution type and gender to ensure the results were representative of the student population.

The qualitative phase consisted of an online bulletin board of 12 domestic students, designed to compliment the quantitative phase by providing an arena for discussing a range of issues. The participants of the board were carefully selected to provide a representative group of students, fulfilling a number of quotas including course type, year of study and institution type.



2 Executive Summary

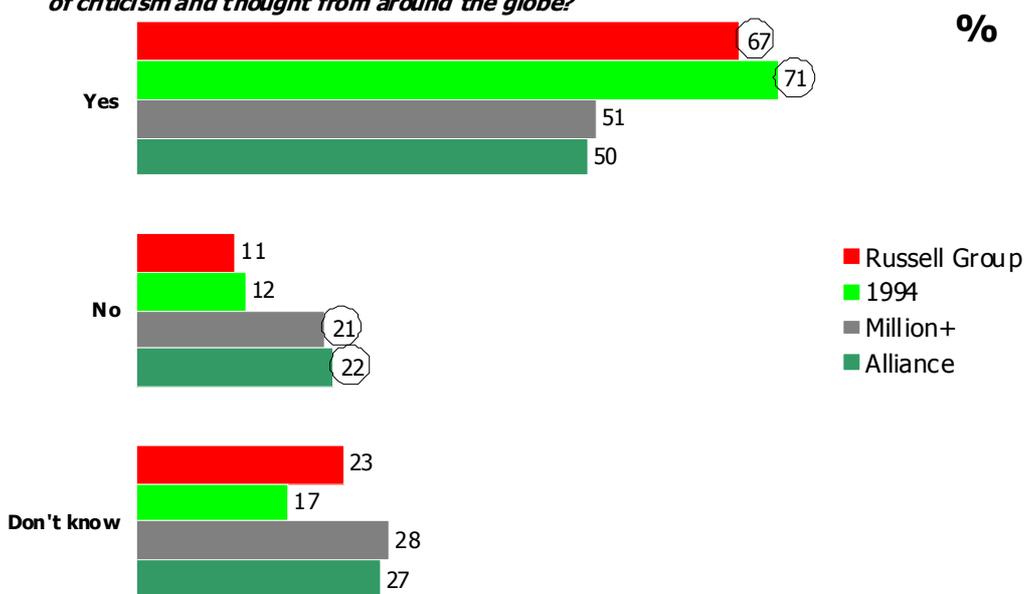
- Half of all students, 50%, said they feel more than somewhat integrated in the academic side of university, with just under half, 49%, saying they feel more than somewhat integrated in the social side of university. However this is significantly affected by institution type, as students attending either a Russell Group or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to say they felt integrated.
- The majority of students, 80%, said they felt that UK higher education is valuable and recognised. Again, this is affected by institution type, as students attending a Russell Group or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to feel UK higher education is valuable and recognised.
- There is a difference between how integrated international students feel with domestic students when compared with how integrated domestic students feel with international students. International students were significantly more likely to say they feel integrated with domestic students than domestic students were with international students.
- Only 16% of domestic students said they either had, or planned to, study abroad as part of their course. However this is affected by institution type, as students attending a Russell Group or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to say they were.
- The main reasons given for studying abroad were to gain greater confidence and to improve employment prospects, while the main reason students gave for not studying abroad was that it was not relevant to their course.
- Just under one third of students, 32%, said they belonged to a religion, with 62% saying they could freely practise their religion at university.

3 Internationalisation & International students

Over half of students, 59%, thought their course included a sufficient range of criticism and thought from around the world. Only 17% of students said they didn't think their course included a sufficient range of criticism from around the world, with just under one in four, 24%, saying that they didn't know. Interestingly, this is significantly affected by institution type, as students attending either a Russell Group institution, or a 1994 institution, are significantly more likely to say they thought their course included a sufficient range of criticism from around the world – see chart 1. When this is looked at by whether students are domestic or international, there are no significant differences.

Chart 1: Students from Russell Group or 1994 institutions are most likely to think their course includes a sufficient range of criticism and thought from around the world

Q59. Thinking about the content on your course, do you feel the curriculum includes a sufficient range of criticism and thought from around the globe?



Base: Russell Group (261); 1994 (153); Million+ (169); Alliance (218)

When students were asked how integrated they feel in the academic side of university, half, 50%, said more than somewhat integrated – see chart 2. Within the qualitative work the challenges in integrating international students were investigated, with two key areas emerging. The first area was the movement into the higher education style of learning, including the move into independent learning along with the trend towards less definitive answers and more towards opinion and critique. This is not unique to international students, their concerns mirror domestic students in this regard; however depending on their country of origin the scale of the transition can increase. The second area relates to the clear issue of language; those from non-english speaking countries frequently find the rapid exchanges and technical language used in University intimidating. Many students

overcome these barriers, and it would appear a critical factor in this is the presence of tutors. Within the research, tutors were often described as an extremely important source of support for international students and they play a positive role in their integration.

"My tutor, she is a nice lady, she helped me with my communication"

1st Year BSc China

"I approached my personal tutor at first and she gave me some hints and tips"

3rd Year BA India

The proportion of students stating that they feel more than somewhat integrated is approximately the same when students were asked how integrated they feel in the university social life. This said, it should be noted that there is a small increase in the number stating that they are close to not at all integrated. Reflecting this, in the qualitative work there were a number of students who felt a significant social

"European socialising is very different to the British way of socializing"

1st Year BA France

"There were none in my halls so I didn't really interact with many exchange students, but I'd like to"

3rd Year BSc Domestic

disconnect between domestic and international students. Aspects which contributed to this included segregated accommodation (where domestic and international students are placed in different halls of residence) and in some cases the cultural differences can be an obstacle, specifically the drinking culture. This said, social integration between domestic and international students seems to flourish in societies and also can form from group work in courses – although these bonds can fail to transfer outside of

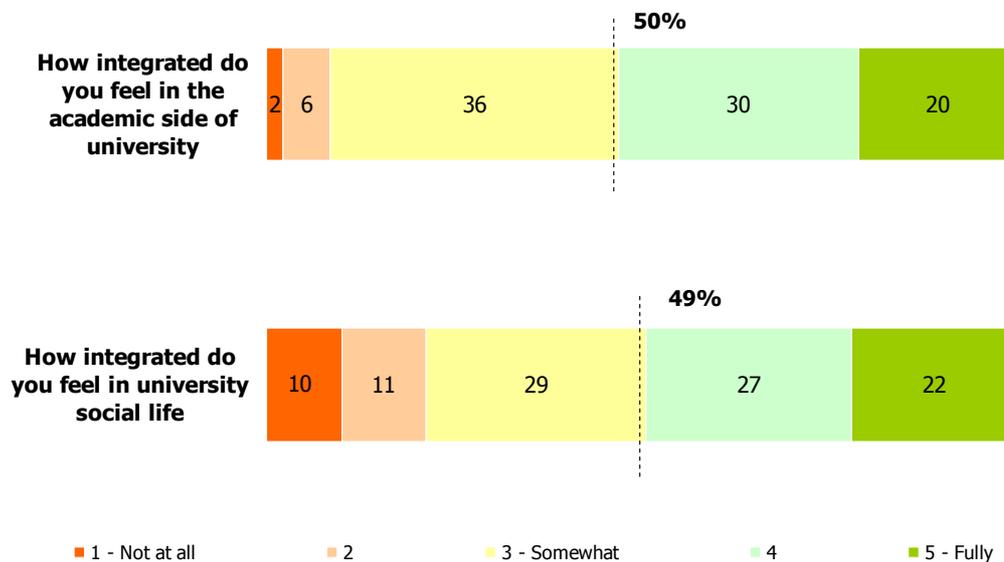
the course. When this is looked at by whether students are domestic or international there are no significant differences.

Chart 2: The majority of students said they feel at least somewhat integrated in both the academic and social side of university

Q60. How integrated do you feel in the academic side of university?

Q61. How integrated do you feel in university social life?

%



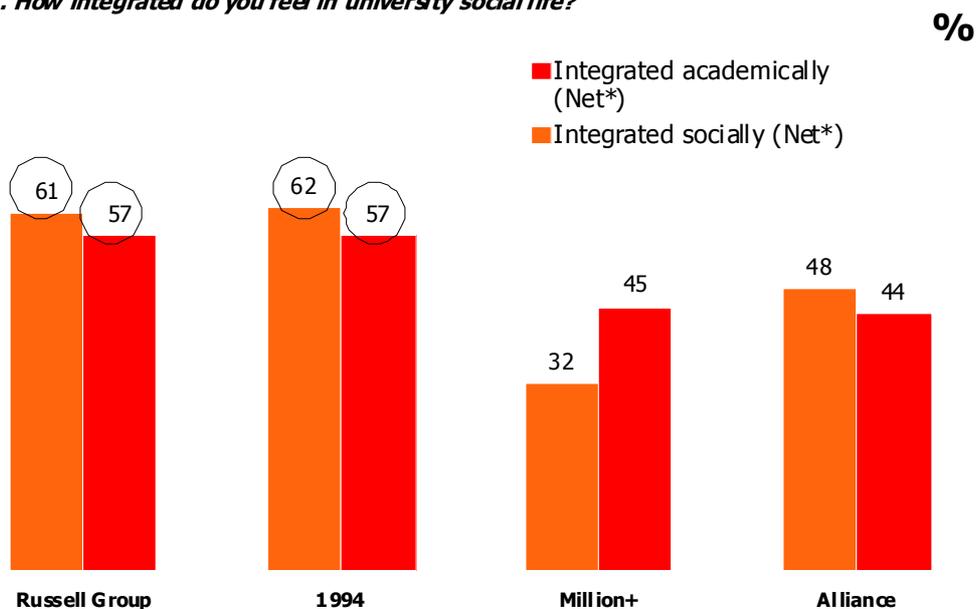
Base: All answering section 7 (1008)

However, when looked at by the type of institution there are significant differences. As can be seen in chart 3, students attending either a Russell Group institution or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to say they feel integrated in both the academic and the social side of university.

Chart 3: Student attending either a Russell Group or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to say they feel integrated in the university's academic and social life

Q60. How integrated do you feel in the academic side of university?

Q61. How integrated do you feel in university social life?



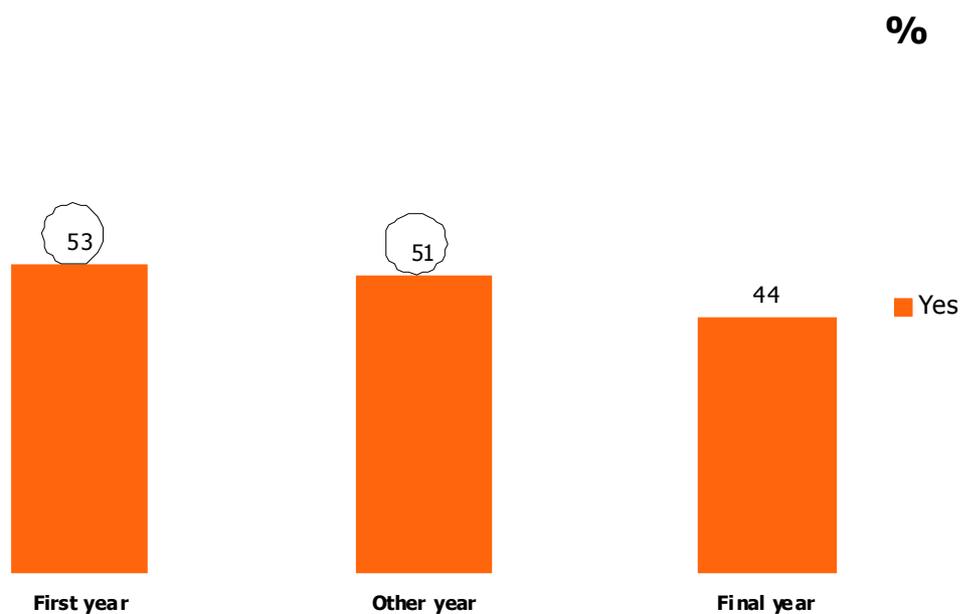
Base: Russell Group (261); 1994 (153); Million+ (169); Alliance (218)

* Combines codes 4 and 5 on a five point scale (1 – Not at all; 2; 3 – Somewhat; 4; 5 – Fully)

When students were asked if they were a member of any university clubs or societies, half of students, 50%, said they were. This is however influenced by year of study, as students in their first year were significantly more likely than final year students to say they were – see chart 4.

Chart 4: Final year students are the least likely to be a member of a university club or society

Q62. Are you a member of any university clubs or societies?



Base: First year students (368); Other year students (423); Final year students (217)

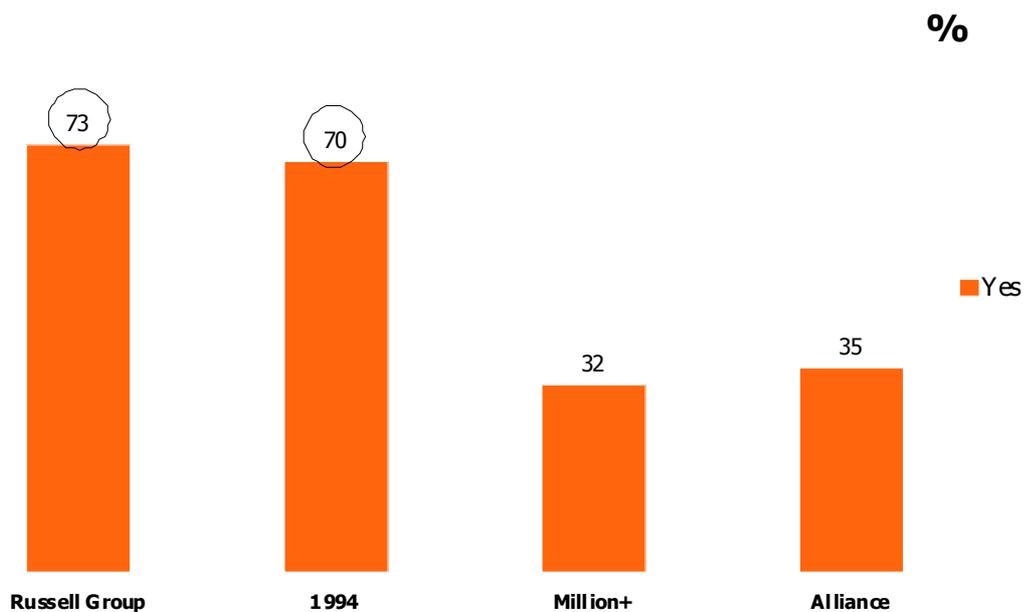
Interestingly, non EU international students were the most likely to say they were a member of a university club or society, with 69% saying they were – significantly more than either domestic or EU students. Indeed, in the qualitative research non EU students commented that societies and clubs more closely

reflected their interests than the perceived drinking culture, and as previously mentioned represent a valuable opportunity to integrate socially with domestic students.

Again, when looked at by institution type, there is a significant difference between students attending either a Russell Group or a 1994 institution and students attending a Million+ or Alliance institution. As can be seen in chart 5, students attending a Russell Group or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to be a member of a university club or society. This is likely partly to explain the high level of integration that students from these institutions felt.

Chart 5: Student attending either a Russell Group or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to be a member of a university club or society

Q62. Are you a member of any university clubs or societies?

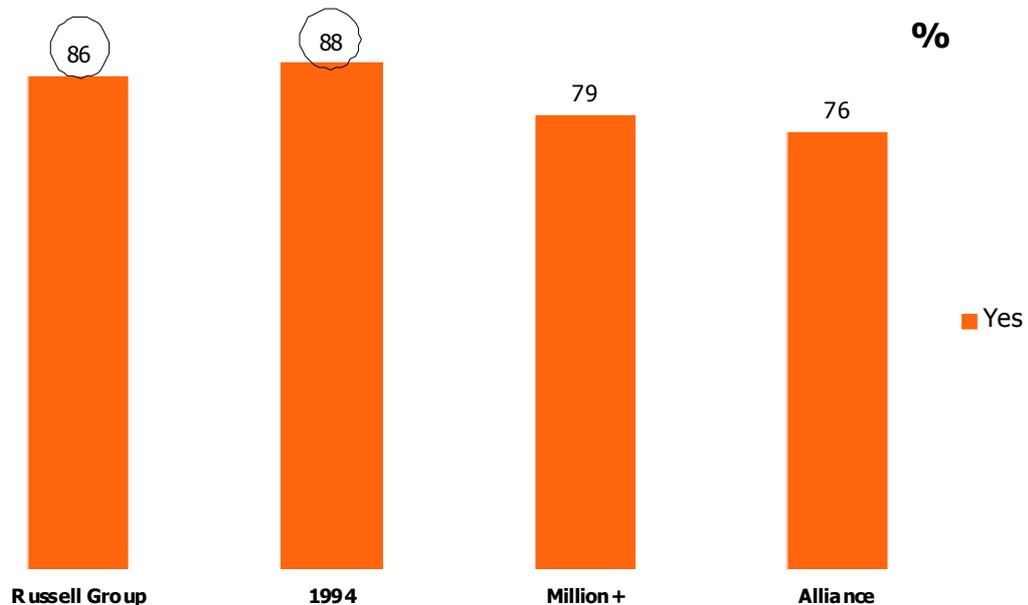


Base: Russell Group (261); 1994 (153); Million+ (169); Alliance (218)

When asked, the majority of students, 80%, said they felt that UK higher education is valuable and recognised, only 13% said they didn't. While there are no significant differences when this is looked at by whether students are domestic or international, there is a difference by institution type. As with previous questions, students attending a Russell Group or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to feel UK higher education is valuable and recognised – see chart 6.

Chart 6: The proportion of students who feel that UK higher education is valuable and recognised is significantly affected by institution type

Q63. Do you feel confident that UK higher education is valuable and recognised?



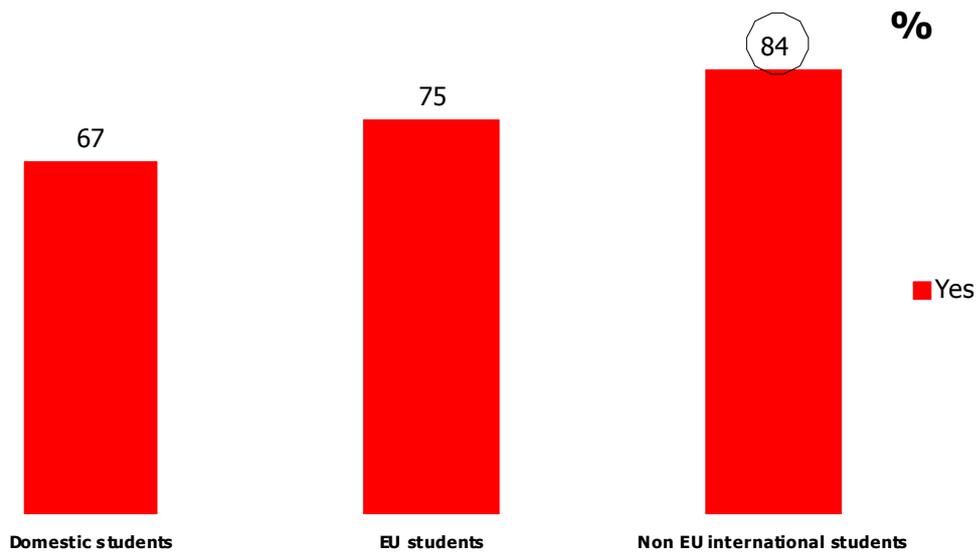
Base: Russell Group (261); 1994 (153); Million+ (169); Alliance (218)

When asked, 69% of students said they thought their degree would be transferable abroad. However this is affected by whether students are domestic or international students. 67% of domestic student said they thought their degree would be transferable abroad, compared to 75% of EU students and 84% of non EU international students – see chart 7. In addition, there is a similar difference by institution type to the one highlighted in previous questions, as students attending a Russell Group or a 1994 institution are significantly more likely than students attending a Million+ or Alliance institution to think their degree is

transferable abroad. 77% of students attending a Russell Group institution and 78% of students attending a 1994 institution thought their degree was transferable abroad, this compares to 64% of students attending a Million+ institution and 57% of students attending an Alliance institution.

Chart 7: Non EU international students were significantly more likely to feel confident their degree is transferable abroad

Q64. Do you feel confident that your degree is transferable abroad (i.e. that you can use your degree in other countries)?



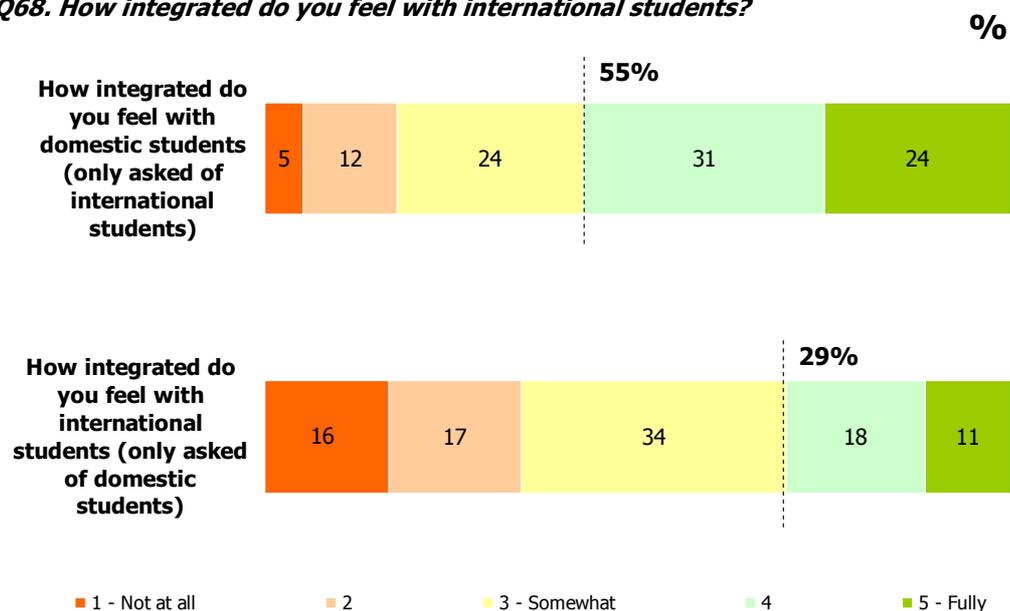
Base: Domestic students (804); EU students (99); Non EU international students (105)

When looking at the levels of integration between domestic and international students there is a difference between how integrated international students feel with domestic students when compared with how integrated domestic students feel with international students. As can be seen in chart 8, international students were significantly more likely to say they feel integrated with domestic students than *visa versa*. In part this may be explained by the fact that there are fewer international students than domestic students and therefore domestic students are less likely to meet and consequently feel integrated with international students.

Chart 8: International students were significantly more likely to say they felt integrated with domestic students

Q65. How integrated do you feel with domestic students?

Q68. How integrated do you feel with international students?



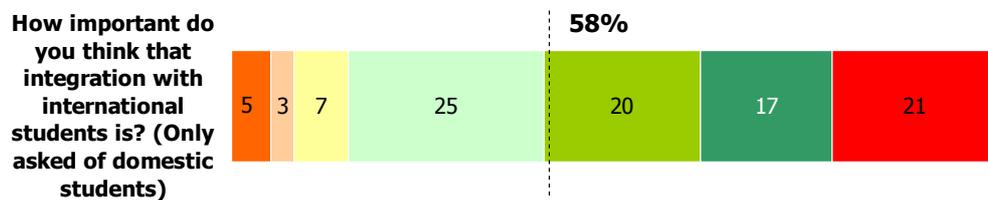
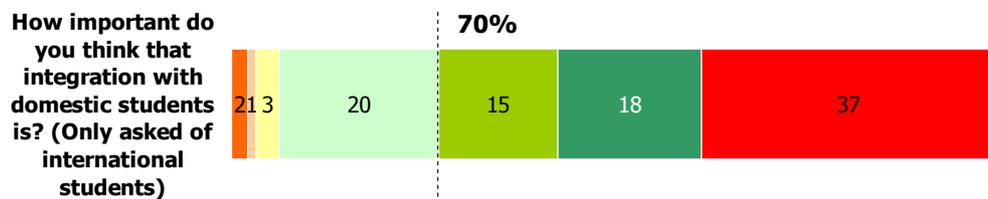
Base: All international students (204); All domestic students (804)

In addition, when these two groups were asked how important they think integration is, a similar difference appears. A significantly higher proportion of international students thought that integration with domestic students was important when compared to the proportion of domestic students who thought that integration with international students was important – see chart 9. Indeed, amongst many international students the chance to experience UK culture through integration is one of the reasons they come to study in the UK. For some, this is simply for the experience of another culture; for others it serves a more practical reason in the form of improving their English.

Chart 9: International students were significantly more likely to think that integration with domestic students was important

Q66. How important do you think that integration with domestic students is?

Q69. How important do you think that integration with international students is?



1 - Not important at all 2 3 4 - Somewhat important 5 6 7 - Very important

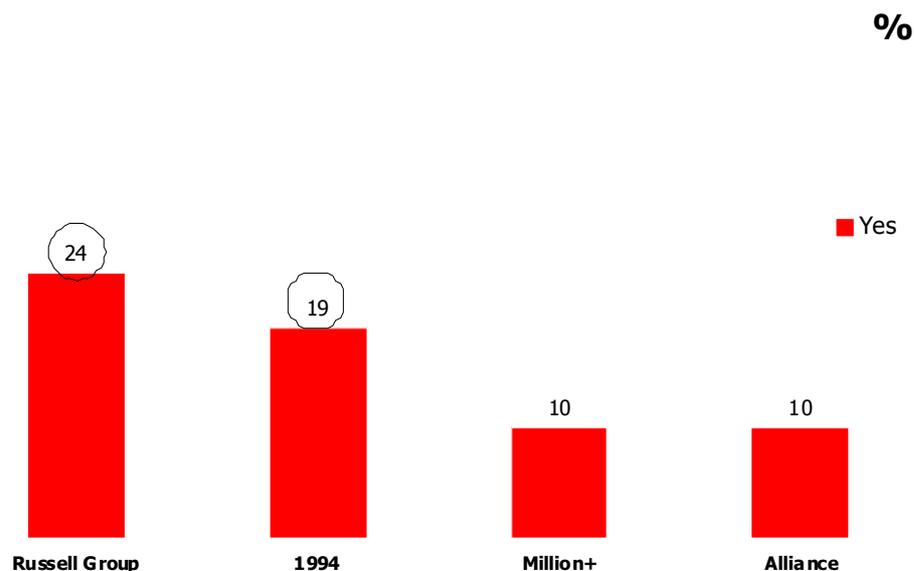
Base: All international students (204); All domestic students (804)

When asked, the vast majority of international students, 80%, said that they didn't experience any difficulties getting a visa to study in the UK. However significantly more non EU international students said they experienced difficulties getting a visa to study in the UK – 13% of non EU international students said they experienced problems compared to 2% of EU students.

Only 16% of domestic students said they either had, or planned to, study abroad as part of their course. However this is affected by institution type, as students attending a Russell Group or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to say they were than students attending either a Million+ or an Alliance institution – see chart 10.

Chart 10: Student attending either a Russell Group or a 1994 institution were significantly more likely to say they planned to study abroad as part of their course

Q70. Have you, or are you planning, to study abroad as part of your course?

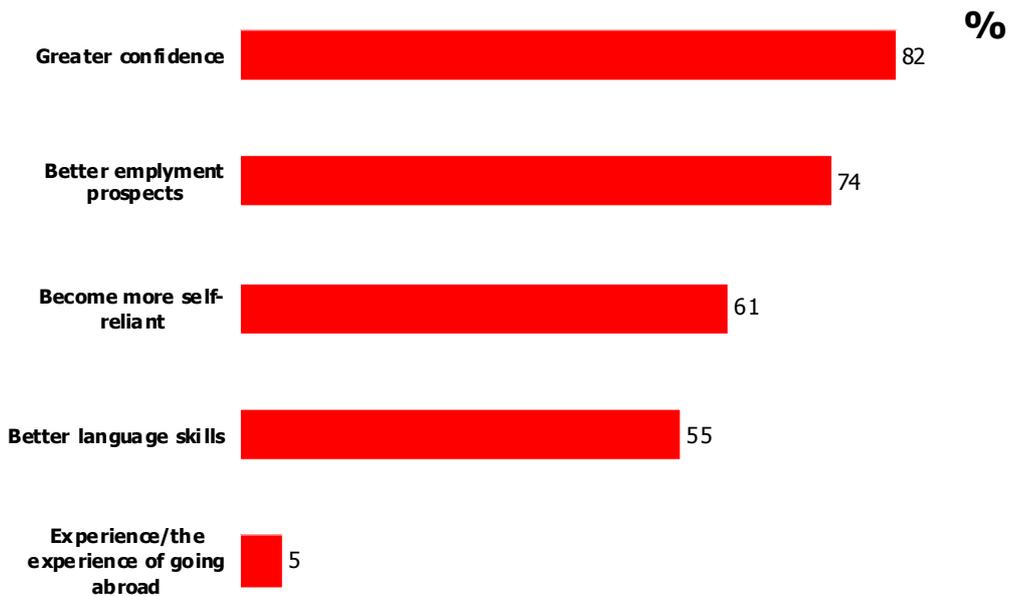


Base: Russell Group domestic students (190); 1994 domestic students (122); Million+ domestic students (138); Alliance domestic students (186)

When students who have, or were planning to, study abroad were asked what they were hoping to gain from this, the most popular response was 'greater confidence' – see chart 11. Better employment prospects were also cited by almost three quarters, 74%, of students.

Chart 11: Students are motivated to study abroad in order to gain greater confidence or improve their employment prospects

Q71. What did you gain, or are you hoping to gain, as a result of studying abroad?



Base: All domestic students who have, or are planning to, study abroad (128)





National Union of Students
4th Floor
184–192 Drummond Street
London NW1 3HP

t. 0845 5210 262
f. 020 7383 0794
w. www.nus.org.uk

© NUS 2010



national union of students